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REVIEW: ANNE-MARIE CAZALIS. *PLANH*. TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH INTO ENGLISH AND SPANISH BY VLASTA MOMAN-KOVÁČOVÁ AND INTO GALICIAN-PORTUGUESE BY EDELMIRO MOMAN. O FIGURANTE EDICIONS, RIBADEO, GALICIA, SPAIN, 2012. ISBN 978-84-15164-72-2. QUADRILINGUAL EDITION; (FRENCH TITLE: *PLANH 10 POÈMES DE ANNE-MARIE CAZALIS*, ODETTE LIEUTIER, 1944).

Anne-Marie Cazalis (Boufarik, French Algeria, 1920 – Paris, France, 1988) remains almost wholly unknown, despite having received the Paul Valéry literary prize for her poetry in 1943, from the great Paul Valéry himself. The few for whom her name rings a bell would rightly situate her as a muse of the vibrant Parisian neighborhood of Saint-Germain-des-Prés in the late 1940s. And indeed, mention of her is found in relation to the legendary Le Tabou jazz club that became a favorite haunt of existentialists, or as a friend of other artists of the period, notably of Juliette Gréco, Boris Vian or Jean-Paul Sartre. But we find little else.

In fact she co-managed *Le Tabou* and, if we are to believe her own words (*Mémoires d'une Anne*, 1976), it seems that Cazalis was the gray matter behind making post-war Saint-Germain-des-Prés world-renowned.

*Planh*, 10 poems by Anne-Marie Cazalis, was published in 1944 in a small edition of 250 handbound copies by Odette Lieutier. Certainly the timing of the publication, the fact that France was still under Nazi occupation, was not propitious for launching a book of any kind.

*Planh* was never republished, nor translated, until 2012 when it reappeared in a quadrilingual version (with translations into English, Galician-Portuguese and Spanish alongside the French original). As we were curious about the motivation to republish the poems with translations, the editor delighted us with the following story.

THE TRANSLATION ROUTE

In 1999, in Perugia the Galician poet Alberte Moman bought an Italian edition of Boris Vian's *Manuel de Saint-Germain-des-Prés*. There he came across an Italian translation of Cazalis' poem *La Liberté*, together with Vian's somewhat derisory comments about Anne-Marie Cazalis. His poet's curiosity was piqued. Who was this Cazalis and why

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had he never heard of her? On further inquiry, no librarian seemed to know her either. No, it was not Kavafis, but Ca-za-lis. Since she had received the Paul Valéry award, it should not be hard to find her books on the Internet, or so he thought. However, nothing showed up. No poetry, at least. Thus thwarted, he in any case translated that single poem from Italian into Galician language (Galego).

Years passed and, with the posting of bookshop catalogues on the Internet, a few of Cazalis' novels turned up, but still no poetry to satisfy Moman's curiosity. In fact, he would have to wait until 2012, when Alberte's brother happened upon '*Planb, 10 Poèmes de Anne-Marie de Cazalis avec un portrait de l'auteur par Valentine Hugo*' (Odette Lieuter, Paris, 1944), in a collectors' bookshop in Paris. Being a collectors' piece, it had financial implications, but he felt compelled to purchase it. Its worn look and what seemed to be homemade, recycled paper still bore witness to the scarcity of materials in occupied France. In its weathered paper case and elegant typography, this first and only edition exuded good taste and love for a work well done.

The jewel passed quickly from one Moman to the other, and the whole family soon fell in love with those long-forgotten, timeless poems. Alberte renewed his resolve to rescue them from oblivion and he set up an *ad hoc* publishing house, O Figurante Edicións. At the end of 2012, a quadrilingual edition (in French, Galician Portuguese, Spanish and English) of *Planb* appeared in an elegant typography similar to the original, and the poetry of Anne-Marie Cazalis breathed and lived once again through the valiant efforts of a small publishing house in Galicia, Spain.

### THE POEMS

There is a strong sense of timelessness in a world tinged with reality, often bordering on the surreal. There is a universality to the themes; this is a world set adrift from any definable period, a world in which people struggle to escape destruction, rubble and imprisonment (*Freedom always beyond*):

*En ce temps la liberté était au delà du mur  
Ils brisèrent le mur et franchirent les ruines.*

*At that time freedom was beyond the wall  
They smashed the wall and clambered over the rubble.*

The tone can move from being brutal, lugubrious and unworldly:

*La liberté était toujours  
En deçà de tout espoir  
Mais la lumière du puits de leur yeux  
Éclaire maintenant la prison.*

*Freedom would always be  
Beyond all hope  
But now the gleam in the sockets of their eyes  
Sheds light on the prison.*

to being mocking and jocose (*Sense of hic haec hoc*):

*Et pendant que je marchais  
Une partie de moi s'en alla dans la rue  
Pensa au printemps, chanta deux chansons  
Courut dans des forêts sans ronces  
Rentra en moi doucement et se mit à rire  
Et je m'aperçus que je suivais un cercueil en riant.*

*And as I was walking  
A part of me took off down the street  
Thought of spring, sang two songs  
Ran through woods without brambles  
Re-entered me softly and burst out laughing  
And I caught myself following a coffin, laughing.*

The imagery is vivid if stark, the associations are ambiguous and understated (*poem IV*, no title):

*En ces jours les oiseaux se tairont sur la terre  
Un lasso de peur étranglera les hommes  
Les femmes ne seront que statues de parc abandonnées.*

*In those days the birds fall silent on earth  
A lasso of fear strangles men  
Women are but statues abandoned in the park.*

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It is the very last poem that gives the book its title. *Planh* (or *plaing*) originally referred to a funeral lament in Occitan lyric poetry, composed and performed by troubadours, hence the melodic rhythm:

*Feuilles ni fleurs, vent ni pluie  
Ne me feront chanter ni n'êteindront ma peine*

*Leaves nor flowers, wind nor rain  
Will neither make me sing nor ease my pain*

Moving and evocative of the uncertainty and prevailing fear of the times, the poems present a challenge to translate into one language, not to mind into three languages.

### THE TRANSLATIONS

The quadrilingual version is a pleasure to read given the reader-friendly layout of two poems per page, enabling the reader to glance across the double page to find the four versions of each poem. A close look at the translations reveals mainly a literal translation into Galego-Portuguese and Spanish, with a freer translation into English given the different syntax. Indeed, challenges for the translator abound.

In *poem II*, there are the lines:

*Et personne ne voit, et personne ne sait  
Se trouvent à bout de doigts  
A travers les heures*

*which have become:*

*E ninguém vê, e ninguém sabe  
Encontram-se na pontinha dos dedos  
Através das horas*

*Y nadie ve, y nadie sabe  
Se encuentran en las puntas de los dedos  
A través de las horas*

*And no one sees, and no one knows  
Found at the end of the fingertips  
Across the hours*

A lack of definition pervades the poems and raises the challenge for the translator which in most cases has been dealt with well and by sticking closely to the original metaphor, or choice of words.

An example of metaphorical challenge occurs in the fourth poem, where the original '*Les manèges de remords tardifs ne tourneront plus*,' is translated literally, and successfully, across all three languages: '*Os manejos de remorsos serôdios não girando mais*,' '*Los tiouivos de remordimientos tardíos no girarán más*,' and in English '*The merry-go-rounds of belated remorse turn no more*.'

Another lovely image arises in the fifth poem, *Découverte*, when in the last two lines the sea horses '*qui nagent leurs galops oubliés*,' '*Qui nadam os seus galopes esquecidos*,' '*Que nadan sus galopes olvidados*.' in English becomes '*Swimming their forgotten gallops*.'

In the third poem (cited above), *Sense of hic haec hoc*, we find ourselves joyfully romping down the street, a few lines later skipping behind a coffin. The real and surreal are interwoven, as are scenes of death and life.

Increasing in complexity as the collection progresses, in *poem VI* in the original French we have the lines:

*Et dans les eaux de mes raisons  
Dormaient réfléchies d'autres raisons mystérieuses  
Et la nuit me ferma les doigts.*

*E nas águas das minhas razões  
Dormiam refletidas outras razões misteriosas  
E a noite fechou-me os dedos.*

*Y en las aguas de mis razones  
Dormían reflejadas otras razones misteriosas  
Y la noche me cerró los dedos.*

*And in the waters of my reasons slumbered  
Reflected other mysterious reasons  
And the night closed her fingers in on me.*

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The translator has chosen to play safe. Perhaps the English version is a little cumbersome, as a result, but the original French is very compact in style and the translator is faced with the dilemma of how much should be changed?

On occasions sticking closely does not always work, as in the first poem of the collection, entitled *Freedom always beyond*. That poem raises an interesting question about how to express space and, in particular, how to keep the essential meaning of “en deçà de tout espoir”. The French describes something that is “below” all hope, whereas in English paradoxically, the solution found means literally the contrary - “beyond”:

*Freedom would always be  
Beyond all hope  
But now the gleam in the sockets of their eyes  
Sheds light on the prison*

*La liberté était toujours  
en deçà de tout espoir  
Mais la lumière du puits de leurs yeux  
Eclaire maintenant la prison*

The same issue arose with the Spanish translation but not with the Galician-Portuguese one, as there exists in Portuguese the pair of antonyms “aquém – além”, which in this context can be considered to be essentially equivalent to the French “en deçà – au-delà”).

A common feature of the poems is the animation of certain actions. For example, in the poem entitled Four, the first verse is as follows:

*Le feu brûle  
L'eau noie  
Le fer coupe  
Les forêts perdent.*

*O lume queima  
A água afoga  
O ferro corta  
As florestas perdem.*

*El fuego quema  
El agua ahoga*

*El hierro corta  
Los bosques pierden.*

*Fire burns  
Water drowns  
Iron cuts  
Woods lose.*

In the eighth poem, *Game*, in French:

*L'enfant nu debout sur la rive  
Sa pierre à la main hésite à briser l'eau.*

*A criança nua de pé na ribeira  
Pedra en mão hesita em crebar a água.*

*El niño desnudo de pie sobre la orilla  
Piedra en mano vacila en romper el agua.*

*The naked child standing on the bank  
A stone in his hand hesitates about rippling the water.*

Do we get the impression that the child in the original will ripple the water, but is just hesitating, whereas the child in the English version is hesitating about the whole venture? How much hesitation is going on there? That is a question best left for our multilingual buffs.

The world of Cazalis is one without boundaries, one of universals: beauty, sadness, pain, imprisonment, joy. In translation such universals usually transfer with ease in most cases. However in *Song*, reference is made to the beautiful Ugénie's father who had a *grocery*, in French '*un magasin d'épices*', in Galego-Portuguese '*uma especiaria*' and in Spanish '*un ultramarinos*'. And one can but wonder do the readers of the different language versions imagine the same kind of shop, or their own local shop, and in what time period? It is not easy to situate the poem temporally. With her plaits and crinolines and his *three-masted ship* we seem to be transported to a period way back. Too long ago for a '*grocery*'? Perhaps, but neither can we say it does not work.

In the final poem, the one sharing the name of the collection itself, *Planb*, we have a kind of chant of indifference with a hypnotic rhythm resonating across all three translated versions:

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*Feuilles ni fleurs, vent ni pluie  
Ne me feront chanter ni n'êteindront ma peine.*

*Folhas nem flores, vento nem chuva  
Não me farão cantar nem extinguirão a minha pena.*

*Hojas ni flores, viento ni lluvia  
No me harán cantar ni extinguirán mi pena.*

*Leaves nor flowers, wind nor rain  
Will neither make me sing nor ease my pain.*

The fact that the English version has the added bonus of a rhyming stanza makes it a fortuitous ending to a rather unique collection of poems with translations.

This quadrilingual collection of poems is quite a beautiful re-edition of poetry we should never have lost. Not only does it provide first-time access to the work for speakers of three additional languages, but for translation scholars it is an opportunity to compare translation solutions.

All in all, a commendable effort all round, to translate this collection of poems and extend the pleasure to readers of Galego-Portuguese, Spanish or English. A noble activity on the part of publisher and translator alike, and a much overdue revival of the singular poetry of the unsung Anne-Marie Cazalis.