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**CE SENS POATE AVEA AZI
SUFERINȚA ÎN ROMÂNIA?**

WILLIAM JAMES AUSTIN* ON MIRELA ROZNOVEANU'S POETRY

How could I not celebrate *Born Again In Exile*, given that many of the poems collected in the first sequence, composed in English, are set in the center of the universe, New York City. My town!

The first stanza of the opening poem, "53rd Street," reads as follows:

*My previous and future lives
look like 53rd Street in Manhattan
with its MOMA and at the corner
the startling snobbish 5th Avenue
with Madison Avenue – the savage one – one block
away
and further down Park Avenue with bulls running
under its sidewalk.*

For me a dead on description of the area, its culture, its surfaces and subways. I read these lines and I am there. In "Golding Lounge" and the title poem, the essences of Washington Square Park and the extended NYU area are similarly evoked.

And this marvelous assessment of hard working New Yorkers riding the subway:
*they know what life is about
where the sky is
and where the ground.*

In one of those Dirty Harry movies, Clint Eastwood remarks that "A man must know his limitations." Mirela says it better. Her own limits of observation, I am certain, have yet to be reached.

And all of this is accomplished by way of a disarmingly simple style, as if nothing very important is being said – when, in fact, everything said is crucial to a time, a place, a life. The style holds constant, even when the challenge is one of translation, of capturing in English the Romanian tongue, its tasting of Romanian soil and sensibility – even when the focus is on "the Communist dictatorship, the repression, the failed revolution."

These images Mirela culls from the landscape of our senses, whether urban or rural, skip across the periphery of attention, quietly moving to the center of our emotional lives. She is a craftsman par excellence. But more than that, she makes us feel. In an age of digital impulses, that, my friends, is a very rare pleasure.

Within the tradition of polished verse, Mirela Roznoveanu has accomplished an astonishing marriage of Romantic elements. The elegance of Brecht and Rilke converses with the occasional surrealism of Rimbaud, flavored by a Baudelairean melancholy which moves the reader between the streets of New York City and ancient landscapes both historical and mythological. A good portion of the text is translated from the Romanian [versions by Heathrow O'Hare], and these especially seem masterfully rendered. At a time when formalist experimentation dominates much of the poetic scene, it is wonderful to have a collection that reaffirms the beauty and craft of the image within the geography of self discovery.

*William James Austin lives in New York City. He is a poet and essayist. To date he has published four collections of poetry and theoretical essays: 1 UNDERWORLD 2 and 3 UNDERWORLD 4 (S Press, now distributed by Koja Press); 5 UNDERWORLD 6 and 7 UNDERWOR(L)D 8 (Koja Press); plus the monograph, *A DECONSTRUCTION OF T. S. ELIOT: THE FIRE AND THE ROSE* (Salzburg University Studies). He is currently Associate Professor of English and Philosophy and the Artistic Director of the Visiting Writers Program at the State University of New York, Farmingdale.

