

**New Translations of French and Spanish Poetry
By Hélène Cardona**



We're delighted to share with you today these new gems translated from the French and Spanish by the accomplished Hélène Cardona. And we'd love to hear from you! Let us know how you like our posts, or attend, share, and spread the word about our readings. Open your heart to new experiences and the beauty of the world, and celebrate its cultures and new voices with us using #NTM2017. Happy National Translation Month!

—Claudia Serea and Loren Kleinman

Translator's Note

Le Rapt was published in 2015 by Bruno Doucey in Paris in a bilingual Arabic/French edition, with **Maram Al-Masri** writing both the Arabic and French texts. It has never been translated into English. ***The Abduction*** refers to an autobiographical event in Al-Masri's life. When, as a young Arab woman living in France, she decides to separate from her husband with whom she has a child, the father kidnaps the baby and returns to Syria. This is the story of a woman denied the basic right to raise her child. Al-Masri won't see her son again for thirteen years.

José Manuel Cardona's work is marked by a predilection for the classical Castilian hendecasyllable as well as free verse, and by a strong interest in social themes. ***The Birnam Wood*** reflects a social conscience and expresses great pain and love, in particular the poet's love for his native island of Ibiza. It is also filled with literary

influences. Its title, *El Bosque de Birnam* (Consell Insular d'Evissa), is a metaphor drawn from Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. *The Birnam Wood* speaks against abuse of power and for overthrowing all illegitimate governments.

—*Hélène Cardona, translator*

Four poems from *Liberty Walks Naked* by Maram Al-Masri

2

A woman complained to the sultan
that his soldiers stole her sheep
while she slept.
The Sultan said
*You must watch your flock
and not sleep.*
She replied
*I thought you watched over us, Highness...
So I slept.*

From *Liberty Walks Naked* by Maram Al-Masri
Translated from the French by Hélène Cardona

2

Une femme se plaint devant le sultan :
ses soldats ont volé son bétail
pendant son sommeil.
Le sultan lui dit :
Vous devez garder vos troupeaux
et ne pas dormir.
Elle lui répond :
J'ai pensé que vous veilliez sur nous, altesse...
Alors j'ai dormi.

From *Elle va nue la liberté* (Éditions Bruno Doucey, 2013) by Maram Al-Masri

7

Yes, yes,
kiss him again
and again.
Yes, yes,
feel him again and again.
Yes, yes,
keep him in your arms again
as if for the last time...

But this is the last time
your lips
will touch him,
the last time his smell will fill you,
the last time your tears will feel
his warm body.

From *Liberty Walks Naked* by Maram Al-Masri
Translated from the French by H el ene Cardona

7

Oui, oui,
embrasse-le encore
et encore.
Oui, oui,
sens-le encore et encore.
Oui, oui,
garde-le encore dans tes bras
comme si c' tait la derni re fois...
Mais c'est la derni re fois
que tes l vres
vont le toucher,
la derni re fois que son odeur t'emplira,
la derni re fois que tes larmes sentiront
son corps chaud.

From *Elle va nue la libert * ( ditions Bruno Doucey, 2013) by Maram Al-Masri

28

In a photo souvenir
the twenty year old
lays in the fields
among green plants in his village.
He poses, proud of his youth.

He doesn't know
or perhaps he knows
that soon
he will be
their sap.

From *Liberty Walks Naked* by Maram Al-Masri
Translated from the French by H el ene Cardona

28

Dans une photo souvenir
le jeune de vingt ans
s'allonge au milieu des champs
dans les plantes vertes de son village.
Il pose, fier de sa jeunesse.
Il ne sait pas
ou peut- tre il sait
que bient t
il sera
leur s ve.

From *Elle va nue la libert * ( ditions Bruno Doucey, 2013) by Maram Al-Masri

37

I keep walking, tired.
I look behind me:
I see myself dragging
a mountain of sadness with my right hand
and a mountain of hope with my left hand.

From *Liberty Walks Naked* by Maram Al-Masri
Translated from the French by H el ene Cardona

37

J' tais en train de marcher, fatigu e.
Je regarde derri re moi :
je me vois en train de tirer
une montagne de tristesse avec ma main droite
une montagne d'espoir avec ma main gauche.

From *Elle va nue la libert * ( ditions Bruno Doucey, 2013) by Maram Al-Masri

Two poems from *The Birnam Wood* by José Manuel Cardona

Poem to Circe II

Hope is your name, because a name
Has meanings only love
knows. Enamored
I kiss your bronze skin burnished by sun.
Skin is the bark of things,
The thing we love without surprise
Like a garment worn every day.
Skin has its aroma, its murmur,
Its fiery color and mystery.
Thus love begins with the skin,
With dark hair, and penetrates
Like a bull horn, to the bones.
To the bones, Circe, you've penetrated,
Into my deep bones that proclaim
The vertebrate pain of the species.
I open my blood in love and offer it to you.

My primate astral potency
Of giant panther kneeling,
Of fallen and toothless pedestal.
Circe, it's my arms around your
Neck. Long arms that would reach
the farthest end.
Wide hands with palm palms,
These hands were never armed,
Conducive to the knife and wound.
Empty, they hold nothing.
They are for the useless. From the earth
They have only taken flowers, no fruit.
You, Circe, kiss it, love, desire.
You kiss it, open them, look at them.
Do you ask why its emptiness?
You see: they love the land that is not theirs.

From *The Birnam Wood* (Salmon Poetry, 2018) by José Manuel Cardona
Translated from the Spanish by Hélène Cardona

Poem a Circe II

Esperanza es tu nombre, porque un nombre
Tiene significados que conoce
Solamente el amor. Enamorado
Beso tu piel de bronce en sol bruñida.
La piel es la corteza de las cosas,
Esa cosa que amamos sin sorpresa
Como una ropa usada cada día.
Its fiery color and mystery.
Ls pirl tiene su aroma, su murmullo,
Su color incendiado y su misterio.
Así el amor empieza por la piel
Por el cabello oscuro, y se penetra
Tal el asta del toro hasta los huesos.
Hasta lo huesos, Circe, has penetrado,
Hasta mis huesos anchos que proclaman
El dolor vertebrado de la especie.
Abro en amor mi sangre y te te la ofrezco.

Mi gravidez astral de cuadrumano,
De pantera gigante arrodillada,
De pedestal caído y desdentado.
Circe, mis brazos son los que rodean
Tu cuello. Largos Brazos que quisieran
Llegar hasta el final más remoto.
Anchas manos de palmas de palmera,
Manos éstas que nunca se han armado,
Propicias al cuchillo y la herida.
Vacías son, no tienen nada. Están
Para lo inútil. De la tierra sólo
Han tomado las flores, no los frutos.
Tú la besas, amor, Circe, deseo.
Tú la besas, las abres y las miras.
¿Preguntas el por qué de su vacío?
Ya ves: aman la tierra que no es suya.

From *El Bosque de Birnam* (Consell Insular d'Eivissa, 2007) by José Manuel Cardona

Poem to Circe XII

Then I dreamed of you in my way.
Distance is a colt galloping
In the opposite direction at full speed.
I dreamed and made you in my size.
I'm the one who created you, but not how you are.
Because mud escapes and you're a trace
Broken free from the potter's love
But for how love was making you.
I created you, Circe; humanly
I keep recreating me in your image,
I keep recreating you and living
My creation in you, until I didn't know
Or confused, by dint of knowing,
Where you, reality, started
And where I, desire, ended.

Exalted were you in my dreams, forewarned
Almost inaccessible like an island
Sought and sought for years.
I saw you in the Sierra Peaks,
In the lily mountain snow
Emerge like an eagle from my dreams.
Like an eagle you stared
At the sun, your jet black plumage
Open winged, messenger.
I made you thus of my flesh. Saliva
Soaked in your feverish dust,
I kept recreating you in my image.

Exalted you opened my painful wound
Lancing the skin until you found yourself,
Heart, created in my side.
Time was an olive tree like that
Of the chalice and surrender. I was the man
Attending to the sacrifice. I was the wait.
All is consumed, Circe, and I live.

From *The Birnam Wood* (Salmon Poetry, 2018) by José Manuel Cardona
Translated from the Spanish by Hélène Cardona

Poem to Circe XII

Entonces te soñaba a mi manera.
La distancia es un poltro que cabalga
En sentido contrario a rienda suelta.
Te soñaba y te hacía a mi medida.
Fuí yo quien te creé, no como eres.
Porque el barro se escapa y eres huella
Escapada al amor del alfarero,
Sino como el amor te iba haciendo.
Te he creado, Circe; humanamente
He ido recreándome en tu imagen,
He ido recreándote y viviendo
Mi creación en tí, hasta ignorar
O confundir, a fuerza de saber,
Dónde empezabas tú, realidad,
Y dónde terminaba yo, deseo.

Alta eras en mis sueños,
Inaccessible casi como una isla
Que se busca y se busca durante años.
Te veía en los Picos de la Sierra,
En la nieve lilial de la montaña
Emerger de mis sueños como águila.
Como águila quedabas fijamente
Mirando al sol, abierto de tu plumaje
Negrísimo y alado mensajero.
Te hice así de mi carne. La saliva
Se mojaba en tu polvo enfebrecido
Y te iba recreando a imagen mía.

Alta me abriste herida dolorosa
Lanceando la piel hasta encontrarte
Creada corazón en mi costado.
Era el tiempo un olivo como aquellos
Del cáliz y la entrega. Yo era el hombre
Que atiende al sacrificio. Era la espera.
Todo se ha consumado, Circe, y vivo.

From *El Bosque de Birnam* (Consell Insular d'Eivissa, 2007) by José Manuel Cardona

About the authors



Maram Al-Masri, a Franco-Syrian poet and writer, was born in Lattakia, Syria, and moved to France in 1982 following the completion of English Literature studies at Damascus University. She is the recipient of many prestigious literary prizes, including the Prix d'Automne 2007 de Poésie de la Société des Gens De Lettres, the Adonis Prize of the Lebanese Cultural Forum for the best creative work in Arabic, the Premio Citta di Calopezzati for the section Poésie de la Méditerranée, Il Fiore d'Argento for cultural excellence, and the Dante Alighieri Prize. Al-Masri's sixteen books include *Je te regarde*, *Le retour de Walada*, *Par la fontaine de ma bouche*, *La robe froissée*, *Elle va nue la liberté*, *Le rapt*, *Je te menace d'une colombe blanche*, *Cerise rouge sur un carrelage blanc*, and *Femmes poètes du monde arabe*.

José Manuel Cardona is a poet from Ibiza, Spain. He is the author of *El Vendimiador* (Atzavara, 1953), *Poemas a Circe* (Adonais, 1959), and *El Bosque de Birnam: Antología poética* (Consell Insular d'Eivissa, 2007).



He was co-editor of several literary journals and wrote for many publications. He participated in the II Congreso de Poesía in Salamanca. The Franco regime forced him into exile in France. He is an attorney (University of Barcelona) and holds PhDs in literature and humanities, writing his thesis on the Mexican revolution at the Instituto de Cultura Hispánica de Madrid. He worked for the U.N. most of his life, in Geneva, Paris, Rome, Vienna, Belgrade, Sofia, Kiev, Tblisi, Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Panama, among many places.

About the translator



Hélène Cardona is the author of six books, most recently *Life in Suspension* and *Dreaming My Animal Selves* (both from Salmon Poetry); and the translations *Beyond Elsewhere* (Gabriel Arnou-Laujeac, White Pine Press), winner of a Hemingway Grant, *Ce que nous portons* (Dorianne Laux, Éditions du Cygne); as well as Walt Whitman's *Civil War Writings* for *WhitmanWeb*. *The Birnam Wood*, her translation of *El Bosque de Birnam* (Consell Insular d'Eivissa) by her father José Manuel Cardona is forthcoming from Salmon Poetry in 2018.

She holds a master's in American Literature from the Sorbonne and has contributed to *The London Magazine*, *Washington Square Review*, *World Literature Today*, *Poetry International*, *The Brooklyn Rail's InTranslation*, *Drunken Boat*, *Asymptote*, and *The Warwick Review*. Acting credits include *Chocolat*, *Jurassic World*, *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes*, *The Hundred-Foot Journey*, etc. For *Serendipity*, she co-wrote with Peter Chelsom & Alan Silvestri the song *Lucienne*, which she also sang.