

agli anglofoni dislocati nel mondo, né ai parlanti di seconda lingua e di lingua straniera. Nel concerto delle traduzioni belliane, questa unione di caratteristiche rendono l'opera di Stocks quantomai adatta a far viaggiare in ambito anglosassone la poesia del Belli nella sua giusta misura e nella sua tempra.

Cosma Siani

**Barbara Carle, *Tangible Remains/Toccare quello che resta*. Formia: Ghenomena Edizioni, 2009. 123 pages.**

For each of us, our native language is a birthright that not only serves to express personality but helps to form it as well. For every writer, of course, language is also the building material of his or her craft. Given these intimate relationships, it is always remarkable and somewhat surprising when anyone chooses to write in an acquired language. Equally remarkable but less surprising, in light of the affinity and aptitude for language that such a choice requires, those who create superior works of art in a language not their own—such as Conrad, Beckett, and Nabokov—are often notable and even extravagant stylists. There are also instances of distinguished poets who have experimented with a second language; examples that come immediately to mind include the four French poems in Eliot's second booklet, Pound's two Italian cantos, Pessoa's thirty-five English sonnets (a peculiar pastiche that is Shakespearean not only in form but in diction and spirit as well), and the more than four hundred poems that Rilke wrote in French. A somewhat related phenomenon is that of poets who have translated their own work. Perhaps the best known examples are Czeslaw Milosz and Joseph Brodsky, who put themselves into English with mixed results, especially in the case of Brodsky. The results were decidedly unmixed, however, in Diana Festa's Italian translations of three of her poems in the previous issue of this journal, which are models of poetic re-creation. With her new book, Barbara Carle joins this exclusive company.

Barbara Carle's name will be familiar to readers of the *Journal of Italian Translation*, for her versions of poems by Rodolfo Di Biasio, Alfredo de Palchi, and Fabio Scotto. In a little over ten years, she has published five books, each of which contains a full text in both English and Italian. The first of these was *Patmos* (Gradiva, 1998), a translation of a slender sequence of poetic fragments by Di Biasio.

This work was incorporated into *Altre contingenze/Other Contingencies*, an ample selection of poems from the entire range of Di Biasio's poetry, published jointly by Gradiva and Caramanica Editore in 2002. Four years later, Carle published two volumes of her own work, one with each of these presses: *Don't Waste My Beauty/Non guastare la mia bellezza* (Caramanica), a volume of poems, with an accompanying translation by Italian poet Antonella Anedda and Carle herself; and *New Life* (Gradiva), with an Italian translation by Marella Feltrin-Morris. Described on its title page as "a fictitious autobiographical story," *New Life* is a mixture of verse and (mostly) prose in which the narrator describes the progress of a passionate though ultimately unconsummated attachment to one of her graduate students. In an admiring review in the Fall 2006 issue of *JIT*, Gregory Pell explores the Dantean connection suggested by the title; thematically, and to a lesser extent stylistically, the work is also suggestive of the experimental fiction-reminiscence written by James Joyce in 1914 and published by Richard Ellmann in 1968 as *Giacomo Joyce*. Barbara Carle's latest volume is *Tangible Remains/Toccare quello che resta*, a volume of poems in which, for the first time, she is the sole creator of the texts on both the left- and right-hand pages.

Not merely a gathering of disparate poems, it is a collection with a unified approach and an organizing principle (*Don't Waste My Beauty* was also a thematically coherent work, exploring themes of passion and desire; rather than simply serving up new helpings of the same fare each time around, each of Carle's three books has its own thematic, structural, and stylistic integrity). As the author explains in a note to the reader, *Tangible Remains* consists of "fifty numbered poems inspired by objects. The titles of each may be found in the table of contents. They have been deliberately omitted in order to avoid reducing the poem to its title, in order to refrain from conditioning the reader. Each poem is inspired by an object but in no manner attempts to realistically describe it nor does it wish to remain grounded necessarily in the originary premise of expression. Many compositions are inspired by more than one thing." Since the table of contents appears, in the European style, at the back of the book, readers who proceed unswervingly from beginning to end may have the additional pleasure of treating the texts as, in May Swenson's phrase, "poems to solve" and attempting to deduce the object that inspires each one. Those who peek even once will be aided by the realization that the



poems are arranged in alphabetical order, and several of them, particularly toward the front of the book, give the game away by naming the object in question. (There are a couple of poems near the end that seem somewhat outside the stated intent; they give the impression, justly or not, of having been written earlier and shoehorned into the plan of the book; on the other hand, their inclusion does provide a refreshing enlargement of subject matter and approach.)

As the author's note suggests, the poems are for the most part not mere descriptions of the objects in question, but imaginative improvisations on their appearances and functions. A few seem merely perfunctory, as if written to fill out the scheme (one can almost envision the poet looking around her study to decide which object to write about next), but many of them reward the reader with their wit and unexpected turns of both thought and phrase. And the phrasing is indeed one of the chief pleasures of *Tangible Remains*: the style is generally crisp and tight, with a fair sprinkling of assonance and (often internal) rhyme. Stylistically, this volume represents a clear advance over *Don't Waste My Beauty*, which, for all of its power and frequent linguistic leaps, seemed occasionally overdone; here, Carle writes with much more artistic detachment and control.

Following is a representative example, one whose solution presents, I would say, a medium level of difficulty:

Plane of expectancy.  
Cleanly cut  
clearly indispensable.

Rustles, tears, crumples, folds  
but holds more than any window.  
Good for everything  
especially the best.

Likes to be scratched, rubbed, pressed.  
Assumes all shapes  
yet retains a blankness  
that eclipses the limits  
of possibility.

And its Italian translation:

Piano di attesa  
 il suo taglio netto  
 è chiaramente indispensabile.  
 Fruscia, si strappa, si spiegazza, si accartoccia  
 ma contiene più di qualsiasi finestra.  
 Serve a tutto  
 soprattutto il migliore.

Ama essere graffiata, sfregiata, compressa.  
 Assume ogni forma  
 eppure conserva un vuoto  
 che eclissa i limiti  
 delle possibilità.

I feel confident in claiming that the English poems are the originals, not only because of their primacy of place on the left-hand pages, but because they have for the most part a compactness of phrasing and a play of sounds that are not fully matched by the Italian renderings. There is music in the Italian versions, but there is also a greater discursiveness; both of these are to some degree necessary functions of the language. There are many things to savor on the right-hand pages, but there are instances when the Italian text seems essentially serviceable, concerned almost exclusively with fidelity to the meaning of the original, and therefore self-limiting in its artistic freedom and expressiveness—which is, of course, the principal reason why poetic translations often seem to be inadequate representations of their originals. Nonetheless, the book also has many instances of greater poetic parity between the languages, greater equivalency of beauty and delight, as in the following poem, which is something of a thematic complement to the one quoted above:

Smudged thumb  
 rubs characters  
 off white stage.  
 Doesn't expunge  
 but does upstage  
 their figures  
 till they fade.  
 Doesn't age  
 in pliant strain

Pollice imbrattato  
 sfrega via i personaggi  
 dal bianco palcoscenico  
 Non espunge  
 però eclissa  
 le loro figure  
 e le fa sbiadire.  
 I suoi pieghevoli sforzi  
 non l'invecchiano

but does assuage	anzi alleviano
the pain	il dolore
of the page.	della pagina.

(For those who hate guessing, the titles of the poems are "Paper" and "Eraser," respectively.)

As befits a book of objects, *Tangible Remains* is itself a pleasing object, handsomely printed and designed. Though published in Italy, it is easily available via the Internet. Unusual in inspiration and satisfying in execution, it should be read slowly and not all at once, just as you would not tear through a museum giving only the merest glance to each piece on display. And while these pages are delighting both your mind and your ear, you should also keep an eye out for what this always interesting writer will do next.

Michael Palma

**Robert Pinsky, *Un'America*, traduzione di Simone Lenzi e Simone Marchesi. Firenze: Editrice Le Lettere, 2009, 128 pages.**

The translators of "Un'America" set out on a very ambitious and arduous odyssey, namely the Italianate rendition of "Explanation of America," the 1979 collection of the poems of poet laureate Robert Pinsky, a virtual summa of the vicissitudes of thirty years of American history rendered in poetry much in the tradition of Robert Lowell. The poems are destined for the ears of the poet's daughter, to serve as a history of an empire, in all its classical undertones and analogies to the Rome of Augustus and of Horace. Lenzi and Marchesi's translation reaches the ears of Italian readers some thirty years after the publication of the original Pinsky text.

Pinsky's poetry makes constant demands on the translators' ingenuity and knowledge as they try to recast it in Italian. They show much resourcefulness in performing their task and they are able to adapt their text to the requirement of the genius of the language as when Pinsky wrote,

"All politics are local politics,  
Said Mayor Daley (in pentameter):  
And this then is the locus where we vote,  
(prisonyard fulcrum of knowledge, fear and work—