



Tameme

C.M. Mayo, Editor

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On the cover of this year's annual anthology of North American literature, a shiny black border sets off a square painting, *The Visitors II* by Derek Buckner. This exciting art is so brilliant with color and movement a reader might, after enjoying the book, choose not to leave it on a bookshelf with nothing but the spine showing. It's fit to hang on the wall.

Spanish translations of works written in English, and English-language translations of Latin writers, offer a grand *mélange* of poems, essays, and short fiction. The subtitle for this new issue is *Reconquista* (Reconquest), which is also the title of one of the essays and two poems. A frequent theme deals with the plight of Mexican settlers along the West Coast of the U.S. Conquest and reconquest run like a bloody thread through the history of every geographical area from the Canadian border to the tip of Panama, and the contemporary Hispanic sensibility hasn't forgotten it.

Tameme (pronounced ta-meh-meh) is a Nahuatl word meaning "porter" or "messenger," an apt title to introduce the unusual concept of a bilingual collection that celebrates writers of both languages with an aptly chosen list of translators. The editor founded the publication after living in Mexico and translating Mexican poetry, where she discovered that many well-read Mexicans had never heard of big-name English writers. Copious Contributors' Notes on the original authors and the translators present the informed reader with a list of many familiar names.

Canadian author Farley Mowat's essay, "Soldier of God," for instance, tells the story of a Roman Oblate priest, who lived and lost his life in the bitter landscape of the Canadian Arctic, waging a constant battle with elements, Eskimos, and Anglican Protestants. His story begins: "Father Joseph Buliard did not have the appearance of someone destined for such a life. At twenty-five, he weighed, according to the Hudson's Bay factor at Repulse, 'about as much as a hungry dog.' Scrawny and ungainly, he seemed doomed to blow away in the first real blizzard."

The story ends with the priest's disappearance from his desolate mission. His body was never found. Gossip in the territory ranged from the suspicion that his native acolyte had murdered him, to a casual indifference, since the chance for a lone individual to survive the weather, the hunger, and the in-fighting among natives, Protestants, Catholics, and fur trappers, was essentially nil.

The final word belongs to Joseph Buliard himself. In the course of his last visit to the Baker Lake mission, he had told Father Choque: 'Life has become very difficult for me at Garry Lake ... some day I may be found beneath the ice.'

The vigorous style of Mowat's piece is echoed with individual variations in every offering in this collection, whether poetry, fiction, or essay. This anthology is a worthwhile read.
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