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Despite the innovative avant-garde nature of her poetry, the Argentine poet Susana Thénon remained virtually unknown during her lifetime and for years after her death in 1991. For Spanish-language readers as well as for world literature she was “one of the best kept secrets of Argentine literature,” to quote the distinguished Argentine novelist and critic Sylvia Molloy. It is only recently that Thénon’s poetry is being rediscovered and celebrated. The translation of *Ova completa*, originally published in Spanish in 1987, has brought Thénon’s poetry to the English-speaking public.

The translator, Rebekah Smith, wisely opted to leave the title in the original given its multiplicity of meanings, but the title merits explanation. One of Thénon’s major techniques is her constant play on words, both from a linguistic as well as a phonological framework. *Ova completa* sounds like a Latinization of the Spanish *Obra completa*, the term usually used to designate a poet’s complete works, but *ova*, while it sounds like *obra*, has no linguistic connection. Rather, it is the Latin for “egg,” and clearly a feminist nod or wink to her readers. At the same time, *ova* is *huevo* in Spanish, and *huevos* is a slang expression for testicles, thereby making *huevos completos* a sly allusion to *huevos llenos* (full), an Argentine vulgar expression for being fed up. The title, thus, captures the tone of the entire volume. The poet is fed up with the conventions of language, societal norms, gender, politics, hypocrisy.

The poems are written in a colloquial style, with fragmented, elliptical phrases that speak to one another dialogically in a kind of free association and a forward moving rhythmic flow. Key and catchy phrases are repeated in echo fashion as the poem pushes forward, nonstop (as the title of one poem states), keeping the reader in constant staccato tension. The texts incorporate a collage of linguistic registers from slang and curse words to allusions to popular culture as well as literary references in various languages with numerous and ingenious word plays and neologisms reminiscent of Oliverio Girondo (“venís pesando pensando represando sope-sando sopesando”). Thénon creatively makes use of the space on the page and italics to either establish a dialogue or present two different tracks, distractions, in a deliberate miscommunication (as in the poem that opens the volume, “Why is that woman screaming?”). And all these phrases are placed in a social and political context to produce a sharp and at once black humor critique of contemporary society. There are feminist barbs, a parody ridiculing academics and their stereotypes of female Argentine writers, a retelling of the “discovery” of the New World by Columbus, a Sartrean “no exit” poem of the torture during the dictatorship.

This is an exceptionally challenging work to translate, and Rebekah Smith has done an extraordinary job capturing in English the multiplicity of nuances, voices, and word plays of Thénon’s poems. She maintains many of the original foreign phrases and Argentine expressions and skillfully captures the mischievous roguish rhymes of “Murgatory” and other poems.

This is a bilingual volume, but unlike most bilingual books the translation and the Spanish original do not appear on facing pages. The translated poems appear in the first half of the volume and the Spanish originals in the second half, followed by a short and illuminating essay by María Negroni and an explanation by the translator of the challenges she faced and the decisions she felt she had to make to render the poems as faithfully in English to the sound and spirit of the original. While bilingual readers might enjoy comparing the English renditions to the original, the arrangement chosen by this volume actually allows the translations to stand on their own as full-fledged poems, as *ova completa*, rather than mere echoes or mirrors of another text that lurks in the background. Thénon’s poems can be fully appreciated in Rebekah Smith’s translations, and they are truly a gift to lovers of poetry.

Marlene Gottlieb is Professor of Spanish and Chair of the Department of Modern Languages & Literatures at Manhattan College. She is a professor emerita of CUNY and of the doctoral faculty at the CUNY Graduate Center. Dr. Gottlieb is the author of several books on the poetry of Nicanor Parra as well as numerous articles on Neruda, Mistral, Lihn, Borges, Vallejo, and Cardenal.