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Plain in flames

Skip to main content EspañolCatalàEnglish Português Juan Rulfo is one of the most important writers of Mexico in the 20th century, although he only wrote two books, the novel Pedro Páramo (1955) and the collection of stories El llano en llamas (1953). Translated into English in 1967 as The Burning Plain, these incredibly realistic stories create a psychologically acute portrait of poverty and dignity in the countryside at a time when Mexico was undergoing rapid industrialization following the upheavals of the revolution. According to Ilan Stavans, the “depth of stories seems almost inexhaustible: with some traits, Rulfo creates a complex human landscape defined by desolation. These stories are moral lessons. They are also surprising examples of artistic distillation.” To introduce a new generation of readers to Rulfo’s unsurpassed literary talents, this new translation proposes the collection as a classic of world literature. Working from the final Spanish edition of El llano en llamas established by Fundación Juan Rulfo, Ilan Stavans and co-translator Harold Augenbraum present fresh translations of the fifteen original stories, as well as two other stories that did not appear in English before – “The Legacy of Matilde Arcángel” and “The Day of the Collapse”. Translators have preserved the “heavyness of the author”, in the appreciation of the distinctive voices of his characters. Such careful elegiac rendering of the stories fits perfectly with Rulfo’s Mexico, in which people on the edge of despair still maintain a sense of self, of integrity that will not be taken away. We translate perfection: Ilan Stavans’ Translation of Juan Rulfo, Michael Codano Juan Rulfo, Ilan Stavans with Harold Augenbraum. The burning plain = El llano en llamas. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2012. ISBN 9780292725836 I should have avoided Ilan Stavans’ Introduction to his translationEl Llano by Juan Rulfo RulfoLlamas. But I didn’t, and the first sentence launched me for a cycle: Perfection in literature, especially in the genre of short history, is an elusive research. According to Stavans, Rulfo achieves perfection - a perfect story manages to find a symmetry between form and content, making the reader feel that the words contained there are not only a mix but the right mix - in three of the seventeen titles included in The Plain in Flames, “Luvina”, “It’s because we are so poor”, and in particular “You Don’t Hear Dogs Barking”. Perfection. It’s an ideal Criticism. The critic approaches a work of literature with a sense of perfection in mind. Criticism expresses the ways in which the piece approaches, reaches, or falls short of perfection in the mind of the critic. For a translator, however, saying a story is “perfect” sets enormous expectations. Stavans elects to allow stories to demonstrate his point on them as stories, limiting the introductory observations of his translator/critical to the historical and biographical context. Rulfo tells a good story, developing huge circumstances, creating empty landscapes, talking to people with a touch of surprise. Rulfo’s characters are men, torn, defeated mestizos, some murderers. They have names, but they could be easily Lucky or Estragon. Rulfo writes with the same intensity and vision of a Samuel Beckett. Rulfo’s characters are acutely illustrated against the essential landscapes: the father who brings his son to the top of his frightful steps, asks his son what he sees from up there. Nothing, the son answers and moves on. Anacleto Morones closes the collection with a sweet satire in search of religious opportunism and women in the cornea church. The story is a long line that Rulfo extends to the final phrase, an irony of PG-rated that, in some contexts, will raise questions about sexism and aging. History is purebecause of the pictorial tradition. stans writes that he and hisHarold Augenbraum, translated with deep awareness of the problems arising from the dialectic syntax of Rulfo and the cultural content. “ exquisite locations” Stavans calls them, taking three paths: choosing to leave some not translated; replace the US equivalents; provide the appropriate translation. The opening lines of Remember illustrates some of these choices; Dimas’ niece, the one who directed pastorias, the Christmas games, and who died reciting the “reclamation of incursed angel” during the time of influence.... Remember that we called him “El Abuelo”, grandfather, because the other son, Fidencio Gómez, had two very playful daughters: a dark and very short, which had been given the average nickname of “The Arremangada,” Stuck Up, and the other one who was towering and had blue eyes and that people said was not his... 87 influence, it leaves me perplexed. Is it the pure country orator, speaking his particular regional dialect that is overwhelmed in teaspoons by “flu”? Sometimes there is no better word, like “poultice” injected in the middle of conversational speech in another story. The apposition translation interrupts the narrative flow in the monologue, recalling the attention on itself, in the statement, thus diverting the involvement of a reader in the continuous speech and adding an element of conversation absent in the original history that reminds us of reading a translation. Sometimes the expectation has an occasional bump on the street, but overall—Stavans’ Introduction included—this is a very fun collection. Popular narrative readers will find strong ties between elements in The Road and scenes in numerous stories in The Plain in Flames. Rulfo’s writing in English is curated, echoes B. Traven’s English in Treasure of the Sierra Madre. In the places, the language of Stavans enters the Rulfo page. But in many, many instances, translation reaches a height of sublimity thatcaptures whatdestined for its idiom: The sound of the river that passes its rising water over the holes Camichin reached them; the voice of the air that gently moves the almond leaves and the screams of the children playing in the small space illuminated by the light coming out of the store. You’ll never see a blue sky in Luvina. The whole horizon is colourless; always cloudy with a Californian spot that never disappears. The whole ridge bald, without a single tree, without one green thing for your eyes to rest; all wrapped in lime ash. 68 “Caliginous” stopped me in my tracks, then my mind pronounced caliche and returned on track. The Introduction doesn’t prepare me for that rut caliche so the next time I listened to my normal practice and read the stories before, and only then the other stuff. E-mail bag - San Antonio is multicultural education A civil right? The Bloga Friend Juan Tejeda e-mail news that Palo Alto College and Gemini Ink are sponsoring a panel of civil rights / community talk entitled “Perspectives on Ethnic Studies: Is multicultural education a civil law? on February 7 at Palo Alto College Performing Arts Center Main Theatre. There will be a free screening of the award-winning documentary film, Precious Knowledge, at 11:00, with the discussion of the panel that will take place immediately after 12:15-2:15. Juan observes, “We have some interesting panelists so that it should prove to be a lively discussion about this very important educational problem. Do we have the right to know our history and culture in our schools? How should this manifest itself? A reception with light food and drinks follows the discussion on the panel. The Bloga On-line Floricanto, 1a of 4 in the 2d of 2013 Francisco X. Alarcón, Samuel Duarte, Raul Sanchez, Nilim Kumar, Patrick Fontes Obama takes a long look from Francisco X. Alarcón Street Vendor’s Drive-By by Samuel DuarteStep Recommendations for Republicans of Raul Sanchez Temporal TemporalNilim Kumar Mrs Sanchez I didn’t know by Patrick Fontes OBAMA TAKES A long look of Francisco X. Alarcón yes, Obama, take everything, the whole sea of humanity, dreams, fears, arms listen to the roaring moor of the crowd, the beat of small flags on half a million hands, the bizarre wings of the butterflies of history: “follow the path marked by your heart... © Francisco X. Alarcón 21 January 2013 Street Vendor’s Drive-By by Samuel Duarte Every Sunday afternoon the street vendor rests under the sun sweltering peddling through streets of inner city with Golden-Dreams-On-a-Cob steam banged with mayonnaise, rolled into parmesan and sprinkled with chili powder. We try to resist the clouds of aromatic contraction that remove us from reality only to find ourselves in search of change. The seller’s on the side. Raise your straw hat and in no time prepare our orders without hygienic masks or latex-gumma gloves or intersecting red light cameras holding a watch over the butter slap. Let’s smile. While spoiling the steamed maize over the barrio-ghetto dogs that evaluate the air to the plastic-covered sofas and Velvet Jesus hung over skeletons that palpitano suburbia where the tycoons make a killing through the insatiable corridors of misery We smile... Pass the immigrated agricultural cities that emit cotton capsules under the shadows of their king, the One who uprooted the ancestral feet of Yokut while our sons and brothers were dead on the streets full of holes-tar by the militarist hands of the woodmen We smile... In the middle of the afternoon Fulton Mall preachers that evoke the heavenly revolts Hallelujah against the tenements of love at high risk We smile and count the anger sweltering while we kill every row of golden kernel and listen to the Street Vendor that moves away with a couple of dollars in the pocket letting us take thesunny yellow caught between our teeth. © 2013 samuel duarte. All rights reserved. Recommendations at twelve stepsRepublicans of Raul Sanchez 1.- Remove the wool from the eyes. 2.- Educate yourself, learn a little history. 3.- Stop ignoring the Latinos. 4.- I appreciate diversity. 5.- Stop threatening the Mexicans. 6.- Appreciate our contribution to our society, this country, our country. 7.- Realize that Latin American culture has already influenced your life. 8.- The Latins are your neighbors, you simply do not see them because they are invisible. 9.- Not all Latinos are criminals. 10.- You already eat and drink the same foods and drinks we do. 11.- Take a grip, the border was not always there. 12.- Stop thinking about us as moochers, we are here to give and contribute. © 2013 Raul Sanchez. All rights reserved. Nilim Kumar’s Sky Temporal A sky is in every human heart, but no one turns his head in to look at him those who fall in love can suddenly see that the sky in their heart of course that the sky is but the temporal. © 2013 Nilim Kumar. All rights reserved. Mrs. Sanchez didn’t know about Patrick Fontes Mrs. Sanchez didn’t know that the farmer’s discharge out often scrolling like the bean juice in the water table at Dinuba gave her happy-go-lucky miijo precious Pablocito big brown eyes Cancer now shakes like La Llorona swinging back and forth beating her wrinkled breast in front of a bed altar after midnight All rights reserved. Bios Francisco X. Alarcón, Samuel Duarte, Raul Sanchez, Nilim Kumar, Patrick Fontes Francisco X. Alarcón, awarded poet and educator Chicano, born in Los Angeles, in 1954, is the author of twelve volumes of poetry, including, DalSide of the night: Selected and new poems (University of Arizona Press 2002), and Snake Poems: An Aztec invocation (Books of Chronicles 1992), Sonetos a la locura y otras penites / Sonnets to Madness and Other Misfortunes (Society of the Book of Creative Arts 2001), De amor obscure / Of Dark Love (Moving Parts Press 1991, and 2001). His latest books are Ce•Uno•One: Poems for the New Sun/Poemas para el Nuevo Sol (Swan Scythe Press 2010), and for children, Animal Poems of the Iguaçu/Animalario del Iguaçu (Children’s Book Press 2008) which was selected as Notable Book for a Global Society by the International Reading Association and as Américas Awards. His previous bilingual book entitled Poems to Dream Together/Poemas para sonar juntos (Lee & Low Books 2005) was awarded the Jane Addams Honor Book Award 2006. He teaches at the University of California, Davis, where he directs Spanish for native speakers Porgram. It is the creator of the Facebook page POETS RESPONDING TO SB 1070 that you can visit: Samuel Hiram Duarte was born in Nogales Sonora, Mexico in 1974 and migrated with his parents and two brothers in the rich Valley of San Joaquin in California. He is the author of Stories of the Other Side of City and the collection of poems, CARNALVAL. His work was presented in Quantum Poetry Magazine, the Sound of Poetry Review and contributed to La Bloga, among others. More recently his work will appear in the next (In) Visible project Anthology due this year through Memoir Journal. He currently lives in Santa Maria with his wife and two boys Raúl Sánchez, conducts workshops on the Day of the Dead. His most recent work is the translation of John Burgess’ Punk Poems into his book Graffito. His inaugural collection “All Our Brown-Skinned Angels” is full of cultural identity poems,a civil protest, a personal celebration, completely murdered and personal. and Patrick Fontes. I am currently a PhD in History at Stanford University. My research concerns border issues, Mexican religion, the Virgin Mary, immigration in the south-west, and the criminalization of Chicano culture. I grew up in Fresno, in a Chicano work house. My father was a worker, my mother, a waitress. My father grew up in makeshift tent communities, collecting crops in California in the 1950s and 1960s. During the Mexican revolution my great-grandfather, Jesus the Moon, crossed the border from Chihuahua to El Paso, then to Fresno. In 1920, Jesus built a Mexican-style adobe house on the outskirts of the city, it is still the home of our family and the center of our Mexican identity today. Nine decades of memories adorn the plastered walls inside. In a corner, a picture of Bobby Kennedy hangs next to an image of La Virgen de Zapopan; in another, an imposing altar in Guadalupe. The smells, voices, sounds, hopes and familia ghosts that preceded me saturate my poems. poetry.

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