



**ALCHEMY**  
**SUMMER 2015**

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# Letter from the editor

Throughout my tenure as editor of *Alchemy*, I have been repeatedly surprised and charmed by translation's unique ability to make the strange familiar and the familiar strange.

Translation bring us not only new language, but also new ways to think and to see. It offers us moods and modes of thinking not found in our native tongue. At its best, translation exposes the gaps where our own language limits us. For a moment, it lets us dream with a different mind.

This issue features authors from Peru and from Germany, from all across Spain, from the fjords of Iceland and from ancient Rome. There are surrealists and "poets of experience," pop-culture enthusiasts and unadorned lyricists—in short, there are as many diverse perspectives as there are authors and translators featured here.

*Alchemy* strives to support a new generation of translators who are expanding our sense of the world. With their fresh voices and contemporary viewpoints, these student translators help us experience familiar writers in new ways and introduce us to unfamiliar authors from around the world.

We are delighted to feature each and every one of them here.

Thank you for reading!

**Sarah Ciston, editor**

# Like the First Cigarette

## Luis García Montero

Like the first cigarette, the first hugs. You had  
A little star made of paper  
Bright on top of the cheekbone  
And you occupied the marginal scene  
Where the parties gather the solitude, the music  
Or the gentle desire of a jointly return, almost always later.  
And not the darkness, but these hours  
That make the streets into stage props  
For the private love,  
They crossed together  
Our possible fleeting shadows,  
With our elevated chests and smoking.  
Silhouettes with a voice,  
Shadows in which began taking shape  
This story that today we are truly,  
Once the heart's piece was bet.  
Although the furniture  
Got used to us.  
In front of that window – which wouldn't shut well –  
In a room similar to ours,  
With books and similar bodies,  
We were loving each other  
Under the first yawn of the city, its announcement,  
Its arrogant protest. I had  
A little star made of paper  
Shining above the lip.

**Translated from the Spanish by Tainā Chiapparro**

Tainā Chiapparro is a graduate student at the University of Missouri Kansas City, with degrees from UMKC and the University of São Paulo.

Luis García Montero (b. 1958) is a Spanish poet and professor at the University of Granada. His poetry, which has been awarded Spain's National Poetry Prize and the National Poetry Critics Prize, takes a down-to-earth approach to what he calls the "poetry of experience," in which the collective connects to the individual and colloquial language expresses a new sentimentality.

# The Hat

## Jón Thoroddsen

I walked her home and to the back-door where she lived. There was nothing else or anything more remarkable about it.

Goodbye, and thank you for walking me home, she said.

Bye, I said.

Your Hat!

It's better off that way, I said, and carried on taking leave of the girl.

### **Translated from the Icelandic by Chris Crocker**

Chris Crocker is a PhD student of medieval Icelandic literature at the University of Iceland. He was born in Newfoundland, Canada.

Jón Thoroddsen was born in Ísafjörður, Iceland, in 1898. The son of the poet Theódóra Thoroddsen and Skúli Thoroddsen, an important figure in the independence movement, Thoroddsen died in Copenhagen at age 26 on New Year's Eve, 1924, after having been struck by a street-car on Christmas day. During his lifetime he published a book of poetry, *Flugur* (Flies) in 1922, as well as several other plays, poems and short stories.

# The Woman

## Jón Thoroddsen

She was an introduction to men's love stories.

She was an added chapter.

She was the division between chapters.

And now she is my love story. But they've forgotten to print the words:  
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# Vision of Moth-Eaten Pianos Falling into Ruins

César Moro

A man in a frock coat representing incest  
Receiving congratulations from incest's hot wind  
An exhausted rose supports a bird's corpse  
Lead bird where do you keep your basket of songs  
And the rations for your brood of clock-like snakes  
When you're done being dead you'll be a drunken compass  
A halter on the bed waiting for a dying gentleman from the Pacific  
islands sailing a divine, cretinous musical turtle  
You will be a mausoleum to the plague's victims or an ephemeral  
equilibrium between two trains that collide  
While the plaza fills with smoke and rubbish and rains down cotton,  
rice, water, onions, and traces from highest archaeology  
A gilded skillet with my mother's portrait  
A park bench with three coal statues  
Eight copies of paper manuscripts in German  
A few days of the week made of cardboard with blue noses  
Beard hairs from various presidents of the Peruvian Republic driving  
themselves like stone arrows into the pavement and producing a  
violent patriotism in people with bladder disease  
You will be a tiny volcano prettier than three thirsty dogs curtsying and giv-  
ing advice to each other on how to grow wheat in mothballed pianos

**Translated from the Spanish by Esteban Quispe**

Esteban Quispe is currently a student at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, studying Modern Languages and specializing in Spanish and French.

César Moro (born Alfredo Quispéz Asín in 1903) was a Peruvian Surrealist poet who wrote in Spanish and French. He spent many years in Paris and in Mexico in connection with artists and poets such as André Breton, Leonora Carrington, Wolfgang Paalen, Benjamin Péret, Remedios Varo, Xavier Villaurrutia, etc. While in Mexico he wrote his best known collection of poetry, *La tortuga ecuestre*. He died in 1956.

# Odor and Gaze

## César Moro

The fine, secluded odor of your armpits

Heap-on-heap of straw crowns and fresh hay cut with fingers and asphodels and fresh skin and far off gallops like pearls

Your hair's scent under the blue water with black fish and sea stars and sky stars under the infinite snow of your gaze

Your gaze of sea cucumber of whale of rain of diaries of suicides with wet eyes of your white coral branch gaze

Daytime sponge while the sea spits out sick whales and every staircase repulses its wayfarer like the plague-infected beast that inhabits the wanderer's dreams

And sparkling blows to the temples and the wave that erases the sparks to leave on the tapestry the eternal question of your dead object's gaze your putrid, flowery gaze

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# In the Woods of Pennsylvania

Gloria Fuertes

When a giant tree commits suicide,  
Tired of already being dry and not producing  
Birds, without waiting for man to cut it down,  
Not waiting for the wind,  
With no leaves, it launches its last tune

Symphonic explosion where once were nests  
All its wooden holes creak,  
Two drops of sap still drop  
When its stem bursts the air,  
Its tons roll down the fields,  
The wolves cry and the deer tremble,  
All squirrels go to meet it,  
Foreseeing that is some beauty what dies.

**Translated from the Spanish by Sofia Sharkey**

Dianny Sofia Sharkey was born in Cali, Colombia in 1990 in a working class family. She was raised moving back and forth between Bogota and Bucaramanga. At age 19 she moved to the United States. She graduated with honors from the University of Missouri Kansas City in May 2015.

Born in Madrid in a working class family, Gloria Fuertes (1917-1998) considered herself a self-taught poet. She participated in the mid-century poetic generations ("Generación de los 50", Postism) and taught for a short period in the United States in the early 1960s. Later she became a popular writer of children literature in Spain.

# Death in Beverly Hills

## Pere Gimferrer

In telephone booths  
There are mysterious inscriptions drawn with lipstick

They are the last words of sweet blond girls  
That, with bloody cleavage, take refuge there to die.

Final night under the pale neon, final day under sky of hallucinations,  
Streets newly watered with magnolias, yellow lights of  
The patrol cars at dawn.

I will wait for you till half past one, when you leave the cinema – and at  
That hour, the one who's body was like a branch of orchids  
Is dead in the Morgue.

Wounded in the nightly shooting, kept in the corners  
By the search lights, slapped in the night-clubs,  
My true and sweet love cries in my arms

A final light, the most slender and clear,  
It seems to be sliding away from the closed night-clubs:  
This light that stops those passing by  
And speaks gently about their childhood.

Music from another time, song to the beat of those old  
Notes from the night we met Ava Gardner,  
A girl wrapped in a clear raincoat that we kissed  
One time in an elevator, in the dark between two floors, and  
She had such blue eyes, and she always spoke in a very low  
Voice – Her name was Nelly.

Close your eyes and listen to the song of the sirens in the night  
Made silver with bright signs.

The night gets warm blue avenues.  
Shadows embracing shadows in swimming pools and bars.

In the dark sky the stars fought  
When she died of love,  
And it was as if she smelled a perfume very slowly.

**Translated from the Spanish by Jesse Wells**

Jesse Wells is currently a student at the University of Missouri Kansas City.

Pere Gimferrer is a Spanish poet born in 1945. Gimferrer's first poetry books in early 1960s (*Message from the Tetrarch*, *The Sea is Burning*, *Death in Beverly Hills*) made waves with their fantasy, references to popular culture, film, adventures and exoticism, in a time when Spanish poetry was considered also a political arm against Franco's dictatorship (1939-1975). Gimferrer was part of a new generation of poets, influenced by mass media and international authors like Ezra Pound or Saint-John Perse. In the 1970s, he wrote his poetry mainly in Catalan and garnered many awards.

# Androculous and the Lion

## Aulus Gellius

**I**N THE CIRCUS MAXIMUS a very magnificent hunting spectacle was given to the people. There were many raging beasts, but above all the others, a lion attracted the attention of everyone with its enormous body and its loud and frightful roar. The slave of a man of consular rank had been led in among many others who had been sacrificed to the battle of the beasts; that slave's name was Androclus. When that lion saw this man in the distance, suddenly it stood still as if admiring Androclus, and then it approached the man gradually and calmly as if he were a friend. Then the lion moved its tail mildly and charmingly, in the manner of flattering dogs, and fastened itself to the body of the man, who was almost already lifeless with fear, and the lion gently caressed his legs and hands with its tongue. Androclus, in the midst of the blandishments of such a ferocious beast, recovered his lost breath, and little by little brought his eyes toward gazing upon the lion. Then, as if with mutual recognition having been made, you might have seen the man and lion rejoicing with each other.

This wonderful event stirred up very great shouts among the people. Androclus was summoned by the emperor, and was asked the reason why that very ferocious lion spared only him. Then Androclus told an amazing and wonderous story. He said "When my master governed an African province with the authority of a proconsul, I was forced to flee on account of his unjust and daily beatings, I went to the flat, sandy wildernesses so that there would be safer places for me to hide from my master, who was the governor of that land; and if I had been lacking food, my plan was to seek death in some way. Then with the midday sun burning fierce, having found a remote cave full of hiding places, I betook myself into that cave and hid myself there. And not much after, this lion came to the same cave with one paw bloody, weakened and uttering groans and murmurs on account of the pain and torture of its wound. And in that cave, indeed, I was terrified and dismayed at the first sight of the approaching lion, but the lion having entered, after he saw me hiding from far away, the beast approached gentle and kind, and it seemed to extend and show to me its disabled paw, as if for the sake of seeking help. Then I tore out the huge stem sticking into the sole of its paw, and I pressed out the pus from the innermost wound, and

now without great fear, I thoroughly dried and cleaned the bloody gore. Then, having been relieved by my help, with its paw placed in my hands, the lion reclined and fell asleep.

From that day, for three whole years the lion and I lived in the same cave and ate the same food. The lion brought to the cave the more fatty limbs of the beasts which he had caught for me, which I ate by roasting in the midday sun, not having the capacity to build a fire. But when I became bored by that wild life, when the lion had departed for its hunt, I left the cave and travelled for about three days, but I was seen and caught by soldiers and was brought back from Africa to my master in Rome. He immediately had me be convicted of a capital charge and handed over to the wild beasts. But I understand that this lion was also captured after I had been separated from it, and now is returning the favor to me for my help and medical treatment.

Androclus said these things; and when all those things written and circulated on a tablet were announced to the people, with all the people begging, Androclus was dismissed and set free from the punishment, and the lion was given to him by the votes of the people. Afterwards, Androclus and the lion, tied with a thin leash, went around to the taverns and throughout the entire city; Androclus was given money, the lion was sprinkled with flowers, and all who met them everywhere shouted "This lion is a friend to that man, and this man is the doctor of that lion."

### **Translated from the Latin by Amber Knight**

Amber Knight is currently a student at the University of California San Diego, where she is a Classical Studies and History double major. Her main interests include Roman religious traditions, classical rhetoric, and the history of Italy. While Latin is her focus, she also enjoys translating Attic and Homeric Greek. She is an intern for Alchemy and will be studying abroad in Rome this fall.

Aulus Gellius (120-180 AD) was a Latin author best known for his book *Noctes Atticae* (*Attic Nights*), in which this story appears.

# About Alchemy

*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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