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Contents

Foreword.....	vi
On the Tomb of a Great Beauty BY CLAUDIAN TRANSLATED FROM THE LATIN BY BRETT FOSTER.....	9
Ribbons of May BY SAGAWA CHIKA TRANSLATED FROM THE JAPANESE BY RINA KIKUCHI AND CAROL HAYES.....	12
Fading BY SAGAWA CHIKA TRANSLATED FROM THE JAPANESE BY RINA KIKUCHI AND CAROL HAYES.....	12
Green BY SAGAWA CHIKA TRANSLATED FROM THE JAPANESE BY RINA KIKUCHI AND CAROL HAYES.....	13
Angel of the Sea BY SAGAWA CHIKA TRANSLATED FROM THE JAPANESE BY RINA KIKUCHI AND CAROL HAYES.....	13
Just Above Silence BY ANNA GREKI TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY LYNDA CHOUTEN.....	16
The Banyan Tree BY CAI QIJIAO TRANSLATED FROM THE CHINESE BY EDWARD MORIN, DENNIS DING, AND FANG DAI.....	18
Untitled BY CAI QIJIAO TRANSLATED FROM THE CHINESE BY EDWARD MORIN, DENNIS DING, AND FANG DAI.....	18
To — BY CAI QIJIAO TRANSLATED FROM THE CHINESE BY EDWARD MORIN, DENNIS DING, AND FANG DAI.....	19
A Dried Flower—for Someone BY CAI QIJIAO TRANSLATED FROM THE CHINESE BY EDWARD MORIN, DENNIS DING, AND FANG DAI.....	19
Palace-Cave Mountain BY CAI QIJIAO TRANSLATED FROM THE CHINESE BY EDWARD MORIN, DENNIS DING, AND FANG DAI.....	20

Nanmu Forest BY CAI QIJIAO TRANSLATED FROM THE CHINESE BY EDWARD MORIN, DENNIS DING, AND FANG DAI.....	21
A Bath BY KHALED ABDALLAH TRANSLATED FROM THE ARABIC BY NICHOLAS SWETT.....	24
Always BY KHALED ABDALLAH TRANSLATED FROM THE ARABIC BY NICHOLAS SWETT.....	24
Mona Lisa BY MURANO SHIRŌ TRANSLATED FROM THE JAPANESE BY GORO TAKANO.....	26
A Deer BY MURANO SHIRŌ TRANSLATED FROM THE JAPANESE BY GORO TAKANO.....	27
That Man BY MURANO SHIRŌ TRANSLATED FROM THE JAPANESE BY GORO TAKANO.....	28
The Night of an Artificial Satellite BY MURANO SHIRŌ TRANSLATED FROM THE JAPANESE BY GORO TAKANO.....	29
Gray Toad BY ŌTE TAKUJI TRANSLATED FROM THE JAPANESE BY DEAN A. BRINK.....	32
Color of the Season BY ŌTE TAKUJI TRANSLATED FROM THE JAPANESE BY DEAN A. BRINK.....	33
The Fisherman BY ANONYMOUS TRANSLATED FROM THE OLD FRENCH BY LUKE CHAMBERS.....	35
Selections from Man'yōshū BY VARIOUS AUTHORS TRANSLATED FROM THE JAPANESE BY JOHN PETERS.....	39
Ryōan Temple Rock Garden BY MURŌ SAISEI TRANSLATED FROM THE JAPANESE BY MICHAEL STONE TANGEMAN...	42
The Eighth Eclogue BY VERGIL TRANSLATED FROM THE LATIN BY ANN LAINGER.....	44
Love BY ADNAN SADDUK TRANSLATED FROM THE ARABIC BY MIRKO M. HALL.....	52
First Mill (excerpts) BY RENE CHAR TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY NANCY NAOMI CARLSON.....	54
Cloudy Skies BY TAO YUANMING TRANSLATED FROM THE CHINESE BY ANDREW GUDGEL.....	57

<i>Frost Moon</i> BY LI SHANGYIN	
TRANSLATED FROM THE CHINESE BY ANDREW GUDGEL.....	58
<i>Autumn Arrives</i> BY LI SHANGYIN	
TRANSLATED FROM THE CHINESE BY ANDREW GUDGEL.....	58
Notes on Contributors.....	60

Foreword

Sooner or later
we must come to the end
of striving

to re-establish
the image the image of
the rose

(William Carlos Williams, from “The Rewaking”)

I came to explore the wreck.
The words are purposes.
The words are maps.
I came to see the damage that was done
and the treasures that prevail.

(Adrienne Rich, from “Diving into the Wreck”)

Lost, is it, buried? One more missing piece?

But nothing’s lost. Or else: all is translation
And every bit of us is lost in it

(James Merrill, from “Lost in Translation”)

The above quotations all focus on the attempt of recovery. Our desire to write and to read poetry can be explained in countless ways, but one of its purposes is certainly recovery—recovery of both individual and communal memories, feelings, and history. Williams, Rich, and Merrill imply that the success of this attempt is predicated upon communication between the artist and his/her audience. Because human communication is always imperfect, the act of recovery will also be imperfect. Merrill, in particular, calls it “Lost in Translation.” But Merrill refuses to say it is a failure, just as one gets the distinct impression with Williams that there never will be an end to the striving and that Rich’s wreck is as important for the prevailing treasures as for the damage. Recovery in literary translation is even more precarious than in original poetry. As we said in the foreword of our first issue, to even call this act “translation” is misleading, because “translation,” from the Latin verb *transfere*, “to carry across,” refers to something that has already been brought across passively, in a perfect state; “transference,”

on the other hand, from the same Latin verb, is the imperfect act of bringing someone or something across, always in a state of incompleteness.

Indeed, *Transference* continues to feature this imperfect yet essential human endeavor of recovery in our second issue: “Everything is on the way to being destroyed / Everything is striving toward completion” (“Nanmu Forest,” p.21). These two lines sum up the dynamic tension of loss and plenitude that characterizes many of the poems in this issue. From Brett Foster’s translation of Claudian’s ephemeral “Great Beauty,” which leads off the volume, to Andrew Gudge’s renderings of Tao Yuanming and Li Shangyin that evoke new spring wine and trees budding side by side with migrating geese and frosty moonlight, a pulling of opposites is woven through this collection. Goro Takano describes the “chilliness of / The new beginning” in his translation of Murano Shirō, and the stones in Michael Stone Tangeman’s rewriting of Murō Saisei “fell silent” but “yearned to scream and stand.”

Within this dialectic of yearning, the reader is trapped in the middle distance, compelled, like the “girl...who gravely counts her dreams” in Nicholas Swett’s translation of Khaled Abdallah, to enter a reverie, to take a side in a debate and then to switch sides, to contemplate “something like a castle / Soaring precariously / on the spot where everything else slips down” (“That Man,” p. 28). These manifold transcriptions of experience reframe the known in time and space. Rina Kikuchi and Carol Hayes’ “the rewinding of a watch” and Edward Morin, Dennis Ding, and Fang Dai’s image of the beard of the banyan tree “fluttering in the sky” take on a signal importance as they paraphrase the ineffable, telling and retelling the human story’s quotidian miracle. And at the same time, these poems, distillations of English words and sounds, carry the echoes of their first form, the language in which they sprang to life. To return to the quotations at the beginning of this foreword, by striving after the image, diving into the wreck, and getting lost in translation, we make it possible to find ourselves.

David Kutzko and Molly Lynde-Recchia, editors-in-chief

Brett Foster
On the Tomb of a Great Beauty

Claudian
In sepulchrum speciosae

Fate never permits
longevity to beauty:
all that is exalted
and preeminent
ends all of a sudden—
just like that.
Here lies a beautiful
woman: Venus's
loveliness belonged
to her, but hers as well
covetous Heaven's
malice, a poor exchange
for that first honor.

The poet of late antiquity known as Claudian (or, formally, Claudius Claudianus, 370–404 AD) is usually overlooked in whatever grouping he is placed. He tends to be overshadowed by his near contemporaries of the early Christian Church—Augustine and Jerome—and among fellow Latin poets, he and his work have not endured amid the company of classical authors such as Virgil and Horace, or even later Silver Age poets such as Lucan. Yet in his own time his reputation was formidable, and at least one poem of his, “De raptu Proserpinae,” an unfinished epic in three books written near the end of the fourth century, has continued to be read and highly regarded, not only in Claudian’s own day but also from the medieval era onward. Consider, for example, references to it in Chaucer as well as poet and translator David Slavitt’s including it in *Broken Columns: Two Roman Epic Fragments*.

Born in Alexandria, Claudian found success as a court poet by writing just the sort of verse—formal, occasional, and often uncomfortably flattering to a modern ear—that is likely to meet only with obscurity amid today’s poetry readership, even among those readers with a taste for classical or medieval poetry. He wrote effusive eulogies to a pair of patrons, Probinus and Olybrius, along with other starchy (by our standards) “panegyrics.” He also wrote *epithalamia*, formal attacks (the best known one against Rufinus), and other more heroic, epideictic poems, in hexameters, in praise of the deeds and leadership of consuls such as Stilicho. Similarly, his “De bello gothico” suggests a poet interested in his times. Although not a certainty, a sudden lack of testimony makes it likely that Claudian was dead by 404. By 400, even before his death, the placing of a statue of him in the Roman Forum suggests the extent of his reputation at the end of his career.

Claudian is even more overlooked as a poet of *carmina* or short lyric poems. Like his Roman predecessors such as Ovid, Propertius, and Tibullus, Claudian showed much skill in composing elegiac couplets. These poems are hardly studied at all, even among specialists, but I find them to be of great interest and promise. If not great late-antique lyric poems in their own right, Claudian’s lyric poems at least provide an occasion, with their attention to image and choice of interesting subject and delicate development of thought, to the literary translator who is hopeful to render a readable contemporary poem from this source text, and by so doing give Claudian a twenty-first-century voice. That has been my goal with this Claudian translation included here.

The slender line lengths of “On the Tomb of a Great Beauty” leave behind Claudian’s original stanza shape in favor of lines that overall may give some readers the impression of a tomb stone and the epitaph shown there. It is lean in appearance but also in its unflinching, brooding sentiment. (Claudian’s early readers would have recognized his own choice of elegiac couplets as the common meter for such epitaphs on tombs.) I realize that this may be seen as perhaps over-subtle, but I was hoping for a subconscious “migration of effect” for the contemporary reader of this English-language version of Claudian’s poem. I have tried to

accentuate the structure and expression that makes this poem lively—moving from proposition to the present occasion, and with a sharp but conversational voice (the talkative “just like that,” for example). Claudian’s original tersely invites readers to infer their own conclusions from the pairing of the “possessions” of the poem’s great beauty—the beauty itself, along with Heaven’s spite. My version allows itself one final, dry point to be verbalized: these two gifts cannot exist side by side; the bearer must be willing, after all (and has no choice but to be willing), to suffer an exchange.

Rina Kikuchi and Carol Hayes
Ribbons of May

Sagawa Chika
五月のリボン

the air laughed loud outside my window
in the shadows of the multi-coloured tongues
the leaves blow about in clumps
I am unable to understand
is there anyone out there?
I stretch out my hand into the darkness
it was only the long hair of the wind

Rina Kikuchi and Carol Hayes
Fading

Sagawa Chika
白く

glimmering like a flame on the grass
amethyst buttons glittering
slowly you come down this way
A mountain dove listens for the lost voice.
Latticed rays of sunlight slant through the branches.
A green terrace and thirsty plants.
I remind myself to wind my watch.

Rina Kikuchi and Carol Hayes
Green

Sagawa Chika
緑

from the morning balcony invading like waves
flooding over everywhere
I feel I am drowning on the mountain path
as each breath catches in my throat I stop myself falling again and again
the town captured in my vision opens and closes like a circling dream
they come crashing in with a terrible force engulfing everything
I was abandoned

Rina Kikuchi and Carol Hayes
Angel of the Sea

Sagawa Chika
海の天使

again and again the cradle crashes
sea spray dances high
like severed feathers
waiting for the one who sleeps
music heralds the coming of the bright hour
I scream aloud trying to make myself heard
the waves follow after and wash my cries away

I was abandoned into the sea

Sagawa Chika (左川ちか, 1911–1936) was a pioneering Japanese woman poet who made an important contribution to the developmental stage of Japanese poetic modernism in the 1920s and 30s. She was born in Yoichi, Hokkaido, Japan. Soon after she graduated from Women's High School, she moved to Tokyo, possibly to follow Itō Sei (伊藤整, 1905–1969), who later became a well-known novelist, translator and literary critic.

Even though there is no clear evidence, it appears Sagawa was in love with Itō, whom she was first introduced to by her half-brother when she was only thirteen. They became more than friends after she moved to Tokyo. Itō's influence is apparent throughout her poetry, and Itō's sudden marriage to another woman in September 1930 clearly affected Sagawa and her poetry deeply.

Sagawa started to publish translations in literary journals under Ito's supervision in 1929. She also became closely involved with a group of young modernist writers that included Kitazono Katsue (北園克衛, 1902–1978) and Haruyama Yukio (春山行夫, 1902–1994), who later came to be acknowledged as the fathers of Japanese poetic modernism. Her first extant poem, entitled "The Beetle," was published in 1930 and her avant-garde spirit was praised by not only these fellow modernist poets but also a number of her literary contemporaries. Her poetic career was cut short when she died of stomach cancer at the age of 24.

During her short literary career, spanning 1929 to 1935, Sagawa published more than one hundred poems, prose writings and translations in various literary journals. Sagawa also published the first Japanese translation of James Joyce's *Chamber Music* in 1932. The first collection of her poems, *Selected Poems of Sagawa Chika*, was edited anonymously by Itō Sei and published in November 1936, eleven months after her death.

With regard to our translation process, we choose to translate together, as one native speaker of Japanese and one native speaker of English. We find this creates an interesting negotiation around the meaning in both languages. It is not a case of one of us translating from Japanese into English and then the other checking that work, but rather a jointly shared process. First we read the Japanese original aloud, as we feel this allows us to better understand the rhythm of the work. Then we play with a number of translations before we are happy with the result. It is also important to note that we each bring a different knowledge base to the table, with one of us a Western researcher of modern Japanese literature and the other a Japanese researcher of comparative literature with a focus on Ireland and Japan. In Sagawa's case, we have chosen to try to express the sometimes uncomfortable or ambiguous expressions she uses. We usually translate a single poem in one three-hour session, spending a lot of time thinking about the tenses, the grammatical particles and whether certain words are plural or singular.

In these translations, we have approached the poems as independent works and the format of the translations attempts to reflect on the internal structure and cohesion of each poem. As a result, the presentation of Sagawa's

work in English translation is not consistent, as she herself often varies her style. Many of her poems are experimental, reflecting her engagement with the poetic modernism movement in Japan and her reading of Western writers such as James Joyce and Virginia Woolf. Some poems even step across the border between prose and poetry. To demonstrate the flavor of the original poems in the English translations, we have intentionally included some awkward phrasing and grammatical structures that challenge English poetic conventions.

Sagawa's use of titles is quite distinctive; the word or phrase used as the title is rarely included in the poem itself. For example, in the poem "Fading", the Japanese title 白く is a non-complete phrase which, grammatically, should be connected to something, such as 白くなる. We chose to translate this with an 'ing' ending in order to reflect this sense of adverbial becoming, or change of state. We also felt quite strongly that this image was not a specific color but rather a fading of all color and all things: hence our title.

We have also tried to reflect on the poetic forms and styles used by Sagawa, including her unique language usage, punctuation and grammatical reordering. The following points demonstrate something of Sagawa's stylistic experimentation and how we have dealt with this experimentation in our translations:

- The capitalization of the first word of each line, a common English poetic convention, has not always been followed, in order to better reflect Sagawa's modernist experimentation.
- If Sagawa has not used punctuation in the original, we have also chosen not to use punctuation in our translations, as long as the grammatical structure allows.
- The large gap (ten spaces) included in some lines of the translations indicates a similar space intentionally used in the original poem. Note that Japanese sentences do not usually include any spaces and so this was quite new in her work.

Our translations are based on the poems collected in *New Complete Poems of Sagawa Chika* (『左川ちか全詩集 新版』) published by Shinkasha in 2010.

Lynda Chouiten
Just Above Silence

Anna Greki
Juste au-dessus du silence

I talk low, just above silence
So that even my other ear can't hear.
The earth sleeps in the open and lingers in my head
With the rigor of asphodels.
I've re-peopled a few deserts and walked a lot
And now I lie down in my fatigue and my joy—
Those wracks thrown ashore by Summer waves.
In unknown countries, bits of me are seeding.
Boughs of my tenderness, they give
Oases where days are merry-making orchards,
Where man drinks amniotic vigor.
Happiness is falling in the public domain.

*

It will be a day like others
A familiar morning, with well-known joys,
Felt because they are daily joys,
With sky-burning words,
With route-charting words,
Which make happiness a matter of patience,
Which make happiness a matter of confidence,
And those women, so proud of their belly
Reddened by dint of re-giving birth to their children
Every dawn; those women, who are blued with patience,
Who have too much voice to learn silence.
Strong like a woman whose hands have been rusted by steel,
You cuddle your children with care,
And when their tiredness gets hurt by your patience
You walk in their eyes, that they can have some rest.

Anna Colette Grégoire, alias Anna Greki, was born in the Algerian city of Batna in March 1931. A French schoolteacher's daughter, she interrupted her education to take part in the Algerian struggle for independence and was jailed and tortured on account of this. After independence, she resumed her studies, graduated in French literature, and worked as a teacher of French at Emir Abdelkader Secondary School in Algiers. In parallel to teaching, she regularly published poems in the weekly newspaper *Révolution africaine* (*African Revolution*). She died at the age of thirty-five, while giving birth.

I first discovered Greki's poems as a schoolgirl, in a textbook; but I rarely, if ever, hit upon any of her poems after that. She seemed to have fallen into oblivion in all memories, including my own, until, in a conference which took place about a year ago, I met a native of her region who spoke passionately about her simultaneously naïve and perplexing poetry. This triggered in me a wish to rediscover and translate her poems. The poem given here is my first attempt at translating Greki's work, but I am currently working on others of her poems.

"Juste au-dessus du silence" ("Just Above Silence") is taken from *Temps Forts* (*Powerful Times*, 1966). Written in the wake of Algerian independence, it reads as the end of a long epic, with years of struggle, patience, and exile giving way to the simple, tranquil routine of peace and daily happiness.

I have tried to be as faithful to the original as possible, but this has not always been an easy task, for Greki's verse is filled with unfamiliar, surprising images which seem to bear the imprint of surrealism and which make their meaning far from obvious. Rereading the lines several times was necessary not only because of the poet's rather surrealist metaphors but also because of the length of the poet's sentences, which sometimes stretch over several lines. The idea of introducing punctuation—commas, semi-colons, periods and dashes that are absent in the French version—was, at first, no more than a technique which helped me confirm my understanding of the poem. Then I thought that in giving clearer contours to sentences, punctuation can make the translation easier to understand for readers; so I decided to keep it.

Edward Morin, Dennis Ding, and Fang Dai
The Banyan Tree

Cai Qijiao
榕树

I've come to believe that no plant more than he
embodies so completely the spirit of my homeland.
His tangled roots spread out in all directions
like bronze that can split the hardest rock,
while the benevolent long beard fluttering in the sky
caresses and fondles the resplendent air;
his branches generously give many kinds of life a dwelling—
small parasitic weeds below, powerful eagles perched above.
He towers by the roadside extending his hands to all sides
as if ready to lift myriad things on earth to great heights.

1956

Edward Morin, Dennis Ding, and Fang Dai
Untitled

Cai Qijiao
无题

Whoever bare their teeth and brandish their claws
are as rare as phoenix feathers and unicorns.
Candor and loyalty are just as rare.
For them deception is a common strategy;
they put on a Buddhist kasaya
or the kind of coat everyone else wears
and go on hiding their hearts' hatred of mankind.
Don't let calamity dissemble happiness,
don't let an emperor pose as a teacher,
don't let blindness replace an ideal,
but observe calmly with vigilant eyes,
and don't blithely trust the most beautiful words.
Imperialism is your foe!
Feudalism is your foe!
Ignorance is yet another!

1963

Edward Morin, Dennis Ding, and Fang Dai

To —

Cai Qijiao

致 —

Because you love others more than yourself
your heart bears a full load of gnawing pain
and blossoms with intense feelings like a rose.

You wear sharp thorns only for self defense.
Unfriendly to boors, you yourself are so gentle
that moonlight forges music in your soul.

Before hope would fly out of your bosom
raindrops have already soothed your feelings,
and therefore sparks flash from your shining eyes.

To tell the truth, your heart is like a green seedling
that dearly loves springtime's morning dew—
moon and rain your only escort as you begin your journey.

1973

Edward Morin, Dennis Ding, and Fang Dai

A Dried Flower—for Someone

Meandering in from far away
this flower whose color hasn't faded
keeps bringing back roguish memories;

today it seems to still hold
the air and sunlight of that day
and shall never change
even when snow falls and ice congeals.

1975

Cai Qijiao
赠人以枯花

Edward Morin, Dennis Ding, and Fang Dai
Palace-Cave Mountain

Cai Qijiao
洞宫山

Dreams lean out from the intense green of this mountain plain
You can almost hear waves crashing
Tall cliffs are transformed into sails
The valley vanishes into the horizon

A silver mirror reflects the spring landscape
charged with flowing light, without the trace of one ripple
How I wish this green tide
would engulf and obliterate the desolate poverty

The original fountainhead of life is water
My reverie on the last hundred years suddenly takes wing
Unfinished laughter is calling
the rose that steadily moves westward

O great land, how could all those hopes of yours
have moved me this much and not broken my heart?

November 25, 1986

Edward Morin, Dennis Ding, and Fang Dai
Nanmu Forest

Cai Qijiao
楠木林

In the vast dense shade of overlapping limbs
rising tier upon tier
over this world of fragrant plants
the wind fills a void and dances with elegant silhouettes

To oppose misdeeds everywhere
a man craves to hear some birdsong
sweet notes that lead
every path toward tranquility

Everything is on the way to being destroyed
Everything is striving toward completion
The grassland with blue crystalline dewdrops
and the stream's song rippling in a cool wind
have brought about this everlasting green

November 26, 1986

Cai Qijiao stands out as a rare poet who extricated himself from the meshes of Socialist Realism under Mao Zedong, survived ostracism before and during the Cultural Revolution, and persisted in writing individually inspired, high-quality poetry. Over a period of four decades, he produced a large, masterful corpus whose literary merit ranks him as a major poet and among the most important living in China until his death in 2007.

Born in 1918 in Fujian Province, Cai Qijiao emigrated with his parents to Indonesia and returned to China by himself at age thirteen. After high school, he went home to Indonesia, returned to China again in 1938, and later walked with friends several hundred miles from Wuhan to Yan'an, where he joined the forces of Mao Zedong. As a cultural worker with the New Fourth Army, Cai began to write poetry in 1941. He married in 1943 and had several children. After the Communist Party came to power in 1949, he entered Lu Xun Arts Academy where he studied literature. When the novelist Ding Ling founded the Central Literature Training Institute in 1952, she picked Cai to head its teaching and research office of foreign literature.

Cai had the rank of military officer dating back to the years of the Sino-Japanese War, yet he associated very little with military people after 1950. Because of a liaison with a high ranking officer's wife, he was convicted in 1965 of "disrupting a military marriage," an offence sometimes arbitrarily and severely punished. After a year and a half in prison, he was released on parole and later sent to a "forest farm" for reform by labor. He lived under the cloud of being "politically irrelevant" and a "hooligan" until the conviction was overturned in 1985.

In the 1950s, Cai published three collections of poems focusing on rural life in a folk style encouraged by the Communist Party. Officials criticized Cai's poems for concentrating on scenery, people, and love, and for showing little regard for promoting political objectives. Chastised after the Hundred Flowers and Anti-Rightist traps of 1957–58 for expressing personal feelings in nature poems, Cai continued writing poems, but kept them out of sight and published no books of poetry for more than twenty years.

Cai has the rare distinction of having written personal poetry during the Cultural Revolution (1967–1976) and preserving it until it could be published afterwards. The Communist Party required all writers to produce only morale-building, "spears and dragons" poetry in support of government programs. Poems expressing personal feelings were considered seditious, so nearly all poets stopped writing personal poems. While China endured thought control whose severity has become legendary, Cai improved his art with the study of classical Chinese and foreign literature. Holding the work classification of "professional writer," Cai had leisure for study and the means to travel extensively throughout China. For years he made his home in Beijing and spent winters in the milder climate of his home province, Fujian.

In the late 1970s, when the “obscurist poetry” (*menglong shi*) of young writers attracted official criticism against their unauthorized magazine *Today* (*Jintian*), Cai Qijiao did not join other established poets in censuring them. He had been a teacher and mentor of the Fujian poet Shu Ting, an important member of the Obscurists. Cai became friends with the young poets and encouraged their work. While very popular with readers in China, his poetry has been less well received there by scholars and critics, who avoid putting him in any category with his peers. They do not know how to fit him into their existent poetic discourse.

Cai Qijiao’s prolific output since the Cultural Revolution includes poetry collections *The Double Rainbow* (1981), *Praying* (1981), *Fujian* (n.d.), *Songs of Life* (1982), *Facing into the Wind* (1984), and *The Drunken Stone* (1986). Compilations of his poetry include *Selected Works of Cai Qijiao* (Hong Kong: Wenxue yanjiushe, N.D., preface dated 1979); *Lyric Poems* (Hong Kong: Modern Press, 1993), which contains a sequence dedicated to student victims of the Tiananmen Square massacre; and *Selected Poems of Cai Qijiao* (*Cai qijiao shixuan*) (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1997). An edition of his collected works in eight volumes, titled *A Gallery of Poems* (*Cai Qijiao shi ge hui lang*) and edited by Liu Denghan, was published by Straits Press, Fuzhou, in 2002.

Nicholas Swett
A Bath

Khaled Abdallah
حمّام

There are no clouds on the way to the water. For I am going to bathe;
my shoulders and torso are two firmaments, like two Berber women
who play upon instruments of wood.

The rain

Dsh-sh-sh

Sh-sh-sh-sh

Sh-sh-sh

The wind.

Like Moses, it splits my back in two. I am a branch of firewood, running from an
ancient fire;

half is split from the rear, revealing the white center of the wood, uninjured.

Nicholas Swett
Always

Khaled Abdallah
امّيات

The street, now crowded with passers-by and free from any sensation,
was stained like a sycamore tree,

lonely as a palm,

and was always inviting like your mother's laughter.

Yesterday the boys stopped the ball here

for the girl to pass, who gravely counts her dreams...

She was not lazy or defeated. Only slow-moving,

for there is a dream far behind her

that waits for the boys to begin again.

Khaled Abdallah is a poet from Gaza now living in Paris. These poems are from his collection *FM*, which was the winner of the 2001 AM Qattan Foundation poetry prize. Many of the poems in this collection express the influence that conscious disembodiment and physical separation can have on self-reflection.

“A Bath” is a poem of dismemberment. The speaker, bathing in the rain, finds his shoulders and body separated by the rain, his back split in two by the wind. Though he is running from a scalding “ancient fire,” he remains “uninjured” and sees “no clouds on the way to the water.” The speaker voices optimism and strength, despite the vivid and even painful physical experience he is undergoing. The separation of the poem is made all the more vivid by the transition featuring the onomatopoeic sounds of the wind. This centerpiece of the poem visually separates the contrasting images of fire and water. This structural choice organically unites this poem about separation and resilience.

“Always” explores separation through time. The opening of the poem establishes a contrast between a crowded street today and the street as it once was, speckled by playing children. The boys stop their game in awe of a slow-moving girl, who has a “dream far behind her.” Once again, we see a strange displacement: the girl’s dream takes on a life and perspective of its own, and lingers behind her, waiting for this frozen nostalgic moment to end. The title of the piece unites this separation of soul and the separation of time; it suggests that disembodiment and confusing, disjointed perspectives are a constant. That separation from the past, separation from one’s dreams, and separation from oneself are all powerful and valuable reflective experiences.

Goro Takano

Mona Lisa

Murano Shirō

モナリザ

Stop looking at us with such a monotonous look, please
Such spiritual convulsions are not meaningful anymore
Stop standing in our way, please
Because of your presence
We cannot look at any landscape
You always block
Both your background and our foreground
What a bandage over our eyes you are
Behind you
Our eyeballs are bloodshot
Behind the vague
And secret fertility you unfold
Lies no shadow of eternity
What we really want to know is the truth of
Pathetic changes or
The bleak bluff and fresh bones you hide
Behind your back
Because of your own immense look
You cannot look at ours yet
Because of your own existence
We cannot look at our own landscapes yet

Goro Takano
A Deer

Murano Shirō
鹿

Standing still at the edge of a forest
In evening sunlight was a deer
He knew
His small forehead was sighted on
But
What could he do then
He was standing calmly and
Staring at a village
His lifetime was shining like gold
Against the background of the night of
The huge forest he inhabited

Goro Takano
That Man

Murano Shirō
あの人

When, for instance, I'm awfully exhausted
I sometimes see something like a castle
Soaring precariously
On the spot where everything else slips down
No visitor has been seen there for a long time
Every path bends as if to stay away from the castle
Milling around on its grounds is only a growth of trailing plants
Its every door, while shutting out the direct sunlight, resists
Crumbling away
Every name of the dead in its charnel house is still legible
And the dressing room adjoining
The storage place for armor is
Fraught with the sobs of some ladies
As long as no one dares to listen to them
Even their death remains semipermanently distorted
And their tragedies stay intact without any decay
The view of the solitary castle tilting in the air is
Yearned for best when
It is rather distant from my eyes
Often, nevertheless, I come across
A silhouette passing one of its windows
He has neither escaped from death
Nor risen from the dead
Newly born, perhaps, out of tragedies, now
He stares with raptures at the inorganic
Sparkle setting slowly in the distance

Goro Takano
The Night of an Artificial Satellite

Murano Shirō
人工衛星の夜に

Tonight, once again, we can watch a satellite flying
Through the autumnal oleaceous atmosphere
Veiling the dark Earth
Within such moist emotions, our ethics sprout
From the soil like mushrooms
And rot into the same soil
On this tiny mother ground, no more space is left
For the burial of new corpses or carcasses, apparently

Now, nobody knows which heavenly body
Will be eventually chosen for our own burial
The entire human history is turning topsy-turvily
How weird, this *ewige Wiederkehr*
The more seriously we think about this, the more sharply
We feel our blood curdling and our love thinning, but
Still, nobody knows what kind of new life
Will be waiting for us
All we know is the very chilliness of
The new beginning of this universe
Behold, the ghosts who once disappeared from the past
Are, in metallic armor, ascending the future
To welcome us
They seem to be going to usher us to brand-new tombs
Under this damp oleaceous night air
Veiling the dark, dark Earth

Commentary

The four poems I chose for my translation are originally included in *On Lost Sheep* (the Japanese original title is *Bōyō-ki* or [亡羊記] by Murano Shirō [村野四郎], 1901–1975).

Murano is one of the most influential poets in the history of the modern poetry in Shōwa era Japan (1926–1989). *On Lost Sheep* was Murano's ninth poetry collection in his roughly fifty-year career, and was awarded the prestigious Yomiuri Prize for Literature in 1960. The Japanese word “Bōyō” (“lost sheep”) is strongly associated with a well-known passage contained in the 4th-century C.E. Taoist text *Liezi*, whose moral is that it is simply difficult to reach the truth among countless ways in academia, just as it is almost impossible to get back the lost sheep from among too many pathways. Murano's choice of this particular word for his prize-winning book may imply his longtime faith in keeping Japanese naturalism at arm's length.

Murano's poetry began to draw national attention, especially when his second poetry collection titled *Poetry on Gymnastics* ([体操詩集]) was published in 1939. Strongly influenced by the 1920–30s German objectivism called “Neue Sachlichkeit,” he sought to carve out, through the poems in this second anthology, the pure beauty of a gymnast's every form. In those early years of his career, Murano was also deeply affected by surrealism and imagism. Those Western influences in his pre-WWII years, as much as his own agonizing experiences in wartime, led Murano to be obsessed, after the end of the Pacific War, with the Heideggerian concept called (in Murano's own terms) “nostalgia for existence.” This key idea is, in fact, functioning even as the bottom line of *On Lost Sheep*.

While working as director for a Japanese electronics company and writing poetry, Murano even wrote numerous essays on his own poetics, in which his private inclinations toward such artists as Rainer Maria Rilke, Ezra Pound, Jean Cocteau, Matsuo Bashō and Nishiwaki Junzaburō are frequently shown. Reading some of them was, honestly, quite helpful in my confronting his poetry as a translator. He emphasizes in one of them, for instance, that his free verses “need no music,” partly because they belong to, in Pound's lexicon, “logopoeia” which should be based solely on logic's geometric images and nothing else (Murano Shirō, “On Images,” in *The Poetry of Murano Shirō*, Tokyo: Shichō-sha, 1987, pp. 112–19). He also declares in one of the other essays: “I will never end up a degraded nihilist. My poetry may seem to have lost its subject matter, but it doesn't, actually. It just shows my anarchic attitude, my one and only attitude, that's all. By showing so, my poetry confirms my life and my own position. Also, it prepares me to dive into reality without hesitation” (Shirō Murano, “The Afterword” [for *On Lost Sheep*], in *The Poetry of Murano Shirō*, p. 94). I endeavored to reflect his personal poetics as faithfully as possible in my own translation.

Last but not least, I'll briefly mention here why I decided to use the German phrase “ewige Wiederkehr” in the poem “The Night of an Artificial Satellite,” instead of such corresponding English words as, say, “eternal recurrence.” As

I explained above, Murano's poetry is, overall, tinged with the pre-WWII German culture. Thus, I expected the choice of the German original phrase to be much more suited to the translation of the word 永劫回帰 in the original poem, which is the Japanese counterpart of the foregoing Nietzschean concept.

Dean A. Brink
Gray Toad

Ōte Takuji
灰色の蝦蟇

Languidly surfacing, silently
licking sweet trickles of secrets entangled
in the dim shadowy dark
the blue gray toad wriggled.
A toad big as a fist
like a sea slug from the sea
the toad rumbles and spews smoke
hopping along, stitching the dreams of spirits.
That skin rough,
those lips festering black,
drenched from the start.
When a yellow wind blows in the middle of the night
this gray toad,
as if doing its duty, swells up.
Toad! Take care of yourself,
bear that torment.
Goodbye goodbye
my precious big toad.

Dean A. Brink
Color of the Season

Ōte Takuji
季節の色

As if trying to topple and nothing falling
only a slack
streaming between leaves
with nothing clear forthcoming,
only a calm shriveling
of the caressed surface,
feeble, slickening the palm
delighted tongues of wind frolicking on the water
in water-blue
in green
in sky-blue
and then an unflagging shade of silver in the distance.
My body shakes
in the shifting hues.

Ōte Takuji (1887–1934) had a gift for (or an obsession with) understated erotic imagery. Even beyond Theodore Roethke’s lolling roots, sensuous experience becomes bound up in an interplay of body and nature, incrementally decentered and rearranged in many of Ōte’s works. Reading his work thus provides new models for exploring emerging affective dimensions in current ecocritical discourse on the function of actants, including photons of reflected colors. Interestingly, rather than focusing on the psychological makeup of erotic experience, Ōte has a way of weaving actions of the human and nonhuman by presenting simple, impressionistic elements within a dynamic, somewhat rhythmic whole, entangling evocations of qualities of the human body with those of animals, the wind, and colors without reducing them to pathetic fallacies. Thus, the omnipresent problem encountered in translating Ōte’s work is that of drawing a line between what is erotic and what is everyday without reducing the latter to the symbolic. These poems beg the translator to foreground erotic nuances in the choice of combinations of imagery so that what seem simple descriptions of natural objects remain intact (as if material) and readers may explore the interplay as they wish. For instance in “Color of the Season,” in the lines “only a calm shriveling / of the caressed surface” (*nodoka ni shinashina toshite / omote wo naderu mono*), a tension is suggested by way of a phonetic link between *nodoka ni* (“calmly”), modifying “shriveling,” and *naderu* (“to caress,” “to stroke lightly”), whose object is “surface,” together intimating a sensitive touching and being touched. After the synesthetic leap to various colors in the poem, it closes with “silver in the distance. / My body shakes / in the shifting hues,” suggesting both an erotically engaged nature and an autoerotic climax within an emotionally charged (Romantic) sensuous realm.

An Honest Man Who Rescued His Fellow Man From Drowning

It happened that a fisherman
Rowed out one day away from land
And cast his nets upon the sea.
He looked, "What's that in front of me?"
It was a man, and nearly drowned!
Up to his feet he leapt and found
An iron hook. He nimbly cast.
He pulled the line, felt it fix fast.
He'd hooked his face, right through the eye.
Nothing to do but draw him nigh,
Into the boat. Waiting no more,
He left his nets, rushed back to shore.
He had him brought to where he dwelt
And had him tended very well
Until he was completely healed.
At length that man began to feel
That he his eye would rather have,
All things considered. He grew mad.
"This fishing fool fished out my eye.
And have I ever harmed him? Why,
I'll bring a suit against him, see,
For all my pain and misery."
So up he left, voiced his complaint.
The mayor for them set a date
When he would listen to their case,
And on that day both came apace
To court. The one-eyed man spoke first.
He told them how he'd come to worst.
He spoke so, "Lord, I am the wronged.
This gentleman, just three days gone
Hooked out my eye most painfully.
Poked it right out. Just look and see!
Do right by me, I ask no more.
No more to say, I yield the floor."

The other spoke without delay:
“O Lord, I don’t deny this, nay.
His eye is out and by my hand
But listen, now I will defend
My deed. I swear I’m in the right.
I pulled this man safe from his plight.
Now he’d be drowned if not for me!
No one should die out in the sea.
My hook took out his eye, too true.
But for his good! Why should I rue
The saving of his life out there?
I don’t know what to say. Be fair
To me, by God’s own love, I ask.”
The people there agreed the task
To judge this case aright would not
Be easy. Then a clever sot
Spoke up: “Why is there doubt about
This case? This gentleman, this lout;
We should just put him in the sea
Back where before he used to be.
If he escapes and does not die
That man should pay him for his eye
That is what seems to me the best.”
Then all as one cried out the rest:
“You’ve spoken well. What could go wrong?”
This judgment was passed before long.
And when he heard that he would be
Put back out in the wavy sea
Where ‘fore he’d suffered cold and wet,
For all the world he would not get
Back in it. So he dropped his claim.
But most still heaped on him their blame.
This good advice is free to have:
He wastes his time who helps a cad.
You save a thief from gallow tree
When he’s deserving hung to be
And never will he thank you, no,
Nor any gratitude you show
If you do him a favor kind.
He won’t recall, it slips his mind.

But rather, he'll too ready be
To hurt you with his villainy
If he should gain the upper hand,
As so did learn the fisherman.

This poem, dating from the thirteenth century, is anonymous and written in octosyllabic rhyming couplets, as are most Old French fabliaux. A fabliau is generally an uncourtly kind of humorous tale which deals mostly with common people and has a simple, short, often satiric plot. “D’un preudome qui rescolt son conpere de noier” is a moralizing fabliau lacking the bawdy humor common in the most well-known examples of the genre. The subject matter of “D’un preudome” is distinctly uncourtly. The poem’s central joke, the poking out of an eye with a fish-hook, is simple and down-to-earth, and the fisherman, the one-eyed man, and the fool are all of the lower classes. The only other specifically mentioned character, the mayor, has a higher status, but he does very little in the poem besides set a date for the hearing. Furthermore, the impression the poem gives is that the ruling in that hearing is the result of majority consent, even though the mayor is actually presiding over the case. Likewise, the plot of the poem is compact and straightforward. The poem is only seventy-eight lines long (with one lacuna) and the plot moves rapidly and clearly to the climax and conclusion. The poem ends with a bit of moral advice about scoundrels, but I choose to read this advice as a sort of joke in itself, as it does not logically apply to the preceding story.

As the poem is a fabliau, I have endeavored to recreate a humorous tone in my translation. My first attempt was done in prose, and I found that the flat style of literal translation drew most of the life from the story. I resolved to make a verse translation, and since the poem is written in octosyllabic rhyming couplets, I have written mine in iambic tetrameter rhyming couplets, which is more or less the same as the Old French meter. In this translation I have taken liberties with the wording and precise sequence of ideas in the poem in order to make it fit the meter and rhyme. Yet all of my changes are slight, and in every case each change is based on material in the original. It is my hope that, though it is further from the original in literal meaning, my poetic translation better captures the comedic feel of the original, which owes much to the regular meter and rhyming couplets. Note that in order to preserve the scheme of rhyming couplets I had to produce an extra line in my poetic translation because of a lacuna in the original where the medieval scribe seems to have missed copying at least one line. This invented line is the last of the poem.

John Peters
Man'yōshū 11: 2653

Anonymous

At the sound of the pounding
of horses' hooves
I go and look out
from the shade of the pines
perhaps it is you

John Peters
Man'yōshū 7: 1263

Anonymous

Night crows caw
the coming dawn
still it is silent
above these
summit treetops

John Peters
Man'yōshū 2: 105

Princess Ōku

Sending you away to Yamato
in deepening night
I stood
till wet with
the dew of dawn

John Peters
Man'yōshū 2: 107

Prince Ōtsu

In the dew
of the mountain
I stand waiting for my love
in the dew
of the mountain

John Peters
Man'yōshū 2: 108

Lady Ishikawa

Waiting for me
at the mountain
you were wet with dew
I wish
I were that dew

John Peters
Man'yōshū 19: 4139

Ōtomo Yakamochi

In the spring garden
the scent of
red peach blossoms
illuminates a woman walking
the paths below

Man'yōshū (*Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves*) is an anthology of poems from ancient Japan; nearly all appear to have been written roughly between 625 and 760 A.D. The anthology is said to have been culled from no longer extant earlier anthologies and comprises 4,516 poems in twenty books or scrolls by over 400 identified poets and numerous others who are unidentified. Of the six translations included here, two were written by unidentified poets. The other four have their authors listed. About Japanese poetry of this time, the poetic line is not based upon the number of stressed syllables, as is Anglo-Saxon poetry, or upon the number of stressed syllables in conjunction with the number of overall syllables, as is blank verse, or upon patterns of rhyming, as is much of Western poetry—but instead upon the total number of *on* (sounds), which is the linguistic concept of a mora. *Man'yōshū* consists of two kinds of such poetry, *chōka* and *waka*, *chōka* being long poems of indefinite length with alternating lines of 5 and 7 *on*, and *waka* being single-line poems with divisions of 5, 7, 5, 7, and 7 *on*. Fewer than 400 of the poems in *Man'yōshū* are *chōka*, and the translations included here are all *waka*. As was true of ancient Chinese poetry, subtlety and understatement are valued in Japanese poetry of this period, and in translating these *waka*, I have sought to maintain the understatement of the original Japanese poems. For example, the image of dew appears with some frequency in these poems and is understood to represent not only literal dew but also tears. Along with trying to maintain the subtlety and understatement, I have also sought to run the difficult middle course of faithfully translating the meaning and spirit of the original Japanese while at the same time attempting to produce good poetry in English.

Michael Stone Tangeman
Ryōan Temple Rock Garden

Murō Saisei
龍安寺石庭

I caught the sound of water
Faint perhaps debilitating
Smothering sound of water
I saw someone's passage aslant through the hall
Black hair hanging
Glistening ebon pupils

I counted the number of stones
The stones were perhaps a mere seven
Carefully looking there were naught but three
Again I looked carefully
There was but one alone

I was however interrupted in the end by
The stones countless in their cluster
The stones all shone with rage
The stones all once more fell silent
The stones all yearned to scream and stand
Ah the stones all strained to return to the heavens

Murō Saisei (1889–1962), apart from being known as one of three famous early twentieth-century men of letters from Kanazawa on the Japan Sea, was a prominent poet, novelist and literary critic whose works are admired as exemplary masculine literary Japanese.

The subject of this 1932 poem is the dry rock and sand garden at Ryōan-ji (Temple of the Peaceful Dragon) in Kyoto. This Zen garden is one of the iconic sites of traditional Japan. The arrangement of the fifteen rocks in the garden prevents all fifteen from being viewed at one time, creating an allusion to the Buddhist principles of impermanence and imperfection.

The space is small, smaller than it appears in photographs, but there is a calming power exuded by its confines. Even boisterous schoolchildren who flock to the temple by the thousands each year are compelled by some ineffable force to quiet themselves—a perceptible change comes over them—in the presence of these deceptively simple, physically unimposing, seemingly organic structures.

Saisei's poem imagines the power contained within the clusters of rocks, the mystery of the clusters, and an almost-biological (rather than geological) essence contained in the seemingly inert forms. His speculation on the divine origin of the rocks, however, does nothing to speak to the purpose of their placement. They remain mysterious.

It is the sound of water that catches the poet, and threatens to paralyze him. Traditional poetic notions associated with water—movement, change—are juxtaposed with the stillness and immutability of rock. Saisei reveals the power—a power able to distract the poet's eye from a beautiful woman—contained within the stones. If he is unable to unleash the rocks from the tether of gravity, he is at least able to give them a voice.

In translating this poem the challenge was to keep the natural elements (water, rock) in the states in which Saisei describes them: to anthropomorphize only when Saisei does so. Preserving the noun phrases in the first stanza, rather than turning them into verb phrases, was important, but not terribly easy given the vibrancy of Saisei's phrasing. And in the final stanza, I attempted to approximate Saisei's alliteration (*musū...muragari...*) in the translation “countless...cluster.”

The art of Damon and Alpheisiboeus,
Contending shepherds who made the cow in wonder
Forget to graze, whose song left lynxes stunned
And stilled the altered course of streams, the art
Of Damon and Alpheisiboeus I'll tell. 5
But you (and where are you now? passing the rocks
Of great Timavus? coasting Illyricum's shore?),
Will that day ever come when I'm allowed
To tell what you have done? And shall I be
Allowed to show the world at large your songs, 10
The only worthy heirs of Sophocles'?
From you was my beginning, and in you
I hope to end. Accept these songs, begun
At your behest; around your brow, among
Its conqueror's laurels, let this ivy twine. 15

The chilly shades of night had hardly left
The sky, and dew, the herd's delight, still clung
To the tender grass when, leaning on a smooth
Olive trunk, Damon thus began his song.

Damon: "Rise, morning star, and shine before the break 20
Of kindly day, while I complain, beguiled
By the unworthy love of Nysa, my promised bride,
And, a dying man, appeal to the gods
In my last hour—even though those gods
Have witnessed all and profited me nothing. 25

Begin with me, my flute, these Maenalian verses.

Mt. Maenalus always has his sounding groves,
His speaking pines. He always hears the loves
Of shepherds; he hears Pan, the first who would
Not let the reeds rest voiceless and unused. 30

Begin with me, my flute, these Maenalian verses.

Nysa is given to Mopsus! Now what may
We lovers not expect? Griffins will mate
With horses next, and in the future age
The shy deer will lap their drink with dogs. 35

Begin with me, my flute, these Maenalian verses.

Mopsus, cut fresh torches: they're leading in
The bride to you. Bridegroom, scatter the nuts:
For you the evening star deserts Mount Oeta.

Begin with me, my flute, these Maenalian verses. 40

O, that's a worthy man with whom you're matched!
And you, meanwhile, despising everyone,
Hating my pipe, my goats, my shaggy brows
And scruffy beard, and not believing any
Of the gods is mindful of the lives of men. 45

Begin with me, my flute, these Maenalian verses.

I saw you first a little girl inside
Our garden with your mother, picking apples
Wet with dew. I was your guide, just
Turned twelve; now, standing, I could grasp 50
The fragile boughs. I saw and I was lost.
So the deadly madness stole me away!

Begin with me, my flute, these Maenalian verses.

I know now what Love is: Mount Rhodope
Or Tmaros or remotest Africa 55
Brought forth that boy on the hard flint, for he
Is neither of our blood nor of our kind.

Begin with me, my flute, these Maenalian verses.

Savage Love taught a mother to stain her hands

With her sons' blood; mother, you too were cruel. 60
Was the mother crueler, or the boy Love more heartless?
The boy was heartless; mother, you too were cruel.

Begin with me, my flute, these Maenalian verses.

Now let the wolf turn tail and flee the sheep;
Let the hard oak trees bear golden apples, 65
And alders flower with narcissus blooms;
Let tamarisks sweat rich amber from their bark,
And owls contend with swans. Let Tityrus
Be Orpheus, an Orpheus of the woods,
And with the dolphins let him be Arion! 70

Begin with me, my flute, these Maenalian verses.

Let the deep sea swallow all! Forests, farewell!
Down from the lofty mountain summit I
Will fling myself headlong into the waves.
Take this, the last gift of a dying man. 75

Now cease, my flute, cease these Maenalian verses."

So Damon sang. Alpheisiboeus's answer,
Muses, you tell. We can't all do all things.

Alpheisiboeus: "Carry the water out and tie a strip
Of cloth around this altar. Burn the strong 80
Frankincense, the pungent vervain boughs,
And let me try with magic rites to drive
My lover out of his stone-sober mind!
There's nothing wanting now except the spells:

Draw him home from town, my spells, draw Daphnis. 85

For spells have power even to draw the moon
Down from the sky. With spells Circe transformed
Ulysses's comrades; singing spells can force
The clammy meadow snake to burst its skin.

Draw him home from town, my spells, draw Daphnis.

90

This triple thread, three different colors, first
I tie around you; three times then I lead
Your effigy around the altar here.
Uneven numbers are the god's delight.

Draw him home from town, my spells, draw Daphnis.

95

Tie the three colors, Amaryllis,
In triple knots; just tie them, Amaryllis,
And say, 'Here I tie the chains of love.'

Draw him home from town, my spells, draw Daphnis.

As this mud hardens and as this wax melts
In one and the same fire, may Daphnis thus
Obey the double fire of my love.
Sprinkle the meal and set the brittle laurel
Aflame with pitch. Wicked Daphnis makes me burn;
Against Daphnis I burn this laurel here.

100

105

Draw him home from town, my spells, draw Daphnis.

May love take hold of Daphnis like a heifer
That, tired out with searching for her bull
Through the deep woods and groves, collapses, spent,
In the green sedge along a river bank,
But has no thought of giving up the search
Although the night is late: such love I wish
On Daphnis—and may I not care to cure it.

110

Draw him home from town, my spells, draw Daphnis.

Here are clothes the betrayer left me once
As precious pledges of himself. I commit
Them now to you, earth, on my doorstep,
And in exchange claim Daphnis as my due.

115

Draw him home from town, my spells, draw Daphnis.

Moeris himself gave me these poisonous herbs 120
Gathered in Pontus (many such grow in Pontus).
I've seen Moeris often with these herbs
Become a wolf, lurking in the woods; often
I've seen him call up souls of the buried dead
Or lead the standing crops from field to field. 125

Draw him home from town, my spells, draw Daphnis.

Now, Amaryllis, take the ashes out,
Throw them over your head and in the stream,
But don't look back. With them I'll besiege Daphnis:
He's full of scorn for the gods and magic spells. 130

Draw him home from town, my spells, draw Daphnis.

Look! The ash—before I could take it out—
Itself fired the altar with wavering flames!
May it mean good! I'm sure there's something—Hylax
Is barking at the door. Can it be true? 135
Or do lovers shape their dreams to their own desires?

Enough now, spells, enough! From town comes Daphnis."

“Eclogue 8” is one of four singing contests in the *Eclogues*. A narrator sets the scene in an opening frame, introducing the two competitors. Both songs are of unhappy love, and each includes a refrain repeated ten times, the last time in altered form. Though both songs are in the first person, the singer is not necessarily the protagonist of his song. Damon sings of losing his beloved to another, while Alphesiboeus more obviously impersonates a speaker, a woman attempting to recover her wandering lover through magic. The ambiguous endings of both songs and the absence of a closing frame for the eclogue combine to blur the line between art and life, impersonation and reality in this mysterious poem.

In translating Vergil’s “Eighth Eclogue,” I didn’t want to update it. The pastoral world of the *Eclogues* is a rich literary convention with its own integrity, a world that is mythic in its idealizing but that also, precisely because of its distance from the real world, invites allusion to and criticism of the real world. My general aim was to let readers experience the visual and aural beauty of Vergil’s pastoral world, along with a sense of its otherness. Choosing blank verse both for its flexibility and as a rough equivalent of Vergil’s dactylic hexameter, I did not attempt to match one English line for every line of Latin, since English syntax has nothing like the succinctness of Latin; and I largely gave up the hope of reproducing Vergil’s word order within the poetic line, since the heavily inflected nature of Latin allows much greater flexibility in that regard. The *Eclogues* generally employ rather simple diction and syntax for Vergil’s imagined rustic speakers, reflecting the literary principle of decorum. Yet with that simplicity, and with the epic associations of dactylic hexameter, Vergil confers a shapeliness and dignity on the actions and feelings of his characters and the sensuous concreteness of their world. The simplicity of Vergil’s diction intensifies a problem faced by any translator from Latin: the language’s word stock is small relative to that of English, so that a single Latin word may convey several distinct meanings. Does fidelity require that a repeated word in the Latin be represented by the same English word each time it occurs? I usually tried to do this. Twice, however, different contexts required rather different English translations for a repeated word, as noted below. In general, I tried to use English that was idiomatic yet not always colloquial. The aim, at least, was to find a tone whose simple, slightly formal syntax and diction would avoid both the awkwardness of some strictly literal renderings and the jarring effect of modernisms which, though they might be “user-friendly,” would violate the conventions and break the spell of the mythic pastoral world. To that end, I let stand most place names and proper names, though I preferred the more familiar “Muses” to “Pierides” (78). I occasionally expanded the Latin slightly to explain or clarify something a Roman audience would have known: for example, specifying “Mt. Maenalus” (27) and, in the allusion to the pipes of Pan (29–30), translating a single Latin adjective, *inertis*, by two English ones, “voiceless and unused,” to render the myth more explicit for modern readers. I also expanded *puer* (“the boy”) to “the boy Love” (61). By contrast, however, the child-murdering mother in

lines 59–62, instantly recognizable to Roman readers as Medea, is identified only in the note below, for the sake of the tone and complicated rhetorical structure of the stanza. A few more specific comments follow.

6–15: Commentators have been divided over the identity of this nameless dedicatee, who might plausibly be G. Asinius Pollio (76 B.C.E.–4 C.E.) or Octavian, the future Augustus. Vergil’s omission of a definite identity for the addressee contributes to the poem’s mysterious tone. (I am grateful to *Transference’s* anonymous referee for this thought.)

14–15: The English fails to capture the intricate Latin word order, a lovely imitation of the literal interweaving of ivy and laurel: *hanc sine tempora circum / inter victrices hederam tibi serpere lauros.*

22: “promised bride” (*coniunx*). The Latin word can mean spouse and here implies a betrothal, but perhaps only in the protagonist’s understanding, not Nysa’s. That we have no way of ascertaining this is one of many instances of the eclogue’s blurring of subjective and objective reality.

33–35: These “impossibilities” (*adynata*), like the set in lines 64–72, express the upside-down world created for the speaker by Nysa’s betrayal.

52: “deadly madness” translates *malus error*, to convey the destructive and pathological power of love. I have translated a later occurrence of *malus* (“bad”) differently (see note to line 104).

59–62: The mother is Medea. The artful repetition, juxtaposition, and chiasmus in the Latin lines are imperfectly captured by the translation.

68: Tityrus is one of the speakers in Ecl. 1. To compare his pastoral music with that of the mythic singers Orpheus or Arion is as absurd as the other unnatural “impossibilities” in the catalogue.

75–77: A curious triple ending to the first half of the poem. The protagonist’s dramatic arc ends in his imminent suicide; the tenth and final refrain with its altered verb brings his utterance/Damon’s song to its formal close; and the eclogue’s narrator recalls the opening frame, the “actual” circumstances of the singing contest.

79–137: In its depiction of a magic ritual, Alphesiboeus’s song is a kind of performative speech act and leads us deeper into the blurring of language and reality that informs the whole eclogue. Throughout, the incantation’s repeated words, parallel phrases, and delicately varied word order beautifully pattern the language (just as a spell uses language to pattern reality) in more ways than English allows.

83: “my lover” translates the same word (*coniunx*) which in Damon’s song was used of Nysa, the “promised bride” (22). As in Damon’s song, the speaker asserts a commitment (marriage? betrothal? sweet talk?) that may exist only in her mind. English doesn’t readily provide a male parallel to “promised bride,” and “husband” seemed too definitive for a relationship the poem leaves undefined.

104: “Wicked” here tries to convey the sense of *malus* for someone who maliciously uses magic to inflict harm, an ironic accusation for the speaker, given what she’s doing. (My thanks to *Transference’s* anonymous referee for both these points.)

132–37: As with Damon’s song, a complex ending and one remaining open in many ways. “Look!...May it mean good!” may be the protagonist’s words or her servant’s. The “wavering” of the flames suggests uncertainty even while the reignited ash constitutes an omen (but of what?). The final, altered refrain asserts that the spell has been successful, yet it is impossible to override the profound ambiguity of the lines immediately preceding. Compare Nisus’s similar musing in the *Aeneid*: “Is it the gods who kindle this passion in our minds, or does the terrible desire of each man become a god to him?” (*Nisus ait: “dine hunc ardorem mentibus addunt, / Euryale, an sua cuique fit dira cupido?”* [9.184–85]). In a final blurring of the real and the imagined, the eclogue closes without returning to its opening narrative frame.

Love



When I was a young man
love was
my favorite pastime;
the love that sends its dreamy looks
from blue eyes
or whispers it with
tender lips
colored in coral
The love that is in fact
like beauty overflowing
and black hair
tousled by the slight breezes of the North
But now,
I no longer possess love
only a feeling
I am not moved at all
for neither do cheeks flush with the horizon's redness
arouse me,
nor does the swaying figure
of a slender girl
excite or lift me away
Now—that the distance has widened
between me and Venus,
the soul mate to the setting sun of my love—
I have returned Cupid's arrows
to his golden quiver
for I find nothing in love
but a silly game, eternally
shrouded in death,
and silence!

Adnan Sadduk (1944–) is a professor of Arabic Language and Culture at the Defense Language Institute at the Presidio of Monterey in California. A native of Tulkarm, Palestine, and educated at the University of Baghdad and Pepperdine University, Sadduk has long had a distinguished career in public service: as an educator, journalist, editor, publisher, and former Jordanian *chargé d'affaires* in North Yemen. An accomplished poet, he has published his works in Jordanian newspapers and magazines since elementary school. He continues to actively organize and participate in Arabic literary seminars in the United States.

Originally composed by Sadduk in 1973 in Amman, Jordan, the poem “Love” is taken from his retrospective collection of romantic poetry, *To Anglo-Saxon Eyes* (2011). The poem’s lyrical “I” explores how the impassioned love of one’s youth can easily go awry by the metonymic slippage of desire—and, ultimately, by the dialectical tension between *eros* and *thanatos*. In my translation, I have attempted to render the Arabic into English as closely as possible while still retaining the visual architectonics of the original text. Sadduk’s use of short lines emphasizes a number of synesthetic experiences, which are further enhanced by his use of colors (black, blue, coral, and red) and sensuous body parts (cheeks, eyes, hair, and lips). Like many of the poems in the above collection, his poetic style harnesses the direct and affective power of everyday language; they are, thus, similar to the works of another modern Arabic poet that Sadduk greatly admires, Nizar Qabbani.

Nancy Naomi Carlson
First Mill (excerpts)

René Char
Moulin premier (extraits)

II

Earth, future of my abyss, you are the pool
where I ponder.

XIII

“The female nude is the blue sky.” Astrology
has soaked up watercolor.

XV

I do not piffle with pigs.

XVIII

The canal advances to meet the river. Both
equal in depth, both equal before the dawn.

XXXVIII

Here, the male image pursues the
female one all day, or vice versa.
Over there, where they finally meet,
the creator dies and the poet is born.

Hailed by Prime Minister Jacques Chirac as “the greatest French poet of the 20th century,” René Char’s literary career spanned over sixty years. In 1952, Albert Camus called Char “France’s greatest living poet.” Martin Heidigger praised Char as “a tour de force into the ineffable.” Char, whose surname was an abbreviated form of Charlemagne, was born on June 14, 1907, in Isle-sur-la-Sorgue, in Provence, France. When Char was eleven, his father died. Char moved to Paris after completing his education at the University of Aix-en-Provence. It was there that he began his association with such surrealist writers as André Breton and Paul Éluard, signing *Le Manifeste du surréalisme*. Although he valued the idea of poetry as a spontaneous activity, he renounced the Surrealists five years later, arguing that poetry must remain free of limits imposed by ideologies or affiliations.

During World War II, under the “nom de guerre” Captain Alexander, Char led a Resistance unit in the French Alps, for which he was named to the Legion of Honor. The publication of *Seuls demeurent* in 1945 led to wide acclaim in France. Throughout his life, Char preferred that interpretation of his work not be limited to a personal or historical context. Instead, he emphasized the poet’s moral responsibility, which was also reflected in his life when he fought in the Resistance, as well as when he later opposed nuclear proliferation. He was a champion of social justice and the rights of “the working man.”

Char’s work is known for his economy of style, including his aphorisms and his short bursts of prose, as well as the sense of mystery that pervades each text. Char was influenced by such French poets as Charles Baudelaire, Arthur Rimbaud, Stéphane Mallarmé, Guillaume Apollinaire, and Paul Valéry, as well as the German poets Friedrich Hölderlin and Rainer Maria Rilke. In addition, one can see the influences of Friedrich Nietzsche and Heraclitus, the ancient Greek philosopher.

The poetic aphorisms in this set were drawn from *Moulin premier (First Mill)*, Char’s collection of 70 aphorisms, first published in 1934 as part of *Le marteau sans maître (Hammer without a Master)*. This collection of aphorisms was the first of many more to come. Subtle sound patterns emerge in the music of his aphorisms. I have tried to honor these patterns, especially the alliterative elements. For example, the three percussive *ps* in the following aphorism literally jump out at the reader, and in so doing, create a humorous effect: “Je ne plaisante pas avec les porcs.” After much time wrestling with this challenge, I was able to come up with “I do not piffle with pigs,” with its humorous undertone. More times than not it is difficult to reproduce the exact sounds of the source text, especially when many sounds do not exist in English, such as many French vowels. This case was the exception.

Another challenge posed by these aphorisms was the urge to make semantic leaps for the reader, based on my understanding of the historical and political context in which they were written. Returning to aphorism XV, I was tempted to modify the word “pigs” with the word “German” to allude to the rise of the Nazi

Party during the time the aphorism was written; however, I dismissed the idea on rhythmic grounds, as well as my desire to stay as faithful to the text as possible. In addition, I wanted to preserve the text's sense of mystery.

I chose these particular aphorisms because of their relative accessibility compared to many others. Their evocative imagery based on everyday sights, as well as the juxtaposition of surprising elements, make them especially appealing.

“Cloudy Skies” was written because I miss my dear friends. There’s new wine in the cups and the trees in the garden are just beginning to bud. But those with whom I’d talk don’t come, and sighs overflow my breast.

Gathered clouds and spring drizzle,
The sky is dark and the road now difficult.
Quiet and alone by my eastern window, I drink new spring wine.
My dearest friends are far away so I stand and stand, rubbing my head.

Gathered clouds and spring drizzle,
The sky is dark and the plain become a river.
There’s wine! There’s wine! But I drink alone by the eastern window.
I miss those with whom I’d talk, yet no boat or cart comes.

The trees in the eastern garden are beginning to bud.
Dear friends and relatives fill me with happy thoughts.
But there’s a saying, “Time flies.”
When will we sit close and chat about our lives?

Flying birds perch on my garden trees,
They rest, and their song is full of harmony.
How can there be no one, when I think of you so much?
Those with whom I’d talk aren’t here and I’m filled with helplessness.

Andrew Gudel
Frost Moon

Li Shangyin
霜月

When you first hear migrating geese, the cicadas are long gone;
To the south of the tower, the water meets the sky.
The Frost Nymph and Lady Moon both can stand the cold,
And in the frosty moonlight, their charms compete.

Andrew Gudel
Autumn Arrives

Li Shangyin
到秋

The blowing wind rustles and the mat is dripping wet,
Distant southern friends stick in my thoughts.
Waiting for the arrival of Autumn is still lonely,
Red leaves and green moss, time to close the doors.

Tao Yuanming (c.376–427), was descended from a well-connected and influential family, yet became dissatisfied with corruption at court and the life of a scholar-official. Tao eventually quit, saying, “I will not bow just to earn five pecks of rice.” He spent the rest of his days as a tipsy recluse. His poems extol the virtues (and struggles) of the life of a simple farmer, as well as the joys of wine. These themes, plus his rejection of official life in corrupt times, made him a wistful ideal for many later Chinese scholar-officials, especially during turbulent periods of Chinese history. Tao’s straightforward poetic style and limited number of literary allusions also make him one of the more accessible poets for Western readers.

“Cloudy Skies” is one of Tao’s more well-known poems, which is written in four Chinese characters/words per line and includes a short explanatory preface. In translating this piece, I tried to use similarly straightforward English and simple sentence structure to capture the flavor of the original.

Li Shangyin (c.813–845), on the other hand, is famous for his lush imagery and numerous allusions. In the titles and almost every line of both of these translated poems, he draws on references to Chinese classics, history, mythology, and even Tao Yuanming’s poetry. (In fact, the line translated as “distant southern friends” in the poem “Autumn Arrives” actually reads “distant southern clouds”—a direct reference to Tao’s “Cloudy Skies.”) Li’s reliance on imagery and allusions means that his poems can be difficult to translate. For example, in China the personification of both frost and the moon are female. This sets the stage for Li’s night-time competition between the “charms” of the two, but also makes it impossible to use Western personifications such as Jack Frost or the Man in the Moon in the translation.

The two poems translated here are written in a style that developed later and which has seven characters per line. In this later style, it is more common to link or juxtapose two images in a single line. In translating, I tried as much as possible to keep the images intact and leave any resulting ambiguity unresolved, as this mirrors the ambiguity that sometimes appears in Li’s poetry.

Notes on Contributors

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Nancy Naomi Carlson holds a master's degree in French language and literature and a PhD in foreign language methodology. Her translations have appeared in such journals as *Agni*, *Circumference*, *Crazyhorse*, *Denver Quarterly*, *Inventory*, *The Iowa Review*, *The Journal*, and *Western Humanities Review*. Her own work has appeared in such journals as *Poetry*, *Prairie Schooner* and *Shenandoah*. Her collection of poetry, *Kings Highway*, won the Washington Writers' Publishing House competition, and *Complications of the Heart* won the Texas Review Press' Robert Phillips Poetry Chapbook Prize. *Imperfect Seal of Lips* was selected for the Tennessee Chapbook Prize. *Stone Lyre*, her collection of René Char translations, was published by Tupelo Press. She is senior translation editor for the new *Tupelo Quarterly* and translation editor for *Blue Lyra Review*.

Luke Chambers is from Stillwater, Minnesota. He has a BS in Physics and Mathematics from the University of Wisconsin—River Falls, and an MA in Medieval Studies from Western Michigan University. His master's thesis was on the incorporation and adaptation of Ovid's *Heroides* in the Old Norse retelling of the Troy legend, *Trójumanna saga*. He is currently applying to English PhD programs in hopes of continuing his studies in medieval Germanic literature.

Lynda Chouiten teaches literature in the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of Boumerdes, Algeria. She obtained her PhD in French Studies from the National University of Ireland, Galway, in March 2013. Her first book, inspired by her thesis and devoted to Isabelle Eberhardt's evolution in the North African Orient, will be published soon by Lexington Books (MD) under the title *Isabelle Eberhardt and North Africa: a Carnavalesque Mirage*. Chouiten is interested in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Orientalist literature and postcolonial writing. One of her current projects is to make minor Algerian literary figures known in the English-speaking world; it is within this scope that her translation of Anna Greki's poems falls.

Fang Dai was born in Shanghai and graduated from high school during the Cultural Revolution. He received a BA in Chinese Language and Litera-

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Dennis Ding was born in southwest China and graduated in Foreign Language and Literature from Guiyang Normal College and Guizhou University. He has studied as a visiting scholar at Oakland University in Michigan (1985–1986) and at Oxford University, England (1988). He has taught English for several years at Guizhou University, where he has been dean and chairman of Foreign Languages. His translations from English to Chinese include over one hundred works by T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, H.D., Robert Frost, W.C. Williams, Theodore Roethke, Saul Bellow, Ernest Hemingway, and a few other novelists including Agatha Christie. Many of his translations have appeared in leading Chinese publications. He has also edited textbooks of English and American literature for use in Chinese universities. He is a co-translator of *The Red Azalea: Chinese Poetry since the Cultural Revolution*.

Brett Foster is the author of two poetry collections, and his translations of poems by Cecco Angiolieri, Guido Cavalcanti, Joachim DuBellay, Persius, Miklos Radnoti, and Antoine Girard de Saint-Amant have appeared in numerous journals, including *Italian Poetry Review*, *Journal of Italian Translation*, *Yale Italian Poetry*, *Ari- on*, *Atlanta Review*, *Green Mountains Review*, *Metamorphoses*, *Partisan Review*, and *Poetry International*. He has been awarded the Willis Barnstone Translation Prize and a PEN American Center translation grant. Foster teaches Renaissance literature and creative writing at Wheaton College.

Andrew Gudgel received his BA in Chinese from The Ohio State University in 1989. He spent the next two decades-plus working for the US government, mostly in US embassies overseas, before becoming a freelance writer. He is currently a graduate student at St. John's College in Annapolis, Maryland.

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Ann Lauinger's publications include two books of poetry, *Against Butterflies* (Little Red Tree, 2013) and *Persuasions of Fall* (University of Utah, 2004), which won the Agha Shahid Ali Prize in Poetry. She is a member of the literature faculty at Sarah Lawrence College. Warm thanks to *Transference's* editor David Kutzko and the anonymous referee and to Emily Anhalt of Sarah Lawrence College for their thoughtful advice on this translation.

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Born in the city of Hiroshima, Goro Takano (高野吾朗) is an assistant professor in the Faculty of Medicine at Saga University, Japan, where he teaches English and Japanese/Western literature. He obtained his MA in American Literature from the University of Tokyo, and his PhD in English Creative Writing from the University of Hawaii at Manoa. His first novel, *With One More Step Ahead*, was published in the US by BlazeVOX in 2009. His first poetry collection, *Responsibilities of the Obsessed*, was published in the US by BlazeVOX in 2013.

Michael Stone Tangeman teaches Japanese language and literature at Denison University. He is interested in genre fiction, particularly detective fiction, and contemporary experimental prose fiction.

