

KAREEM JAMES ABU-ZEID

The single Arab author I believe to be the most in need of translation is the Lebanese novelist Rabee Jaber, born in 1972. He has published a host of novels in Arabic, several of which have been translated into French, yet none of which have been translated into English. He captures the life and spirit of the city of Beirut in unforgettable ways.

*Kareem James Abu-Zeid is the translator of numerous Arabic texts, most recently *Cities Without Palms* by Tarek Eltayeb.*

CHRIS ANDREWS

Some of Rodrigo Rey Rosa's fiction has been translated—beautifully—by Paul Bowles and by Esther Allen, but most of his books are still waiting. I particularly hope that one day soon there will be such a thing in the world as the experience of reading *La Orilla africana* (“The African Shore”) in English. *La Orilla africana* is set in and around

Tangiers, presumably during the detention of Augusto Pinochet in London (1998-2000), since “the fate of Pinochet” comes up in a dinnertime conversation. The main human character is something of a mystery. Absent from the novel’s beginning and end, he also remains, in a sense, absent throughout, partly because the narrator recounts his actions far more than his thoughts. Although his name is strategically withheld until the final section, we soon learn that he is a young Colombian tourist in no hurry to return to his wife in Cali. When he loses his passport and has to wait for a replacement, he is glad as well as anxious. In the weeks of waiting, his old life begins to unravel, as he wanders through the streets of Tangiers in search of accommodation and *kif*, and is variously helped or used or both (and it is often hard to tell) by a louche Honorary Consul, a pair of French women with a vacation house, a local café owner and an adolescent shepherd dreaming of riches to come. The Colombian is the novel’s main human character, but not really its protagonist, for two reasons. First, for most of the story’s duration, he is uncommonly passive (the key incident in which we learn his name is also the point at which he recovers agency). And second, his presence doesn’t make the novel hang together. That function falls to an owl, which circulates among the human

characters, linking their lives. The owl is more than a mere plot device: it reveals what the humans are too wary or embarrassed to show each other—the need for power, the will to care—and is also a locus of experience: in two discreet but crucial passages we perceive the world through its eyes and ears. *La Orilla africana* is written in very short chapters (sometimes less than a page long) that often stop before the point at which a less subtle novelist would aim for strong effects. But Rey Rosa's ellipses are not an excuse for plotlessness. On the contrary, *La Orilla africana* is expertly designed; it raises a series of small and large questions, which relay one another cunningly, maintaining narrative tension up to the haunting conclusion, and indeed beyond, providing for ongoing puzzlement: What exactly happened there? It is tempting to call *La Orilla africana* a minimalist novel, because of its scaled-down look, but that would be misleading. Although it systematically avoids emphasis, it touches on large and urgent themes: the trafficking of human beings and substances at the frontier between Africa and Europe; the long tail of colonialism. It is a novel that generates powerful reality effects by very precise scene-setting and mapping of itineraries, but at certain moments it also has an undeniable metaphysical resonance. The world it constructs is a hard place, where

trust is risky, but also a place of intricate resilience, where fevers abate and bones knit up, where power is slippery and the powerless can sometimes seize their chance.

Chris Andrews has translated numerous works from Latin American writers, including several novels by Roberto Bolaño.

JEFFREY ANGLES

Hiromi Itō is one of Japan's most prominent women writers—a fiercely independent poet and novelist who has consistently explored issues of motherhood, childbirth, the female body, sexuality, international migration, and mythology in dramatic and powerfully vivid language. In addition, she is also known for her radical experiments with registers of speech rarely found within contemporary Japanese poetry and prose. In 2007, Itō published perhaps her most ambitious book—the strikingly original novel *Toge-nuki Jizō: Shin Sugamo Jizō engi* (“The Thorn-Pulling Jizō: New Tales of the Jizō at Sugamo”). Weaving autobiography with elements drawn from folklore and

classical Japanese literature, this surreal and wildly imaginative book represents Itō's attempt to create a new mode of mythological storytelling that explores some of the most important concerns facing contemporary Japan. In this regard, Itō's work builds upon the foundations laid by Haruki Murakami and Yoko Tawada, two other Japanese writers who have employed a surreal, seemingly "mythological" style to explore problems of modern society. Itō's novel centers on a popular statue of the Buddhist bodhisattva Jizō, which is located near her former home in Sugamo, Tokyo, and which is revered—especially among the elderly—for its ability to alleviate suffering. This novel was written at a moment of demographic crisis as the number of senior citizens in Japan was swelling to enormous proportions, and it explores the meaning of life, old age, care-giving, religion, and personal legacy within the nation with the world's longest life expectancy. The novel can be enjoyed on many levels—for the engaging plot, which frequently veers into the surreal and imbues scenes of everyday life with mythological grandeur; for its clever use of literary devices, including fascinating deployments of archetypes and literary references; as well as for its innovative language, which weaves together both profane and elevated registers of speech. It was because *Toge-nuki*

was so dramatically creative that it received both the 2007 Hagiwara Sakutarō Prize and the 2008 Izumi Shikibu Prize, two of Japan's highest literary prizes for recent, innovative works of literature.

Jeffrey Angles is an associate professor of Japanese literature and translation studies at Western Michigan University. He is co-editor of Japan: A Traveler's Literary Companion, and he has translations forthcoming of Tada Chimako's and Ito Hiromi's poetry.

MARCELO BALLVÉ

Near the beginning of Andrés Caicedo's novel *¡Que viva La música!* ("Let Music Live!") his first-person narrator, a teenage party girl, says, "I would like for the esteemed reader to follow along at my speed, which is energetic." Energetic? That's quite an understatement. Caicedo's novel, first published in 1977, proceeds at a vertigo-inducing pace. The protagonist, María del Carmen Huerta, might be described as a countercultural, Spanish-speaking version of Dante's Beatrice. She pulls the reader along as

she plunges into the many-tiered nightlife of Cali, Colombia. It is a hard-partying 1970s landscape marked by the requisite proportions of sex, drugs, and rock and roll (Rolling Stones and The Cream especially). But early in her nocturnal wanderings, María del Carmen discovers salsa music, and that's when the book accelerates to an even quicker tempo. The salsa genre was enjoying a heyday in the mid-1970s thanks to a generation of groundbreaking musicians like Richie Ray, Bobby Cruz, and Willie Colón, all whom played on and off for legendary New York-based multinational salsa collective, Fania. Cali, as Latin music buffs may know, emerged as a key hub of hemispheric salsa-mania. In fact, Cali invented its own method of listening to salsa. Albums meant to be listened at the standard 33 1/3 rotations per minute were instead played at 45 RPMs. As Caicedo writes in the novel: "The 33 transformed into a 45 is like being flagellated while one dances, it's a need to say it all, so that there's time to say it again 16 more times, to see who can withstand it, who can dance to it. It's taking the lid off the spirit, the voice . . ."

Caicedo, unfortunately, also lived a rock star's trajectory. He took his own life in 1977, at age 25, the same day he received his first copy of *¡Que viva la música!* in the mail. The novel, the only one Caicedo finished, has long been a

cult classic in Colombia. But all of Caicedo's writings, which include short stories and memoir, have been the subject of renewed interest throughout Latin America. Last year, prominent Chilean novelist Alberto Fuguet edited and compiled some of Caicedo's nonfiction writings and published them as an autobiographical tome titled *Mi cuerpo es una celda* ("My Body Is a Cell"). It's hard to imagine *¡Que viva la música!* remaining untranslated for very long, if rights haven't already been purchased. The precocious Caicedo might even be read as a precursor to Roberto Bolaño, so popular now among English-language readers. The two writers have much in common. Both were products of the 1970s and of the intermingled countercultural and avant-garde movements flourishing then in Latin America (at least in places and times where the intensity of government persecution didn't limit self-expression). María del Carmen, the charming, if self-destructive, protagonist of *¡Que viva la música!* might be compared to Auxilio Lacouture, the beguiling Uruguayan poetess who narrates Bolaño's minor classic *Amulet*, set in late 1960s and 1970s Mexico.

Marcelo Ballvé has written for various publications, including *Mother Jones*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and

Alternet, and has been featured as a commentator on *National Public Radio*.

SUSAN BERNOFSKY

Franz Hessel's 1913 novel *Der Kramladen des Glücks*, whose title might be translated as “The General Store of Happiness” or “The Curiosity Shop of Happiness,” is a gorgeous, light-flooded book telling in compellingly nostalgic tones of a childhood in Berlin and an adult's attempts to recapture the magic of that city as once viewed through the lens of childhood. Hessel is best known as the author of flâneur stories that won him the admiration and later friendship of Walter Benjamin, with whom he collaborated on a translation of Proust, and his novel may have been an inspiration for Benjamin's own memoir-in-essays *A Berlin Childhood*. Hessel's early adult life inspired the novel by Henri-Pierre Roché *Jules et Jim*, which was later filmed by François Truffaut, but the later life of this Jewish author was far less sunny: after fleeing Nazi Germany he was interned in the Les Milles concentration camp outside Aix-en-Provence and died shortly after his

release from illnesses sustained during his internment there.

Susan Bernofsky is the translator of numerous German-language authors, including Robert Walser, Yoko Tawada, and Herman Hesse.

ELLEN ELIAS BURSAC

I would love to see the verse of Tin Ujević, a Croatian poet from the 1920s and 1930s, translated from the Croatian. He wrote jewel-like sonnets and other (mostly) short poems that fuse mysticism, pain, intellectualism, and insight with extraordinary rhymes. His work is still revered wherever Bosnian, Croatian, or Serbian is spoken, but the poems have never been translated into English in a way that captures how they resonate in the original. His opus is not large, but it is a steep challenge.

Ellen Elias Bursac's translation of Nobody's Home by Dubravka Ugresic was recently published by Open Letter.

CHARLES CANTALUPO

To lament the almost overwhelming failure in the publishing world to translate African-language writing ironically reinforces the false, popular conception that modern Africa is an ongoing catastrophe. Even more ironic, the only remedy for such widespread misunderstanding is precisely the translation of more African-language writing. More than any other continent, Africa is not only unread—to speak of the thousands of writers in all genres who write and remain untranslated in indigenous rather than colonial languages like English or French—Africa is also misread: with the most popular and accessible African writers, who are far fewer in number, choosing colonial languages for their work. To address this problem, translation of the work of Eritrea's premier historian, Alemseged Tesfai, who writes in Tigrinya, would be one of my first choices. While he has translated some of his short stories, plays, and creative nonfiction himself into English, the translation of his two major works of history (over 1000 pages)—*Aynfelale* (“Let Us Not Separate”) and *Kab Matienzo ksab Tedla Bairou* (“Eritrean Federation with Ethiopia: From

Matenzo to Tedla”)—could be a catalyst finally to change American foreign policy in the Horn of Africa, which was formulated in 1950 during the Eisenhower administration and has led—the word is inescapable—from one catastrophe to another, up to the present in Somalia. As secretary of state delivering a lengthy policy speech in Kenya earlier this year, Hillary Clinton asserted that although "the story of Africa is told in stereotypes and clichés about poverty, disease, and conflict—the story we also need to tell, and tell it over and over again, is that many parts of Africa are rising to 21st-century challenges. We have seen the changes, and we know what is happening right now." But do we know, and what do we know about Africa, if we don't recognize that it must come from Africa first and in Africa's languages, not ours?

Charles Cantalupo is a professor of English, comparative literature, and African studies at Penn State University.

SERGIO CHEJFEC

It's been over 50 years since one of the best Latin American novels was written. When the Argentine Antonio di Benedetto set out to write *Zama* (1956), he shut himself away for a long time with books on the history and geography of Paraguay, a territory which was dependent on Buenos Aires in colonial times. The product of di Benedetto's seclusion was not simply a novel of historical interpretation and re-creation. On the contrary, in this misty, far-off time and now-disappeared scenery, we discover the tortuous personality of a mid-twentieth century hero burdened by existential frustration and conformist fatalism. Former magistrate don Diego de Zama is a member of the colonial bureaucracy who arrives in Asuncion to fulfill the vaguely delineated job as a learned adviser to the governor. For this, he had to leave his wife and children. The first lines of the novel describe the corpse of a monkey floating trapped between the pillars of a wharf, the rocking waves subjecting it to a battle between persistent confinement and imminent separation.

Obviously, this is also the situation that Diego de Zama himself faces. The story tells of his civil degradation and ethical dissolution. It has the beauty and force of a classic, but also the attributes of an overlooked masterpiece. To say that this work, like others from Latin American, was overshadowed by magical realism when it became the only literary style of the continent is only part of the truth. What's certain is that *Zama* is within a certain timeless, solipsistic mode, which speaks of useless memory and the irresolute colonial past of these countries where nature turned into trauma. Its brief and touchingly eloquent sentences put this work far, far from the exuberant declamation of magical realism. One of the most enduring lessons of this novel is that nature has no prefabricated models; it can be mute, cruel and desolate all at the same time, although it seems the opposite. Di Benedetto makes this muteness and desolation speak a new language. I think that *Zama* should be translated into English simply because so many English-speaking readers and authors haven't read one of the best novels of the twentieth century. Good books are unique and need no justification. (Translation by Beth Wadell and Scott Esposito)

Originally from Argentina, Sergio Chejfec is the author of numerous novels, most recently Mis dos mundos. A Guggenheim fellow, his poems and essays have been published widely.

JESSICA COHEN

I recommend Benjamin Tammuz's *Hayei Elyakum* ("The Life of Elyakum"), the first novel a trilogy written by the Russian-born Israeli. (The second novel, *A Castle in Spain*, was published in English in 1973.) A decidedly Israeli version of the picaresque, the book follows the accidental successes and inevitable failures of a young man in pre-State Israel as WWII rages in the background. The eponymous narrator's candid revelations, equally candid omissions, and confounding blend of painful self-awareness and wildly unrealistic aspirations make him a compelling and deeply likeable figure. He describes the characters he encounters with Dickensian relish, and the novel is peppered with lovingly satirical depictions of Israeli society, foreshadowing the more cynical critique that was to emerge in much of Tammuz's later work.

Jessica Cohen is the translator of numerous books from Hebrew, including works by David Grossman and Amir Gutfreund.

PETER CONSTANTINE

An author who deserves to be discovered by the English-speaking world is Dritëro Agolli, considered by many Albanians to be their country's finest novelist and poet. Like his more famous compatriot Ismail Kadare, who has been extensively translated into English, Agolli was born in southern Albania (five years before Kadare, in 1931). Agolli and Kadare are generally considered Albania's foremost writers of the modern era, but of the two, Agolli was the greater bestseller before the fall of Enver Hoxha's brutal dictatorship in 1991, which had isolated and sealed off Albania from the outside world for many decades. During the darkest years of the dictatorship Agolli was the president of the Union of Writers and Artists and a deputy in the People's Assembly, positions that have subsequently haunted him. His prestige during an era when many

Albanian authors were sent to brutal prison camps is still an issue. But what is most remarkable in the writings of both Agolli and Kadare is that during the years of the harshest and most restrictive censorship they both managed to write deep and powerful novels, despite having to avoid an endless list of unmentionable and untreatable topics. The first Agolli novel I would propose for translation is *Njeriu me top* (“The Man with a Gun”), which was in fact brought out in a weak and incomplete version by the Albanian State’s 8 Nëntori Publishing House in 1983. Other important Agolli novels are *Shkëlqimi dhe rënia e shokut Zylo* (“The Rise and Fall of Comrade Zylo”), and *Komisari Memo* (“Commissar Memo”), which also appeared during the dictatorship era in what is more of a paraphrase than a translation published by 8 Nëntori Publishing House as *The Bronze Bust*. Dritëro Agolli’s works deserve a wider readership and a translation that captures the elegance and power of his prose.

Peter Constantine has received a *PEN Translation Prize* and a *National Translation Award*. His translations include *Machiavelli*, *Voltaire*, and *Tolstoy*.

MARGARET JULL COSTA

Manuel Mujica Lainez's wonderful 1954 novel, *La Casa* (“The House”), has a stately Buenos Aires mansion as egotistical narrator, relating its own story and that of its protagonists, who all come to a sticky and often absurd end. The novel spans a period from the 1880s to the late 1940s and is a biting satire on the house’s original aristocratic residents, their more low-born successors, and its two melancholy ghosts. *La Casa* forms part of a cycle of novels Mujica Lainez wrote about Buenos Aires, none of which, for some reason, have so far been translated.

Margaret Jull Costa is one of the most lauded translators working today from Portuguese and Spanish. Her translations include Jose Saramago, Javier Marias, and many others.

STEVE DOLPH

Rosario Castellanos (1925-1974) was a Mexican essayist, poet, and novelist sometimes associated with Spain's *generación de 50*. Her writing rubbed its heel into social and aesthetic convention, and its mark can still be seen in contemporary Mexican poetry. Only a couple of books are widely available in English translation: Esther Allen's fantastic *The Book of Lamentation* (from the original *Oficio de tinieblas*), a selected poems, and *A Rosario Castellanos Reader* (edited by Maureen Ahern), a book I'm not familiar with. These three from a writer who published over fifteen books of prose and about as many of poetry and plays. This is a writer whose influence can be compared to César Vallejo's, but whose poems have only been translated sporadically.

Steve Dolph is an editor of *Calque*, a journal of literature in translation.

KAREN EMMERICH

In my recent translations, I've been trying to bring across some contemporary Greek voices that haven't yet been adequately heard in English, but there are still many classics of Modern Greek literature that really deserve to be translated. One is *I Papissa Ioanna* ("Pope Joan"), by Emmanuel Roidis. First published in 1866, "Pope Joan" is a wickedly witty historical novel about the life of the legendary (and probably fictional) female pope of the 850s. The book, which also offers a stinging critique of the Greek Orthodox Church, was banned, and Roidis was excommunicated because of it. Lawrence Durrell published a version of the book in the 1950s, but it's far shorter than Roidis's Greek, and it would be wonderful to have a complete translation in English. I would also love to see strong translations of the works of the 16th-century Cretan playwright Georgios Chortatsis: the pastoral play *Panoria*, the tragedy *Erofili*, and the comedy *Katzourbos*. These plays are just wonderful, and should be of particular interest to scholars and readers of Renaissance works in English. There are also a whole host of fantastic books that

already *have* been published in good English translations—but the translations are either out of print, or put out by small presses or academic presses with poor distribution. Two of my favorites are William Wyatt’s translation of the stories of Yiorgos Vizyenos, *My Mother’s Sin and Other Stories*. Vizyenos is a fascinating character, born in 1849 to a very poor family in Thrace, sent to apprentice to his uncle, a tailor in Constantinople; he went on to study child psychology in Leipzig and died in an insane asylum outside of Athens. There’s also the very important trilogy of novels by Stratis Tsirkas, set in Jerusalem, Cairo, and Alexandria during the period 1942-44, that were translated by Kay Cicellis and put out by Knopf in 1974 under a single cover, as *Drifting Cities*. It would be wonderful to see those re-released.

Karen Emmerich’s translation include *I’d Like* by Amanda Michalopoulou, *Poems (1945-1971)* by Miltos Sachtouris, and *Landscape with Dog and Other Stories* by Ersi Sotiropoulos, just out from Clockroot Books.

MICHAEL EMMERICH

I'd love to see *Dogura magura* by Yumeno Kyūsaku translated. It's brilliant, bewildering, totally nuts, a stylistic stew unlike anything I've ever read in either English or Japanese. This is the kind of book that lets a translator blossom into the labor of love of translation—the kind of book that would let translation shine. The kind of book that ought to be translated. First published in 1935, the title might best be translated, as it was into French, as *Dogura magura*.

Michael Emmerich is the translator of numerous seminal Japanese authors, including Yasunari Kawabata and Banana Yoshimoto.

GEORGE FRAGOPOULOS

How does one begin describing E.H. Gonatas's short story collection *The Cows*? Certain adjectives come to mind: grotesque, fantastic, ethereal; surreal would be another apt designation. While Gonatas refused the label of surrealist, there is something of that aesthetic fingerprint found all over his work—stemming, perhaps, from his friendship with preeminent Greek surrealists such as Milto Sachtouris and Nikos Engonopoulos. Like Borges and Kafka, he was a master of the short form, with much of his best work reading like prose poems. Gonatas's work springs forth from what the writer himself labeled an “irrational” element, and it is in this chasm between the rational and the irrational where Gonatas's sublime and wonderful vistas unfold. *The Cows* is no exception. The title story, for example, deals with an unnamed protagonist who discovers a town's well-kept secret: exploding cows. In another, “The Forest,” an encounter with two strangers, who may or may not be twins, leads to a “boundless garden,” filled with “white, round boulders,” where “flowers are nowhere to be

seen.” And in “The Swans”—a story that can be found in David Connolly’s anthology, *The Dedalus Book of Greek Fantasy*—the rescue of a young girl lost ends in confusion when a swan’s head appears at the most inopportune time. While it would be a stretch to say that the short stories that compose *The Cows* cohere in any tangible manner, they do connect through a dream-like logic of repeating motifs and images. The entire collection can be read as a fantastical bestiary, brimming as it is with references to animals—snails, cows, swans, ominous birds—all of which Gonatas imbues with totemic import. Or, better yet, *The Cows* can read as a road map to those places we dream of but can never remember when we awake. Dream landscapes of which, as Gonatas writes in the last story of the collection, “They Will Send Us Away,” we can only say, “I have no idea how I arrived at this wretched sea side village. Nor do I know if I should stay or not. I don’t remember when I arrived, or from where I came. Perhaps I’ve spent an entire life here.”

A contributor to Words Without Borders, George Fragopoulos lives in New York and is a Ph.D. candidate in English and American literature at the CUNY Graduate

Center. He is currently writing his dissertation on modern American poetry.

JUAN FRANCISCO FERRÉ

In the extensive dedication to his novel *El Dorado*, author Robert Juan-Cantavella acknowledges his debts, both real and symbolic, and thanks the “urban planners and the building industry mafia, who, aside from running the country, have given me a theme to write about” and “politicians in general, for demonstrating with their idiocy that the American dream is possible in any corner of the planet.” In this devastating journey through a Spain on the verge of mortgaging itself to the hilt, the author satirizes the pope’s visit to Valencia in 2006; furthermore, he contemplates the insanity of the promoters and backers of tourist megalopolis Marina D’or; a set of attacks that exterminate all the crowned heads on the planet and part of the Spanish aristocracy; and the bankruptcy of the middle class and the nuclear family. Robert Juan-Cantavella has the best aim and sense of humor of all the literary “terrorists” in Spain. It couldn’t be otherwise: he is

the great European disciple of Hunter S. Thompson. This extraordinary novel partakes of a hybrid aesthetic. Journalism, impossibly perverted in its ends and means, is combined with the literary, which is itself split between attention to the immense profanity of the real and the preservation of intelligence and irony when confronted by events that put an end to any capacity for judgment and critical discernment. Both extremes of contemporary experience are portrayed by Cantavella. With *El Dorado* Cantavella is part of a literary tradition (think of the picaresque, the *Quixote*, Quevedo or Rabelais as well as Robert Coover or David Foster Wallace) of authors who have made parody (or rather, the comic disassembly of the dominant beliefs of a determined social order) the primary tool of their hilarious inventions. After participating in this hysterical catharsis, the reader will experience an immediate improvement in his mental faculties. (Translated by Elizabeth Wadell and Scott Esposito)

Juan Francisco Ferré is the author of the short story collection Metamorfosis® and the novels La vuelta al mundo, I Love You Sade, and La fiesta del asno. His most recent novel, Providence, was a finalist for the Premio

Heralde de Novela, given by the Spanish publisher Anagrama.

EDWARD GAUVIN

Noël Devaulx is the secret master of the 20th century French *fantastique*. His prose has the shimmer of Mérimée and the seamliness of Flaubert; clearly, he keeps Nerval by his bedside, the better to read it by the light of a Baudelairean lunacy. In his hands, the *Kunstmärchen*—nine collections' worth, over nine decades—is reinvented as the vessel of a personal metaphysics; evident in every one is his mandarin mastery of narration. Jean Paulhan, an early champion, famously called his hermetic, exquisite tales, oft-featured in the *NRF*, “parables without keys”: spellbinding, even when perfectly obscure, for the secret to his prose is promise. Some enticing deferral of revelation extends past his final lines, into silence. *Sainte Barbeigrise* (1952), the second of his only two novels, is all sprightly felicity. An evocation of idyllic childhood shot through with the droll and impossible, its characters include a floating stepmother, a tart-tongued granny, a frog princess, and an

astrologer uncle living in a lighthouse. The plot bests paraphrase: episodes cohere into the portrait of a vanished time. At every instance in Devaulx's writing, content is stitched to style; the golden thread of theme here running through his sentences may be the lasting ways early enchantment refracts our outlook on life. Kindliness and good nature, not to say happiness, are notoriously difficult in literature, and too often the light veil of nostalgia seems more like Vaseline slathered on the lens. Many of Devaulx's tales are haunted by death and madness, but *Sainte Barbegrise* reads like a virgin spring, or a breeze from a summer kingdom. It belongs, for its humor, for its merry invention, for its skillful use of marvel, on a shelf with *Little, Big*, *At-Swim-Two-Birds*, or *The Complete Tales of Ketzia Gold*.

Edward Gauvin has been an ALTA fellow and a resident at the Ledig House and the Banff International Literary Translation Centre. His translation of Georges-Olivier Châteaureynaud's *A Life on Paper: Selected Stories* is forthcoming from Small Beer Press.

JUAN GOYTISOLO

Let's imagine a happy Arcadia: a country that's always green, covered with forests and meadows, with rustic manor houses, simple woodcutters, and wise elders who harbor an ancient language and customs. This idyllic country suffers under the cruel oppression of foreigners who neither speak the native language nor understand the people's customs, oppressors who depend on shameful collaborators who have betrayed the sacred cause. Fortunately, the Organization keeps watch over each and every one of its children. The just war, which has lasted centuries, will end with a bright new era: independence will triumph "through the force and violence of convictions." After starting out among the virile woodcutter and wise old man of the mountain, Gorka K., already a battle hardened veteran, takes part in the conflict that's ripping apart his country, first, as a minister in the political arm of the Organization; then, as a soldier. Soon he becomes known for his skill with weapons and bold patriotic actions. His career promises to be brilliant and it is, but not in the way

that was expected. Juan Francisco Ferré's novel doesn't fit the outlines of a screenplay or the expectations of the genre; there are surprises in store every step of the way. Paragraph after paragraph, chapter after chapter, Ferré throws the reader off-balance: every time we think that we are on familiar ground, we encounter something entirely strange. The logic of the world and the logic of the story are on a course for collision from the first page to the last. Time zigzags at whim. Young Gorka, mythologized by the Organization, transforms into other unforeseen Gorkas: the fetishist of berets and military uniforms, the masturbator, the sodomite, the brutal executioner of the enemies of the cause. As we toboggan through the rises and falls of the novel, we observe another of the author's intentions, to always "listen to the voices of the world," in the words of Karl Kraus. Whoever looks for any kind of positive message in *La fiesta del asno* will be greatly disappointed. Ferré's serpentine game is the opposite of political correctness; its subversive energy comes precisely from this total lack of correctness. Nobody involved in the Basque problem, neither nationalists from either side, politicians, judges, police, or religious leaders, will find support for their convictions. Fortunately, lovers of literature are left with

the most refined and least common of the senses: that of humor.

Juan Goytisolo is the recipient the Premio Octavio Paz de Literatura, the Premio Juan Rulfo, and numerous other honors.

JASON GRUNEBAUM

I recommend *Basharat Manzil*, by Bhopal-based Hindi writer Manzoor Ahtesham. Set in pre-Independence Old Delhi, this novel spans three generations from 1857-1947: part family saga, part exploration of India's political past, the book delves deeply into Muslim cultural and religious traditions and Indian nationalist politics. Historical figures are integrated in the narrative, but it's the portrayal of the family conflict—unequal brothers separated by views, lifestyles, and alliances at odds with each other—and the outstandingly wrought female inhabitants of Basharat Manzil (the eponymous residence) that make the work so fulfilling. Readers of Indian literature in English will not be unfamiliar with some of this territory, but Ahtesham's

loving prose, artfully rendered in English, will add a very different and important voice to the pre-Partition literary landscape of broken dreams, doomed love, and devastating loss.

Jason Grunbaum is the recipient of a PEN Translation Fund Grant to translate Uday Prakash's Hindi novella The Girl with the Golden Parasol.

SUSAN HARRIS

Published in Sweden 2006, Peter Fröberg Idling's *Pol Pots leende* ("Pol Pot's Smile") is dazzling, one of the best things we've ever excerpted on *Words Without Borders*: kaleidoscopic, probing, deeply sorrowful. In this expansive and deeply felt history of Cambodia and the former Democratic Kampuchea, the Swedish author struggles to uncover the truth about what took place there in the years after the Vietnam War, and what happened to turn Saloth Sar, the young football-playing fan of French Romantic poetry, into the tyrant the world would come to know as Pol Pot. Idling went to Cambodia as a legal advisor to an aid

agency, and poking around the tiny Swedish library in Phnom Penh discovered an overwhelmingly positive report submitted by a Swedish delegation, one of the first allowed into the country after the 1978 revolution. How could the delegates travel through Cambodia at the height of Pol Pot's genocide without seeing anything? The author investigates the power and deceitfulness of ideology and the capabilities and limits of the human mind.

Susan Harris is an editor with Words Without Borders, the former director and editor-in-chief of Northwestern University Press, and the founding editor of Northwestern's Hydra imprint of literature in translation.

CHARLES HATFIELD

Wendy Guerra's novel *Todos se van* ("Everybody's Going"), which won the Bruguera Prize in 2006, is a semi-autobiographical story about a girl's coming of age in Revolutionary Cuba. This first novel captures—more

incisively and powerfully than any other I can think of—the strange complexities and contradictions of daily life in Cuba.

Charles Hatfield is an assistant professor of literary studies and an associate director of the Center for Translation Studies at the University of Texas at Dallas.

DWAYNE HAYES

A few years before the death of Swedish filmmaker Ingmar Bergman in 2007, he revealed that his relationship with his late wife had started years earlier than previously known, while she was still married, and that he was actually the father of her daughter Maria. He also spoke openly of his desire to commit suicide following her death in 1995. As an admirer of Bergman, I'd like to see *Tre dagböcker* translated. The book was published in 2004 and is a compilation of the diaries of Bergman, his wife Ingrid, and their daughter Maria von Rosen from the time Ingrid was

diagnosed with cancer in 1994 until her death the following year.

Dwayne Hayes is the editor of the biannual magazine Absinthe: New European Writing.

FADY JOUDAH

I'd like to see the poetry of the Palestinian Ghassan Zaqtan in English, especially his latest collection, "Like a Straw Bird It Follows Me." He has been one of the leading Arab poets for the last decade or so, and has been hailed by Mahmoud Darwish as an important figure in Arab poetry. Zaqtan is also a recognized novelist, but perhaps that would come later, after we have come to appreciate more completely his first love, poetry. Also, the poetry of Syrian Muhammad Maghut and Egyptian Amal Donqul should be made more available in English (I don't know of any book-length translations of their work); as well as the novels of

Palestinian Ibrahim Nassrallah (especially “The Birds of Caution”).

Fady Joudah was awarded the 2008 Saif Bhabash-Banipal Prize for Arabic Literary Translation for his translation of Mahmoud Darwish's *The Butterfly's Burden*. His newest translation of Darwish's poetry, *If I Were Another*, is just out from Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

ROHAN KAMICHERIL

The book that comes immediately to mind is Fahmida Riaz's Urdu novella *Godavari*. The book has been widely praised in the original, but despite the valiant efforts of advocates like Muhammad Umar Memon and Faruq Hassan (who has translated a portion for the Annual of Urdu Studies), it has yet to make the transition in its entirety into English. *Words Without Borders* published Riaz's "Pink Pigeons: Was it They Who Won," in our Pakistan issue of June 2009, and I strongly urge any reader unfamiliar with her work to read this remarkable piece. The glimpse that we get of *Godavari* in Faruq Hassan's fine

rendition makes one hope that the stars align so that English-language readers may soon have access to more work from Riaz.

Rohan Kamicheril is an editor with Words Without Borders.

ILYA KAMINSKY

Poems of Miron Bialoszewski is the book I hope to one day hold in my hands. A great post-war Polish poet, Bialoszewski wrote work radically different from that of his contemporaries—Milosz, Swir, Kamienska, Herbert, and Szymborska—but his poetry was just as powerful and important to the development of the contemporary European lyric. His work is translated in many other languages, but in English we only have five poems currently available in print in *Postwar Polish Poetry: An Anthology*, edited by Czeslaw Milosz. His earlier, tiny collection, *The Revolution of Things: Selected Poems* (translated by Andrzej Busza and Bogndan Czaykowski) is very incomplete and is long out of print. When I mentioned

this to Tomas Salamun in a recent conversation, Tomas' face lit up: "Bialoszewski, when he is translated and available in English, will cause an explosion in American poetry!" One hopes so.

A recipient of a Lannan Foundation Literary Fellowship and numerous awards, Ilya Kaminsky is currently at work on the Ecco Anthology of International Poetry.

JIM KATES

Among Russian poets of past generations, Blok and Pasternak (again!) are badly and underrepresented in English, and Vladislav Khodasevich is virtually invisible in English, although he's considered the best poet of the post-Revolutionary diaspora. (Well, if we don't count Tsvetaeva.) The former is known in the West only under a fictional name in Nabokov's novel *The Gift*.

Jim Kates is a codirector of Zephyr Press. His poems and translations have been published widely.

TINA KOVER

There is a book I've longed to translate for years, a novel called *Spiridion* by George Sand, which is a far-ahead-of-its-time work about a haunted monastery, an aged monk who is the guardian of handed-down religious secrets, a young, innocent protégé, ghosts emerging from paintings on the ancient walls . . . sounds intriguing, doesn't it? I haven't been able to rouse enough interest in any of my publishers yet but I think it has an almost *Harry Potter/Da Vinci Code* quality that could be very, very successful and appealing to today's readers if marketed the right way.

Tina Kover has translated novels by Alexandre Dumas and George Sand, among others.

ANDREA LINGENFELTER

I'd like to recommend *Chengshi jifeng* by Yang Dongping, which might be translated as "Urban Currents: Shanghai and Beijing in History and Popular Culture." I've gotten a bit carried away with the title. The literal title, "City Monsoons" doesn't quite get at the heart of the matter. Some people refer to this book in English as "A Tale of Two Cities," which is witty but perhaps a bit misleading. *Urban Currents/Chengshi jifeng* is not a riff on Dickens, nor is it about torrential rains. Rather, it is a lively and extensively researched, scholarly and yet personal account of the long-standing and ongoing rivalry between Shanghai and Beijing, two cities whose cultural differences and relative merits have been hotly debated ever since Shanghai became a treaty port in the 19th century. In *Chengshi jifeng*, Yang Dongping explores what lies behind this intense urban competition. He delves into the history, society, economy, and culture of China's two leading cities, while also discussing their roles in the popular imagination. Beijing and Shanghai have staked out or been

assigned opposite positions in the popular mind, *jingpai* and *haipai*. Some may take these categories with a grain of salt, and others maintain that the differences are superficial; but Yang examines and interrogates a long list of polarities associated with these two cities: North vs South; *yang* vs *yin* (and the corollary opposition of macho vs feminine); hierarchical vs democratic; xenophobic vs cosmopolitan; distrustful of the West vs adoring of the West; conservative vs open-minded; socially stratified and rigid vs socially mobile; traditional spiritual values vs modern materialistic values; Chinese vs foreign. The list goes on. With a deep personal connection to and affection for both cities, the author, an academic, contrasts *jingpai* and *haipai* without taking sides. For readers of English, the book introduces deep-seated cultural patterns, trends and concepts that are part of the fabric of Chinese society, in addition to offering a wealth of historical information and interesting tidbits (e.g., what is now Shanghai was underwater until the 12th century; you could tell someone's rank in the capital of Beijing by the height of the threshold of the front gate of their house). This book is well-known among North American scholars of Chinese studies (especially urban studies), and if it were available in English it would be widely taught in universities. *Chengshi*

jifeng would also give people who do business in China more solid cultural footing. Non-Chinese may be tempted to see China as monolithic and homogeneous, but regional differences like those described in Yang's book are the rule, not the exception, and they reflect the diversity and complexity of Chinese society and culture.

Andrea Lingenfelter has translated widely from Chinese. Her translations include the novels *Farewell My Concubine* by Lilian Lee and *Candy* by Mian Mian.

CHARLOTTE MANDELL

If I had to choose one, I guess it would have to be *Les ombres errantes* by Pascal Quignard, which won the Prix Goncourt in 2002. It's one in an ongoing series of books called *Le Dernier Royaume*. Quignard is a difficult author to translate because he demands a lot of the reader, including a willingness to listen and be quiet—his writing is very meditative and reflective, but can at times be beautiful and lyrical. It's amazing how few of his books have been translated into English—only a few out of over

forty. He's best known because of the film *Tous les matins du monde*, but that's not at all representative of his work as a whole.

Charlotte Mandell is the translator of Proust, Blanchot, and, most recently, The Kindly Ones by Jonathan Littell.

CHRISTOPHER MERRILL

Ge Fei's *Shanhei Rumeng*. It is said to be a fabulous novel, and from what excerpts I have read of his work he is a dazzling writer. But we have no books of his in English.

*Director of the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa, **Christopher Merrill** has published numerous books and translations.*

FRANÇOIS MONTI

If you were to ask a French reader *Who's your literature's best kept secret?*, if said reader had any sense, he would reply *Pierre Senges. Fragments de Lichtenberg*, Senges' latest novel, was hands-down 2008's most fascinating book, and quite probably the best French fiction of the first decade of this century. What if the over 8,000 aphorisms written by German scientist and writer Georg Lichtenberg were actually the pieces of a lost novel? This idea puts in motion a fantastic piece of writing in which a group of scholars creates, with Alfred Nobel's money, a society dedicated to finding out the novel that hides behind the fragments. To each time its version: romantic, modernist, allegory of the camps, or postmodernist (the Fragments as a hilarious story of Snow White's eighth dwarf). The parts given over to reconstruction are placed beside examinations of Lichtenberg's and Goethe's lives in a sort of weird hall of mirrors populated by links between the society and world events, the whole thing contaminated by digressions of all kinds in what may very well be Senges' own take on the

Situationist concept of the *Dérives*. This is no mere literary game: what hides behind all this is a deep observation of the links between one's age and one's culture; a subtle reflection on the construction of canon, schools, and literary cults that structures our idea of great literature and thus closes our mind to a more dynamic, alternative, or revisionist view—Goethe being the great classic, Lichtenberg representing the open-ended work or approach. It is also a very moving illustration of close reading as a sort of rewriting that goes beyond the specialist consensus, a political novel that dares not say its name, and one of the funniest books I've read in a long while. *Fragments de Lichtenberg* is Senges' masterwork, the exhilarating novel of a great stylist, a baroque writer that shows us the encyclopedic novel is not an old man's game.

François Monti is a founding member of the *Fric-frac club électrique*, a clandestine congregation of French-speaking litbloggers whose only common trait seems to be the worship of Thomas Ruggles Pynchon's oeuvre.

JAVIER MORENO

I have had the big and black Alfaguara edition of *Cuentos Completos de Juan Carlos Onetti* on my night table a few months already. I read one at random from time to time before I go to sleep. I believe that Juan Carlos Onetti should be read while lying in bed. Ideally, on Sunday afternoon. His stories are hard and cleverly written. Onetti is a master of controlling the flow of narrative information. Subtlety is his personal signature. Some of his stories are technical marvels in that respect. Everything happens when nothing seems to happen, as if he were performing a magic trick. While Borges was creating his universe full of obsessed scholars of the esoteric, tragic gauchos and paradoxical intellectuals, the Uruguayan Onetti told us tales about the empty urban Latin American man: a little lost, a little confused, a little in love or heartbroken, a little tired of himself and his life of routines and long walks. His

prose is sharp and beautiful. I still cannot believe his stories have not been translated into English. He is a huge classic.

*Javier Moreno writes on movies and literature for various publications and is the author of the short story collection *Lo definitivo y lo temporal*, published by Fondo Editorial EAFIT.*

MURAT NEMET-NEJAT

There is one work that for quite a long time I've thought needs to be translated into English. That is Luc Godard's *Histoire Du Cinema*. This book is based on a series of T.V. programs (with illustrations) that Godard gave in France on the nature of film language. Full of fascinating and brilliant observations—for instance, on the nature of "the gaze" in film and in painting—the book has relevance not only on film; but on new possibilities in all

sorts of artistic endeavors, including literature, in our time. It is a powerhouse of ideas.

Murat Nemet-Nejat is a Turkish translator and poet working on the long poem “The Structure of Escape,” and on the translation of the Turkish poet Seyhan Erozçelik’s complete book of poetry Rosestrikes and Coffee Grinds.

IDRA NOVEY

I'd love to see someone translate the Chilean writer Pedro Lemebel's latest book, *Adios Mariquita Linda*. Katie Silver translated his best-known novel, *Tengo Miedo Matador*, and she and I have talked about how mysterious it is that the book received so little attention in the U.S. Lemebel seems like just the sort of prose writer to do well in the U.S., and not just because he was one of the few novelists that writes frankly of being gay and of the rampant, often fatal homophobia in Latin America. Bolaño was a big fan of

Lemebel and said Lemebel was an outcast but also the real victor of Chilean literature.

Translator of the Brazilian poet Paulo Henriques Britto, Idra Novoy is the author of the poetry collection The Next Country. Her work has appeared in The Believer, AGNI, and The Paris Review.

CHAD POST

I recommend *Dogura magura* Yumeno Kyūsaku. *Dogra Magra* exemplifies modern Japanese avant-garde gothic literature. In the story, the protagonist/narrator wakes up in a hospital with amnesia. He finds out that he was the subject of an experiment by a now-dead psychiatrist, and the doctors are working to bring back his memories. It is not clear whether he was a psychotic killer or the victim of strange psychological experiment, but he is told that he killed his mother and wife and that he inherited his psychotic tendencies from an insane ancestor. I first heard about this book via the Japanese Literary Publishing Project, but more interestingly, I had it pitched to me by an

English professor living in Estonia . . . He claimed that it was the greatest Japanese book ever written. Something like Philip K. Dick meets *Finnegans Wake*. Hell and yes.

Chad Post is the publisher of *Open Letter*.

SAL ROBINSON

I still hope I may get the chance to publish Jean Rolin, a French journalist and writer. His “The Explosion of the Radiator Hose” is a short book about transporting a used car from Paris to the Congo; Rolin is bringing the car to the family of a Congolese friend of his in Paris, so that the family can use it as a taxi. The story begins with the car stuck on the road to Kinshasha, night approaching, no help in sight, and a blown radiator hose. Unfortunately at the same time as we received this book, there was another book on the same topic making the rounds, which has now come out—it’s called *My Mercedes Is Not For Sale*, written by a Dutch author, a comic treatment of the same type of

journey. I think Rolin's book is a little more elegant and serious. It hasn't been published here yet.

Sal Robinson is an editor at Harcourt.

ADAM ROVNER

I recommend Uri Zvi Greenberg's *The Streets of the River: The Book of Dirges and Power*. One of modern Hebrew literature's most distinctive voices, Greenberg published this book-length cycle as an extended poetic meditation on the destruction of European Jewry in the Holocaust. His poetics in this volume range from lament, to prophetic rage, to an expressionistic martyrology. He deploys a complex web of symbols, images and idiosyncratic spiritual associations to create a devastating and highly personal response to catastrophe. The poems that comprise *The Streets of the River* are notoriously difficult to translate, and though individual poems have been translated from

the book over the years, they lack the consistency and weight of context that a single talented hand could give to Greenberg's magisterial vision.

Adam Rovner is the translations editor for Zeek: A Jewish Journal of Thought and Culture.

MATT ROWE

I recommend *The Stories of Machado de Assis*. Machado is generally regarded as Brazil's greatest writer, for both his psychological insight and his post-modern playfulness. While his major novels are readily available, out of his hundreds of stories only thirty-odd are in print in English—and those are scattered among survey anthologies, British imports, and translations from the '70s. The masterful novella "O alienista," a satire on the corruptions of power and the relative nature of sanity, was translated in 1963 as "The Psychiatrist" but is now out of print. Many other gems haven't yet made it into English, including "Miss Dollar," which begins with the narrator challenging the reader to guess the personality of the title character (who turns out

to be a missing dog); the unresolved mystery of “O relógio de ouro” (“The Gold Watch”); and “A carteira” (“The Wallet”), whose finder can’t see the importance of its contents. A pharaoh trades places with a scribe; a needle’s conversation with a spool of thread becomes an allegory of class; a dress-pin recounts her début at a society ball. Machado’s stories range from the fantasy and humor of Poe or Twain to the subtle perceptions of James or Chekhov, and they deserve to be as widely read.

Matt Rowe is a doctoral student in Comparative Literature at Indiana University.

SOPHIE SCHIAVO

I recommend *Là où les tigres sont chez eux* (“Where Tigers Feel at Home”) by Jean-Marie Blas de Roblès, published last Fall by Zulma. An adventure epic that takes the reader from 17th-century Europe to today’s Brazilian favelas, *Les tigres* won several literary awards in France, including the prestigious Prix Médicis. A critic in *Le Figaro Littéraire* compared it to “Umberto Eco revisited by Indiana Jones in

Malcolm Lowry, with a zest of African Queen and Lévi-Strauss in Nambikwara"! Here's a synopsis: Eléazard von Wogau is an obscure author and foreign correspondent living in Alcântara, a ghost city of the wild northern regions of Brazil. He is also an expert on German encyclopedist Athanase Kircher, a sort of Leonardo da Vinci of the Baroque age. One day, a fascinating biography of Kircher, seemingly written by German Jesuit Casper Schott, falls into his hands. Eléazard's journey into that biography intertwines with the intriguing destinies of the book's other characters: Elaine, his ex-wife, on a jungle expedition in a search of precious fossils; Moéma, his cocaine-addict daughter who is studying the origins of primitive tribes; the diabolical governor of Maranao; Loredana, a seductive Italian journalist; and Nelson, a child from the favelas determined to avenge his father's death.

Sophie Schiavo is an agent with the French Publishers Agency in New York.

MARIAN SCHWARTZ

In 2001, Olga Slavnikova published *Bessmertniy* (“The Immortal”) or, as I like to call it, “The Man Who Couldn’t Die,” about a war veteran kept alive by his wife and stepdaughter, who love him but who also need his pension and go to incredible lengths to prolong his life after he suffers a stroke. (To spare him the shock of the Soviet Union’s collapse, for example, they produce fake newsreels of Communist Party congresses that never happened, combining old footage and footage from the current Duma). His stepdaughter is also involved in the first post-Soviet forays into local politics and media politics. A skillful and moving novel that captures the *Zeitgeist* of the immediate post-Soviet years brilliantly, its reputation was tainted by the subsequent appearance of the film *Goodbye Lenin*, in 2003.

Marian Schwartz is a prize-winning translator of Russian fiction, history, biography, criticism, and fine art. Her translations include the New York Times bestseller

The Last Tsar by Edvard Radzinsky, as well as classics by Mikhail Bulgakov, Ivan Goncharov, and Mikhail Lermontov.

E.J. VAN LANEN

A contemporary of Antal Szerb, Béla Hamvas was a Hungarian philosopher, essayist, and novelist who died in 1968. His masterwork, *Karnevál*, was originally written in the early 1950s, but the communist regime blacklisted Hamvas and the novel wasn't published in Hungary until 1985. A three-volume work that spans some 1,500 pages in the original and whose story ranges from the late 1800s to World War II, *Karnevál* is, as the great Hungarian translator Tim Wilkinson says, “a satire on the human condition [that] touches on much of the religions and philosophies of the last two or three millennia.” Filled with dozens of characters and an apparently indescribable plot, the narrator and the main character of *Karnevál* are constantly in dialogue with each other, commenting on the story and the other characters: “They comment on the difficulties of narration, talk about time, reality,

probability, style, common sense and the imagination, women, the body, misunderstandings, the masks that human society is wearing, and much more.” Or so Google, Wikipedia, *Hungarian Literature Online* (a great, great resource), a few emails, and hamvasbela.org tell me. Unfortunately, *Karnevál* is caught in the catch-22 that a lot of these kinds of books—long, complex, containing a whole world, and, God forbid, “philosophical”—are caught in: a) their commercial viability outside of their home countries appears limited; b) translators sense this and can’t afford to champion seemingly risky projects (especially 1,500-page ones); and c) due to a & b there is little information available to foreign publishers or anyone else. So from here, it’s hard to say if *Karnevál* is brilliant, a brilliant mess, completely unreadable, or some mixture of all three, but based on the info available, and the knowing smiles of every Hungarian to whom I mention the novel, I’d love to have the opportunity to read it in English.

E.J. Van Lanen is an editor with Open Letter.

ENRIQUE VILA-MATAS

In the latest work from Rodrigo Fresán, the Argentine writer succeeds in offering us a book that closely resembles what he calls an “orphan book.” These are books that come out of nowhere and that probably have no descendents, books like *Nightwood* by Djuana Barnes or *Oh What a Paradise It Seems* by John Cheever. They are books that feed on themselves, that are self-sufficient like autonomous machines, and that generally possess immense poetic force. In *El fondo del cielo*, (“The Bottom of the Sky”), Fresán writes the book that will come immediately after the era of apocalyptic books—the era that began with the Bible and the Aeneid, and culminated with postmodern books about the end of all possible worlds. It’s the book of the future, the book that begins to write itself when everything has

ended: the story of two young people in love with planets, and of a disturbingly beautiful girl. Between Bioy Casares and Philip K. Dick, but with a voice all its own, it is both powerful and artistic.

Enrique Vila-Matas is one of Spain's pre-eminent novelists and has been awarded the the Rómulo Gallegos Prize and the Prix Médicis étranger.

CHARLES WAUGH

We desperately need a good translation of *The Tale of Kieu*, a Vietnamese classic that's currently only available in English in some pretty terrible forms. Luckily, I believe John Balaban is working on a new version (but I don't know how seriously). I would love to see the collected works of Ho Anh Thai translated, and the same for Ma Van Khang and Bao Ninh. These three are the pillars of post war Vietnamese literature. I'd also like to see a collection of

Phan Trieu Hai's stories translated—he's had one translated for Wayne Karlin's collection *Love After War*, but that's all that I know of.

Charles Waugh is the fiction editor of Isotope: A Journal of Literary Science and Nature Writing, and his fiction, nonfiction, and critical essays have appeared or are forthcoming in a variety of national journals.

JEFFREY YANG

I'd recommend *Kitab al-Hayawan* (“The Book of Animals”) by Al-Jahiz. From the ninth century, it’s a multi-faceted, multi-volume book about animals that begins with a passage in praise of books and, as Paul Lunde describes it, “is by no means conventional zoology, or even a conventional bestiary. It is an enormous collection of lore about animals—including insects—culled from the Koran, the Traditions, pre-Islamic poetry, proverbs, storytellers, sailors, personal observation, and Aristotle's *Generation of Animals*. But this is by no means all. In keeping with his theories of planned disorder, he introduces anecdotes of

famous men, snippets of history, anthropology, etymology,
and jokes.

*An award-winning poet and translator, **Jeffrey Yang** is a
poetry editor with *New Directions*.*