

VOLUME 5 Number 1
Spring 2011

Our featured writers, Clayton Eshleman and Lucas Klein, need no introduction. We are very lucky they thought of sharing their process with us, as they wrangle with Bei Dao. We have a good deal of their correspondence about the translation, and it continues in our Archives (click on Archive, above).

Note that Rilke wrote in French, not just German—and the first set of translations (by James Owens) is from the French. These are followed by Lorne Mook’s work. Lorne has done the noble work of translating (for the first time) all of Rilke’s *Traumgekrönt* (*Dream-Crowned*, 2010, University of New Orleans Press).

In other notes: Francesco Levato wants us to read the three Alborghetti poems as an untitled sequence. We break with our house style by printing a fascinating Urdu original version, at the end of the issue. Vivek Iyer’s translation of these ghazals is stupendous.

Ezra hopes you’ll go to the sidensi conference (www.sidensi.com) in Windsor, UK, May 27-29, this spring. This is a conference on translation and traducture, organized by the noted writer, theorist and translator, Dr. Wangui wa Goro. “Traducture” is her term for ideas and practices that derive from “the theoretical and empirical premise that multiple knowledges, values and cultures do not always translate in equivalence, nor communities interact in equal relationships of power, nor are the modes, means and processes of knowledge management the same or similar, within or across cultures.” The conference promises to greatly increase the ripples of understanding around our acts of literary translation.

Lastly, do wish Ez **Happy Birthday**, as we enter our fifth year...

I traduttori/traduttrici:

Clayton Eshleman
Lucas Klein
James Owens
Lorne Mook
Li-Chung Wang

Joshua Lavender et al.
Jan Owen
Francesco Levato
Vivek Iyer
René Joyal

FEATURED WRITERS

Clayton Eshleman's most recent publications include a translation of *The Complete Poetry of Cesar Vallejo*, with a Foreword by Mario Vargas Llosa (U of Cal Press, 2007), *The Grindstone*

of Rapport / A Clayton Eshleman Reader (Black Widow Press, 2008), and Anticline (Black Widow Press, 2010). This spring Wesleyan University Press will publish his cotranslation with A. James Arnold of the unexpurgated 1948 *Soleil cou coupe* (Solar Throat Slashed) by Aimé Césaire, and this winter Black Widow will publish his translation of Bernard Bador's *Curdled Skulls*. Eshleman was the founder and editor of two seminal literary magazines: *Caterpillar* (20 issues, 1967-1973) and *Sulfur* (46 issues, 1981-2000). He is also the author of the first study by a poet of the origin of image-making via the Ice Age painted caves of southwestern France: *Juniper Fuse: Upper Paleolithic Imagination & the Construction of the Underworld* (Wesleyan, 2003; second edition, 2009). A professor emeritus at Eastern Michigan University, he continues to live in Ypsilanti with his wife Caryl.

Lucas Klein—a former radio DJ, barman, and union organizer—is a writer, translator, and editor of CipherJournal.com. His translations, essays, and poems have appeared or are forthcoming at *Two Lines*, *Jacket*, and *Drunken Boat*, and he regularly reviews books for *Rain Taxi* and other venues. A graduate of Middlebury College (BA) and Yale University (PhD), he is Assistant Professor in the dept. of Chinese, Translation & Linguistics at City University of Hong Kong, and is at work on translations of Tang dynasty poet Li Shangyin and contemporary poet Xi Chuan.

TRANSLATING BEI DAO'S "UNTITLED: A HUNDRED THOUSAND WINDOWS SHIMMER"

LK to CE, July 29, 2009 3:35 PM:

Here's the next BD poem, "Untitled."

I found it very difficult, which you'll be able to tell from my footnotes. One thing that comes to mind is that the first Chinese poet to write "Untitled" poems was Li Shangyin (ca. 813-858) of the late Tang. They're known for being dense, allusive, and hermetic, and are assumed to be allegorical, though no one knows for what, and also for being about love, though guesses about with whom proliferate. And it's not that they're untitled, but rather that their title—which was an important indicator of context and social referent in Chinese poetry up to that point—was the deliberately vague "Untitled." I imagine that Bei Dao may likely be invoking Li Shangyin in this and the other "Untitled" poems in *The Landscape Over Zero*.

Here's a quick bibliography for Li Shangyin in English, if you're interested:

- C. Graham, *Poems of the Late T'ang* (Penguin, 1965), pp. 141-173.
- James Liu, *The Poetry of Li Shang-yin: Ninth-Century Baroque Chinese Poet* (U. of Chicago, 1969)
- David Hinton, *Classical Chinese Poetry: An anthology* (FSG, 2008), pp. 308-320
- Lucas Klein, a few Li Shangyin poems, *Fascicle 1* (www.fascicle.com; link seems to be dead, unfortunately)
- Robert Kelly's "Reading Li Shang-yin: Falling Flowers," in *Red Actions* (Black Sparrow, 1995), pp. 330-336

it's a goal of mine to translate the collected works of Li Shangyin into English. I'd like the book to be called *Untitled*.

*

北島 《無題》

Bei Dao, "Untitled"

千百個窗戶閃爍
這些預言者
在昨天與大海之間
哦迷途的歡樂

a hundred thousand windows shimmer¹
these sooth-sayers²
between yesterday and the sea³
murmur an errant delight⁴

橋成爲現實
跨越公共的光線
而涉及昨日玫瑰的
秘密旅行提供
一張紙一種困境

the bridge becomes reality
stretching over a public⁵ ray of light
and touching on yesterday's rose's
secret voyage to provide⁶
one sheet of paper one kind of dilemma⁷

母親的淚我的黎明

mother's tears my dawn⁸

¹ I like "shimmer" better than DH's "glimmer" because the word uses repeated /sh/ sounds (shānshuò), but another definition for the word is to be vague or evasive, maybe like "hem and haw." Also, I don't think the number—which is actually more like "millions and millions"—should be taken literally. It strikes me that the number itself is a kind of *shānshuò*, or imprecise speech.

² I think I like "sooth-sayer" here better than "prophet" because the Chinese word includes the character for "speech."

³ Probably in English these lines should be transposed, so that "between yesterday and the sea / these soothsayers..."

⁴ For DH this line reads "o that joy of losing the way," which is considerably different from how I understand it. I read the line as *é mítú de huānlè*, where *é* = "v.: recite softly," *mítú* = "adj.: lose one's way; wrong path," and *huānlè* = "n.: joy, delight" (so that *mítú de huānlè* = "a lost joy, an errant delight"). For DH, it's *ò mítú de huānlè*, where *ò* = "oh, ah," and *mítú de huānlè* = "the joy of getting lost." Both are possible, but I'm sticking with my reading. At some point, though, we might want to ask Bei Dao, and see if he didn't mean to cover both meanings at once. If that's the case, we might have to figure out a way to encapsulate both meanings in their simultaneity in English.

⁵ DH has this as “the public,” but I don’t think *gōnggòng* can be a noun, only an adjective.

⁶ The grammar of this poem is particularly complicated, and I find myself reading it differently from Hinton at just about each turn. I’ll exchange line breaks for punctuation to show the different readings. Hinton: “A bridge becomes reality, spanning the public’s gleam, and the clandestine journey involving yesterday’s rose offers a sheet of paper, a dilemma.” Me: “The bridge becomes reality stretching over a public ray of light and touching on yesterday’s rose’s secret voyage to provide a certain dilemma for every sheet of paper.” I guess we just have to pick whichever one we like better.

⁷ My English here is admittedly strange, and strained. I think it probably means, as would be colloquial Chinese, “a kind of dilemma per sheet of paper” (kind of like how we say “one man, one vote”). See above.

⁸ The implied grammar here is probably parallel to the line above, so that, if “one piece of paper one kind of dilemma” means “a kind of dilemma for each sheet of paper,” then this probably means “a dawn for me for each of mother’s tears.”

*

CE to LK, July 29, 2009, 4:02 PM:

Yes, a complicated one. But your information in your notes is very useful.

UNTITLED

Millions of windows shimmer
between yesterday and the sea
these sooth-sayers
murmur an errant delight

The bridge becomes reality
spanning a public ray of light
and touching on the secret voyage of
yesterday’s rose providing
a certain dilemma for each sheet of paper

for me a dawn for each of my mother’s tears

Try this version and let me know where I have missed a point.

*

[CE then revises this version and sends a new one to LK later the same day:]

UNTITLED

A hundred thousand windows shimmer
between yesterday and the sea
these sooth-sayers
recite lost joys

A bridge becomes reality
spanning public rays of light,
touching on the secret voyage of
yesterday's rose providing
for each sheet of paper a certain dilemma

for each of my dawns my mother's tears

*

LK to CE, July 30, 2009, 11:07 AM:

I think this is good. See attached comments. My only worry is that we're doing too much to lock the poem down to one meaning, as opposed to leaving it open to the ambiguities that would lead to David Hinton's translation.

UNTITLED

A hundred thousand windows shimmer
between yesterday and the sea
these sooth-sayers
recite lost joys

Comment [LK1]: I'm trying to think of a word that would go with "shimmer" to suggest a kind of verbal beating-around-the-bush. How about "shimmer and shuffle"?

Comment [LK2]: "recite" is good, but the verb in Chinese suggests low tones. "intone"? something else?

A bridge becomes reality
spanning public rays of light,
touching on the secret voyage of
yesterday's rose providing
for each sheet of paper a certain dilemma

Comment [LK3]: The Ch. word for "touching on" is explicitly verbal, e.g., "your argument touches on the issue that..." Is this clear in the English?

for each of my dawns my mother's tears

Comment [LK4]: I guess it's the same, but I think the Ch. says, "one of my dawns for each mother's tear." Of course, then we get into questions about whether it's each mother's tear, or mothers' tear, or tears, or...

*

CE to LK, July 30, 2009, 2:27 PM:

Another version. "shimmer and shuffle" seem definitely off to me.

The only way I can see using "shuffle" is to replace "intone" with it.

I think it would be ok to create an extra half line with "providing," to keep the prosody in balance.

The last two lines are now parallel. Do they pretty much match the Chinese?

To think of the bridge itself "touching on" is a little unreal. Thus "bordering on" which I think is a little more indirect and mysterious, the bridge itself being a kind of border.

You imply that we are making the poem too logical. Can you point out where?

UNTITLED

A hundred thousand windows shimmer
between yesterday and the sea
these sooth-sayers

intone errant delights

A bridge becomes reality
spanning public rays of light
and bordering on the secret voyage of
yesterday's rose

providing

one kind of dilemma for each sheet of paper

one of my dawns for each mother's tears

(continued in Ezra's Archives)

*

The Birth of the Sun

*~~translated by Joshua Lavender, Brittany Sansom, William Taylor, Ladonna Perkins,
and Rebecca Flowers*

I have constructed new planets, dreamed nights
composed of sheetless music.
I've painted brilliant skies, mute stars
before half-moon eyes.

Yet

I will never relive the first day our father's tribes
emerged from the dark jungle and looked to the east.
They listened to the jaguar's roar,
to the chorus of birds.

And they saw

a man rising whose face flushed with fire—
a youth with a resplendent face
whose luminous looks dried the marshes,
a tall man whose countenance blazed,
whose face lit the world.

PABLO ANTONIO CUADRA (Nicaragua, 1912 –)

Manuscript In A Bottle

~~translated by Joshua Lavender, Brittany Sansom, William Taylor, Ladonna Perkins, and Rebecca Flowers

I remember the coconut trees and the tamarinds
and the mangos,
the white sheets drying in the sun,
the smoke of breakfast staining the sky
at daybreak,
and fish dancing in the net,
and a girl in red
who would drift down to the shore and float up with a jug
and pass behind a grove
and appear and disappear.
And for a long time
I could not sail without that image
of the girl in red
and the coconut trees and the tamarinds
and the mangos
that seemed to live only
because she lived;
and the white sheets were white
and the smoke was blue
and the fish and the reflection of the fish
were happy only
when she lay down
in her red dress.
And for a long time I wanted to write a poem
about this girl in red
and could not find a way to describe
the peculiar thing that captivated me,
and when I told my friends they laughed.
But when I sailed away and returned

I always passed the island
of the girl in red,
until one day I ventured into the bay
and cast anchor and sprang to shore,
and now I write these lines and cast them to the waves in a bottle
because this is my story,
because I am staring at the coconut trees and the tamarinds
and the mangos,
the white sheets drying in the sun
and the smoke of breakfast staining the sky,
and time passes
and we wait and wait
and we grunt,
but she does not come with ears of corn—
the girl in red.

PABLO ANTONIO CUADRA

Girl in Red

~~translated by James Owens

At times she walks through the village in her little red dress,
trying hard to contain herself,
but she seems to move, nevertheless,
to some rhythm from her future life.

She runs a bit, hesitates, pauses,
half-turns back again....
dreaming, shakes her head, refuses
pro or con.

Then she sketches a few steps of a dance
that she invents and forgets,
finding life at once
moves on too fast.

It's not so much that she might go
outside her body's little enclosure,
but that all she carries within her

frolics and starts to grow.

Later, she will remember this dress,
when risk surrounds her life,
a sweet release—
the little red dress will always be right.

RAINIER MARIA RILKE

from *Les Roses*

~~translated by James Owens

VI

A single rose is all roses
and this one: irreplaceable,
perfect, supple vocable
the text of things encloses.

How could we say, without her,
what were our hopes,
and the brief, tender stops
in continual departure.

RAINIER MARIA RILKE

The Silent Whole

~~translated by James Owens

What measure holds firm
against what is and goes
and passes too fast or too slow
for the unforeseeable term
our hearts are still just usable?
Even if you are asleep
or sitting at the table,
in the end you take the shape
of the untellable.
What silence around our lives,
despite some word that seeks
to live. We shout, we cry.
The Whole never speaks.

RAINIER MARIA RILKE

To Love

~~translated by Lorne Mook

I

And how might the love have come to you?
Came it like a sunning, a blossom-snow?
Came it like a praying?—Tell:

A happiness, among the heavenly things,
broke free and hung, grandly, with folded wings
upon my blossoming soul . . .

II

That was the day of the white chrysanthemums;
before their heavy splendor, I nearly took fright . . .
And then, then you came to take my soul
deep in the night.

I was afraid—and lovingly, softly, you came;
of you, within the dream, I had just thought.
You came, and softly like a fairy tune
the night rang out . . .

III

To be together with you on a day in May
and, through the fragrant haze of flowers
in flaming rows, to wander aimlessly
to the white jasmine bower.

And from there to gaze out at the May blossoms,
each wish within the soul made silent . . .
And to build in the middle of May-desire a great
happiness,—that's what I want . . .

IV

I don't know how this happened to me . . .
don't know what joy I listen to;
my heart is away as in drunkenness,
and the longing is like a melody.

And my girl has a heart that's cheerful,
and hair that's full of sun,
and eyes of the Madonna,
who still today works miracles.

V

Do you still remember that I brought you apples
and softly, gently smoothed your hair of gold?
You know . . . that was when I still liked to laugh,
and you were still a child.

Then I turned serious. Within my heart
a youthful hope and an old sorrow burned . . .
It was around that time the governess took
the *Werther* from out of your hand.

The spring cried out. I kissed your cheeks; your eye
looked upon me large and full of blessing.
That was a Sunday. Far off, bells rang, and through
the firs the lights were passing . . .

VI

We sat in thought, in the grape-leaf twilight,
together—you and I;
above us, in the scented tendrils,
was a buzzing bumblebee.

In your hair, many-colored patterns of circles
retained a brief repose . . .
I said nothing but, once and softly,
"You have such beautiful eyes."

RAINIER MARIA RILKE

Travelers' Burial

~~translated by Li-Chung Wang

On July 3, 1509, an unknown official from Beijing took his son and a servant to his new place of employment. They passed by Long-chang City² and put up for the night at a local family's home. I saw them through a bamboo fence. It was dark, rainy, and overcast. I intended to go to their home and ask them about the news in the north, but I did not. The next morning, I sent people to see them. The official, his son, and his servant were gone. Around noon people came from Wu-gong Slope³ and said, "One man died at the foot of the slope. Two people were weeping at his side." I said, "It must be the official who died. How sad!" At about sundown, another group of people from the same place came with an update. They said that there were two people dead at the foot of the slope and that one person was sitting alongside and crying. After asking about the situation, I learned that the official's son had also died. The next day, a third group of people from the same area came and said that they saw three corpses lying at the foot of the slope. The servant was dead as well. Alas! How tragic!

I was sorry that the corpses were exposed in the wilderness and that no friends would claim them. Therefore, I carried a shovel and a bucket and went to bury them. I also asked two boys to help me, but they appeared reluctant to go. So I said, "We are in the same situation as they are." Then the two boys wept with pity and agreed to go bury the corpses. At the foot of the mountain we found the corpses. Nearby we dug three graves and buried them.

After offering a chicken and three bowls of rice to honor the dead, I spoke to the spirit of the deceased official through tears, "Alas! What an unfortunate event! Who are you? Who are you? I am Shou-ren Wang, a post official of Long-chang City. You and I were born in Central China even though I do not know exactly from where you came. Why did you come here to become ghosts of this mountain? In ancient times, people would think seriously before leaving their home town. If they had a job offer more than a thousand miles away from their home town, they would not accept it. It is appropriate for me to stay here because I am in exile. But what crime could you have committed that forced you to suffer such misfortune? I heard that your new position was a jailer. Its salary is less than five bushels of rice a month⁴. You might earn that amount of money by farming with your wife. Why did you trade your precious life for such a low salary? In addition, you have also traded in your son and your servant. If you really came for five bushels of rice, you should have been cheerful when setting out for your journey. However, when I saw you yesterday, you seemed to knit your brow as if you could not bear your sorrow. During your long journey, you risked frostbite and had to climb numerous cliffs and mountain tops. You had to endure thirst, hunger, hardship, and exhaustion. The plague attacked your body, and sorrow attacked your mind. How could you avoid death? Although I know you had to die, I am surprised that your death came so soon and that your son and your servant also died so suddenly. You have only yourself to blame for this tragedy. What else can I say?

"Since no one would have claimed your corpses, I came to bury you. This grieves me endlessly. Alas! How sad! The foxes from the gloomy mountain edges gather in groups. The vipers in the dim valley are each as thick as a wheel. If I had not buried you, they would have devoured you and you would not have been exposed to the elements for long. Now that you are insensible, how could I have the heart to let that happen? I have lived in Long-chang City for two

years since leaving my home town. I can survive the plague because I have never been dejected even for a single day. I am sad today because I care more about you than about myself. It is no use to mourn your death further. I would like to sing for you. Please listen!

“A continuous chain of mountain tops meets the sky. Even a bird can not fly over them. Like wanderers, we miss our homes. We wish we could find a way to leave here. Although I cannot see my home, my family and I share the same sky. Although I live in a primitive region away from home, I am glad that there is no sea to separate me from my family. We should be optimistic and feel at home wherever we are. Spirits! Spirits! Please do not grieve too much!”

“I sang again to soothe the spirit of the deceased jailer: ‘You and I left our home town and came here, we could not understand the local dialect. In such a plagued region, one cannot expect to live long. If I die here, please bring your son and your servant to join me! We may travel for pleasure. We may ride a purple tiger or a colorful dragon to view our homes in the distance. Perhaps we will weep with grief because we cannot be there with our families. If I can survive and return home, your son and your servant can still follow you. Do not be upset about loneliness. There are plenty of graves along the roadside. Most of the dead came from Central China. You may greet them with whistles and walk with them back and forth. You can survive by eating wind and drinking dew. In the morning, you can befriend deer. In the evening, you can rest with apes. May you remain here in peace. Do not bother people in this area.’”

¹ Bo-an and Yang-ming were Shou-ren Wang’s other first names. He was a native of Yu-yao City in Zhejiang Province during the Ming dynasty. He built a dwelling and gave lectures in Yang-ming Cave at the foot of Kuai-ji Mountain in Shao-xing City. Scholars call him Master Yang-ming.

Shou-ren was extremely clever and had a heroic spirit. When he was fifteen, he visited Ju-yong Pass and Shan-hai Pass of the Great Wall. The grand wall inspired his aspiration to administer China’s frontiers. In 1499 CE, he passed the Advanced Exam at the age of twenty-eight. Then he was appointed Assistant Director of the Board of Punishment. When he was thirty-five, he wrote a letter to his superior because he wanted to rescue Xian Dai, the Supervising Censor of Nanjing City, and more than twenty other people. The letter offended Jin Liu, a powerful but corrupt eunuch. As a consequence, Shou-ren Wang endured forty floggings and was demoted to a low position at China’s western border. This essay “Travelers’ Burial” was written during his exile. After Jin Liu was killed, Wang was promoted to Assistant Director of the Board of Punishment at Nanjing City, and then Lord High Chamberlain’s Censor. In 1516 CE, he was appointed to the position of censor, in charge of patrolling the southern area of Jiangxi Province, along the Ting River and the Zhang River, and crushing local insurgents. In 1519 CE, he also defeated the rebellion instigated by Chen-hao Wang. Soon after Shou-ren Wang was promoted to the position of Director of the Board of War and was made the Count of Xin-jian. In 1527 CE, he was appointed to the position of joint governorship of Guangdong and Guangxi Provinces, and was in charge of crushing rebellions instigated by chieftains of the tribes in Si-en City and Tian-zhou City.

Shou-ren Wang is regarded as a great philosopher both in China and in Japan. He claimed that knowledge and action are two aspects of the same entity. He advocated for developing one’s talent to the utmost. His disciples were all over China. Later generations called his school of philosophy “Yao-jiang School”. His philosophy is similar to that of Jiu-yuan Lu of the Song

dynasty. Scholars usually put their names side by side and call them “Lu and Wang”. The school led by Jiu-yuan Lu and Shou-ren Wang as well as the school led by Hao Cheng, Yi Cheng, and Xi Zhu were the two major schools of Neo-Confucianism in modern China. Shou-ren Wang’s essays are broad, profound, and virtuous; his poems are graceful and exquisite.

² Long-chang City is now called Xiu-wen-xian City and is located in Guizhou Province. During the Ming dynasty it was China’s western border city where the Han people and the Miao people lived together.

³ “Wu-gong Slope” means “The Mountain Slope of Centipedes”.

⁴ “Five bushels of rice a month” is not a generous salary.

WANG, SHOU-REN (1472-1528 CE)

Meanwhile the weather, the clouds, the century change

~~translated by Francesco Levato

And where else do you believe my presence possible
if even my country is against me? Nothing else remains
but cancellation he repeated an affirmation of existence

even without place. Now count he said
total those remaining. Subtract the blows the flashes
the nameless bags or piles of limbs and mouths choked
with emptiness and you’ll have the measure of remaining, the nameless expanse.

There were those who resisted the place at first sight
unchanged. A few signs visible though scattered: a bonfire
by the house a stack of twigs and limbs

a column of smoke or tanks at the roadside.
Yet the immensity was akin to the familiar
calm: not seeing is denial he said, ignoring

vagrant soldiers killing those who would not shed country or skin

and bringing further ruin after the ashes.
Having no intentions quantified the mistake

of having too many: the factions at the core willfully
went on perceiving it as lawful. Overcoming the silence
some through upheaval others by aligning borders.

At the core always at the core only flesh, a stream
of unvarying color illuminating the dispersion yet the place
remained the same: it donned the seasons and at once undressed

without concern for the slaughter of destinies that would never germinate.

From one shore to the other the only divide
the fear of beginning, an absence of traces:
what do I leave behind

if I go he said what memory will I find?

FABBIANO ALBORGHETTI

Place...

~~translated by René Joyal

Place your earrings under the chair
as well as the carpet's flowers
and all the nose-gays of the day before
so that the sweat of lightly stirring air
and the verdure's thighs
and the trumpet bells under the sea
survive along the precipice.

ETIENNE LÉRO (Martinique, 1909-1939)

Hymn to Beauty

~~translated by Jan Owen

Where are you from, blue distance or the devil?
That look of yours, demonic and divine,
pours such a heady mix of good and evil,
you work on us like some ethereal wine.

Your eye encompasses sunset and dawn,
you breathe out fragrances like evening rain;
your kisses sipped like philtres from an urn
turn heroes into cowards, boys to men.

Are you from the depths or from the stars?
Destiny trots yapping to your call;
you spread joy and disaster as you please;
answering for nothing, yet ruling all.

Beauty, you tread the faces of the dead,
and mock them too. Horror's your finest jewellery,
and murder your favourite gem, strung on its thread,
shimmies seductively low on your arrogant belly.

You're like a candle drawing the dazzled moth
to crackle and flare yet keep on blessing the flame.
The panting lover and his girl, in truth,
seem more like corpses turning in one tomb.

Whether you come from heaven or from hell,
artless, monstrous Beauty, you alone –
your eyes and smile and footsteps – are the sill
to an infinite I've loved and never known.

So are you an angel of God or siren of Satan?
Who cares, my doe-eyed elf of rhythm and light,
Not I, my queen, for only you can lessen
this world's ugliness, this hour's dead weight.

CHARLES BAUDELAIRE

Unsatisfied

~~translated by Jan Owen

Bizarre goddess, colour of dusk, oiled
and perfumed – musk mixed with Havana,
you're a voodoo fetish, Faust of the savannah,
a witch with ebony flanks, midnight's child.

I'd forego constancy and hash and sleep,
to taste your nectared lips where love pavares;
desire sets off in endless caravans
toward your eyes – wells where ennui drinks deep.

So by those great dark eyes, those windows of calm,
my pitiless demon, moderate your flame;
the Styx may well encircle you nine times,

not I! Nor can I play at Proserpine
to overcome your shrewish will with shame.
Your bed's become my hell, dear libertine.

CHARLES BAUDELAIRE

Book- 'Divan-e-Ghalib' (Ghazals)

~~translated from the Urdu by Vivek Iyer

Ghazal 111(1852)ⁱ

In what the flowers display and what the dust yet hides
Resurrected Beauty, for aye, Thy veil abides

What in Memory as our colorful legend presides
Life's quotidian but cobwebs provides

The Pleiades, whose conceits our day elides
Lie naked to a fate, night decides

If from Jacob, Joseph a dungeon hides
His eyes, in darkness, its chink betides

On cutting up rivals, if Love, itself, prides
Zuleikha's jury, Justice derides!

For Separation's dark, the nightmare so rides
The Eye, erupting blood, its ember, chides

If, in Heaven, as houris, Beauty resides
Revenged are we on who weren't our brides!

His is sleep, and mystic dream, & Night & all besides
Your coiffure on whose chest its undoing confides

Wine is life giving; gain Wine and no March's Ides
Mars your hand's hold on the immortal guide's!

All Faiths are One for their Observance divides.
Nothing is won by but warring sides.

'Fore Cities and Towns, which tears' flood subsides?
Dams my isthmus of wreckage a damn Deicide's?

Ghazal 20 (1847 or later)ⁱⁱ

To be in tryst united, not I could twist my fate
If longer life invited, I'd yet forlornly wait

*Did I live on thy oath, know, my life were a lie
Of happiness I'd die! held thy troth to a date*

For as feebly as fond entreaty, bindst thy Word
Its sequel, equal treaty, art surd to sublimate

Why was that arrow drawn without brawn, not art?
That, in my heart, it stick, not sever it straight!

Why admonishes like a priest, my old comrade and mate?
If you haven't a pain killer, at least, my pain giver hate!

Were what it mock as 'woe wilful'- flint struck sparks
Thy Ark's veined rock, would ruck Red sans bate

Anguish is certain arson; know! -the heart *must* burn
If not to yearn, then to earn, or learn chalk's slate!

By his assent, this night of grief, did an Adam create?

Death's a Thief, or Madam, my ruin can't sate

My grave- ghazal's fresh ground?! Better I'd drowned!
My clay, they claim-jump, with elegies on 'the late'!

*His vision can't anoint, who is but a singular viewpoint
Were a second scented... Ah! God alone is Great!*

Since Sainthood has its Arabi seal, thy mystic spate
For Drunkard's weal, ope's a Ghalibian gate!

Ghazal 96ⁱⁱⁱ

Thy footsteps, in desert sands, are where to our famished gaze
Iram resurrected stands, its rose beds all ablaze.

That Beauty's mole miss kiss her lip, must so trouble and amaze
For Reason we now let slip & Reality e'en lower appraise.

Tho' the rapture of your beholding mere human havoc plays
Yet less Cosmic is the tumult, Doomsday itself displays.

To find the Ninja who, by dark, attacks, foils Day's detective rays
For, fleeing my heart, assassin tracks, Night as its Sun assays.

Now lost to her own looking glass, alas! her not the spectacle sways
Of her lovers as lost to a mirrored, for, but blind alley, maze.

In a goliard's tuneful tatters, cloak, Ghalib, Thought's gilded lays
For Princes now are paupers & only tadpoles croak thy praise.

Ghazal 63 (1816)^{iv}

For that her street's rain refreshed puddles are changed to a scummy, sicklied o'er, green
Or that the *mise en abyme* of the mystics, only in the mirror's verdigris, now is seen
Rare wines and rich acquaintance have yet, me, to common madness sped.
Till the sigil plain, of all Mathesis arcane, is but this stain upon my bed!

Ghazal 214 (1821)^v

Till the mouth of the wound gravid utterance attain
All paths to your ear, mere aporias detain
Majnun's footy blister has raised a dusty twister to pervade the Plenum's plane
Whom, longer, in imaginal Limbo, can Lailah's locks limn sane?
Not Civility has a freezing center, all heating, guests to gain
Save my sleeting heart, she enter, who entered ere as pain.
Cup companion, my tears' flood to slow, reprove not- no reproof is vain!

That my Noah's knot of the heart's rainbow, the Saqi sooner obtain

Ghazal 39 (1816)^{vi}

Last night, when the radiance of our assembly to her abashed chamber retired
Each candle wick, became a thorny prick at its shade from the desired

Who has not, Lord, the longing to kiss bridal feet, with a martyr's zeal fired?
For miles, the Lover's tomb, by not rolling wheat but green henna is gyred

Against Sorrow's sorites, the Brain, this Stoic armor, in vain, thus acquired
Trysts, hearts crush hearts to gain, are the thin lips of pain- it required.

Knew I respite from this wretchedness- I'd recite much to be admired
But, Oh!- eating my own heart out- my very bile has grown tired!

Ghazal 8 (1816)^{vii}

Not haughty, nor naughty, 'tis love of the knotty makes prayer, not prosody, such a bore
And our hundred hearts to her henna'd hand- a rosary of carnelians, nothing more

Not for heartless is her each luckless wight, but that Hope Hearts knotted sore
Her dexterous digits to unknot delight but render naught our core

If she, a turn in the garden, proposes- the breezes to her mirror- or adore
Make such a massacre of the roses as to mire her soles in gore!

ASADULLAH KHAN GHALIB (1797- 1869)

N.B. Nastaliq script versions of the originals can be found on the 'desertful of roses' site.

*ⁱ sab kahāñ kuchh lālah-o-gul meñ numāyāñ ho ga ṭñ
ḳhāk meñ kyā ṣūrateñ hoñgī kih pinhāñ ho ga ṭñ*

*yād thīñ ham ko bhī rangārang bazm-ārā ṭiyāñ
lekin ab naqsh-o-nigār-e ṭāq-e nisyāñ ho ga ṭñ*

*thīñ banāt ul-na ṣh-e gardūñ din ko parde meñ nihāñ
shab ko un ke jī meñ kyā ā ṭ kih ṣuryāñ ho ga ṭñ*

*qaid meñ ya ṣqūb ne lī go nah yūsuf kī ḳhabar
lekin āñkheñ rauzan-e dīvār-e zindāñ ho ga ṭñ*

*sab raqīboñ se hoñ nā-ḳhvush par zanān-e miṣr se
hai zulaiḳhā ḳhvush kih maḥv-e māh-e kan ‘añ ho ga ṭñ*

*jū-e ḳhūñ āñkhoñ se bahne do kih hai shām-e firāq
maiñ yih samjhūñgā kih sham ‘eñ do furozāñ ho ga ṭñ*

*in parīzādoñ se leñge ḳhuld meñ ham intiqām
qudrat-e ḥaq se yihī ḥūreñ agar vāñ ho ga ṭñ*

*nīnd us kī hai dimāgh us kā hai rāteñ us kī haiñ
terī zulfeñ jis ke bāzū par pareshāñ ho ga ṭñ*

*maiñ chaman meñ kyā gayā goyā dabistāñ khul gayā
bulbuleñ sun kar mire nāle ghazal-ḳhvāñ ho ga ṭñ*

*vuh nigāheñ kyūñ hu ṭ jātī haiñ yā rab dil ke pār
jo mirī kotāhī-e qismat se mizhgāñ ho ga ṭñ*

*baskih rokā maiñ ne aur sīne meñ ubhrīñ pai bah pai
merī āheñ baḳhyah-e chāk-e garebāñ ho ga ṭñ*

*vāñ gayā bhī maiñ to un kī gāliyoñ kā kyā javāb
yād thīñ jitnī du ‘ā ‘eñ ṣarf-e darbāñ ho ga ṭñ*

*jāñ-fizā hai bādah jis ke hāth meñ jāñ ā gayā
sab lakīreñ hāth kī goyā rag-e jāñ ho ga ṭñ*

*ham muvaḥḥid haiñ hamārā kesh hai tark-e rusūm
millateñ jab miṭ ga ṭñ ajzā-e īmāñ ho ga ṭñ*

*ranj se ḳhū-gar hu ‘ā insāñ to miṭ jātā hai ranj
mushkileñ mujh par paṛīñ itnī kih āsāñ ho ga ṭñ*

*yūñ hī gar rotā rahā ghālib to ay ahl-e jahāñ
dekhñā in bastiyoñ ko tum kih vīrāñ ho ga ṭñ*

ⁱⁱ *yih nah thūi hamaarii qismat kih vi.saal-e yaar hotaa
agar aur jūite rahte yihii inti:zaar hotaa*

*tire va((de par jiye ham to yih jaan jhuu;T jaanaa
kih ;xvushii se mar nah jaate agar i((tibaar hotaa*

*tirii naazukii se jaanaa kih ba;Ndhaa thaa ((ahd bodaa
kabhii tuu nah to;R saktaa agar ustuvaar hotaa*

*ko))ii mere dil se puuchhe tire tiir-e niim-kash ko
yih ;xalish kaha;N se hotii jo jigar ke paar hotaa*

*yih kaha;N kii dostii hai kih bane hai;N dost naa.si;h
ko))ii chaarah-saaz hotaa ko))ii ;Gam-gusaar hotaa*

*rag-e sang se ;Tapaktaa vuh lahuu kih phir nah thamtaa
jise ;Gam samajh rahe ho yih agar sharaar hotaa*

*;Gam agarchih jaa;N-gusil hai pah kaha;N bache;N kih dil hai
;Gam-e ((ishq agar nah hotaa ;Gam-e rozgaar hotaa*

*kahuu;N kis se mai;N kih kyaa hai shab-e ;Gam burii balaa hai
mujhe kyaa buraa thaa marnaa agar ek baar hotaa*

*hu))e mar ke ham jo rusvaa hu))e kyuu;N nah ;Garq-e daryaa
nah kabhii janaazah u;Thtaa nah kahii;N mazaar hotaa*

*use kaun dekh saktaa kih yagaanah hai vuh yaktaa
jo duu))ii kii buu bhii hotii to kahii;N do chaar hotaa*

*yih masaa))il-e ta.savvuf yih tiraa bayaan ;Gaalib
tujhe ham vali samajhte jo nah baadah-;xvaar hotaa*

*ⁱⁱⁱ jahāñ terā naqsh-e qadam dekhte haiñ
khiyābāñ khiyābāñ iram dekhte haiñ*

*dil-āshuftagāñ khāl-e kunj-e dahan ke
suvaidā meñ sair-e ‘adam dekhte haiñ*

*tire sarv-e qāmat se yak qadd-e ādam
qiyaamat ke fitne ko kam dekhte haiñ*

*tamāshā kih ay mahv-e ā ṭnah-dārī
tujhe kis tamannā se ham dekhte haiñ*

*surāgh-e taf-e nālah le dāgh-e dil se
kih shab-rau kā naqsh-e qadam dekhte haiñ*

*banā kar faqīroñ kā ham bhes ghālib
tamāshā-e ahl-e karam dekhte haiñ*

^{iv} *qaṭrah-e mai baskih ḥairat se nafas-parvar hu 'ā
khaṭṭ-e jā-m-e mai sarāsar rishtah-e gauhar hu 'ā*

*i 'tibār-e 'ishq kī khānah-kharābī dekhnā
ghair ne kī āh lekin vuh khafā mujh par hu 'ā*

^v jab tak dahaan-e zakhm nah paidaa kare koi
mushkil hai tujh se raah-e sukhan vaa kare koi
ālam ghubār-e vaḥshat-e majnūñ hai sar-ba-sar
kab tak khayāl-e turrah-e lailā kare koī
afsurdagii nahii;N :tarab-inshaa-e iltifaat
haa;N dard ban ke dil me;N magar jaa kare koi
rone se ay nadiim malaamat nah kar mujhe
aakhir kabhii to uqdah-e dil vaa kare koi

^{vi} *shab kih vuh majlis-furoz-e khalvat-e nāmūs thā
rishtah-e har sham 'a khār-e kisvat-e fānūs thā
mashhad-e 'āshiq se kosoñ tak jo ugtī hai ḥinā
kis qadar yā rab halāk-e ḥasrat-e pā-būs thā
ḥāṣil-e ulfat nah dekhā juz shikast-e ārzū
dil bah dil paivastah goyā yak lab-e afsūs thā
kyā kahūñ bīmārī-e gham kī farāghat kā bayāñ
jo kih khāyā khūn-e dil be-minnat-e kaimūs thā*

^{vii} *shumār-e subḥah marghūb-e but-e mushkil-pasand āyā
tamāshā-e bah yak-kaf burdan-e ṣad dil pasand āyā*

*bah faiz-e be-dilī naumīdī-e jāved āsāñ hai
kushāyish ko hamārā 'uqdah-e mushkil pasand āyā*

*havā-e sair-e gul ā 'tnah-e be-mihrī-e qātil
kih andāz-e bah khūñ-ghaltīdan-e bismil pasand āyā*
