



2018

Transference Vol. 6, Fall 2018

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/transference>



Part of the Chinese Studies Commons, Classical Literature and Philology Commons, Comparative Literature Commons, European Languages and Societies Commons, French and Francophone Language and Literature Commons, International and Area Studies Commons, Japanese Studies Commons, Language Interpretation and Translation Commons, Modern Languages Commons, Modern Literature Commons, Near Eastern Languages and Societies Commons, and the Poetry Commons

Recommended Citation

(2018) "*Transference* Vol. 6, Fall 2018," *Transference*: Vol. 6: Iss. 1, Article 1.
Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/transference/vol6/iss1/1>



Vol. 6
Fall 2018

Transference



Transference features poetry translated from Arabic, Chinese, French, Old French, German, Classical Greek, Latin, and Japanese into English as well as short commentaries on the process and art of translation. Selection is made by double-blind review. For submission guidelines, visit us online at:

scholarworks.wmich.edu/transference

ISSN (print): 973-2325-5072

ISSN (online): 2325-5099

© *Transference* 2018

Cover: "Site 0257 - Basswood Tree - Kalamazoo, Michigan - 5:35 a.m."
by Bill Davis

Globe image © Don Hammond/Design Pics/Corbis

Department of World Languages and Literatures
College of Arts and Sciences
Western Michigan University



Transference

An Annual Publication of the
Department of World Languages and Literatures
at Western Michigan University

Volume VI

2018

Editor-in-Chief
Molly Lynde-Recchia

Editorial Board

Jeffrey Angles	Peter Blickle
Vincent Desroches	Olivia Gabor-Peirce
Rand Johnson	David Kutzko
Mustafa Mughazy	Carlos Pimentel
Viviane Ruellot	Cynthia Running-Johnson
Rika Saito	Vivan Steemers
Xiaojun Wang	Li Xiang
Shu Yang	

Contents

Foreword	vii
Tina Z. Shan	
Four Poems by Yang Chia-hsien:	
<i>Waltzing Violence</i>	1
<i>The Drill</i>	2
<i>Breakfast on Pluto</i>	3
<i>The Keepsake</i>	4
Gregory Divers	
<i>The End of the World</i> by Jakob van Hoddis	8
<i>The Dreaming Man</i> by Jakob van Hoddis	8
<i>natura morta</i> by Yaak Karsunke	9
<i>dazzling deception</i> by Yaak Karsunke	10
Laurel Taylor	
Four Poems from <i>To Young Utari</i> by Yaeko Batchelor:	
<i>Wild stag...</i>	16
<i>Had I even...</i>	16
<i>Raised on...</i>	16
<i>My utari...</i>	16
Joshua Solomon	
Four Poems from <i>Thorny Roses</i> by Ichinohe Kenzō:	
<i>Thorny Roses</i>	19
<i>Sand Pear Petals</i>	19
<i>Rice Fish</i>	19
<i>Early Spring</i>	19
Andrew Gudgel	
Three Inscriptions for Paintings by Yao Nai:	
<i>A slanting wind...</i>	22
<i>The mist from the peaks...</i>	22
<i>Pale clouds roll...</i>	22

Nancy Naomi Carlson	
Six Poems from <i>Cargo of Stars—Coolitude</i>	
by Khal Torabully:	
<i>I refuse</i>	25
<i>I have faith in the rhythm of waves</i>	26
<i>I know the echo</i>	27
<i>No grammar can express</i>	28
<i>My cargo mother-of-pearl</i>	29
<i>Night will shower the hidden flowers</i>	29
Houssem Ben Lazreg	
<i>To the Arab Nation: After “Damn you,”</i>	33
<i>You are No Longer Worthy of Greetings</i>	
by Ahmed Fouad Negm	
John Brugaletta	
<i>Better Left Unsaid</i> by Philodemus	37
<i>Still Young</i> by Philodemus	37
<i>Le Moment Psychologique</i> by Rufinus	37
Rina Kikuchi	
Four Poems by Yoshiko Hanabusa:	
<i>The State of My Day</i>	39
<i>Fallen Blossom</i>	40
<i>Over the Winter Mountains</i>	43
<i>The Battle of Sparrows</i>	44
John DuVal	
Three Laisses from the Franco-Italian <i>Song of Roland</i> :	
23. <i>Riding by day and moonlight...</i>	49
30. <i>Ganelon grips his sword...</i>	49
314. <i>King Charles gives Amery a sword...</i>	50
Erik Lofgren	
Four Poems in Diverse Styles by Natsume Sōseki:	
[untitled]	54
<i>on a mountain lane looking at maples</i> [1]	54
<i>on a mountain lane looking at maples</i> [2]	54
<i>winter night</i>	55

Kathryn Kimball	
Three Poems from <i>The Fabric of the Universe</i>	
by Andrée Chedid:	
<i>Still Here Passing Through</i>	59
<i>Growing Old VI</i>	60
<i>Dying IV</i>	61
Zack Rogow	
Three Poems by Alfred de Musset:	
<i>To Ulric G.</i>	65
<i>I love the first shiver of winter</i>	66
<i>Venice</i>	67
Xinlu Yan	
Four Poems by Yu Xiuhua:	
<i>My Dog, Little Wu</i>	72
<i>I Crossed Half of China to Lay You</i>	73
<i>An Evening in Early Winter</i>	74
<i>I Please This World With Pains</i>	75
Susan McLean	
<i>The Woman Going Blind</i> by Rainer Maria Rilke	79
<i>Catullus, XI</i> by Catullus	80
<i>The Two Sisters of Mercy</i> by Charles Baudelaire	81
<i>Very Far from Here</i> by Charles Baudelaire	82
Armine Kotin Mortimer	
<i>So often have I dreamt of you</i> by Robert Desnos	87
<i>No, love has not died</i> by Robert Desnos	88
Louise Stoehr	
Five Poems from <i>Miss Suki, or America is not far</i>	
by Utz Rachowski:	
[untitled]	92
<i>My Tricolor</i>	93
<i>The Large Bird</i>	93
<i>Thanksgiving</i>	94
<i>The Trace</i>	95

Shelley Kristina Hu	
Four Poems from <i>The Divine Way Station</i> by Shaojun Li:	
<i>At Dusk</i>	101
<i>The Divine Way Station</i>	102
<i>Confession</i>	103
<i>Green Jade</i>	103
George Held	
<i>Martial, IV.29</i> by Martial	106
Notes on Contributors	109

Foreword

"I believe I have encountered
the mightiest inspiration
you are the streetlight in every poem"

—"The Drill" by Yang Chia-hsien,
translated by Tina Z. Shan

We are all looking for light and inspiration in some way, shape or form. This year's issue offers a multitude of voices to lead us in that direction. The voices speak of glaciers dancing and steeplejacks plunging from rooftops. They describe squawking and braying over rosy dreams, winds wheeling and galloping on the rim of a shield, and a trek across the Alps. These high-intensity moments are balanced by quiet, contemplative observations: the dry sound of yellow leaves following horse hooves, the silhouettes of rice fish, a forest of endless white birch trees.

As these jumbled references demonstrate, reading poetry requires the deliberate choice to slow down. Crammed up against each other, the sounds and images don't have enough room to breathe, to signify, to let their meaning ripple out into calmness. We invite you, therefore, to take some time off the clock, turn off your phone, and leaf through the poems and commentaries assembled here. The world (and your electronic devices) will still be there when you get back.

These translations, above and beyond attesting to the power of the written word to express and illuminate, demonstrate the critical need to do so. All human beings share that need. Whether writing of the loss of a child as a blossom fallen from the sky, the love of a dog who knows your lifelines, or pervasive post-nasal drip, these authors and their translators tell a single story of shared human experience: tragic, warm, and occasionally surprising.

We hope that these poems will provide you with matter for reflection and that they will offer some kind of inspiration in the way that they illustrate the quirks and complexities of life and language.

Molly Lynde-Recchia, Editor-in-Chief

Tina Z. Shan

Four Poems by Yang Chia-hsien

Yang Chia-hsien

Waltzing Violence

暴力華爾滋

Fracture the sun with butt of a gun
Strangle the garrulous night with strand of hair
I hold the sky and shake, stars drop their masks

Throw down lover's eyes for firewood in thick fog
Blood left on bed sheets for drinking
After the storm, I cross a disheveled grassland
And chase after countless fleeing signs

O, swollen glacier, dance!
Shed darkness, remove wig of wisdom
My bare skull pays honest salute to pain

Tina Z. Shan

Yang Chia-hsien

The Drill

鍛鍊

I believe I have encountered
the mightiest inspiration
you are the streetlight in every poem
rainy season, fleeting golden crow
corona of a clear night's moon, you
are the father of them all

I settle with delay, settle
with quarantine (did I give it to you or are you
the disease)-like isolation
I must have been calm
calmly I touch you once, then
I cave in

Caught off guard by a flower
passing through veranda, angels of green wings
a most ordinary alleyway
the noodle cart you once pointed to
suddenly, all turn into broken creases
of a worn treasure map, rustling
glimpses of landscape

I even suspect my rebirth
before our next reunion
coal dust left in my hair
thorns stuck between scapulae
I am not afraid of anything (am I)
even if you threw yourself into my arms, you
a sharp blade

Tina Z. Shan

Yang Chia-hsien

Breakfast on Pluto

冥王星早餐

Cheeks baked to perfection
Your waist of thick velvet
Eyes brimming with honey
What else
hides under that napkin
Why does water vibrate in the cup
Room contracts to the most minute
until our kneecaps push into each other
compressed into
another structure

All you see is me
like Pluto ever
sensitive to light
On the lone dining table of
this dwarf planet
you come
you cut me open
Everything that gives way to the blade is yours

Tina Z. Shan

Yang Chia-hsien

The Keepsake

信物

Do not give me
what I have given you
Time stops and starts off again
When summer returns
fireflies and gun smoke take turns
What you refuse to give me
I have, after all, already
redoubled and given you

Those old singers you like
have aged more. The bay we have
yet to see
is made smaller again
Recurring typhoon signal eight
irregular earthquakes
In the floating world
several bullets once deep
rise from my chest

Does your old room still
offer the view of lamps
gradually fading out at day-
break along the seawall?
You painted this picture for me
once in a letter, taking unchanging
scenery as keepsake
You moved out of that room
the keepsake keeps true, but the sender
is no longer found

You who are afraid of old age
have aged
Have you regifted to time
what I gave you?
And what time gave you
you have also generously given
me ahead of time

Commentary

Yang Chia-hsien is a poet, essayist and literary critic born in Kaohsiung, Taiwan in 1978. Her first poetry collection, *The Civilization of Holding One's Breath* (屏息的文明, 2003), was published shortly after she graduated college. After earning her master's and Ph.D. degrees in Chinese Literature from National Taiwan University, Yang was appointed as the writer-in-residence at National Tsing Hua University, where she currently teaches. With the exception of "Breakfast on Pluto," the poems translated here appear in her 2016 collection *The Golden Crow* (金鳥), which takes its title from the Chinese mythological creature that is thought to inhabit and represent the sun. Among these poems, "Waltzing Violence" was also previously published in *The Civilization of Holding One's Breath*.

Yang is one of the most iconic Taiwanese poets of the internet age. While in college, she self-published over 230 poems and 90 prose pieces on her blog, which achieved over 260 thousand views within three years of its establishment in 1998. While Yang is now widely recognized as a public intellectual for her active engagement with social issues and the happenings of the Chinese literary world, her poems are intimate explorations of the personal. Heartbreaks and losses are abundant in her work, as are literary allusions to both Chinese and non-Chinese traditions. Yang's verses, while showing influence of classical and modernist Chinese poetry, burst with emotions of contemporary urban life.

The subtlety of Yang's layered language and the agility with which she plays with symbols that have accumulated weight throughout literary history are both what moves one to translate, and what frustrates the translator. In "The Drill," for example, the phrase "angels of green wings" makes a reference to song poet Liu Yong (柳永), who affectionately recalls his lover at the sight of green birds playing with each other. The popularity of Liu Yong's poem made these green-winged birds a symbol for lovers. In Chinese mythology, these birds are also thought to be messengers of the Queen Mother of the West (西王母). Yang places the "angels of green wings" under the veranda, a common architectural feature of Taiwanese cities and often inhabited by

pigeons, the green-winged messengers of modern time. As a result, Yang is able to restage Liu Yong's reminiscence to amplify her own emotions for the addressee of the poem. In this short phrase, Yang uses a snippet of mundane urban life to make the classical move of borrowing a predecessor's sentiments. As the translator, I can only hope that my reader will have read Liu Yong, and have the patience to read my commentary to fully understand the intricacy of Yang's composition.

Another example of how layers of allusion and meaning are packed into Yang's words appears in the final stanza of "Breakfast on Pluto." In the phrase 迎刃而解 ("to separate when meeting the blade"), the final character 解 *jiě* means to unravel, dissect, solve, understand and more. Here, Yang uses an idiom that originally describes the ease with which the bamboo splits at the force of a blade to describe both the hurt and the passion felt by both parties of a relationship. Words such as "unravel," "solve," or "separate" fail to capture the willingness with which a lover sometimes meets the blade. I choose "give way" in the hope of retaining agency for the narrator of the poem, and to emphasize the readiness with which she opens herself up for the knife that is her lover, and the power she holds in such an act.

Source texts:

Yang, Chia-hsien. "Baoli huaerzi" ["Waltzing Violence"], "Duanlian" ["The Drill"], and "Xinwu" ["The Keepsake"]. *Jin Wu [The Golden Crow]*, Muma Wenhua, pp. 46, 40, 131.

———. "Mingwangxing zaocan" ["Breakfast on Pluto"]. *The Merit Times*, 10 April 2013, p. 15.

Gregory Divers
The End of the World

Jakob van Hoddiss
Weltende

From the pointy head of the burgher flies his hat.
The air everywhere resounds with shrieks and cries.
Steeplejacks plunge from rooftops and go splat.
And on the coasts – one reads – floodwaters rise.

The storm rages on, wild seas hurl vessels
Onto land, waves threaten through dams to rip.
Most everyone has a post-nasal drip.
And trains are toppling from the trestles.

The Dreaming Man

Der Träumende

to Kay Heinrich Nebel

Blue-green night, the softly muted color glows.
Is he threatened by crude armor and a stream of spears?
Is it Satan's advancing minions that he fears?
Those yellow flecks swimming in the shadows
Are the eyes of gigantic illusory steeds.
His pale body is naked, it's protection he needs.
An insipid pink pus oozes from the furrows.

Gregory Divers
natura morta

Yaak Karsunke
natura morta

for Ingrid

three peaches & a nutmeg melon
on a white plate
with pale green trim

between the stones the grass
traces the old ground
plan: where the tower once
stood the wind now
fans a fig tree

the old end rhymes flash through my mind
“the meadow is a treasure trove
on the fringes of the olive grove”
& you break white bread for hearty red wine

Gregory Divers
dazzling deception

Yaak Karsunke
blendwerk

in the glamour of the enlightenment
dragons fairies & water nymphs grew pale
a tiny tallow candle blew
out their lifelight

in the presence of sooty
petroleum lamps
miracles lost their color
in the ever-brightening darkness

nighttime was conquered
by gaslight & incandescent mantles
& the glistening
arc lamps

progress raised
its two-faced head
& began to speak
with forked tongues

the light of the enlightenment shined
brighter than a thousand suns
in the alamogordo desert & then
over two japanese cities

later fish screamed
in the market of osaka
and the fishing boat "lucky dragon
number eight" had

run out of luck.

Jakob van Hoddis: *Weltende / The End of the World*

German poetry was never the same after the publication of “Weltende” in 1911, and its opening line—*Dem Bürger fliegt vom spitzen Kopf der Hut*—is etched in the mind of countless readers. Jakob van Hoddis stands as one of the earliest German expressionist poets. The significance of this poem is reflected in the fact that it opens *Menschheitsdämmerung* [*The Dawn of Humanity*], the seminal anthology edited and published by Kurt Pinthus in 1919. “The End of the World” is marked by a startling clash between form and content. Its formal structure followed a long tradition in German poetry, but its ominous yet magical and at times even utterly banal tone ushered in something startling new. The title suggests an undeniable *zeitgeist* triggered not just by the approach of Halley’s Comet which, for many, meant the end of life on earth, but also by newspaper reports of other catastrophes including both storms on the coast of the North Sea and a train crash in North Carolina.

Translating rhymed, formally structured poetry presents numerous challenges. The first line adds to those challenges by beginning with the dative case; as a result, rules of German word order dictate that the subject first appears at the end of the line. I have adopted this inverted word order in both the first line and the conclusion of the sixth thereby creating friction between the pronounced formal structure and the outrageous content. The original by van Hoddis employs an *abba cdcd* rhyme scheme in the two quatrains; I have reversed the pattern with *abab cddc*. I also took a small liberty in line five. A quick internet search on the train wreck in North Carolina produced the headline “Pullmans Thrown from Trestle into Creek.” Trestles became an obvious choice for a rhyme word, especially because it evokes a scene from bygone days of the early 20th century, just as steeplejacks in line three. Therefore, I created the vessels in line five, believing such is plausible even if not explicitly stated in the original. I have, however, retained the *enjambement* employed by van Hoddis in lines five and six. I also chose the cognate “burger” in line one for its association with

bourgeoisie and to accentuate the smug class consciousness of this man with the pointy head who, by losing his hat, loses his middle-class respectability. One further note on vocabulary: “The storm” at the beginning of line five is a subtle reference to *Der Sturm*, an avant garde literary magazine published in Berlin by Herwarth Walden to which van Hoddiss regularly contributed between 1911 and 1914.

For me, the charm of this poem lies in pairing the various catastrophes with the “post-nasal drip” in the penultimate line. Once again, I had my rhyme word and then worked backwards to “rip” concluding line six. Jakob van Hoddiss packed a great deal into these eight lines of verse. Much of what followed in the next decade of German poetry would have been unthinkable without his “The End of the World.”

Jakob van Hoddiss: *Der Träumende* / *The Dreaming Man*

This poem is based on a painting by the artist Kay Heinrich Nebel, to whom the poem is dedicated. The title most likely comes from the title of the painting, which the artist had given as a present to his friend the poet. As with the majority of Nebel’s early artwork, this painting has long since gone lost.

The night is a favorite subject matter in the poetry of Jakob van Hoddiss. The dark of night offers solace, because for van Hoddiss daytime represented hours of harsh sunlight. And even though he sought refuge in the darkness, the night as portrayed here could likewise be threatening. In “The Dreaming Man” the colors of night are softly muted, yet this blue-green color is eerie. The title suggests a dreamscape, but for van Hoddiss the world of dreams was quite real. His is a world of fear, trepidation and vulnerability where the shadows of night create portentous illusions.

I altered the rhyme scheme slightly, opting for *abbacca* rather than the original *abbacbc*. The first two rhyme words—“glows” and “spears”—follow directly from the original. I was able to remain true to the content in the remaining lines while finding suitable phrasing and the necessary rhymes. I chose “steeds” instead of horses in line five, a rhyme word which led to “it’s protection he needs” in line six in place of the original

which literally reads “without weirs”—a low dam or dike across a river.

This poem was first published in the Berlin literary magazine *Die Aktion* in 1911 and is also included in *Weltende* (1918), the only book-length collection published during the lifetime of Jakob van Hoddis. Perhaps most significantly, “Der Träumende” was reprinted in both the original and a French translation by Hans Arp in André Breton’s *Anthologie de l’Humeur noir* [*Anthology of Black Humor*] in 1939, a fact which underscores how even though van Hoddis is primarily seen as an early expressionist poet, he is also considered a forerunner of surrealism. One can easily imagine how Breton would have been intrigued by the “insipid pink pus” in the final line.

Due to the allusion to Satan’s minions in line three, one could argue that this poem anticipates a fascination with Biblical and especially Christian themes that surfaced later in the poetry of van Hoddis. In fact, during 1912 he even briefly converted to Christianity. Born as Hans Davidsohn to Jewish parents in 1887, his pseudonym is an anagram of the family name. In 1942 Jakob van Hoddis was deported to Poland and killed in an extermination camp, most likely Sobibór.

Yaak Karsunke: *natura morta* / *natura morta*

The title, from the Italian, means still life, and the opening stanza reads as a straightforward description of fruit on a plate, a common theme for a still life painting. The second stanza, however, shifts the focus to an outdoor scene and a place with visible traces of where an old, perhaps even ancient edifice once stood; in fact, the allusion to a tower possibly suggests a castle. The third and final stanza introduces both the lyrical persona and the addressee, Ingrid Karsunke, the wife of the poet to whom the poem is dedicated. In its entirety, then, the poem presents a still life within an outdoor scene where a picnic takes place. Hence, with the title and the opening stanza, one could read the entire poem as a still life within a still life. An unmistakable stillness permeates the first two stanzas with movement limited to a light wind fanning the leaves of a fig tree. The only true action is saved until the final line when the poem’s addressee

literally breaks bread, an act that serves as a prelude to what is left unstated: the raising of two glasses of robust red wine in a toast.

While the opening stanza was a straightforward translation from German to English, the second stanza raised a few questions with word choice and line breaks. I chose “ground/plan” over the alternatives layout or plot not only for its connotations but also because the line break allowed a more strategic placement of the colon in the third line. The final stanza, however, was quite unique in that the rhymed couplet in the middle of the quatrain presented its own special challenges. In the original, the two lines literally read “a meadow’s edge/ borders the olive grove” with the German verb *säumen* denoting not only border, but also the hem or seam of an article of clothing. I took the liberty of adding “treasure trove” to rhyme with “olive grove” and changed the verb to the noun “fringes” to enhance associations with a garment. My changes and additions do not deviate from the sense of the original and create an appropriate rhythmic flow to the couplet. Instead of “the old end rhymes occur to me” or “come to mind” I chose “flash through my mind” to create a sudden, lightning-like thought. Furthermore, “mind” provides a near rhyme with “wine” and brackets the rhymed couplet. Thus, even though not identical to that of the original, I am able to provide a rhyme scheme for the entire final stanza.

All my translations of the poetry of Yaak Karsunke are done in consultation with the poet. And in this case, Herr Karsunke heartily endorsed the liberties I took in the final stanza.

Yaak Karsunke: *blendwerk / dazzling deception*

The poem “*dazzling deception*” is noteworthy for two features commonly found in the poetry of Yaak Karsunke. First and foremost, this is a political poem and reflects the poet’s opposition to nuclear weapons (as well as nuclear power), a position he has held for well over a half century. Secondly, this poem can be read as a commentary on history, specifically, a wry assessment of what is perceived as progress. The first line notwithstanding, the prevailing theme of this poem is not the Enlightenment, but

instead light itself. Even though the poem in its entirety reads as an historical overview, the text seems to move from quatrain to quatrain making an historical hop, skip and jump from the late seventeenth to the mid-twentieth century. Moreover, we as readers slowly realize a sense of loss for humankind with each level of invasion of light into our lives. Throughout the poem I tried, where possible, to make vocabulary choices that reflect the historical era depicted, for instance the “tiny tallow candle” in the first stanza (with tiny instead of small for the added alliterative effect). The prepositional phrase “in the presence” opening stanza two adds a spiritual element (see Psalm 16:11) associated with miracles. Likewise, the vocabulary in stanza three signals that we have reached the nineteenth century.

As to the message of this poem, the fourth stanza is the fulcrum, and the word “progress” takes on new meaning with its “two-faced head” and “forked tongues.” Stanza five, then, reads as an explication of the end-effect of progress brought about by the Enlightenment. The italicized “brighter than a thousand suns” is, of course, not only a reference to a verse from the *Bhagavad Gita* (XI, 12) but also a quote of what J. Robert Oppenheimer recalled while witnessing the fireball at the Trinity nuclear test in 1945. Although light is the dominant theme through the first three stanzas, Karsunke employs synesthesia in the penultimate stanza as the screaming fish add an acoustic component with reference to the catch of a Japanese fishing boat contaminated by fallout from the Castle Bravo thermonuclear test at the Bikini Atoll in March of 1954.

Source texts:

Hoddis, Jakob van. “Weltende” and “Der Träumende.” *Dichtungen und Briefe*, edited by Regina Nörtemann, Arche, 1987, pp. 15, 27.

Karsunke, Yaak. “natura morta.” *gespräch mit dem stein*, Rotbuch, 1992, p. 28.

——— “blendwerk.” *RHEIN! Zeitschrift für Worte, Bilder, Klang*, Nr. 2, Oktober 2011, S. 52.

Laurel Taylor
Four Poems from *To Young Utari*^{K i n}

Yaeko Batchelor
若きウタリに

Wild stag, doe, and fawn
all chased across field and plain
to their bitter end

Had I even a narrow field, I'd keep them
buck, doe, and fawn
though they be bound by a shrine-red fence

Raised on the ancient^{l e g e n d g o d s} yukara-kamui^{s a p o}
my sister
I wish you were still here

My utari^{k i n}, the shore at last draws near!
Pray and into your oars
pour strength!

Commentary

These four waka are excerpted from Yaeko Batchelor's 1931 collection, *Wakaki utari ni* [*To Young Uтары*]. Yaeko Batchelor (1889–1962), born Mukai Yaeko, Ainu name Fuchi, was a member of the indigenous Ainu population of northern Japan, born in what is now Usu, Hokkaido. She lived through the tumultuous period in which the Ainu minority was being forcibly subjugated and assimilated by the Japanese Empire, a process which included the deliberate elimination of Ainu culture and language. Batchelor lost her parents at a young age and was adopted by John Batchelor, a British Anglican missionary who was traveling in Hokkaido and attempting to convert the indigenous population, and his wife, Louisa. Yaeko herself was trained in England as an evangelist, and lived out her final years preaching at a church in Usu.

Wakaki utari ni, Batchelor's only published collection of waka, utilizes her unique position at the confluence of three cultures to express her cultural identity through traditional Japanese forms. Though she maintains the traditional 5-7-5-7-7 meter of waka, her verses contain a mix of Ainu language and Japanese, and their blending of allegory, personal memory, and didactic preaching demonstrate her sorrow for her people as well as her evangelical background and her attempt to give the Ainu guidance toward a better future. All four excerpted poems come from her first and longest chapter, which opens completely in Ainu and gradually shifts to Japanese. The first two excerpted poems fall in sequence and demonstrate her allegorical voice, while the third poem concerns her family. The final poem utilizes traditional Ainu imagery to deliver a message of hope.

Batchelor's use of comingling Japanese and Ainu provides an ethical dilemma for the translator. In the book, the all-Ainu and mixed-language poems are heavily footnoted and explicated, though certain words are eventually left untouched with the assumption that the reader has learned them. In other sections, Japanese terms are marked with an Ainu reading above them or vice versa, as with “^{s a p o}sister” in the third poem. To the Japanese reader, thanks to the katakana writing system in

which these Ainu words are rendered, it is immediately clear that these words are foreign. I wanted to create a similar visual cue for the Anglo-reader, even at the peril of exoticizing these words. They are marked as other in the Japanese, and moreover, their meanings are opaque because Ainu and Japanese are not related languages; there are very few words a Japanese reader could recognize without further translation, and so it seems right that the words appear equally strange to the Anglo reader's eyes.

At the same time, however, in these excerpts the Ainu words are scant enough that footnoting them feels equally a disservice. A footnote draws the reader's attention away from the sound and content of the poem and removes them from the reading experience, and with poems as short as waka, the loss of attention is even more marked. Following Batchelor's example, I have created super-scripts instead, glossing Ainu words with their English equivalents. In this way, the reader can experience the sound of an Ainu term as well as quickly reference its meaning.

As to the waka form, though many Anglo translators break these poems into five lines to mimic the 5-7-5-7-7 meter, I've often felt that this creates too much visual distortion in what is otherwise a continuous line, and I feel this even more strongly with Batchelor's particularly prosaic voice. Interestingly, Batchelor's publisher chose to insert spaces between each metered five or seven, but this seems to be a means to make the Ainu language waka easier to read rather than serving any poetic purpose, especially when some of the lines in the complete collection are broken mid-word while others break after the end of a five or a seven. After toying with various forms, I settled on a three-line poem as a compromise, a waka translation method which also has precedence. Though these may visually appear more similar to many translations of haiku/hokku, I feel they better mimic Batchelor's voice.

Source text:

Batchelor, Yaeko. *Wakaki utari ni*. Edited by Sasaki Nobutsuna, Chikuhakukai, 1931, pp. 20, 23, 31.

Joshua Solomon
Four Poems from *Thorny Roses*

Ichinohe Kenzō
茨の花コ

Thorny Roses

Growing curbside, sprayed with grit,
unbending, thorny roses bloom...

Sand Pear Petals

The cuckoo bird
is still calling out at the dreary, dismal sky!

The sand pear petals all,
he says, were scattered by the nighttime showers...

Rice Fish

As rice fish drift up,
 upon the sand below
 are cast their silhouettes.

Early Spring

Beneath the hedge of cypress
butterburs sprouting, oh, so soon

Commentary

“Dialect poetry” [*hōgenshi*] adds a complex, but difficult flavor to the literary history of Aomori prefecture, Japan. Deliberately crafted as a new genre by Fukushi Kōjirō (1889–1946) as a vehicle for his regionalist philosophy, it was taken up by a small cohort of students including Takagi Kyōzō (1903–1987), Ueki Yōsuke (1914–1971), and Ichinohe Kenzō (also, Ichinohe Rintarō, 1899–1979). The work of these three men has been canonized in the pages of *Tsugaru no shi: Hōgen shishū* [*The poetry of Tsugaru: Poems in dialect*], first published in 1964, and now in its fifth printing.

The poems translated here are excerpts from the final section of Ichinohe’s “Neputa” (reproduced in the volume above) called *Bara no hanako* [*Thorny Roses*]. *Thorny Roses* is comprised of seven short poems, five of which take the form of two short lines and focus on the poet’s encounter with a floral scene (e.g. “Early Spring”). The length and content may evoke traditional haiku in the reader’s mind, but the poems formally differ in line construction, use of punctuation and space on the page, and inclusion of a title. Although similar to haiku, they should instead be read as vernacular free-verse works [*kōgo jiyū shi*] written for a regionally-limited audience familiar with the poet’s choice of imagery and idiosyncratic language.

Ichinohe was a devotee of meter, prosody, and form. Traditionally, Japanese verse was almost always composed in units of five to seven morae; for example, a haiku is made up of three units of five, seven, and five morae. While these examples do not fit metrically into any standard units of five or seven morae on the page, when read aloud in a vernacular style (employing the “inner rhythm” of the language) they often approach the frame of standardized metrical units (“outer rhythm”). For example, the first line of “Sand Pear Petals” reads: *ku-wa-[tsu]-ko-o-a-ma-n-da*, an ungainly nine morae. When read aloud, however, the first two morae **ku** and **wa** converge into the single morpheme **kwa**, as the subject marker **a** blends into the concluding **o** of the prior noun, creating a **wa** sound. This lowers the overall mora count to a familiar seven. The latter half of the

second line can similarly be read fluently with two condensed morphemes, as *so-ra-sa-nae-de-rwa-ne*, creating another seven-mora unit.

It's important to focus on prosody when translating Ichinohe, as one can easily become too entangled by issues of vernacular speech. The representational techniques he employed were first introduced by Fukushima and refined by Takagi, and involve a general reversal of the roles of kanji and furigana (phonetic reading guides), in addition to deploying a mixture of katakana and hiragana syllabaries for tonal (rather than semantic) effect. Typically, furigana are supplemental, either acting as reading aids, or providing nuance to the interpretation of the Chinese characters, which represent something of the main body of the text. In these poems, however, the furigana represent the phonetic body of the text, and the kanji are supplied to parse local language potentially unfamiliar to the reader. For example, with the exception of “sand pears,” all of the flora and fauna named are either written in a heavily accented style or given a regional moniker.

Taking these two central aspects—spoken prosody and vernacular language—into account, I deployed several translation strategies. The unfamiliar vernacular vocabulary and accent is slightly alluded to in the oral quality of language chosen and some unexpected grammatical inversions and vocabulary choices. I decided that in this case relying on strongly accented English (à la Robert Burns) or the fabrication of an artificial “dialect” would be inappropriate, as the language used herein, while unfamiliar and at times slightly ambiguous, is not particularly alienating. At the same time, I try to preserve the strong rhythmic quality of the original text, and use mid-line caesuras to replicate the feeling of the linked syllabic units in the original.

Source text:

Ichinohe, Kenzō. “Thorny Roses.” *Tsugaru no shi: Hōgen shishū*, Tsugaru shobō, 1974 [1964], pp. 32–38.

Andrew Gudel
Three Inscriptions for Paintings

Yao Nai
題畫（三首）

I.

A slanting wind blows rain past the wooded knoll,
Myriad clouds flow like water.
Lean against the railing to once more see the depths among the peaks.
It's dark, as if the horizon realized a boat was returning.

II.

The mist from the peaks presses on the drooping forest;
The dry sound of yellow leaves follows the horse's hooves.
A sudden shower would make touring the mountain even slower.
The farmers' houses end well before the valley.

III.

Pale clouds roll among distant mountains,
And the empty space representing the Yangtze is long.
Autumn comes easy in Moling,
Making not only the woods frosty.

Commentary

Yao Nai (1731–1815) was born in Tongcheng in China's Anhui Province. In 1763, he not only passed, but came first in the Qing Dynasty's national-level examination. Yao served in several imperial government bureaux during his life; he was also one of the early members of the Tongcheng School of writing, which stressed natural, straightforward prose and maintaining harmony between theme and form.

These poems were originally written about—and possibly actually on—three different paintings. Literati often added their own inscriptions to artwork as a sign of friendship with the artist, or to display their personal taste in art and their poetic talents. As a result, a painting might accrue a number of inscriptions over decades or centuries as it passed through the hands of a chain of literati-collectors.

In the case of these three inscriptions, the poems have become separated from their paintings and therefore lack the context the accompanying visual images would have provided. This forced me to pay close attention to the emotional nuances of the words in my attempt to convey the overall image created by the poem.

In addition, each poem posed different problems to solve in the process of translating. For example, the returning boat in the last line of the first poem can only be assumed to be a ferry or river-boat that departed earlier in the day. This, in turn, implies that the poem is set in the late afternoon or early evening. Yet the last line also uses the word “as if” or “like” (如), which leaves open the question whether the darkness is actually caused by the depths mentioned in the line above or by the lateness of the hour. After several days of struggling, I decided to leave the translation equally ambiguous and let the reader decide.

The third line of the second poem provided another kind of challenge. It contains two common verbs, “to see” (看) and “travel/road” (行), both of which had possible alternative meanings within the text. Choosing between alternatives took several days of comparing translations until I found the one I felt best conveyed the sense of the line.

The last poem posed the most challenges of the three. The second line uses the term (空影), literally “empty image.” Though unstated, this implies that the river in the painting is represented by a blank, unpainted area of the silk or paper. Yao also displays a flash of humor here, in that the long negative image of the river is a play on the meaning of Yangtze: “Long River.”

Finally, the last line of the third poem contained the deceptively simple yet ambiguous construction (不獨為), which literally means “not only makes.” The problem is that the phrase can equally mean “makes not only.” Once again, it took several days of comparing alternatives before I finally settled on the latter.

Source text:

Yao, Nai 姚鼐. *Xibaoxuan shiwen ji* 惜抱軒詩文集 [*The Poetry and Prose of Xibao Studio*]. Shanghai Guji Chubanshe, 2008, pp. 578, 586.

Nancy Naomi Carlson

Khal Torabully

Six Poems from *Cargo of Stars* — *Coolitude*

I refuse

Je refuse

I refuse

to leave for a dream that takes too long—
the schooner falters
and I've neither sky nor vertigo.

But I speak to the void.

We're from an ancient home
where goldsmiths hoarded their loot
in a large ebony trunk.
Their eyes, narrow caskets for jewels,
parried dubious suns.

A cutlass at their back,
bearers of waves with each backwash,
they refused
to leave on your boats of spume—
and leaving and nevertheless
our only fate
leaving is all at once
the balance owed by our roots.

Nancy Naomi Carlson

Khal Torabully

I have faith in the rhythm of waves Je crois au rythme des vagues

for Nazila

I have faith in the rhythm of waves,
in canticles of salt, *qawal* of ocean froth;
the sea will claim that her dancing alone
will make seashells sprout feet.
The land will claim that incense and praise
will generate legs on a seahorse.
I have faith in the tabla of swells
in the storms' strong *ravannes*.
For the cosmic cadence
of midnight poems,
the ocean turns sega, flow's motion is crazed
when shuddering blue ignites:
the wave was a woman of fingers and soul.

Nancy Naomi Carlson

Khal Torabully

I know the echo

Je connais l'écho

for Jeanne and Edmond Masson

I know the echo, I in-grave the sea,
I chase after dazzle, I spellcast algae.
And I don't know, I no longer know
if the horizon absents flesh.

I absurd the burden, I squander silence,
I cover skins, I square white stars.

I lose the spume, I lose the loam,
and all the moorings of scents
are only loosed for the skins of our love.

Nancy Naomi Carlson

Khal Torabully

No grammar can express

Pas de grammaire pour dire

No grammar can express
the blood of men.

I chew my syllables of flesh
which splash the sea.

Even the thunder has turned
beguiling and sealed
like the mouth of the sky.

And I far-fling the spice
annoyed by the lookout-less night
and fervor the mouth
which kisses me until midnight words,
but I keep the sun to rub out
the stars on musty maps,

for it's blood that my temple pounds.

Nancy Naomi Carlson

Khal Torabully

My cargo of mother-of-pearl

Mes tonnages de nacre

My cargo of mother-of-pearl decks out the sand
to seep in deeper than light
and erupt as dust.

Without banning my banners
and breaking wave after wave
I'll ascend again for as long as God.

*Night will shower the
hidden flowers*

*La nuit comblera les
fleurs cachées*

Night will shower the hidden flowers
with shade's long embrace:
what gathering place for exploded stars
among endangered spaces?

So our hearts may be exposed
a bit further than our senses,
I'll go myself to spill your blood
as far as the Gorgons' magnificent eyes.

Commentary

It is hard to imagine the suffering of indentured laborers, yet Khal Torabully, a prize-winning francophone writer from Mauritius, has devoted his entire career to giving voice to these workers. Torabully has re-visioned, re-imagined, and re-defined the derogatory term “coolie” to encompass the richness of transcultural exchanges (geographical, biological, and cultural) that enrich the world. He coined the term “coolitude” in much the same way that Aimé Césaire coined the term “negritude,” imbuing the term with dignity and pride, as well as a strong and resilient cultural identity and language. Author of some 25 books, including more than a thousand poems that constitute his “poetics of coolitude,” the overwhelming majority of these works are unknown to the English-speaking world.

Born in 1956, Khal Torabully is a poet, essayist, film director, and semiologist. His father was a sailor from Trinidad, and his mother came from a long line of migrants who came to Mauritius from India and Malaysia. Mauritius is considered part of Africa, located off its southeast coast in the Indian Ocean. Originally a Dutch colony, it passed into the hands of the French, then the British, before finally becoming independent in 1968. Half a million Indian indentured workers passed through the Aapravasi Ghat (immigration depot) in Port Louis in the years between 1849 to 1923, with many staying to work in the sugar cane fields as a cheap source of labor, since slavery was abolished in 1834, and others being shipped off to former British colonies around the globe. What is particularly horrifying is that these indentured workers were transported in the same ships that had once carried slaves. In 2014, UNESCO officially approved the International Indentured Labour Route Project, and Torabully is a key player in this project that offers a new paradigm for the encounter of “memories and imaginaries,” which UNESCO has recognized as “vectors of peace.”

Torabully’s knowledge of Mauritian Creole (his native language, though he likes to say poetry is his mother tongue), French, English, as well as some Urdu, Arabic, and Chinese, contributes to the vibrancy, playfulness, and inventiveness of his language. Khal invented his “poetics of coolitude” because

he felt ordinary language could not do justice to describing the suffering of indentured workers whose indomitable spirit could not be dampened by the harsh conditions of transoceanic travel and indenture. Humor found in Torabully's language serves to underscore the tragedy that pervades the texts. Even the word *cale* (ship's cargo hold) in the French title of the book from which these poems come (*Cale d'étoiles*) is wordplay for his name, "Khal," pronounced the same way. Indeed, the greatest challenge in translating Torabully is dealing with the word play and neologisms that are found on almost every page of his work. It is fun to let these difficult passages and words have the run of my unconscious mind, and it is truly a thrill each time I solve one of these puzzles. For example, in "I know the echo," Torabully takes nouns and uses them as verbs. *Gravure* (engraving) becomes *je gravure*. I could not translate this phrase as "I engrave," because it would have sounded perfectly normal in English and would have lost the strangeness of the French. I ended up inventing the verb "I in-grave" to highlight the wordplay, with a wink to "engrave." In the same poem, Torabully converts the noun (and sometimes adjective) *absurd* (absurd) into "j'absurde le poids" (a verb), which I rendered in English as "I absurd the burden." Using the same technique, Torabully transforms the adjective *lointaine* (distant/remote) into the verb phrase *je lointaine l'épice* which I translated as "I far-fling the spice."

Music is deeply ingrained in the richness of Torabully's language. One of the translation challenges I have faced is to honor this music without sacrificing meaning. Using my ear and my knowledge of linguistics, I map the rhythm and sounds of the original text (assonance and alliteration), looking for the most salient patterns that most characterize a particular poem. I find it hard to ignore rhymes (slant or pure) at the end of lines, and I also pay attention to Torabully's predilection for ending each poem with a sound that echoes one from the same line, or one or two above. I try to approximate sounds (though not necessarily exact sounds, as some do not exist in English) in my translations. For example, in "I refuse," I noticed that six of the French lines ended in the same stressed French vowel of *i* (which doesn't quite exist in English), with the *i* of the last line echoing the ones that came before, as follows: *partir, hésite,*

vertige, *vide*, *partir*, and *racines*. My translation maintains a pattern of the sound **oo** with the following words: “refuse,” “loot,” “jewels,” “refused,” “spume,” and the final “roots.”

One of my favorite aspects of translation is learning about cultures and customs unlike my own. For example, from “I have faith in the rhythm of waves,” I learned that a *qawal* is a popular Indian song, and *ravanne* refers to a large tambourine-like drum made from goat skin, used to play Mauritian Sega music. I chose to keep these non-French words in the original, to add a Mauritian flavor to the text.

Source text:

Torabully, Khal. *Cale d'étoiles—Coolitude*. Éditions Azalées, 1992, pp. 56, 64, 84, 96, 100, 103.

Housseem Ben Lazreg

Ahmed Fouad Negm

To the Arab Nation: الى الأمة العربية: بعد "الظز" لم يعد يليق بك التحية !
After "Damn you," You Are No Longer Worthy of Greetings

To the Arab nation: After "Damn you," you are no longer worthy of greetings

To the Arab nation: How is Palestine; a populace without a homeland, a
homeland without an identity

How is Lebanon; a nightclub with wooden chairs and a sectarian table

How is Syria; the rapacious knives of barbarism contending for her

How is Iraq; the land of deliciously free death rides?

How is Jordan; no sound or image and the focus is on local issues

How is Egypt; the post-revolution bride, banged by the Islamists

How is Libya; a country turned into military camps and tribal ideas

How is Tunisia; a clown¹ became its president on the pretext of democracy

How is Morocco; a new member in a Gulf Council in the name of monarchy

How is Somalia; only God the most knowledgeable knows about it

How is Sudan; a nation's land and bounty were slashed in half in the name
of freedom

How is Yemen; its president Saleh is abroad, its wicked are apostate, and
its people are a forgotten cause

How is Sultanate Oman; a country you honestly hear about only in the
weather forecast

How is Saudi Arabia; a dates-exporting country burdened with Wahabi² ideas

How is United Arab Emirates; a beautiful secret vault where all secret plots
are woven

How is Kuwait; an Arab state that became part of the United States of America

How is Bahrain; a dying populace absent from fiery speeches

How is Qatar; the godfather of revolutions, the dagger of betrayal, and the
kitchen of imperialism

To the Arab nation: After "Damn you," you are no longer worthy of greetings

¹ A reference to the previous Tunisian president Moncef Marzouki.

² Wahabism is an Islamic ultraconservative doctrine and religious movement founded by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab in the Arabian Peninsula in the 18th century.

You are no longer worthy of anything but squawking and braying over your
rosy dreams
You are no longer worthy of anything but a carpet trampled by western feet
You are no longer worthy of the revolutions' slogans when your Arab
Spring³ became a staged play
You are no longer worthy of freedom when all your demonstration chants
turned to blood
It is no longer appropriate for you to scream in the name of Islam while you
are originally accused of terrorism
It is no longer appropriate for you, O' nation, whose summits are conspiracies,
Whose speech is nonsense, and whose decisions are fake
You are no longer worthy of greetings, O' nation, who buried alive its
dignity and Arabism.

³ The Arab Spring is a revolutionary wave of demonstrations, protests, riots in North Africa and the Middle East that began on 17 December 2010 in Tunisia with the Tunisian Revolution.

Commentary

Ahmed Fouad Negm (May 22, 1929, December 3, 2013) is an Egyptian poet who is famous for the use of slang/vernacular Arabic in his poems. His words inspired many generations of Egyptians, mainly the working class. His poetry acted as a vehicle for radical social and political change and was shaped by experiences of poverty and prison. Negm's poems became a rallying chant for many protesters during the Egyptian revolution especially his poem "Who Are They, and Who Are We?" Negm's constant clash with the authorities led to his imprisonment for 18 years under Nasser and Sadat. His first collection titled *Pictures from Life and Prison* was published in vernacular Egyptian Arabic and became famous after famous Egyptian writer and journalist Suhair El-Alamawi introduced his book while he was still in prison. An anthology of Negm's poems was published in 2005 by the publisher Dar Miret. In 2007, Negm was appointed a UN "ambassador of the poor." He also won the 2013 Prince Claus Award for "Unwavering Integrity."

In this poem, Negem voices his anger and disenchantment over the outcomes of the Arab Revolutions or the so-called "Arab Spring." He curses and lampoons Arabs for their failures in building and piloting successful democratic movements that would help them regain and reclaim their dignity and unity. He frets about the destiny of the Arab nations and denounces harshly the socio-political conditions in each country separately while employing a language full of puns, obscenities and rhyming slang.

Translating this poem into English posits some challenges, notably on the cultural and political levels. On the lexical level, the famous expression طر is an old Ottoman word that means salt. In the Arabic dialects, it gained a different meaning and became associated with a particularly strong and vulgar way of saying "I don't care." This term was used several times by Libyan colonel Khadafy in his fiery speeches against the USA and Great Britain. I chose to render it as "Damn you" as it expresses feelings of anger and disillusionment over the conditions of Arabs. On the political level, I used footnotes to explain the referents of certain words. For example, the "clown" that is

evoked in the ninth line refers to the post-revolution president of Tunisia Moncef Marzouki, who was known for his verbiage, empty words, broken promises and powerlessness in his relation with the Islamists. In addition to that, Wahabism and the Arab Spring are also glossed in footnotes.

In a region that has been dominated for many decades by authoritarian regimes, poetry has been the most eloquent medium for voicing people's hopes, dreams and frustrations. Poets such as Tamim Al Bargouthi, Hesham Al Gakh and Ahmed Foued Negm assumed other responsibilities and acted as historians, journalists, commentators and even revolutionaries.

Source text:

<http://www.albayanlebanon.com/news.php?IssueAr=257&id=12680&idC=>

John Brugaletta

Philodemus

Better Left Unsaid

Here, slave, make my lamp enebriate with oil,
The quiet witness of those things we won't discuss,
And then retreat. I'll ask of you no further toil.
When leaving, lock the door; we'll not be infamous.

And now my Xantho... Ah, my bed, the lover's friend,
You are about to learn just how two lovers blend.

Still Young

Philodemus

Sweet Charito is sixty years of age,
Her hair as dark as when she was nineteen,
Her breasts so firm they've never known a bra,
Her clear, unwrinkled skin the scent of rose.

All you who do not quail at love's desire,
Come see how well preserved the woman is.

Le Moment Psychologique

Rufinus

I prayed I might have you one night.
I did, and you stripped. What a sight!
 But when I looked down,
 My little droll clown
Just couldn't achieve any height.

Commentary

There seem to be at least two important problems that the translator ideally avoids. First there is the literal, word-for-word translation at one extreme. At the opposite extreme there is the free and easy poem or story that the translator was reminded of when reading the source of the translation. These are the Scylla and Charybdis of translation. The first extreme often produces oddities, while the second is less a translation than an original work. One must find a sweet spot between the two. Of course translation from Italian, for example, has a different sweet spot from translating a Greek passage.

The ideal product of any translation of poetry strikes me as having a strong degree of faithfulness to the original in meaning and tone, but it need not be rigidly faithful to word order. A more difficult sort of translation lies in rendering a work into both metrical and rhyming verse, for when composing an original poem, the search for a rhyme will often trigger a new idea or phrase, but writing a free-verse target poem renders no such benefit in and of itself.

Ezra Pound's many translations are prime examples of too little faithfulness to the originals, while the King James Bible errs for our day only in its archaisms, both intentional and unintentional. The translators clearly were intent upon producing a magniloquent version and resorted to a form of discourse that was antiquated even in their time.

Source texts:

Philodemus. "Better Left Unsaid." *The Greek Anthology*, vol. I, Harvard University Press, 1969, book V, p. 4.

Philodemus. "Still Young." *The Greek Anthology*, vol. I, Harvard University Press, 1969, book V, p. 13.

Rufinus. "Le Moment Psychologique." *The Greek Anthology*, vol. I, Harvard University Press, 1969, book V, p. 47.

Rina Kikuchi
Four Poems by Hanabusa Yoshiko

Hanabusa Yoshiko

The State of My Day

一日のすがた

Sitting on the dresser

A box of *Shikishima* cigarettes, gloves, a plastic pinwheel,
Karukasu cracker crumbs, postcards and calling cards

More and more things there too

A train ticket, a half-used ball of yarn,
A wallet, a sachet of *Ryūkakusan* cough medicine,
A fountain pen, a handkerchief dried in the sun

When night falls and the children sleep

I clean up the dresser top
Piled up there, each item recounts
The pleasures of deeds done that day

Come tomorrow, fresh and new,
May the pile grow ever higher
With tomorrow's items
Healthy and full of love!

Fallen Blossom

散華

“This is my boy
 The day he graduated from aviation school at Kasumigaura—
 A memento of the time
 He received a gift from the Emperor,”
 I say this, pointing at the desktop photo

In a plaza, walled by red and white curtains,
 In front of another long curtain,
 You, straight as a shoot of bamboo,
 Raise your hand to salute the Emperor
 I vividly feel
 Your pulse, your pride
 But only a few days later, far too soon,
 He was sent to the Navy Base in Oita

May 24, 1939
 7:25 in the evening
 Those numbers—forever, as long as I live—
 Will remain deeply lodged in my body and soul

He joined a night drill
 In preparation for the heavy yet honorable duty
 To which he was about to be called
 They say he asked to lead the aircraft 95 in combat,
 But that evening
 His life concluded at twenty-four years
 As he died, becoming a fallen blossom in the open sky

That was the last of him
His fighter plane crashed
Onto the great plains in Oita, darkness already falling
Dyeing the navy-blue wheat field with burning red
Like a falling meteorite
The officers dashed there, shouting
Who's that? Whose craft? What aircraft number?
His body was clad tight in uniform,
His face hidden in his helmet,
It wasn't easy to identify who he was

One voice screamed, "Lieutenant Colonel Ikeda!"
Tearing through the darkness of night
His comrades-in-arms held their breath
Then called your name like thunder
While surrounding you, my boy

Their cries called him back to life
Using his last strength, he sat,
Held the control stick again
As if to lift his spirit and fly once more
He lasted only half a minute more
They brought him to the Navy Hospital
But despite diligent care,
My boy's soul left this world

In Oita
All wept for his heroic end
Those who knew him and those who did not
Attended the solemn military funeral
All this was written in a heart-felt letter
I received from a perfect stranger

That day
Was the southern sky
Beautiful with a misting of blossoms?
His father hurried there without packing a thing
How he praised our boy, I wonder
His name was written on an honorable flag of death
“Navy Lieutenant Colonel Ikeda, Seventh Court Rank”—My Isamu,
The name you received in honor shines brilliantly

You
Made my wishes come true
Your mother, who adores the blue sky and wide-open ocean,
Had her wishes granted thanks to you
Beautiful both inside and outside, you became
One of the youngest, bravest soldiers of the sea, of Japan, of the Fatherland
Your death is in the utmost honor
I wish for nothing more in this world, for humankind, for myself
There is nothing more I wish to say

I, a nameless woman poet,
Am humble, full of awe.
I say “Long life—*banzai!*—to Your Majesty, the Emperor.”

Rina Kikuchi

Hanabusa Yoshiko

Over the Winter Mountains

- Joining the Kagayaku women's troop
to visit Minato Veterans' Hospital-

冬山を越す

湊病院を慰問する、
輝く部隊の一行に加はり。

"We should have brought some flowers,"
Someone said in the bus.
She was right, no one has flowers
But still we go over the winter mountains
Bearing only our pure hearts

The seaside town of Izu, covered in dust,
Greeted us gloomily
Islands, seagulls, fruit orchards, mountain surfaces
Everything I see makes me cold
Lake Ippeki is the only blue
Turning from the bus
I fill my fountain pen
With the clear water of this lonesome high land

Minato Veterans' Hospital, are we there yet?
Not yet, much, much further
This mountain, that mountain
From the city of Shimoda,
We once more go over the mountains

Rina Kikuchi

Hanabusa Yoshiko

The Battle of Sparrows

雀の闘ひ

In the sunny, quiet sky of autumn
The sparrows fight incessantly
Darkening branches as they gather
Their noisy cries never cease
Some may be wounded but still
Their uproar brings me cheer

One dark night, as dark as a lone house,
I plant spring onions.
Snow-white, straight shoots
Burrow into the cool, soft soil
One by one, they go down deep
As I collect my thoughts

*

I am a triangle-shaped ruler.
If I become edgeless, I will no longer exist.
So, my friends, forgive me.

*

The tree half-felled by the storm,
Is it falling down
Or is it rising up?

*

A rainy day
Are the umbrellas
Feeling joy or grief?
Answer me, with your own ideology

Translator's Notes

The State of My Day

Shikishima: the name of a cigarette brand of the time.

Karukasu crackers: thin, big, round crackers which are like wafers.

Ryukakusan: the brand name of a cold medicine.

Fallen Blossom

The Japanese title, *Sange* (散華), literally means “falling petals” and refers to a Buddhist ritual in which the petals of water lily flowers are scattered. It is meant to purify the place for the god(s) to come down and/or to pay respect to the god(s). However, during war time, *sange* started to be used to refer to dying an honorable death, most likely because the image of petals falling from a tree resembles the aircraft falling from the sky. The beautiful image of falling petals was effectively used to glorify death in war.

Kasumigaura: The name of the city where a military school was located.

Oita: A prefecture in the southern part of Japan. Thus, “the sky in the South” implies the sky in Oita, where the son’s plane crashed.

His father: Hanabusa left her husband and got officially divorced when Isamu was about seven years old. Isamu and his elder sister were raised by a foster mother. The details of her first marriage and how she came to know of Isamu’s death appear in her autobiographical novel, *Waves* (浪, Kōa-Nippon, 1941).

Over the Winter Mountains

Izu: Izu peninsula is 100 km south of Tokyo. It is a heavily forested area with lots of mountains, beautiful beaches, bays and hot springs.

Lake Ippeki: Ippeki literally means “one deep-green lake” in Japanese.

Shimoda: A city in the Izu area.

Commentary

Yoshiko Hanabusa (英美子, 1892–1983) is one of the women pioneers of free-style modern verse, and her first solo poetry collection, *On the White Bridge* (白橋の上に), was published in 1925. She was one of the first five women who managed to publish a solo free-style poetry collection in Japan. Her free-style poems, short stories and essays appeared in various journals and magazines, notably the radical feminist magazine, *Nyonin-geijutsu*, *Women's Art* (女人藝術, 1928–32). When she was around 30 years old, she abandoned her husband and two children in order to pursue her dream career and become a poet. It was very difficult for a woman to be a wife/mother and a poet at the same time. Many women sacrificed one or the other. An extreme example of this is Misuzu Kaneko (金子みすゞ, 1903–1930), a renowned pre-war woman poet, who chose to kill herself at the age of 26 because her husband did not allow her to write poems.

After the divorce, Hanabusa worked in factories and took many other jobs to financially support herself in Tokyo. She never remarried, but later became a single mother and lived with her son, Atsumasa (1927–). She kept writing and publishing till the end of her life. Her poetry collection, *Town of Disguise* (仮装の町, 1993), was published with a small disc, which records her readings of her own poems.

I hope this selection demonstrates the poetic path many early women free-style poets took, by focusing on her pre-war poems on feminism, women's life, war and imperialism, aesthetics and philosophy.

"The State of My Day" was published in *On the White Bridge* reflecting her everyday life as a mother and a woman with a career. I kept all the Japanese names, such as *Shikishima* and *Karukasu*, in "The State of My Day" in the English translation, though they may be easily deleted. I argue these particular names of cigarettes, crackers and cough medicine bring reality into the poem. The poem is based on the poet's own everyday life, and because of these brand names, the readers can share the familiarity of everyday middle-class family life. It was important for women poets, who were fewer than 10% of all poets

in Japan in the 1920s, 30s and 40s, to write what (they thought) men-poets could not, but only women could, about women's real lives.

I have chosen three poems published in one of the first free-style poetry anthologies of women poets, *Anthology of Contemporary Women Poets* (現代女流詩人集, 1940). War poems such as "Fallen Blossom" and "Over the Winter Mountains" were completely neglected after the surrender of Japan in 1945, mainly because both poets and critics felt ashamed of propaganda poetry in support of war. However, as Hideto Tsuboi points out in his *Celebration of Voices* (声の祝祭, 1997), a reassessment of war poetry is necessary to fully understand the development of Japanese free-style poetry in the twentieth century, and I argue that the war poetry written by women deserves its own position in Japanese literary history.

"Fallen Blossom" is one of the earliest free-style war poems written by women, which reflects the imperialism of wartime Japan. Government imperialism brainwashed almost all Japanese citizens, including intellectual, elite, well-educated women writers and poets with the "Emperor Showa as God" ideology. They were repeatedly taught that Japanese citizens were the emperor's chosen children, whose highest honor was to serve him, implying that sacrificing their own lives for him was their duty as good citizens. Dying for the emperor was taught and believed to be the most honorable act one could achieve in life.

This poem is crucial, not only because it strongly reflects this ideology but also because it demonstrates the paradoxical twist of the feelings of the mother, who is trying to turn her heartbroken sadness into honor. In order to give a meaning to her son's death, the mother tries to believe in the doctrine of Japanese imperialism. The imperialism is used as a means to overcome the tragedy. This poem was written based on Hanabusa's own experience with the death of her son, Isamu.

"Over the Winter Mountains" is also based on her own experience, a visit with her fellow women writers to Minato Veterans' Hospital in Izu area. Hanabusa became a passionate volunteer to help war victims after her son's death. "The Battle of Sparrows" was also published in the same anthology, but it reflects her ideology and philosophy. Many similar epigram-like poems were written by women in pre-war Japan. Such

epigram-like poems have been unfairly disparaged. They express women's struggles to live their lives fully, as well as the fact women can be philosophical and can deal with issues beyond household and motherhood. I believe these early women's poems have their own importance in literary studies as well as in gender studies.

Source texts:

Hanabusa, Yoshiko. "The State of My Day." *Over the White Bridge* [白橋の上], Masago shuppan, 1925, pp. 110–112.

———. "Fallen Blossom," "Over the Winter Mountains," and "The Battles of Sparrows." *Anthology of Contemporary Women Poets* [現代女流詩人集], Sengabou, 1940, pp.145–159.

John DuVal
Three Laisses from the Franco-
Italian *Song of Roland*

Anonymous
Chanson de Roland

23

Riding by day and moonlight, Ganelon,
like one who fears his death is somewhere close,
speaks to his horse, as lovingly he strokes
the brown spot on its back: "Dear sorrel, go
slower. No need to gallop now. Go slow.
Soon enough you'll pass the river Rhone
and on beyond the valley Gardamonde
with its treacherous cliff side paths and plunging slopes.
Past it, no one returns to France and home.
I carry words to King Marsillio.
The man who sent you does not love me: Roland!
May God confound him, and He will, if only
God lets me live to deliver the death blow."

23

30

Ganelon grips his sword until halfway
out of the sheathe it sparkles. He exclaims
"How precious you are to me, exquisite blade!
I've drawn and swung you through many a campaign
and carried you with honor many a day.
Charles, when he hears that Ganelon was slain
in a strange country will not hear you failed
to cut heads off the most courageous pagans.
Now we'll find out what Marsillo's men are made of!
The pagans mutter, "This Ganelon is brave."

30

King Charles gives Amery a sword he carried
again and again in many a great battle.
One day is all it ever spent in France,
tested and true as Roland's Durendal,
more costly than a hundred gold Byzants.
He fastens it to him with a gold-rimmed sash.
Now he brings forth a helmet of great value.
He offers it to Amery the lad.
Then he brings forth a shield of elephant.
The emperor won it when he killed Braibant
and gave it to Roland from the dead man's hand.
At the shield's heart are sturdy ivory planks
Its outer leather is of elephant
and hangs from the neck on a gold-embroidered strap.
Around the rim the four winds wheel and gallop.
Heaven and earth are held there by enchantment,
the sun and moon as opposite companions.
Between them tiny stars light up the black.
Its surface never failed the man who grasped it.
All these he gives to Amery the lad,
the son of Count Arnaldo of Bellanda.

Commentary

These three *laissez*, that is, decasyllabic verse-paragraphs of various lengths whose lines end with the same assonance, are from the thirteenth-century Franco-Italian version of *The Song of Roland*, known as the V4 manuscript of St. Mark's Church, Venice. The first 3,870 lines of this version correspond closely with the first 3,682 lines of the 4006-line Anglo-Norman French *Chanson de Roland* known as the Oxford version by which almost all readers know this greatest of French epic poems. From then on, either a different scribal author or the same one, perhaps because the last pages of the manuscript in his hands were missing, seems to awaken to the opportunity to author an independent poetic narrative and ends with a 2,178-line series of adventures parallel to but different from those of Charlemagne and his warriors in the last 320 lines of the Oxford *Roland*. The V4's Franco-Italian reads more like a mixing of two languages than as a single language in itself, and scholars assume that it was composed in a Piedmont region where people, equally fluent in French and Italian, tended to alternate words and phrases from one language to the other as they spoke.

The first two of these three *laissez*, from early in the epic before it diverges from the Oxford version, feature Ganelon, one of the most convincing villains of literature and the only natural poet in the *Roland*, in the act of apostrophizing. In *laisse* 30, which is similar to *laisse* 34 of the Oxford version, the apostrophe to his sword is wonderfully appropriate to the situation. He is a Frenchman alone in Spain, surrounded by Saracens who murdered the last two ambassadors that the French sent and are now threatening to kill him. He has no one to trust or speak to but his own sword. This Franco-Italian *laisse*, with its talk of cutting off heads, is a little more specific than the briefer Anglo-Norman Oxford *laisse*.

The apostrophe to the sword must have inspired the Franco-Italian author to insert one of the extremely few early *laissez* that are totally independent from the Oxford version, a *laisse* where Ganelon speaks to his horse, his only animate friend, as he rides gloomily toward the fortress of the Saracen king.

The third of these three *laissez*, which also appears in

none of the other versions, occurs after the plot line of the V4 has diverged from the Oxford version. A young future hero, Amery, as he is about to be knighted by Charlemagne, receives a shield. The *laisse* begins as standard French-epic armor description and suddenly becomes magically Homeric, except that Homer's famous "Shield of Achilles" is seven times longer with so much more description that the Franco-Italian "Shield of Amery," with its earth and sky, sun and moon and stars, seems realistic and restrained in comparison.

Because *laissez* are wonderfully variable in length, French epic poets use them as story telling units: a single action, a dialogue, a speech (as in *laissez* 23 and 30), a description (as in *laisse* 314). Each is its own aural unit, and the change of assonance from *laisse* to *laisse* signals some kind of shift. As I translated, I imitated the original decasyllabics with loose iambic pentameter and assonance on the last stressed syllable of every line of a *laisse*. Thus in *laisse* 30, "campaign," "pagans," "made," and "brave" all assonate. For the sake of assonance and meter I took small liberties, such as adding in the last line of *laisse* 314 the name "Bellanda," Count Arnaldo's peaceful estate where his wife until recently has been able to keep Amery sheltered from warfare. Sometimes, however, a verse translation can be closer to the original than a prose translation because some rhetorical effects work better in verse than in prose. For instance, the paratactic style of the French epic writers, one short and simple grammatical unit followed by another, then another, *punch, punch, punch*, would grow tiresome in prose, but the line-by-line movement of assonantal verse hurries the story forward.

My primary edition in translating the Franco-Italian *Chanson de Roland* has been Robert F. Cook's 2005 "*La Chanson de Roland*": *The French Corpus*, Vol. 1, Part 2, *The Venice 4 Version* (Brepols), with its useful English language glossary, but Giuliano Gasca Queirazza's 1955 *La Chanson de Roland nel testo assonanzato franco-italiano* (Rosenberg & Sellier) is also very useful, especially for *laisse* 314, where Gasca Queirazza notices a problem and wisely attributes the manuscript's awkward mention of the shield first, and then the helmet, and then the shield again, to an error of the scribe, who accidentally transposed the like-sounding lines "Pois li oit aporté un eume luxant," (then he brought him a fancy helmet) and "Pois

li oit aporté un escu d'olifant" (then he brought him a shield of elephant). Following Gasca Queirazza's example I have transported them back again, for a more intelligible narration and a steadier preparation for the ekphrastic climax of the *laisse*. With this emendation, the second "he brought forth a" stresses through repetition the compact power of the shield, which is tough as elephant, being made of both ivory and elephant hide.

Erik Lofgren

Natsume Sōseki

Four Poems in Diverse Styles by Natsume Sōseki

[untitled]

leafy autumn mountain while walking in the rain;

lo! a cataract

2 November 1895

on a mountain lane looking at maples

山路觀楓

even a woodcutter

looks to be wearing brocade

when this morning's rain

thoroughly washes his sleeves

to the hue of autumn leaves

6 November 1889

on a mountain lane looking at maples

山路觀楓

moss-covered stones washed with rain, slippery and difficult to climb—

across the river, threading through the forest, back and forth

everywhere the cries of deer; in vain do I seek them—

white clouds and crimson leaves fill the countless mountains

November 1889

the shadow of the
clumped all together
diagonally

a milky quartz-glass chimney
its crimson color
illuminating

ears cold in the dark
to the crystal sound
a single person

when I replenish
paulownia wood
with spent coal—embers

pouring water from
for some short time, now,
cast iron kettle

I think, yet I can't
first five syllables
at length, I delight

with thoughts of slumber
above my head; Hail!
my mind untroubled

peony's blossoms
four or five of them
on a golden screen

encompassing the lamp flame
strikes across the wall
a broadly bright sphere

listening clearly
of silent snowfall
in the dead of night

the charcoal in the
brazier, it collides
scattering resound

the cold water pot
the susurrating
has ceased its crying

write the stanza—those
so hard to produce
in creating it

I pull my sleepwear
Amida Buddha
and free of all dream

10 December 1904

Commentary

Natsume Sōseki (1867–1916) is the preëminent Japanese author of the early modern age (1868–1912), and perhaps of the entire twentieth century as well. He straddled the feudal and modern eras, and the breadth of his education, with its particular emphasis on the Chinese classics, found a literary outlet in myriad genres. The poems here represent Sōseki's work in four poetic forms: *waka* (of which he wrote a handful), *kanshi* (poetry in classical Chinese, of which he wrote hundreds), *haiku* (several thousand), and *haikai-tai* (humorous poetry in the style of *ren-ga*, or linked poems, of which he also penned only a handful). With the exception of the second and third poems, which explicitly share a time, space, theme, and title, the connection among these four is a simple temporal continuity of the end of the year; however, by their juxtaposition they present a glimpse of the impressive range of Sōseki's poetic output, as well as sense of both the breadth of his literary ambition and the depth of his skill.

Each poem offered a different challenge for the translator. The *haiku* (untitled) gains its rhetorical and emotional effect through what Ezra Pound called the “super-position” of an “invisible” image revealed through the juxtaposition of the two parts of the poem. The trick for the translator is to capture in English enough of what is in the original to occasion that same flash of insight without revealing what the flash should be. This may involve rearranging the words or, as I have done here, adding a term (“while”) to clarify a relationship.

The *waka* (“on a mountain lane looking at maples,” 6 November 1889), too, leverages its economical use of language to evoke an emotional response. The struggle here was again one of word order. Both the *haiku* and *waka* also implicitly raise the question of lineation. In the original, they are each a single line. The (older) western convention distinguished poetry from prose through multiple means, but lineation was, perhaps, the most obvious. Many translators follow the descriptive syllabic breaks (5–7–5 for *haiku*; 5–7–5–7–7 for *waka*) to present these poems as either three or five lines, respectively, in English. I have followed the latter for the *waka* in acknowledgement of its relatively smooth narrative continuity. The essential role played by

the *kireji*, the caesura (the semi-colon in my translation), that demarcates the two parts so essential to Pound's super-pository image seen in haiku, however, argues convincingly for rendering the haiku into two lines, which more accurately represents what is occurring as a consequence of the poem's formal construction.

Kanshi offer a plethora of conundra for the translator and "on a mountain lane looking at maples" (November 1889) is no exception. To be sure, the grammar and vocabulary are frequently unfamiliar to Japanese readers, but it is more often the compactness of the form that causes the greatest difficulties for the translator. The struggle between fidelity to that economy and comprehension is impossible to resolve to everyone's satisfaction. I have opted for the former, hoping that what is on the page is still sufficient to suggest, as it does in the original, the necessary information to flesh out the interpretation. Reading this poem against Sōseki's waka written, we might presume, on the same occasion (6 November 1889), illustrates differences in both tone and structure as well as highlights how their respective formal elements might lead to different emphases.

Finally, "winter night" is one of only a few poems in the haikai-tai that Sōseki composed. This was, in many respects, the most challenging poem to translate. The original appears prose-like in its structure, each stanza reading more like a sentence cut into six segments than a "poem," narrowly construed. It was easy enough to replicate the split sentences, themselves a nod to Chinese poetic convention with which Sōseki was intimately familiar. To have followed, slavishly, the word order in Japanese, on the other hand, would have been to create an awkward, disjuncted string of text that would ill serve Sōseki. There is a second concern, however, for haikai are a comic outgrowth of renga, a form whose mode of construction—a strict syllable count of either a 7-7-syllable stanza or a 5-7-5-syllable stanza—eventually inspired what we now call haiku. Sōseki's poem is actually only in the *style* of haikai, a variant on the form, as it were: only two of the 42 segments have seven syllables and all the rest have five. To ignore, therefore, the very deliberate syllabification would have meant dismissing a fundamental structural component of the poem as irrelevant. In the end, I opted to construct the lines to read comfortably as prose-like in English

and replicate the deliberate five- (or seven-) syllable pattern for each segment. This latter choice had the unavoidable consequence of requiring an occasional additional term not present in the original, but I chose to think of this as something akin to an intercalary day designed to harmonize the whole.

Source text:

Natsume Sōseki 夏目漱石. [untitled], “on a mountain lane looking at maples” (6 November 1889), “on a mountain lane looking at maples” (November 1889), and “winter night.” *Sōseki zenshū* 漱石全集 [*The complete works of Sōseki*], vol. 12, Iwanami shoten, 1975, 2nd printing, pp. 538, 463, 395, 496–97.

Kathryn Kimball
Three Poems from
The Fabric of the Universe

Andrée Chedid
L'Étoffe de l'univers

Still Here Passing Through

De passage je suis encore là

Still here
passing through
still traveling
the road of life
clearing pathways
breaching walls
brief and fleet
this one-way trip
hoping fate
will find me soon
no “see you later.”

And if I were a long-distance runner, would I rest at the end of my race, would I not increase my effort?

Diogenes

Running, running everywhere, never stopping. Take off running, increase the incline, never give up. The key word is effort. More and more effort is required to get to the end of a race or to the end of *anything*. Life is made up of constant effort. I agree with the old cynic—and yet leisure, even laziness, seem to me as important as effort, linked as words are in necessary opposition.

In short, I prefer that lounging Diogenes who said to Alexander: “Move out of my sun.”

Kathryn Kimball

Andrée Chedid

Growing Old VI

Vieillir VI

This disease
so hard
to face
this losing touch
with the universe
this clash
with death
this too short life
this home boarded up now
soon to be nowhere

These broken ties
with the world
this confrontation
with death
this far too brief a time
these memories
soon forgotten
this total absurdity
this opening
into infinity
this break
with my own mind
the final period of this sentence
never wished for.

*Do not go gentle into that good night
Old age should burn and rave at close of day
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.*

Dylan Thomas

It's true that there is plenty to rage about. But what good would that do? And since the poet says the night is "good," I prefer, instead of raging, to go there as "gently" as I can.

November 2005

Dying IV

Mourir IV

I've had enough of dying
day after day
of letting time
slip through my fingers
I've had enough of dwindling
day after day
of losing my tomorrows
to oblivion

The sap of memory
no longer flows
Silence settles all around
Our clasped hands
lie still
in the grass
My mind has deserted me
The day wraps itself up
with string
swaddling me inside
abandons me on the riverbank
orphaned

I demand redress
but why?
how?
I concede
and let vast death
take my place
forever?

*Everything begins with memory and everything ends with it. . .
The present is opaque.*

Paul Ricoeur

The opacity of the present is an immense problem. Everything is remembrance; everything is memory recomposing or reviving itself. So nothing is lost? To the flashy showman demonstrating how to develop memory, the Philosopher poses this question: "How do we learn to forget?" If only Alzheimer's, in splitting open the breastplate of language and abolishing the Newtonian certainties of time, space, matter, and the principle of causality, could teach us something. Why not? And if God had truly willed, as St. Paul declares, that our wisdom be folly and our folly be wisdom. Why not?

Commentary:

Andrée Chedid was born in Cairo in 1920 of Lebanese-Christian ancestry. In 1946, she moved to Paris with her physician husband, eventually becoming a French citizen. During her lifetime, Chedid published over forty volumes of poems, novels, short stories, and plays, which won numerous prizes, including *Prix Mallarmé* (1976), *Prix Goncourt de la Nouvelle* (1979), and *Prix Goncourt de la Poésie* (2002). In 2006, she completed *The Fabric of the Universe* while suffering from the first stages of Alzheimer's. As an integral and unique part of many of the poems in this last volume, Chedid included quotations from other writers as well as her own reflections in prose. She died in 2011.

To render Chedid's straightforward diction, I keep the English simple. The lines of this English translation correspond to the lines of the French original, although very occasionally, line order may be switched for comprehension and/or effect.

Chedid's verse runs on an engine of high-octane verbs, with few adjectives and fewer adverbs, and I try to find sharp English equivalents, such as "dwindling," "swaddling," "clearing" pathways and "breaching" walls. Some minor stylistic features of Chedid's poetry are minimized in this English translation. The capital letters beginning each of Chedid's lines are generally cut back either to a capital at the start of each stanza or to a change in the thought-stroke within the stanza. I keep to Chedid's practice of no period until the last line.

I agree with Antoine Berman that translators cannot help but destroy the rhythm of the original language, its unique linguistic patternings, its golden expressions, idioms, and associative chains (Berman in Venuti 276–289*). Even though every translation *falsifies* the original, still one must attempt this "false fidelity" to *connect* across languages and cultures. Shakespeare's Sonnet 138 comes to mind:

O, love's best habit is in seeming trust,

...

Therefore I lie with her and she with me,
And in our faults by lies we flatter'd be.

Indeed, there can only be a *seeming* trust between two texts. Assuredly, there's unavoidable lying going on, which actually allows them to co-exist and which permits the glorious privilege of lying side by side—text and translation. Since cloning a twin text is impossible, a text with a remarkable family resemblance is the next best thing. I can only hope that I have found adequate rhythms and expressions in English to accomplish this task, and that, as translator, I have justly rendered Chedid's translucent poems.

*Venuti, Lawrence. (ed.), *The Translation Studies Reader*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2004.

Source text:

Chedid, Andrée. *L'Étoffe de l'univers*. Flammarion, 2010, pp. 81, 102–03, 117, Post-Scriptum, pp. 137, 142, 146.

Copyright notice:

“De passage je suis encore là,” “Vieillir VI,” and “Mourir IV” in *L'Étoffe de l'univers* © Flammarion.

Zack Rogow
Three Poems by *Alfred de Musset*

Alfred de Musset

To Ulric G.

À Ulric G.

No eye, Ulric, has plumbed the sea's deepest caves,
Not a diving heron, or an old salt on board.
The sun snapped its rays on those waves,
Like a vanquished soldier breaking his sword.

And Ulric, no eye has pierced the swirls
Of your sorrows, angel who's had his fall.
In your head and heart you carry two worlds,
Those nights you walk by my side, hunched and small.

At least let me catch a glimpse of your soul,
Like a child leaning over the water too far;
You, life so full, pale from kisses you stole—
Me, so young, envying your sins and your scars.

July 1829

I love the first shiver of winter

Sonnet

I love the first shiver of winter! That day
When the stubble resists the hunter's foot,
When magpies settle on fields fragrant with hay,
And deep in the old chateau, the hearth is lit.

That's the city time. I remember last year,
I came back and saw the good Louvre and its dome,
Paris and its smoke—that whole realm so dear.
(I can still hear the postilions shouting, "We're home!")

I loved the gray weather, the strollers, the Seine
Under a thousand lanterns, sovereign!
I'd see winter, and you, my love, you!

Madame, I'd steep my soul in your glances,
But did I even realize the chances
That soon your heart would change for me too?

Zack Rogow

Alfred de Musset

Venice

Venise

In Venice of the red walls,
Not a ship stirs at all,
Not a fisherman afloat,
 No lanterned boat.

Seated alone on the strand,
The great lion stirs to stand,
And stretches out his paw
 With its bronze claw.

Around him groups of crafts,
Sailing vessels and rafts,
Like herons in the dark
 Rest in an arc,

In the smoky lagoon they sleep,
While in fog turning deep,
The wind gently whips
 The flags of the ships.

The moon—which hides its eyes
Behind patchwork skies
With their star-flecked clouds—
 Now half veiled.

Leaving Santa Croce Church
The abbess with a lurch
Reaches up to drape
 Her surplice in her cape.

And the ancient palaces,
And the porticos so serious,
The stairways carved in white
 For all the knights,

And the bridges and the squares,
And the statues' mournful stares,
And the ribboned seas
 Trembling in the breeze,

All are silent, except the guards
With their long halberds,
Who patrol crenellations
 Of arsenal stations.

—Now more than one will wait
Beneath the moon's porcelain plate.
She listens with one ear—
 Is her dandy near?

Getting ready for the ball,
She arranges her shawl,
In the mirror at her task,
 Dons her black mask.

On her perfumed divan,
La Vanina bedecked for her man,
Snoozes close to her lover,
 Tugging the cover.

And Narcissa, the wild,
In her gondola has piled
A feast to help forget
 Till moon and sun have met.

And who, here in Italy,
Is not without some folly?
Who doesn't keep for love's blaze
All the best days?

Let's let the horloge
Near the palace of the old doge
Keep track during his nights
Of ennui that bites.

Let's count, my beauty, instead,
On your rebel lips of red
All the kisses given...
Or forgiven.

It's your charms we should count,
Mark sweet tears as they mount—
The real price of these nights
And their delights!

Commentary

I've always had a soft spot for the Romantic movement, for the furtive meetings of utopian revolutionaries in Paris garrets, and for the trysts of freethinking aristocrats in limestone townhouses in the Faubourg Saint-Germain. Alfred de Musset (1810–1857) was no stranger to that world. Bad boy of the French Romantic era, he was known for his many affairs, notably with George Sand, the older woman in their relationship; and for his alcoholism and partying.

With such biopic lives, it's easy to forget that the literary celebrities of the Romantic movement became famous for their writings. Alfred de Musset is best remembered for his plays, including *Lorenzaccio* and *On ne badine pas avec l'amour* [*No Trifling with Love*]. But he was also a wonderful poet, full of delicious ennui and angst. I've chosen three of his early lyrics to give a sense of his work. The poet was only eighteen when he composed "For Ulric G." in honor of a fellow Romantic, Ulric Guttinguer, twenty-three years his senior.

Whenever a translator goes down the road of creating English versions of rhymed, metered poetry, there is a definite fork where s/he has to choose one path or the other: prioritize the meaning, or take the road less traveled by and try to recreate the form. I attempt to do both, which leaves me bushwhacking somewhere in between. Alfred de Musset's poem "Venice" is particularly tricky in this respect, because the lines are so short, especially the four-syllable fourth line that ends each quatrain with a flourish. I've come as close as I could in those last lines to the short syllable count.

My goal is to create a poem that is true to the emotions and the music of the original, while aiming for a version that is *agréable* in English. Robert Frost famously said, "I could define poetry this way: it is that which is lost out of both prose and verse in translation." Yes, exactly right, but poetry is also what the translator is able to put back into a poem that is true to the author's style, intent, and meaning, and also preserves the kinetics of the poem. Since so much of the music of words is lost in translation, I feel that intensifying the imagery is allowable in certain cases, if that imagery is a reflection of what is already in the poem. I have tried to do that in certain places in de Musset's poems.

I was particularly pleased to translate these poems in Venice, where de Musset took a memorable trip with George Sand. My deep thanks to the Emily Harvey Foundation for the residency that allowed me to work on these.

Source text:

de Musset, Alfred. *Poésies*. Hachette, 1949, pp. 54–58.

Xinlu Yan
Four Poems by Yu Xiuhua

Yu Xiuhua
余秀华诗四首

My Dog, Little Wu

我养的狗，叫小巫

When I limped out of my courtyard, it followed
We walked by the vegetable garden, the field ridge, toward the north, to my
grandmother's house

I tripped and fell in the field, it wagged its tail
I extended my hand, it licked the blood off

He was drunk, he said there was a woman in Beijing,
She was better looking than me. When there was no work to do, they went
dancing
He liked women who danced
And liked watching their butts swinging back and forth
He said they moaned in bed, it sounded nice. Unlike me who was soundless
and
Always covered her face

I ate my meal in silence
Calling "Little Wu, Little Wu" and tossing it some scraps
It wagged its tail, barking exuberantly
When he yanked my hair, banged my head on the wall
Little Wu kept wagging its tail
To someone who was not afraid of pain, he was powerless

Only when we walked to the back of my grandmother's house
Did I recall, she had passed many years ago.

I Crossed Half of China to Lay You 穿过大半个中国去睡你

In fact, to lay you or to get laid by you is the same, nothing but
The force of two bodies banging against each other, nothing but flowers
erupting from the force
Nothing but spring virtualized by the flowers making us believe that life has
been unfolded again

In half of China, everything is happening: Volcanos erupting, rivers drying up
Some political prisoners and homeless people whom nobody cares about
Elks and red-crowned cranes always being targeted at gunpoint

I have crossed gun forests and bullet showers to lay you
I have squeezed numerous nights into one dawn to lay you
I have run numerous selves into one to lay you

Naturally, I might be sidetracked by butterflies and
Regard praises as spring
Regard a village that resembles Heng Dian as my hometown

And all these
Are the necessary reasons why I am going lay you

Xinlu Yan

Yu Xiuhua

An Evening in Early Winter

初冬的傍晚

The sunlight is retreating from the courtyard, slowly
With many pauses, like sobbing
The medicine pot on the stove gurgles and grumbles dully
The scent of herbs gushes out
beating her old sickly body
She crouches in the courtyard, curled up like a piece of leaf
The blade inside her body also curled up
She tries to smooth it out,
To cut out a piece of old love
This old disease always flares up in winter

Relying solely on Chinese herbs, only symptoms are cured, not the cause
But she can tell all the herbs by their scents
Out of twelve herbs, she picks “shall return” (*Dang1 Gui1*)
And tosses it in the heap of fallen leaves

I Please This World with Pains 我以疼痛取悦这个人世

My body is old, when I notice it for the first time, there is no way to turn
back time

Many parts of it start to ache: the stomach, the arms, the legs, the fingers

I suspect that I have done many evil deeds in this world

Speaking harsh words to the withered flowers. I suspect I have favored the
nights

and despised the mornings

But it's okay after all, some pains are negligible: Being abandoned, being
made lonely

Being adopted by a long desolation

These, I am too embarrassed to say: I haven't truly

Loved them enough

Commentary

Yu Xiuhua lives in a small village named Heng Dian in Hubei, a province in central China, where she farms and raises chickens and rabbits. She has cerebral palsy due to a prolonged birth. In a marriage arranged by her parents, she wed a man twelve years her senior. But the marriage was an ill-fitted one. She felt trapped and unable to escape. In 2014 she became a household name overnight for her poem “I Crossed Half of China to Lay You.” A year later she published two books, *Moonlight Rests on My Left Hand* and *In This Staggering World*. Three of the four poems above are from *Moonlight Rests on My Left Hand*.

Translating Yu Xiuhua’s poems has proven to be challenging yet fulfilling. Particular challenges derive from her use of homophones and homonyms.

The Chinese language contains many homophones. There are about 6,763 commonly used symbols but only 1,211 sounds in Mandarin, including the five tones. Because all symbols are monosyllabic, homophones are inevitable. For example, the sound *Li3* can be associated with 李 (a popular Chinese surname), 鲤 (a type of fish), 理 (reason), or 里 (inside). Yu uses homophones in her poems to create compelling effects.

For example, in “My Dog, Little Wu,” Yu Xiuhua stacks three *Ta1* symbols. In the first, second, and fourth paragraphs, *Ta1* - 它 (it) is the pronoun representing non-human items in the third person point of view, in this case, the dog Little Wu. In the third and fourth paragraphs, *Ta1* - 他 (he) represents a single male in the third person point of view. In the last paragraph, *Ta1* - 她 (she) refers to the deceased grandmother. By stacking the three *Ta1* symbols, Yu juxtaposes several seemingly unrelated scenes together to tell a woman’s life story: searching for her grandmother, who represents her family history; interacting with her inseparable dog who represents her present life; and remembering a man who used to be in her life. When reading the poem aloud in Chinese, the three *Ta1* symbols also create a sound repetition which gives a structural unification to the poem. Together with the poignant story, Yu creates a rich and powerful emotional experience. After the poem is translated, although the meaning of the *Ta1* symbols is retained, the effect of sound repetition is not.

Another translation challenge is homonyms. In “An Evening in Early Winter,” in the last paragraph, Yu writes:

Out of twelve herbs, she picks “shall return” (*Dang1 Gui1*)
And tosses it in the heap of fallen leaves.

Dang1 Gui1, or Chinese Angelica, is a type of popular Chinese herb that’s typically used for medicines for women. The two symbols also mean “shall return.” *Dang1* means “shall” and *Gui1* means “return.” In the first paragraph, Yu refers to cutting out a piece of old love. In the second paragraph, when the woman in the poem tosses out *Dang1 Gui1*, the reader becomes aware of an absent man whom she once hoped would return. This double meaning is clear and powerful in Chinese, but in the English translation, the subtle implication of the missing man and the woman no longer wanting him to return is lost.

An additional challenge lies in accuracy in both grammar and nuance of meanings, which I believe is true to any language pair in poetry translation. The fact that Chinese grammar is remarkably different from English increases the level of difficulty.

For example, in “I Traveled Half of China to Lay You,” Yu writes: “In fact, to *lay you* or to *get laid by you* is the same....” In Chinese, the character 睡 (sleep) can be used as either a transitive or an intransitive verb. When used as an intransitive verb, it means the subject is sleeping. When used as a transitive verb, like in the phrase above—睡你 (sleep you), it refers to sex. 睡你 (sleep you) is a new slang from Taiwan that has become widespread via Taiwan’s pop culture, for example, in sitcoms and talk shows. It refers to sex in a casual and easy tone. It has been adopted by Mainland China, especially the young generation. In the first half of the phrase, 睡你 (sleep you) means that the narrator initiates sex with *you*. In the second half, 被你睡 (be slept by you) switches the roles of the narrator and *you*. Now *you* becomes the sex initiator. This is an interesting wordplay. It shows that the female narrator can take on either role at a given time. However, I found it tremendously difficult to find a suitable English word that can be used the same way 睡 is being used here. “Sleep” fits for its neutrality, but *sleep you* or *be slept by you* is grammatically incorrect and could be confusing to native speakers of English. “Sleep with you” is a little bland and weak. It is missing the sense of action, especially when sex

is initiated by the female narrator. “Fuck,” “bang,” or “screw” seem to fit grammatically but are rather obscene and vulgar compared with 睡 (sleep). I decided to use a less vulgar slang term, “lay.” While the transitive form, “lay you,” sounds a bit awkward because it’s not a commonly used phrase, it is grammatically correct and its meaning is more clear. The intransitive form, “get laid by you,” works very well.

Another example of grammatical challenges occurs in “I Please This World with Pains,” when Yu writes:

But it’s okay after all, some pains are negligible: Being
abandoned, being *made lonely*,
Being adopted by a long desolation

In the original text, Yu writes 被孤独 (being lonely). In Chinese, 被孤独 is grammatically incorrect—the helping verb 被 (a marker for the passive voice) is unnecessary in this case. Here Yu makes a creative choice to break the grammar rule in order to show that the absence of the narrator’s partner makes the narrator lonely against her will. It’s also a repetition from a structural point of view, with three 被 (again, the marker for the passive voice) symbols stacked consecutively. But when translated into English—“being lonely”—the grammar becomes appropriate, unfortunately. It simply talks about a woman who feels lonely. The idea that she is being involuntarily left behind is missing. To compensate for that, I added “made” to the phrase which does not exist in the Chinese text. It’s not an ideal solution, but better than leaving out the marker for the passive voice altogether.

Despite these three challenges, translating Yu’s poems has been a rewarding experience. Although some nuances are difficult to carry over into English, her poems still offer enough richness in language, imagery, and imagination for a translator like myself to ponder.

Source texts:

Yu, Xiuhua. “My Dog, Little Wu,” “An Evening in Early Winter,” and “I Please This World with Pains.” *Moonlight Rests on My Left Hand*, Guangxi Normal University Press, 2015, pp. 4, 150, 101.

“I crossed half of China to lay you”: <http://t.cn/ROJfxP9>

Susan McLean
The Woman Going Blind

Rainer Maria Rilke
Die Erblindende

She sat much like the others taking tea.
At first, the way she held her cup seemed just
a little different from all the rest.
One time she smiled. That almost hurt to see.

And when at last we stood up, chatting on,
and, as the impulse took us, slowly walked
through many other rooms (we laughed and talked),
I watched her there. She followed where they'd gone,

like one who in a little while must rise
to sing before a crowd, a bit withdrawn,
the light from outside, as upon a pond,
shining on her bright, rejoicing eyes.

She followed slowly, letting time pass by,
as if some hindrance had to be transcended,
and yet as if, when the transition ended,
she would no longer go on foot, but fly.

Furius and Aurelius, fellow travelers
beside Catullus, whether he'll explore
far India, where echoing eastern waves
pummel the shore;

whether among the Persians, pampered Arabs,
the Scythians or the Parthians armed with bows,
or lowlands that the seven-channeled Nile
dyes as it flows;

whether he'll trek across the lofty Alps
to visit glorious Caesar's monuments,
the Gaulish Rhine, the terrible Britons who
live furthest hence—

you who are ready to face with me all this,
whatever heaven's will decrees, unfazed,
take a brief message to my girl from me,
not kindly phrased.

May she live on and thrive with her adulterers,
clasp in her arms at once three hundred men,
loving none truly, but sapping and breaking them all
again and again.

Let her not look, as once, for adoration
from me, which by her fault is leveled now,
like a blossom at the edge of the meadow, touched
by a passing plough.

Susan McLean
The Two Sisters of Mercy

Charles Baudelaire
Les Deux Bonnes Sœurs

Debauch and Death are charming girls, a pair
bursting with health and lavish with their favor.
Their rag-draped sides, forever virgin, bear
no children, though they're constantly in labor.

To the baleful poet, bane of families,
Hell's favorite, ill-paid flatterer at courts,
brothels and tombs disclose in bowers of ease
a bed that's never haunted by remorse.

Bedroom and bier in blasphemies are fertile,
like two kind nuns who offer, one by one,
terrible pleasures and delight that harms.

Debauch, when will you shroud me in your foul arms?
O Death, her rival siren, when will you come
to graft black cypress on her tainted myrtle?

Susan McLean
Very Far from Here

Charles Baudelaire
Bien loin d'ici

Here is the hut, a little shrine
in which this girl, dressed very fine,
always prepared and calm, reclines.

One elbow on the cushions rests
as, with a hand, she fans her breasts
and listens to the fountains weep.

This is the room of Dorothy.
—Far off, the breeze and water croon
their pulsating and sobbing tune
to rock this pampered child to sleep.

From head to toe, attentively,
the scented oil and benjamin
are rubbed into her dainty skin.
—The flowers in the corner swoon.

Commentary

Rainer Maria Rilke: *Der Erblindende* / *The Woman Going Blind*

Rilke's four-quatrain poem in iambic pentameter readily lends itself to four quatrains of iambic pentameter in English, but in order to stay as close as possible to the meaning of the original while trying to preserve the form, I needed to resort to some re-arrangement of information, slant rhymes, and a slight change to the rhyme scheme of the last stanza. In order to make my rhymes work, I was also obliged to supply words that were implied, but not stated, in the original. For example, in the last line of the first stanza, I assume that "it almost hurt" applies to the speaker watching the woman, not to the woman herself, so by adding "to see," I make it clear that the speaker is the one who is nearly pained by watching the woman smile. I also added the words "must rise" to the first line of the third stanza, although no rising is mentioned in the German; however, usually an audience is seated and a singer stands during a concert, so rising would be implied by the metaphor of having to sing before a crowd. In the third stanza, I also moved "a bit withdrawn" later in the stanza than *verhalten*, in order to gain a slant rhyme with "pond" (*Teich*). "Letting time pass by" is not a literal translation of *sie brauchte lang*, which means "she took a long time," but again I felt that it captured the implied meaning. In the last line of the poem, "would no longer go on foot" is not the most direct way to translate *nicht mehr gehen würde* but to use the more literal "would no longer walk" would leave the line a foot short. I thought the measured rhythm of the original needed to be preserved by a slightly less literal wording. Rilke breaks his previous pattern of envelope rhymes in the first three stanzas by using alternating lines in the last. Though I could see that the change could signal closure in the last stanza, it seemed more important to preserve the meaning of the lines than to replicate that rhyme scheme, so I used envelope rhymes in that stanza, too.

Catullus: XI

Catullus's poem 11 is in Sapphic stanzas, but the rhythms of that classical meter are not only relatively unfamiliar to readers of English, but also an awkward fit with the natural rhythms of verse in English. I therefore decided to create an analogous pattern in English of a stanza of accentual verse that has three five-stress lines followed by a two-stress line. This looser pattern allows more varied rhythms than the stricter classical meter, while hinting at that pattern for those who are familiar with it. I have also taken the liberty of rhyming the second and fourth lines, to add more polish to the pattern, though poetry of Catullus's time did not rhyme. The closure that rhyme provides both adds force to the author's voice and emphasizes the truncation of the last line of each stanza, in a poem that talks about a love being cut short. Not trying to rhyme every line gives me a greater ability to stick close to the meaning of the original. Catullus makes many erudite allusions that would not be understood by most English readers, such as using *Eoa*, an allusion to the dawn goddess Eos, to signify "eastern," or *Sagas*, referring to the Sacae, a tribe of Scythians; or *Hyrkanos*, referring to peoples who lived on the Caspian Sea. For these recondite allusions, I have substituted more easily recognized terms that still suggest the great distances and exotic locations implied by Catullus's terms. *Ilia rumpens* is a term that refers to injuring the groin through excessive sexual activity; English doesn't have an exactly equivalent term, so I settled for "sapping and breaking." I have tried to preserve the sharp contrasts between the elevated language of Catullus's description of his projected travels and the harsh language to his former lover, the "Lesbia" to whom he had written his most passionate love poems.

Charles Baudelaire: *Les Deux Bonnes Soeurs / The Two Sisters of Mercy*

Baudelaire's sonnet "Les Deux Bonnes Sœurs" plays on several meanings of *bonnes sœurs*, which could mean not just "good sisters," but also "nuns" and "nurses," since many nuns worked in hospitals to care for the sick. Yet when the nuns are Death and Debauchery, there is the suggestion that he is also playing on the image of the prostitute as a kind of "Sister of Mercy" who ministers to the morally sick, the poets who are prostituting their own art at court ("courtisan" can mean "courtier," but it is also very close to "courtesan"). Neither nuns nor prostitutes are known for having children, but the ironic suggestion that they are constantly "in labor" draws a parallel between the hard work of the nuns and of the prostitutes. The double image of the nun/prostitute is paralleled by the tomb/brothel, coffin/bedroom, and cypress (a tree associated with death and graveyards)/myrtle (a tree sacred to the goddess Venus). Since Baudelaire himself suffered from syphilis acquired from prostitutes, his "tainted myrtle" suggests the diseases that prostitutes spread. Yet Death and Debauchery themselves are rich in health (they will never die) and generous with their kisses. The rags they wear suggest the poverty of most prostitutes, but also the vow of poverty that nuns take. There is a rococo quality in Baudelaire's referring to the *charmilles* ("bowers") of tombs and brothels. The striking image of Debauchery's dirty arms (*bras immondes*) again suggests the poverty and squalid life of most prostitutes, and the ending of the poem, in which Death is described as Debauchery's rival in attractions, suggests disgust and a longing for the end. Though the poem is written in Alexandrines, I have translated it into iambic pentameter because hexameters tend to drag in English, and the number of monosyllabic words in English makes it relatively easy to condense longer French lines into shorter English ones without much loss of meaning. Because there are fewer rhymes in English than in French, I have changed the rhyme scheme so that no more than two lines must rhyme with one another, and I have used some slant rhymes.

Charles Baudelaire: *Bien loin d'ici / Very Far from Here*

Baudelaire's "Bien loin d'ici," an octosyllabic sonnet with the sestet preceding the octave, describes Dorothée, a young prostitute whom Baudelaire encountered on the island of Réunion (note in James McGowan's translation, *The Flowers of Evil*, New York: Oxford UP, 1993, p. 384). The island is east of Madagascar in the Indian Ocean. The poem focuses on the passivity, youth, and sexual attractiveness of Dorothy, who is presented almost as an exotic idol in a shrine. The sensuous details—her fanning her breasts, the weeping of the fountains, the sobbing of the breeze and the distant water, the rubbing of fragrant oils into her delicate skin—combine to suggest a voyeuristic enjoyment on the part of the speaker, symbolized by the swooning of the flowers in the corner. Yet there is also a hint of the boredom of this spoiled child (*enfant gâtée*) and Baudelaire's describing the prostitute as a child makes the scene even creepier. All the weeping and sobbing of the things around her imply a sadness that, along with the title, hints that she herself would wish to be "very far from here." I used a tetrameter sonnet to approximate the effects of the original, but could not duplicate Baudelaire's use of just two rhymes. Instead, I tried to use rhymes that shared a consonant sound (**-ine**, **-oon**, **-in**) or a vowel sound (**-eep**, **-y**), but I still had to use one more rhyme (**-ests**) that did neither.

Source texts:

Rilke, Rainer Maria. "The Woman Going Blind." *The Selected Poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke*. Edited and translated by Stephen Mitchell, Random House, 1982, p. 32.

Catullus. "XI." "The Poems of Gaius Valerius Catullus," translated by F.W. Cornish. *Catullus, Tibullus, and Pervigilium Veneris*. Cambridge, 1962, pp. 14, 16.

Baudelaire, Charles. "The Two Sisters of Mercy" and "Very Far from Here." *The Flowers of Evil*. Translated by James McGowan, Oxford UP, 1993, pp. 246, 248.

Armine Kotin Mortimer
So often have I dreamt of you

Robert Desnos
J'ai tant rêvé de toi

So often have I dreamt of you that you are losing your reality.

Is it still time to reach this living body and to kiss on these lips the birth of the voice that is dear to me?

So often have I dreamt of you that my arms, crossing my chest in my habitual embrace of your shadow, would not bend to the contours of your body, perhaps.

And that before the real appearance of what has haunted and governed me for days and years I would become a shadow, no doubt.

O balancing sentiment.

So often have I dreamt of you that the time has passed, no doubt, for me to awaken. I stand asleep, my body exposed to all the appearances of life and love, and you, the only one who counts for me today, no more could I touch your forehead and your lips than the forehead and the lips of the next person.

So often have I dreamt of you, so often walked, talked, slept with your phantom, that all that remains for me, perhaps—and yet—is to be a phantom among phantoms and a hundred times more shadow than the shadow that wanders and will joyfully wander upon the sundial of your life.

Armine Kotin Mortimer

No, love has not died

Robert Desnos

Non, l'amour n'est pas mort

No, love has not died in this heart and these eyes and this mouth
proclaiming its funeral's commencement.

Listen, I've had enough of the picturesque and colors and charm.

I love love, its tenderness and its cruelty.

My love has only a single name, only a single form.

Everything moves on. Mouths press against this mouth.

My love has only one name, only one form.

And if one day you remember it,

O you, form and name of my love,

One day on the ocean between America and Europe,

At the hour when the final ray of sunlight reverberates on the undulated
surface of the waves, or else during a night of storms under a tree in the
country, or in a fast-moving automobile

One spring morning on Malesherbes Boulevard,

A day of rain,

At dawn before you go to bed,

Tell yourself, I command it to your familiar phantom, that I was
the only one to love you more and that it's a shame you didn't know it.

Tell yourself that you should not regret things: Ronsard and
Baudelaire before me sang of the regrets of aged women and dead women
who scorned the purest love.

As for you, when you are dead,

You will be beautiful and still desirable.

I will already be dead, entirely enclosed in your immortal body, in
your astonishing image forever present among the perpetual marvels of life
and eternity, but if I live

Your voice and its accent, your gaze and its rays,

The smell of you and the smell of your hair and many other things
besides will live in me,

In me, though I am neither Ronsard nor Baudelaire,

I who am Robert Desnos, who, for having known and loved you,

Am worth what they are.

I who am Robert Desnos, to love you,

And who want to attach no other reputation to my memory on this
contemptible earth.

Commentary:

Robert Desnos (1900–1945) took an active part in French surrealism and was an adept of automatic writing and dream writing. There is a lot of fun in his many surrealistic poems. But the two poems I want readers to enjoy come from a group of seven with the title “To the Mysterious Woman,” written in 1926. Desnos was passionately in love with the music hall singer Yvonne George, the “mysterious” woman who inspired these poems and who died in 1930, the year “À la mystérieuse” was published in the collection *Corps et biens*.

Perhaps the most striking effect of these love poems lies in the *warmth* the poet achieves with the simplest language. The translation must above all render that warmth, resisting, however, the temptation to turn Desnos’ language into complex verbal structures characteristic of poetic verse. As the poet writes in “No, love has not died,” he refuses picturesque imagery and the “charm” one typically expects of lyric poetry. Instead there is a simplicity of diction that commands the translator to shun elaborate poetic language as well: no poetic reversals of word order, no far-reaching metaphors, a simple lexicon.

As quasi prose poems, rhyme and familiar poetic meter and rhythm are absent; yet the language is not prosaic. It might seem that the translator’s task is simplified by the absence of poetic form, and it is certainly true that one can simply write in English without giving thought to meter, accentuation, or rhythm. But I feel it is important to stay as close to the structure of the French as possible, and that requires preserving word order in many places. For example, in “So often have I dreamt of you,” the placement of expressions of dubiety—*perhaps, no doubt*—carries powerful impact, which would be lost if those words were placed in more ordinary word order. Most interesting is the *reversal* of doubt in the last stanza when the poet places an “and yet” immediately after a “perhaps.” So unusual is such a structure that I sought to bring it out by using dashes, instead of setting “and yet” off simply by commas as it is in the original. (Dashes are rarely used in this way in French, and I see the unusual juxtaposition *peut-être, et pourtant* as serving to express this emphasis.) The French syntax brings out the strange internal conflict in the poet between his pride and his modesty; the “perhaps” signals his modesty while pride rises for a moment with the “and yet.”

In choosing the vocabulary that will ideally render the lexicon of the French, I pay special attention to repetitions and to words that serve to raise the tension, as well as the placement of the “I (or “me”) and the “you.” For similar reasons, it is important to preserve the line length of the originals. Spacing, placement of key words, short or long lines, repetitions, words with multiple valences—all make poems of these prose lines. What may seem a word-for-word mistranslation may actually stem from a deliberate choice. In “No, love has not died,” I translate *se réverbère* as “reverberates” for multiple reasons: the image is of a shimmering *movement* on the undulating waves; the three syllables do that movement better than the two of “reflects”; the internal rhyme of “**ver**”—“**ber**” contributes to the lively reflection of the sunlight—and in any case this was a chance to keep a poetic effect. I find “reflects” too suggestive of a calm, mirror-like surface.

Three particular comments on “So often have I dreamt of you”: As the poet is dreaming, one expects he will be asleep, but not usually while standing. In French, *dormir debout* indexes great tiredness, but when coupled with *histoire*, as in *une histoire à dormir debout*, it means a cock and bull story, something that doesn’t make any sense. But the poet audaciously uses the expression for its literal meaning, and subtly suggests that his dream is *not* senseless; better, it is productive. This I chose to translate “I stand asleep” rather than “I sleep standing,” which is more literal, for the sake of rhythm and to convey the oddity of the poet’s posture.

Set off as the shortest line and approximately in the middle, the nominal phrase *O balances sentimentales* is the most challenging to translate. A possible literal translation is “ô sentimental scales.” But “scales” is a bad translation: the sonority of a long **a** sound betrays the softer, longer sounds of the two **a**’s in *balances*; and it is hard not to think also of other meanings or associations of scales: fish scales, scaly skin, climbing, even ladders, none of which should be evoked at this point. “Balance” also implies a regular back and forth movement, like a pendulum; the French verb *balancer* indicates such movement, and its metaphorical meaning extends to hesitation or uncertainty in a person. Whether the line evokes the side to side movement of a pendulum or the up and down adjustments of a weighing balance with two pans, the words convey the poet’s uncertainty and hint that a swing of the balance in the right direction will restore his confidence.

“Shadow,” occurring four times, key word in the lexicon, translates *ombre*. Though this word has several possible meanings, I chose to use “shadow” each time, with no variation, just as the poet chose only one word. I hope the context allows the reader to ponder other possible values for the word, such as “shade” in the sense of Dante’s *Inferno* or the idea of something fleeting or ephemeral, or only the shadow cast by the person and not the actual body. The real body of the woman, appearing, would darken the poet into a sunless shadow. A shadow is also a vain illusion, a phantom: Desnos’ love was unrequited. At its last occurrence, the word takes one of its most literal meanings, the darkness cast by something that interrupts the sun, when the poet speaks of the woman’s life as a sundial.

In “No, love has not died” I find the most powerful expression of the immortality that poets ascribe to themselves *because they have loved*. It is a motif found in many poems, particularly, as Desnos writes here, in famous poems by Ronsard and Baudelaire. But Desnos takes the motif and turns it around in two ways: if he does live, she will live in him, immortal. And for me the most moving moment in these poems, is the plain and simple affirmation that he is Robert Desnos, spoken twice.

The repetition of “only one name, only one form,” with slight variants, points directly to the double method by which love does not die: the form points to the body and all its parts—heart, eyes, mouth, voice, gaze, hair, all present in the poem; and the name points to the trio of poets who have known how to love a woman. Even dead, the woman—her form—will be beautiful and desirable: that is the magic the poem operates. And the poet, in the space of one stanza, is “already dead,” and then alive because he can affirm his name.

Deported in February 1944 by the Nazis for his resistance activities, for which he was denounced, shunted among six different camps, Robert Desnos died of exhaustion and typhus in June 1945 in the Terezin concentration camp after the SS abandoned it, in the month before his forty-fifth birthday.

Source text:

Desnos, Robert. “So often have I dreamt of you” and “No, love has not died.” *Corps et biens*, Gallimard, 1953, pp. 91, 98–99.

Louise Stoehr
Five Poems from *Miss Suki*,
or America is not far

Utz Rachowski
Miss Suki
oder Amerika ist nicht weit

[untitled]

My dog and I are listening
to songs by Theodorakis

just slightly

our walk outdoors is delayed

since we're watching another film
about Federico Garcia Lorca

for all that unlike me
my clever dog doesn't need glasses

my doggie has such long ears
ranks number forty four

on the dog intelligence list
they told me

my place among humans
no one has told
me

Louise Stoehr

Utz Rachowski

My Tricolor

Meine Trikolore

Three colors
has my doggie I took an oath on them

Three colors
that I keep secret

So they never become a flag

Among them beautiful white
freedom for all colors

The Large Bird

Der große Vogel

You became
very
frightened

a large bird
black and gray
flew over your yard

all the birds
at once
fell silent

beneath its shadow

it was none other
than war

Louise Stoehr

Thanksgiving

Your nose
like a marvel
made of black plastic

is so lively
at the word *Thanksgiving*
just a bit you raise your head

days in advance
you smell the turkey
in which the *key* to truth

lies stuffed with fragrant
memories plump from the year
for this one Thursday

Utz Rachowski

Thanksgiving

Louise Stoehr

Utz Rachowski

The Trace

Die Spur

A springy
zig-zag
is your gait

your knowing nose
pressed
to the forest floor

as though you were
tracking
down my lifelines

who

else
knows about them

Commentary

About Utz Rachowski

The five short poems presented here seem to be easy-going, but that first impression is deceptive. Selected by Utz Rachowski himself as some of his favorites from the 2013 volume *Miss Suki oder Amerika ist nicht weit* (which translates as *Miss Suki, or America is not far*), these poems reveal that, in addition to the celebration of a dog's enjoyment of life, the threat of political repression is never far. Utz Rachowski's early life was indeed molded by dictatorship—both at home from his father and in general from a repressive regime—and betrayal.

Born in Plauen in 1954, Rachowski grew up in Reichenbach in the Vogtland region of the former German Democratic Republic. Expelled from high school for reading so-called subversive books, Rachowski was forced into manual labor until, after compulsory military service, he was permitted to begin studies at the University of Leipzig. He was later exmatriculated and arrested by the *Stasi*, the East German secret state police, on October 5, 1979, on suspicion of “subversive activities against the state.” After seven months of interrogation, he was given a 27-month prison sentence for circulating his own poems as well as texts by other writers critical of the regime, such as Jürgen Fuchs, Reiner Kunze, and Wolf Biermann. He was released through the efforts of Amnesty International after seven months of hard labor and inhumane treatment in prison that led to serious health issues. At age 25, Rachowski began a ten-year exile in West Germany, living most of that time in West Berlin.

His poems and prose texts have established Rachowski as one of the most important voices in the effort of working through all aspects of living under the repressive control of a state whose surveillance seemed to reach all social areas. In this sense, much of Rachowski's work is what Jürgen Fuchs referred to as *Erlebnisliteratur*, that is, literature of one's own experience, and deals with the overarching themes of childhood, love and friendship, and oppression. However, these experiences are not self-centered but exemplary. This insight is perhaps the

reason that, since 2003, Rachowski has worked in the professional capacity of counselor for people affected by the GDR dictatorship for the state of Saxony (“Bürgerberater für Betroffene der DDR-Diktatur im Auftrag des Sächsischen Landesbeauftragten zur Aufarbeitung der SED-Diktatur”). As a result, one could argue, life in the GDR has been Rachowski’s professional topic at several levels.

In spring semester 2012, however, Rachowski’s writing added a new quality. Rachowski was Visiting German Writer-in-Residence at Gettysburg College, during which time he was also the caretaker for Suki, a young Cavalier King Charles Spaniel. The semester with Suki was a pivotal event for Rachowski. Since his experience in the United States and, in particular, his connection to unconditional affection from Suki, Rachowski’s writing has taken on a new lightness—a lightness, though, that is tempered with a subtle awareness of contemporary threats.

Translating Utz Rachowski’s Poems

Translation is, for me, the act of recreating in English the world that the author has created in the original German language. Clearly, there are a series of filters through which this act takes place, the primary consideration, of course, being how the translator interprets and reproduces in the target language the multiple levels of meaning inherent in the original text. In a nutshell, the translation’s words are my choice, but they should “speak” in the poet’s voice.

Therefore, in addition to recreating Rachowski’s multi-layered message, it is similarly critical to maintain, to the extent possible in the target text, the lyrical quality and rhythm of the original. At the same time, the visual experience should reflect the visual experience of the original text; the physical shape of the translated poem should mirror the textual image of the original.

In addition to following these basic guidelines, I had the benefit of Utz Rachowski’s reactions to my translations as I worked on them. While we sat down together, we engaged in animated conversation about his writing and how best to think about some of the more difficult passages for an English-speaking reader.

Mein Hund und ich hören Lieder von Theodorakis

“My dog and I are listening / to songs by Theodorakis” begins by describing the poet’s quiet evening at home with his dog. Yet even here, the choice of music and film is not arbitrary but very specific because they allude to the poet’s personal experiences—being spied on by the East German *Stasi*, interrogated and subsequently imprisoned before being exiled to West Germany—and gives the poem a definite political resonance. Both the Greek composer Mikis Theodorakis and the Spanish poet Federico Garcia Lorca were persecuted for their left-leaning political convictions. Theodorakis has been imprisoned and exiled several times during his lifetime, and Lorca disappeared in 1936, mostly likely assassinated by Spanish fascists during that civil war. Rachowski’s own imprisonment and exile did indeed delay—by decades—his walk outdoors with his dog.

Meine Trikolore

“My Tricolor” works at several levels. At the surface level the poem refers to the tree colors of the dog’s coat. Also, at first sight, the poem has a rhythmic character that is reminiscent of the children’s song “Mein Hut der hat drei Ecken/Drei Ecken hat mein Hut” (which also has political references, specifically as a satirical verse against Napoleon). However, Rachowski explained that he had not thought of that song when writing this poem. Nevertheless, the three-fold political dimension is present in Rachowski’s own experience of having lived in three German states, all of which were represented by a three-color flag. On the one hand, the poem seems to suggest a certain weariness in terms of political allegiances. On the other hand, the poet has no hesitation declaring his allegiance to Suki, whose three actual colors he never divulges, presumably to protect her from broader political cooptation. The only color the poet mentions is the color white, which is no color at all and, therefore, the “color” of freedom.

Der große Vogel

“The Large Bird” is the most overtly political poem of the five selected here. The reference to a large bird is clearly to a military plane and the threat of war it represents. This poem serves to illustrate a few translation choices that are exemplary of specific choices I made for all these poems. First, *groß* in the title, of course, suggests “big,” but this would be an unfortunate choice because it would most likely evoke the large yellow comic Big Bird from Sesame Street rather than a terrifying image of a war machine. Second, word order in German and English varies; therefore, it is often difficult to maintain rhythm and length of line without placing certain keywords in different places. Examples of this are found in the first and third stanzas. In contrast, the second and the last stanzas of the translation closely reflect the syntax in the original German. “The Large Bird” underscores the extent to which German and English, as two closely related languages, can express the same meaning in linguistic structures that sometimes are very similar and, at other times, diverge.

Thanksgiving

At the center of this poem is the word play based on the German word for “turkey.” The German word *Truthahn* indeed contains the English word “truth,” thus creating a translation challenge. I capitalized on the “key” in “turkey,” and refer to the “key to truth,” thus reflecting how the German original explains that “truth” means *Wahrheit* in German. In general, this poem demonstrates the importance of individual word choices, that is, of finding the right word, or *le mot juste* as Flaubert would say. *Wunder* in reference to the dog’s nose, for example, does not represent “wonder” or “miracle,” but rather a “marvel,” which best evokes the sense of awe in light of such a feat of creation. In the German original, truth is “filled” to almost a bursting point with memories. Maintaining the image of the Thanksgiving turkey that underlies this poem, and in keeping with German culinary terms, the English “stuffed” offered itself as the obvious choice. However, the playful image of an overstuffed turkey, expressed

by *prall* in German, suggested a positive and joyous sensation that could be rendered as “overflowing” in English. The problem with this word choice, however, was the syllable count of the word, that is, both its length and rhythm, which would have created a comparatively long line that did not easily flow in English.

Die Spur

“The Trace” begins deceptively simply in its description of the dog’s zig-zag gait as she trots through the woods, yet there is much more going on in the poem than first meets the eye. The German title suggests a trail that one might follow or clue to some mystery; still, neither “trail” nor “clue” are appropriate translation choices, for either one might well lead the reader down the proverbial garden path. Likewise, the noun “track” could evoke the inappropriate image of a race track, hence the choice of the noun “trace” for the title, while the verb “track down” is indeed the appropriate choice for the German verb *nachspüren* in the third stanza. In addition to its linguistic complexities, the poem also contains a subtle yet powerful political allusion. Rachowski playfully suggests, using the hypothetical subjunctive verb form, that the lifelines Suki might be tracking are a form of intimate knowledge. At this moment, the poet seems to be startled by the possible intrusion into his privacy—not by Suki but by others, by forces he so well knows from his own experiences with the East German *Stasi*.

Source text:

Rachowski, Utz. *Miss Suki oder Amerika ist nicht weit!* Mironde, 2013, pp. 14, 17, 32, 63, 66.

Shelley Kristina Hu
Four Poems from *The Divine Way Station*

Shaojun Li
神降临的小站

At Dusk

傍晚

At dusk, time for dinner
I went out to call my old father walking in the woods

The night color was saturating little by little
Darkness was spreading like ink on rice paper
With each call, the night color was pushed out a little further
With each pause, it gathered again

The sound of my call
Echoed for a very long time in the woods
Then rippled out in the wind like waves

The answer from my father
Seemed to have brightened up the dark night

Shelley Kristina Hu

Shaojun Li

The Divine Way Station

神降临的小站

A few wooden cabins

Diffuse gloomy lights

I'm little as an ant

Held up in an anonymous station

In the middle of a mighty Hulunbeier prairie¹

Enduring the piercing loneliness but peace inside

Behind me, stands the brutal early winter night

Farther back, is a distinct empty road

Farther back, the slow flowing Argun River

As bright as light in the darkness

Farther back, a forest of endless white birch trees

And the dull vast wilderness

Farther back, against the soft blue curtain

Stars twinkle quietly in the sky

Farther back, reside the holy spirits in the infinite north

¹ Hulunbeier prairie is located in Inner Mongolia and regarded as the most beautiful grassland in China, as well as one of the three most famous grasslands in the world.

Shelley Kristina Hu

Shaojun Li

Confession

抒怀

Under the tree, we chatted about our dreams
You said you would write biographies for the mountains, and chronicles for
the water

For me, I just wished to shoot a portrait album of the clouds
Paint a landscape picture outside the window
(sprinkled with a couple of birds singing)
And a sketch of my little girl at home

Needless to say-----
she has to stand in the garden under the papaya tree

Green Jade

碧玉

When the country is big, there's room for convolution
When it's small, it can be grabbed in the palm to enjoy
As soft and warm as jade
He's lingering with ease between you and the country

For one moment, it's about the national business
For another, personal affairs
When he's exhausted, you're the cooling gel on his chest
When it's peaceful, you're the romantic soft spot in his heart

Commentary

Shaojun Li is one of the best-known contemporary poets in China, and acclaimed as the “poet of the natural world.” Like American poet Mary Oliver, Li’s poems are largely centered around nature: mountains, rivers, ocean, birds, and so forth. In this fast-paced chaotic era, the poet turns to nature for reflection, inspiration, and peace of mind. As poet Li-Young Lee once said, “poetry is the yoga of the mind”; for Li, it’s an act of meditation through which he sheds new light on ordinary objects. The four Chinese poems translated here were selected from his latest poetry collection *The Divine Way Station* (2016).

In the poem “At Dusk,” the speaker’s search and love for the father (biological or religious) can be seen as a universal experience. Although it is a short poem, it is challenging to westernize it for English readers while keeping it as close to the original wording as possible. In Chinese poetry, words such as 又 (again), 一下 (a little), 一点点 (a little), 一声 (one call) are frequently used; however, that would sound wordy in English. Hence I have to be careful about where to keep and where to omit those words without straying from the original meaning.

The poem “The Divine Way Station” is one of Shaojun Li’s masterpieces. In this poem, the poet used “little ant” as a metaphor to express the insignificance of a human, in contrast to mighty and magnificent nature—the prairie. He uses an anonymous train station as the center point, and then gradually zoom out with layers of natural sceneries and beauties, all the way to the farthest north where the holy spirits reside. The challenge of translating this poem is in choosing the most accurate word. I first used “further back” for 背后, later changed to “farther back” since it’s more about the physical distance rather than figurative distance.

Searching for the best English word to match its Chinese counterpart is not always easy because one must take into consideration the word’s meaning, the metaphor it’s often associated with, and the tone. For example, in the poem “Confession,” I was stuck on a common word, 当然, which means “of course.” If I translate directly using the words “of course,” it would sound too hasty for such a gentle and calm poem. Therefore I decided

to use “needless to say--” and made it a separate line to slow down the pace. This way, it conveys the same meaning, is visually more pleasant, and reads well.

“Green Jade” is about romantic feelings. Green jade usually symbolizes a pretty girl in a middle-class family in Chinese culture. In this poem, the poet’s feelings move between career ambitions and personal romantic love. There are a couple of challenges in translating this poem. For the second line of the first stanza, I was not sure whether to add the word “it” to represent the subject because the subject of the clause in Chinese is ambiguous. The other challenge is to find the most accurate translation for the Chinese idiom 游刃有余. I was hesitating among “maneuver,” “linger with ease,” and “drift,” and finally decided to go with “linger with ease” since it’s the best choice to describe such fuzzy romantic feelings.

I hope the above poems provide a glimpse of contemporary Chinese poetry, in particular the poetry of Shaojun Li, which is worthy of a wider readership and greater attention.

Source text:

Li, Shaojun. *The Divine Way Station*. Writers Publishing House, 2016, pp. 1, 2, 3, 6.

George Held
Martial, IV.29

Marcus Valerius Martialis
IV.29

The number of my little books
works against them, dear Pudens,
and their frequent publication
bores and sates their readers.

What's rare delights: thus the first apples
are most prized, thus winter roses
fetch prime prices, thus arrogance
recommends a despoiler,

and a door always open won't retain
a young stud. So Persius in just one book
outranks all of slight Marsus' *Amazoniad*.
So whichever of my books you reread,

suppose it the only one: thus
will it be worth even more to you.

Commentary

When it came to justifying the value of his “little books” of epigrams, Martial (40–104 CE) was his own best apologist, and many of his poems concern the poet’s avidity for recognition and fame. After all, he wrote in competition with such accomplished poets as Juvenal, Ovid, and Martial’s fellow Spaniards Seneca, Lucan, and Quintilian. Moreover, Catullus, who lived in the previous century, still held sway, so Martial became an ardent salesman of his own wares: “Buy these” (I.2).

In IV.29 Martial speaks in defensive mode, explaining that his “little books” suffer from their proliferation: too much of a good thing breeds indifference. It is “what’s rare” that gains attention, so Martial offers a series of examples of prized rarity, including the first apples of the season and winter roses. The poet ties these examples together through the repetition of *sic*, creating parallel structure and underscoring his series of items. Both parallelism and the series frequently aid Martial in his poetry, for he revels in making lists of examples and in filling out categories.

The clause in Martial line 6, about the young man, proves interesting, for he might find the open door inviting either to enter or to leave through. The young “stud,” as I call him, might allude to the motif of *paraclausithyron*, in which a young lover (*exclusus amator*) laments being locked outside his mistress’ door. But Martial, ever contrary, chooses to leave the door open to suggest that once inside, the lover, granted easy access, won’t easily be held inside by his mistress’ charms.

At the end of IV.29 Martial comes back to his main point, a defense of his own books against a predecessor of the previous century, Marsus, a lightweight whose epic was, Martial argues, eclipsed by their fellow satirist Persius (34–62), who died before completing his own book. Martial then concludes by telling Pudens (“Bashful One”), who was last mentioned in line 1 (line 2 of the translation), that whenever he rereads one of Martial’s books, he should regard it as one of a kind: “thus / will it be worth even more to you.” This notion, that his then four books are as one, complements Martial’s theme that what’s rare, a single volume, is valued most.

Rather than use Martial's block-form, I divide the poem into four stanzas, three quatrains and a concluding couplet, resulting in a pseudo sonnet: it has the fourteen lines of a sonnet and looks like some English sonnets, but has no rhyme scheme or standard line-length. Like Martial, I do use internal rhyme, as the repetition of the **uh** sound in line 10 shows: "a **y**oung **st**ud. So Persi**u**s in **j**ust one book." As in many English sonnets, the final couplet both ends the poem and cinches the argument.

Source text:

Martial. *Epigrams*, vol. 1. Edited and translated by D.R. Shackleton Bailey, Cambridge, 1993, p. 300.

Notes on Contributors

John J. Brugaletta is professor emeritus of English and comparative literature at California State University, Fullerton, where he edited *South Coast Poetry Journal* for ten years. He has published over 380 poems in 85 venues and has six collections of his poetry in print, the latest of which is *Peripheral Visions* (Negative Capability Press, 2017). A seventh volume, *Selected Poems*, is in press with Future Cycle Press. X.J. Kennedy has called his *Selected Poems* “a vital contribution to American poetry.”

Nancy Naomi Carlson has received grants from the Maryland State Arts Council and the Arts & Humanities Council of Montgomery County. She has authored three books of poetry and six books of translations, including *Hammer with No Master* (Tupelo Press, 2016), translations of René Char, which was a finalist for the 2017 CLMP Firecracker Poetry Award. Her translations have appeared in such journals as *The American Poetry Review*, *Boulevard*, *Crazyhorse*, *The Iowa Review*, *Kenyon Review Online*, *Massachusetts Review*, and *The New England Review*. Her original poetry has appeared in *The Georgia Review*, *Poetry*, *Prairie Schooner*, and other journals. Her website is located at www.nancynaomicarlson.com

Gregory Divers is Professor Emeritus of German at Saint Louis University. In June 2018 he attended the Bread Loaf Translators’ Conference and Workshop.

Professor of Creative Writing/Translation at the University of Arkansas, **John DuVal** also serves on the Medieval and Renaissance Studies faculty. He has received two awards from the Academy of American Poets: the 1992 Harold Morton Landon Translation Award and the 2006 Raiziss/ de Palchi Award. His latest book of translation is *The Song of Roland*, which was a 2012 finalist for the PEN-USA Award in Literary Translation. He is currently finishing an *Essential François Villon* and is writing a series of essays, from a translator’s perspective, on *The Song of Roland*. He is incorporating most of what he wrote for this *Transference* article into an essay on the V4 *Roland*,

which he presented at a colloquium on Francophone literature at King's College, Cambridge, in 2014.

Andrew Gudgel received a B.A. in Chinese from The Ohio State University, and M.A. degrees in Liberal Arts from St. John's College, Annapolis, and Science Writing from Johns Hopkins University. He spent a decade-plus working for the U.S. government, mostly in U.S. embassies overseas, before becoming a freelance writer and translator.

George Held has translated more than 160 of Martial's epigrams and published many of these translations in such journals as *Circumference*; *Ezra*; *National Poetry Month*; and *Transference*, as well as in *Martial Artist* (Toad Press Translation Series, 2005). A ten-time Pushcart Prize nominee, he has published twenty collections of his own poems, most recently in the chapbook *Dog Hill Poems* (Seattle: Goldfish Press, 2017). His fourth children's book is *Under the Escalator* (2018).

Shelley Kristina Hu is a member of the Academy of American Poets and President of Windy City Poet Association. She is internationally published and her works have been selected in poem collections such as *Distilled Lives*, *The Best Chinese Poetry 2016*, and *World Poetry Literature*. She lives in Northbrook, Illinois.

Rina Kikuchi is an associate professor at Shiga University, Japan. She has a Ph.D. in contemporary Irish poetry from Chiba University, for which her study included a year of research at Trinity College, Dublin. She is currently a visiting fellow at the Australian National University and University of Canberra, undertaking her research on women's free-style poetry of the Asia-Pacific War, funded by a Kakenhi Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (15KK0049). Her bilingual anthology, *Poet to Poet: Contemporary Women Poets from Japan*, was published in September 2017 by Recent Work Press (co-edited with poet Jen Crawford).

Kathryn Kimball has a BA in English and French from Brigham Young University and a Ph.D. in English Literature

from Drew University. She is currently earning an MFA in Drew University's Poetry and Poetry in Translation program. From 1991–2007, she taught writing and nineteenth-century British and American literature as an adjunct professor and continues to crisscross the Atlantic for literary conferences. A poet, translator, and yoga practitioner for twenty years, she and her husband live in New York City.

Houssem Ben Lazreg is currently a Ph.D. candidate, a translator, and a teaching assistant of Arabic/French in the Department of Modern Languages and Cultural Studies at the University of Alberta in Canada. He was a Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant of Arabic at Michigan State University from 2010–2011. He holds a Master of TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) from Nazareth College of Rochester. He has also taught Arabic and French at different American institutions such as West Virginia University and Indiana University in Bloomington. His research interests include politics and translation, Middle Eastern graphic novels, and Islamist militant movements.

Erik Lofgren is associate professor of East Asian Studies at Bucknell University where he teaches Japanese language, literature, and film. His most recent publication is a comparative look at rape and female agency in Kurosawa Akira's *Rashōmon* and Martin Ritt's *The Outrage*. The translations here are an expression of his interest in the poetry of Natsume Sōseki.

Susan McLean's book of verse translations of Martial's Latin poems, *Selected Epigrams* (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 2014) was a finalist for the PEN Center USA's Translation Award. Her translations of Catullus, Horace, Martial, Sir Thomas More, Charles Baudelaire, Charles d'Orléans, Jean de la Ceppède, Heinrich Heine, and Rainer Maria Rilke have appeared in *Ari-on*, *Moreana*, *First Things*, *Literary Imagination*, *The Classical Outlook*, *Amphora*, *Blue Unicorn*, and elsewhere. She is a professor emerita of English at Southwest Minnesota State University and has two books of her own poetry, *The Best Disguise* (U of Evansville P, 2009) and *The Whetstone Misses the Knife* (Story Line, 2014).

Armine Kotin Mortimer was awarded the *Palme académique* honor in recognition of her distinguished work on behalf of French culture. She holds a Ph.D. from Yale and is the author of numerous scholarly publications. She has published translations of three French books, *The Enchanted Clock* by Julia Kristeva and *Mysterious Mozart* and *Casanova the Irresistible* by Philippe Sollers. Excerpts from twelve other literary translations have appeared in *3:AM Magazine*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, *The Cossack Review*, *Asymptote*, *Black Sun Lit*, *The Peacock Journal*, *The Critical Flame*, *The Northwest Review*, *Reunion: The Dallas Review*, *Lunch Ticket*, and *AGNI*.

Zack Rogow was a co-winner of the PEN/Book-of-the-Month Club Translation Award for *Earthlight* by André Breton, and he also translated Breton's *Arcanum 17*. Rogow received the Bay Area Book Reviewers Award (BABRA) for his translation of George Sand's novel, *Horace*. His co-translation of *Shipwrecked on a Traffic Island and Other Previously Untranslated Gems by Colette* was published by SUNY Press. His English version of Colette's novel *Green Wheat* was published by Sarabande Books and nominated for the PEN/Book-of-the-Month Club Translation Award and for the Northern California Book Award in Translation.

Tina Zuangchen Shan holds a B.A. in Comparative Literature (French and English) from Barnard College of Columbia University. While in college, she completed additional studies at National Tsing Hua University and Oxford. Her writings and artworks have appeared online and in print in *Journal of Art Criticism* and *Ratrock Magazine*, among other publications. Tina writes and translates in New York city.

Joshua Lee Solomon is a lecturer in the Hirosaki University (Japan) Center for Liberal Arts Development and Practices. He received his Ph.D. in East Asian Languages and Civilizations from the University of Chicago in 2017. His research centers on issues of place, minor literature, vernacular language, and practice. His current work examines these issues in the contexts of the Tsugaru region of northern Japan and wartime Manchuria/Manchukuo. He is the co-editor of a special issue of *Japa-*

nese Studies called “Rethinking the Supernatural in Modern Japanese Literature,” including his article on “Fantastic Place-ness: Fukushi Kōjirō’s Regionalism and the Vernacular Poetry of Takagi Kyōzō” (both forthcoming). In addition to poetry, he has published Japanese-to-English translations of academic research and literary criticism.

Louise Stoehr holds B.A. and M.A. degrees in German from Occidental College and a Ph.D. in Germanic Studies from the University of Texas at Austin. She is Associate Professor of German at Stephen F. Austin State University with a specialization in linguistics and computer-assisted language learning. Her research interests include language learning technology, sustainability, social justice, and literary translation. Her published translations include works by Elfriede Jelinek, Uwe Kolbe, Ludwig Harig, Matthias Buth, Wolfgang Hegewald, Sarah Kirsch, and Hans-Joachim Schädlich.

Laurel Taylor is a Ph.D. student in Japanese Literature/Comparative Literature at Washington University, St. Louis. She holds an MFA in Literary Translation from the University of Iowa. Her translations have appeared in the *Asia Literary Review* and *Voices from Tohoku*, and in 2017, she was chosen as one of five translators to be featured by English PEN Presents East and Southeast Asia.

Xinlu Yan grew up in China and came to the U.S. for graduate school in the 1990s. She works in the IT field but enjoys poetry and literature tremendously. She translates literature between Chinese and English in her spare time. This is her first published poetic translation.

We gratefully acknowledge support from Emily Brooks Rowe and from the College of Arts and Sciences at Western Michigan University. We would also like to express our appreciation to Maira Bundza, Bill Davis and Thomas Krol.

This issue was printed by McNaughton and Gunn using Georgia, Segoe Script, MS Mincho, SimSun, and Gabriola fonts.



WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
College of Arts and Sciences
Department of
World Languages and Literatures

ISSN 23255072



9 772325 507007