

translation zine 2023  
+ original poems

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*a note on the typefaces*

*The text was set in Marco, a serif font designed by independent designer Toshi Omagari, and Adobe Song Light.*

*June 30, 2024*

*previously published online at:*

[leahsfiction.tumblr.com/tagged/gushiwensday](https://leahsfiction.tumblr.com/tagged/gushiwensday)

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怜底众生病

*untitled (“pity this sickness of living things”)*

*Hanshan*

*pity this sickness of living things:  
they dine and taste, and are they ever satisfied?*

*steamed piglet: marinate in garlic black-bean  
roast duck: sprinkle with pepper salt*

*pick the bones out of fresh raw fish  
leave the skin on a well-done cheek*

*they don't know whose lives are bitter  
they only take and take so they and theirs are sweet.*

感讽五首 · 其三

*Five Verses, Voicing My Feelings (III)*

*Li He*

*how much grief can Mt. Zhongnan bear?  
ghost rains dot the empty grass.  
autumnal midnight in Chang'an  
there's the wind: how many have grown old?  
the track wavers in the deepening dusk  
roadside oaks twist and spiral  
the moon strikes noon. trees become standing shadows  
all the mountain turns to white dawn.  
lacquered lamps welcome new arrivals  
to their tombs below; a crowd of fireflies, a throng.*

感春

*a touch of spring*

*Lí He*

*it is warm and I am listless  
the flowers mourn for Beiguo Sao.*

*elm threads through the eye of lei coins  
willow snaps like the waist of a child, dancing.*

*pitch the canopy welcoming the god Yan  
floating silk carries gifts to the shrike.*

*the strings give voice to today's anguish  
and I spill my words into the sandalwood groove.*

咏怀二首

*Feelings: Two Verses*

*Lí He*

*I, Changqing, remember Maoling  
where green grasses drape over stone wells.  
playing the qin, I look at Wenjun  
the spring breeze stirring her beautiful hair.  
the kings of Liang and Wu  
abandoned me as lightly as a snapped twig.  
I only left a single volume behind  
and the rite of heaven atop Mount Tai.*

*the sun sets; stop reading.  
frost scatters on my white silk page.  
I laugh a little in the mirror:  
is this the longevity of Nanshan?  
I have no cloth upon my head  
my robes are bitter yellow.  
since there are no fish in the clear stream  
sweet and proper it is to drink this water.*

苏小小墓

*The Tomb of Su Xiaoxiao*

*Lí He*

*somewhere, dewdrops—the orchids weep  
no promises, no garlands are made—even still,  
don't cut the flowers!*

*her bed is grasses of all kinds, its canopy dark pines  
the winds, her skirts; a river chimes upon her belt*

*her painted carriage made ready at dusk  
cold jade wicks throw their light*

*by her western tomb, the wind whistles, the rain blows.*



浪淘沙令 · 帘外雨潺潺

To the tune "Waves Washing the Sand"

Li Yu

*beyond the screen  
the rain is chattering;  
spring's first flush is leaving us behind.  
the silken quilt is no match for  
the early morning chill.  
in dreams you forget  
you're just an exile;  
still clinging to that joy come noon.*

*in your loneliness  
don't lean on the railing  
over the boundless rivers and mountains.  
parting is an easy thing  
as meeting is hard.  
as the waters run and flowers fall,  
spring moves far away:  
as far as heaven from earth.*

江城子·乙卯正月二十日夜记梦

*Dream, 20/1/1075*

*Su Shí*

*ten years—the haze of distance between the living and the dead  
one doesn't think on it much  
one never forgets it*

*a thousand miles of lonely graves  
nowhere for my living voice to speak misery*

*even if we meet again, you would hardly know me  
a face full of dust  
white in my hair*

*with a strange dream at night I am suddenly back home  
that little window  
where you are getting ready*

*we look at each other, but words don't come  
only a thousand lines of tears*

*I will be waiting every year at the place of my heartbreak  
the bright moon at night  
the mound of short pines*

江城子 · 密州出猎

*Hunting in Mizhou*

*Su Shi*

*Make an old man young again for now, headstrong,  
With a yellow hound leashed  
And a goshawk too,  
Brocade hat and a sable coat on  
As a thousand riders make the flat hilltop tall.  
The whole city's turned out; like a good governor I'll  
Shoot a tiger myself  
Like a second Sun Quan.*

*Intoxicated, with chest inflated and courage too  
See these grays coming in  
Is that a crime?  
Ride out with a pardon to Yunzhong,  
Feng Tang, ride out soon.  
My painted bow's ready to bend round like the moon,  
Sight northwest  
And shoot the wolf down.*

无题

*Untitled Verse*

*Lí Shangyín*

*swallowing desire  
this spring evening  
brief view  
of night encroaching*

*noise from your apartment  
inviting me to come up, a coward  
movement behind the lit screen  
desire surges to cross the street, a disgust*

*ashamed like the white bird  
on its perch in your hair  
like the phoenix  
facing out of the back of your mirror*

*to its rightful home  
comes the Hengtang dawn  
the last flowering stars  
kissing the colours on my ride*

暮秋独游曲江

*Alone at Winding River in Late Autumn*

*Lǐ Shangyīn*

*Time again for spring anguish  
with the budding lotus leaves  
And time again for autumn—  
ripe now, the leaves all withered.*

*The piercing knowledge that having a body  
means having emotions too  
I ache: where does the river start,  
that the waters keep on sounding?*

江上值水如海势聊短述

*a short post: the river was raging like the ocean*

*Du Fu*

*I'm the kind of freak who obsesses over the perfect line  
if my words don't stun them, I won't rest until I'm dead*

*but in my old age my poems just tumble out as they will  
hey spring birds and flowers, you have nothing to worry about  
from my pen*

*got a new addition to my place, a pier where I can sit and fish  
plus my old tied-up raft—I'm happy without a boat!*

*where can I get a mind like Tao or Xie  
to narrate and compose on a stroll with me?*

留別王侍御維

*Parting from Wang Wei*

*Meng Haoran*

*stillness and silence—I find myself waiting  
one dawn comes and another—foolishly I return  
I long to go searching for fragrant grass  
and hate to part from you, my friend.*

*on this road who helps a fellow-traveller?  
kindred souls are so rare in this world  
what can I do but keep to myself  
and close my old garden door.*

行香子 · 七夕

*Qixi Festival*

*Lí Qíngzhao*

*crying crickets by the field's edge  
shake loose the wutong leaves  
sorrow lies heavy upon both earth and heaven*

*cloud stairs between the moon and earth  
a thousand locks bar the way  
one raft drifts on the sea  
one on the heavenly river  
never meeting*

*when the magpies draw the star bridge  
only then can you meet each year  
your loss and longing must be bottomless*

*dear cowherd, dear weaver  
are you still waiting on either side?  
just now there was sun  
no, it was rain  
no, wind*



山坡羊 · 骊山怀古

*Meditation on History, Mt. Li*

*Zhang Yanghao*

*the view spreads out under Mt. Li.*

*Epang Palace, put to the torch,*

*all of its past splendours—where have they gone?*

*there's only the grass, wild and forlorn*

*and the waters winding on.*

*regrets from antiquity still thread through the mists and trees.*

*each and every state of Zhou, Qi, Qin, Han, and Chu:*

*those that won,*

*where all has turned to dust;*

*and those that lost,*

*where all has turned to dust.*

寄扬州韩绰判官

*Sent to Official Han Chuo in Yangzhou*

*Du Mu*

*the green mountains are as hazy as the river winding on  
autumn takes Jiangnan, though the grass survives*

*among the twenty-four bridges under moonlit night  
where is my dear virtuoso? teach me once more.*

蝶恋花 · 梦入江南烟水路  
*To the tune "A Butterfly Loves Flowers"*  
Yan Jídao

*in dreams I'm travelling  
the southern mists and rivers—  
I cross all of Jiangnan,  
I don't meet you once.  
asleep, in the grips of what I couldn't tell;  
awake in tears, I knew it was regret.*

*if only I could complete  
this love letter's length of plain silk:  
geese fly up and fish swim down,  
an ending without evidence.  
I draw on slow songs to preserve these feelings  
but the finale, heartbreak, needs the guzheng.*

original poems

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*self-recrimination*

*zhuangzi may well have been right  
a little learning makes a great fraud*

*why brag and put on airs  
why write, pretending at culture*

*poems? the same fenced garden  
essays? the same well-swept roads*

*how comfortable, since you fear going out  
and have interred your heart in boredom's halls.*

## *Sweet-talking Li Bai*

诶 大侠  
中圣花醉  
银河上之客人  
*hey you swashbuckler,  
wine-besotted flower-lover,  
wanderer among the stars—*

快点下来跟我聊一会儿  
*come down so we can talk for a second.*

等什么，老骨头在下界之内闷死了  
*please. my old bones gets lonely down here—*

*ascend how many thousand cloud stairs? you want to ask  
an old man to—*

*alright! alright, forget about that  
forget that we're Du Fu and Li Bai  
this nameless raft will do us*

*do you remember when we slept under the same quilt  
in the same bed  
and I still (with a mind running on verse)  
wouldn't stop composing drunken nonsense  
and you dragged the blanket over our heads  
(exposing my poor bloodless feet with their veins and bunions)  
and we started giggling like great foolish children*

*thinking back, I do think our breathlessness (you inhaled wrong  
and started to cough in deep barks, I flung  
the mass of cotton off and put it to rights)  
better  
than most kinds of verse  
the moments of not knowing what to say  
beads of each other's spittle and breath on our beards*

*—well it wasn't poetry  
it wasn't significant dreams  
it wasn't meaning or allusions or the story of ambition  
the slice of shining red atop the pouch of your eyelids  
and the way the excellent unfiltered wine  
tends to give you gas, your guts gurgling  
and moving about in the silence*

*—alright then! You tell me what it means  
O Angel of Poetry*

