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## Introduction

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## INTRODUCTION

The editors of *CutBank* are pleased to present this special issue of translations. During the difficult process of wading through submissions, we became aware of the demand for publication of poetry and fiction from other languages. As the world community continues to shrink it becomes necessary for all of us to familiarize ourselves with world literatures. However, we do not believe that the narrowing gap between cultures requires the adoption of a common language exclusively. On the contrary, English-speaking readers are now more than ever obliged to meet and understand the nature of literature around the world. For this reason we have tried to select those poems that retain as much as possible the tone and imagery of the original. We have also tried to select those poems that retain as much as possible the tone and imagery of the original. We have also tried to select poems that we feel are carefully conceived as works in English. This is not to deny any of the idioms, idiosyncracies or subtleties of the original that might be lost in translation. Rather, it is to acknowledge the significant elements of the poem that are translatable. Otherwise, how do we explain the immeasurable influence of foreign prose and poetry on American writers?

This issue contains work from eighteen countries. The oldest poetry represented is from the seventeenth century; the most contemporary, written in the past few years. There is no one thematic stance, no single stylistic trait. The poems themselves range from the internal mysteries of Eugenio Montale to the political satire of Guiseppe Belli to the conceptual call-to-meaning of Octavio Paz to the pure imagery of Bashō.

We have awarded the \$50 poetry prize to Daniel Simko for his translations of the two Slovak poets, Milan Rúfus and Štefan Strážay. We feel the clarity of image and precision of language evoke the best of what is never finally translatable: the meaning that resonates between the words and the emotional power that remains after the poem is read.

The \$50 fiction prize was given to Cathy Tebbetts for her translation of three chapters from Ana Maria Matute's *Celebration Toward the Northwest*. The elements of the novel evident in these

chapters — tradition, religion, family, community, childhood, maturity, poverty, love and repulsion — express a sensitivity to the complexity of joy and pathos. We believe any good work of art illuminates the things that comprise and surround human experience.

We feel all the work in this issue satisfies this criterion, yet offers a variety of forms and sensibilities. In making our choices, personal taste also swayed us, as is inevitable. With these qualifications in mind, *CutBank* has officially jumped on the translation bandwagon in an attempt to offer our readers poetry and fiction that in every sense survives.

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*Don Schofield*