

Butterflies sip turtles' tears:

New Poems by Carmen Firan

Translated from the Romanian by Alexandra Carides



National Translation Month continues its established tradition of publishing women translating women poets with a new selection of poems by the accomplished **Romanian writer, editor, and poet, Carmen Firan, translated by Alexandra Carides.**

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—*Claudia Serea and Loren Kleinman*

Știri false

Cu o mână murdară
o mână o spală pe cealaltă
să nu lase amprente
pe apa din pahar

cuvintele se rostogolesc
mărgelile de sticlă
și nu se sparg
și nimeni nu le ridică

frica împinge în piață
căruciorul cu măști
statuile sar de pe socluri și ne imită
porumbeii sunt trimiși înapoi
în țările de unde au venit

clovnul de serviciu
își rade varul de pe față

FAKE NEWS

With a dirty glove
one hand washes the other
not to leave fingerprints on the water
in the cup

fake words are rolling all over
like glass beads
and they don't break
and nobody catches them

the fear pushes a cart with masks
in the public square
the statues jumps off the podium
mocking our hide and seek
birds are sent back to the countries
they came from

the clown in chief rips out his mask

Criza noastră cea de toate zilele

Ia-o de la noi azi și iartă-ne nouă greșelile noastre
Vanitatea de a ne crede singurii cuceritori ai pământului
Se roagă unii, alții înjură
Unii își iartă trecutul,
Alții nu mai suportă să se uite în oglindă
Fluturii sorb lacrimile broaștelor țestoase

Culoarea e cușcă de sârmă ghimpată
Cămașa de forță a gândurilor
Împinse înapoi după cortina de fier
Papa predică în pustiu implorând spiritul fantomatic
Care și el se ține la distanță
Contemplându-și propria singurătate

Când fluturii vor dipărea vom plânge singuri

Take our daily crisis away

And forgive us our trespasses

The vanity to believe we are the only conquerors of Earth.

Some pray, others curse

Some forgive their past,

Others can't look into the mirror anymore

Butterflies sip turtles' tears.

The color is a barb-wired cage

The straitjacket of thoughts

Pushed back behind the iron curtain.

The Pope preaches in vain imploring a phantom spirit

Himself keeping a distance

While contemplating his own loneliness.

When butterflies disappear, we cry alone.

Sunt aici

Și mâine voi fi tot aici
Mai obosită decât ieri
Nerăbdătoare să văd
Cumva va arată lumea
Pe ecranele celor și mai nerăbdători
Să-i grăbească sfârșitul
Din ecran vocea comandoului
Culcă iarba la pământ
Înainte ca firul de iarbă să plesnească tânăr
Și ne promite viață fără de moarte
În timp ce nouă ne îmbătrânesc visele
Pe caldarâm

Sunt aici

Sfântă ironie a sorții
Să re trăiesc toate cele de care odată am fugit
Să acopăr în oglindă chipul diavolului primenit

I am here

I will be here tomorrow too
More tired than yesterday
Impatient to see
How the world will be
On the screens of the ones even more anxious
To hasten its demise
On the screen
The voice of the commander
Flattens the grass
Before the blade of grass blossoms
With the promise of life without death
As our dreams age on the concrete.

I am here
Blessed irony of fate
To relive all I have feared
To cover the devil's new face in the mirror.

About the author



Carmen Firan has published twenty-eight books including poetry, novels, essays and short stories in her native Romania and in the USA. Since 2000 she has been living in New York. Among her books published in the United States are *Changing Your Sign, Changing your Destiny. An Immigrant's Horoscope* (New Meridian Arts), *Interviews and Encounters (Poems and Dialogue with Nina Cassian*, Sheep Meadow Press), *Inferno* (SD Press), *Rock and Dew* (Sheep Meadow Press), *Words and Flesh*, (selected works of prose, Talisman Publishers, 2008), *The Second Life* (short stories, Columbia University Press, 2005), *The Farce* (novel, Spuyten Duyvil, 2003), *In the Most Beautiful Life* (Umbrage Editions, 2002), and other collections of poetry: *Afternoon With An Angel*, *The First Moment After Death*, and *Accomplished Error*. In 2006, she co-edited *Born in Utopia: An Anthology of Modern and Contemporary Romanian Poetry* (Talisman House), and in 2008 the anthology *Stranger at Home. Contemporary American Poetry with an Accent* (Numina Press, Los Angeles). Her work appears in translation in magazines, anthologies, and books in France, Israel, Sweden, Germany, England, Ireland, Poland, etc Firan is a member of the Pen American Center and the Poetry Society of America. www.carmenfiran.com

About the translator



Alexandra Carides, born in Romania, lived for about 30 years in the USA. Received a PhD from Temple University, Philadelphia, and published more than 60 articles in several journals. Currently she is Managing Editor for New Meridian Arts Publishing group, New York, and press correspondent for the Romanian Literary Magazine *Scrisul Romanesc*, a monthly publication dedicated to literature in translation. Carides published translations from English into Romanian and vice-versa, including several volumes translated from American writers. Her work includes: **Febra Alba** (*White Fever* by Edward Foster), SR Publishing House, Romania; **Scrisori din America** (*Letters from America* by Deyan Brashich), essays, SR Publishing House, Romania; **Words and Flesh** (*Puterea Cuvintelor* by Carmen Firan), Talisman Publishers, USA; **Among Women** (*Intre Femei* by Adrian Sangeorzan), short stories, New Meridian Arts Press

Quarantine's Songs (*Cantece de carantina*), poems by C Firan & A Sangeorzan. For the last 15 years, *Scrisul Romanesc* Literary Magazine published her translations from several American authors: Stanley Moss, Andrey Gritsman, Maya Popa, Andrei Codrescu, Bruce Benderson, Carmen Firan, Adrian Sangeorzan, Edward Foster, and others. Her name appears as a translator of essays written by Carmen Firan in international literary reviews like *The Copenhagen Review*, *Lettre Internationale*, *The Wall*, *Critical Flame*, *Raggazine*, etc. alexandra.carides@gmail.com.