

# Three Poems

SHI ZHI

冬日的阳光

——给寒乐

你可感受到了冬日的阳光  
我可已经嗅到了她的芬芳  
在经烘晒变暖的新鲜空气里  
在吸足了阳光后略带糊香的衣被上

你可注意到冬天阳光的颜色  
浅浅白白地略微加点金黄  
哈气成冰的季节里就这点暖色调  
透着严寒中人们心中的祈望

可得好好珍惜这暖暖的冬阳  
外出走走，愉快地享受好时光  
让阳光翻晒的好心情随鸽群放飞  
鸽铃声牵带出心中的笑声朗朗

淡淡的冬日的阳光不躁动不张狂  
静坐在家中品杯茶是乐事一桩  
悠闲清静中不妨读上几页书  
累了便合上书本闭目遐想

“冬天到了，春天还会远吗？”  
品味着诗句微微睁开双眼  
发觉那暖暖的，淡淡的冬日的阳光  
已经悄悄地移出了朝南的门窗

Sunlight of Winter

*for Han Le*

Have you felt the winter sunlight?  
I can already smell her fragrance,  
In this fresh, sun-warmed air  
Sun-soaked clothes smell scorched

Have you noticed the color of winter sunlight?  
white water with a golden hue,  
The only warm color in the season of frozen breath  
passes through the cold to fulfill everyone's desires

Please hold onto the warm winter sun  
Walk outside, take pleasure in this sunlight  
Let your sun-soaked mind follow the pigeons released into the sky  
Where their bells string together the sounds of laughter

The pale winter sun isn't restless or arrogant  
Still the mind at home with a cup of tea  
The pure clarity of the mind pauses on a few pages of a book  
Tired, close the book, then the eyes, and leave the body behind

"If winter comes, can spring be far behind?"  
Savor the verse, then open, dimly, both eyes.  
Notice the winter's pale warm light  
has already migrated, soundless, beyond the southern window

(2003)

你可感受到了冬日的阳光

## 春 雪?

天气预报：立春已过十多日，但今夜可能还有一次降雪过程，雪量不大。

天黑黑的很阴，  
夜风不冷但湿漉漉的  
想必是细碎的春雪已悄然降临  
屋内暖气很热  
便敞开了窗子  
潮润润的空气便立刻浸漫了身心

关上灯，漆黑一片，什么都看不见  
但外面在落雪却分明感到很真  
有了，这正是艺术追寻的“感觉”  
说不清道不明的，让人回味无穷

冥冥中突然觉得二千多年来  
生命力极强的中国诗学的须根  
正沿血脉在我被春雪裹着的  
暖暖的心中缓缓地向外延伸

没有一点痛苦的感觉  
倒有点从未有过的亢奋  
有点酒后微醉的得意  
心境却大海般平静又深沉……

随着这根须的伸展，我仿佛听到  
从远古传来的讲授诗学的声音……  
赶紧把几天来纷杂的所思所悟  
整理成诗句记在这午夜时分

之后可能是两种结果：  
第二天早晨醒来，忙起身  
昨夜下了雪，外面窗台上  
薄薄一层，白白的，很均匀……

还有一种可能：  
第二天醒来，忙起身  
昨夜无雪，天很阴……

## Spring Snow?

Weather forecast: Spring began more than ten days ago,  
Tonight there may be some snow, but not heavy.

Dark, an overcast sky,  
night winds blow, not cold, but damp,  
Spring's light snow is already falling  
Open the window,  
it's too warm inside,  
The moist air quickly floods body and mind.

Turn off the lights, pitch black, can't see anything,  
But the snowfall outside feels very real,  
Here, right now, this is what art pursues, "this feeling,"  
It lingers unexplainable, beyond cognition, an aftertaste without end

In the dark, I suddenly feel the two-thousand-year-old  
Vitality and strength of Chinese poetry, its fibrous root  
Slowly spreads through my veins, wrapped in spring snow  
A warm spirit slowly extends outward

Not feeling any pain,  
I have never been so excited,  
As if intoxicated  
this sense as deep and dark as an ocean . . .

As the root hairs stretch, I seem to hear  
From history, a voice offers an ancient poetics . . .  
Hurry, it will take days to untangle these ideas  
Concentrate, develop these night thoughts into a verse

Afterward, there are only two possibilities  
Rush to wake in the morning,  
Last night's snow lies on the windowsill,  
A thin layer, white and even . . .

Or, perhaps, the other possibility:  
rush to wake in the morning,  
Last night no snow fell, only an overcast sky . . .

(2006)

*Translations from the Chinese*  
By Jonathan Stalling & Yongan Wu

# 说不清道不明的，

## Oh, Nietzsche

It was cold on the last Christmas Eve of the nineteenth  
century,  
Raging storm squeezed from the cracks,  
The philosophy professors gathered in the golden hall—  
The nonsense and crap were winning applause.

The cold air wrinkled professors' brows,  
Subconsciously the ladies pulled up their collars,  
Nobody paid attention, nobody reacted further,  
But the roaring sound was sweeping across Europe.

Outside, Nietzsche was rambling in the expanse,  
His thoughts danced with the storm and the wolves,  
In the icy world his thoughts metamorphosed again and again,  
As they kept trying to break the spiritual shackles.

He never stopped questioning in his life,  
No one understood his arrogance and loneliness  
Nobody answered his scorn to the world either,  
Only his drafts stayed with him, like the snowflakes.

The torturous diseases made him older,  
In the loneliness Nietzsche painfully pondered,  
Rebellious thoughts were like the gale rolling with snow,  
Stomping across the universe, so ferocious and abusive—  
For a pure and ruthless world.

Then the bell of the New Year rang,  
The heroes Nietzsche called "Supermen,"  
From *Martin Eden*, Jack London's novel,  
To Hemingway's old fisherman,  
Now the whole world has been shaken.

After so many sleepless nights plagued by disease,  
The poetic dreams nestling alone and cold,  
Like a newborn baby going through the pain of delivery,  
Finally cried out, shocking all people on earth.

Nietzsche, before the sun rises to change the world,  
The stars in the sky are the flames of your thought.  
Your last passion is just like the guttering candle,  
Wake with us Nietzsche, let us walk together.

(2003)

*Translation from the Chinese*  
By Yongan Wu

inside china

SHI ZHI (b. 1948) worked in the Chinese countryside as an "Educated Youth," joined the army in 1972, and then developed schizophrenia. After convalescing in the No. 3 Welfare Hospital for years, he now lives at home. He is one of the most famous writers of the influential and avant-garde group of "Misty" poets.

JONATHAN STALLING, Assistant Professor of English at the University of Oklahoma, specializes in twentieth-century American poetry and East-West poetics. His publications include articles, translations, poems, and reviews in the *Boston Review*, *CLEAR (Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews)*, *Chain*, and *Verdure* as well as several book chapters on American poetry, translation studies, and poetics. He is the co-editor of a forthcoming book entitled *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry: A Critical Edition* and is working on a book project entitled "Poetics of Emptiness," which traces the contributions and transformations of East Asian philosophy, religion, and poetics in twentieth-century American poetry.

YONGAN WU teaches Chinese at the University of Oklahoma and studies English education as a doctoral student. His research interests include Chinese-English literacy, Chinese history and literature, and educational technology.

让人回味无穷

## August

in august I passed through the political piano room, hearing someone repeatedly practice a lofty air

the helicopter casts a shadow  
its great dragonfly thorax  
venturing out from under eaves hung with birdcages

I've already gone far, even leaving the city  
I'm about to leap onto a concrete dike over a hundred feet high  
the wind at my back  
bringing me as of old that lofty air

the ears of a tulip, the ears of an imaginary quadruped  
the ears of a herring with glimmering scales  
have all been plugged by those fingers playing notes

in august, sitting on the great dike  
I can gaze at the roofline of the piano room  
that helicopter almost level with  
my eyebrows: will it ride up  
on that lofty air  
—that seems to be what dragonflies would do

(1992)

# Three

CHEN DONGDONG (b. 1962, Shanghai) is a graduate of Shanghai Normal University and one of the leading poets of the "Third Generation."

While slouching toward a Ph.D. in Chinese literature at Yale University, LUCAS KLEIN is a labor activist who edits the online magazine of creative translation, [www.CipherJournal.com](http://www.CipherJournal.com). His translations, essays, and poems have appeared or are forthcoming at *Frank*, *Manoa*, *Composite Translations*, *Palimpsest*, and *Big Bridge*, and he regularly reviews books for *Rain Taxi* and other venues. He met his wife in Beijing, got married in Paris, and lives in Connecticut, but wishes he were back in Chicago.

# Poems

CHEN DONGDONG

## Descent

in the ritual of descent the testability of a swallow  
might at times be a circling battleship bird's  
seafaring testability too

but a gas factory testing the so-called dizziness  
of flight arrivals is a roaring and unexpected  
indulgently cooing language

in a fan-shaped field it decelerates again  
on an even more imposing fan-shaped coastline, it  
stands grounded on its heels, two polished

stainless-steel barrels becoming breasts  
nourishing flames, the employment rate  
couching the swaddled ideals of a delta's blank consciousness

so someone slides down from an iron chimney  
like a flag annulling an alarm  
he walks out of the gas factory

in his identity are mixed the singeing blood of  
the last engendered descendant and the greater-economic newborn  
the sightline within his breast is yet

half the air: the swallow and the battleship bird  
are celebrating the impending arrival of a great rain with  
the dragonflies, ah, dragonflies

he slowly makes his way down the old path  
walking into a somewhat thicker  
green. —Forced to shrink

the rural village is even further down. Insomnia  
there is the cooing language of  
mingling tragedy and expectation

(1996)

## The Tour Guide's Map

Yu Huipei carries a star-shaped mark like an error. An error?  
 Still enthusiastic novice hikers take a breather on the lookout peak,  
 listening to the movement of the clouds below, a torrent of rain.  
 The next site they want to get to is even further beyond the earth.

\*

The rain means that you and he can only play cards in the inn at the foot of the mountain.  
 The doors and windows are wide open, and from time to time the salon girls without customers come peeking in.  
 The fog a flock of sheep made even more marvelous—from the sauna  
 seeping into the hallway, crowding into a double bed;  
 wrathfully suppressing the bleating calls.

\*

In the lightning the author takes a glance.  
 In the lightning I think back on my background, in more voyages I have been sent, reading other travelogues:  
 In the lightning someone pokes through the bundle of defense lines, amid which one says, "I'm already wet . . ."

\*

The climber decides to keep the sweat flowing,  
 reaching the golden peak before drying off in wind or sun.  
 Behind them the railing holds back old revolutionary films, black clouds, and breasts:  
 the bandit boss's second wife's chignon coils to a higher sea-level;  
 the rank coolie's swollen shoulder, a gaze back through the cheongsam slit toward the sun as it collapses into the peninsula.

\*

This isn't a poem. It's a chore.  
 How many reincarnations has the stonecutter spent building steps around the mountain?  
 Newcomers climb up to the new fork in the road, touching the deeply chiseled-out eagle's eye and  
 the nocturnal smoke ring's green stone road sign:  
 how many reincarnations will it take to reach paradise?

\*

But every look back seems like a little paradise.  
 If you plan on tying your sightline to the foot of some migratory bird whose name you can't say  
 look back further, straight into the darkness . . . perhaps paradise will flip over into hell.

\*

One day's wait is already so slow no one can take it.  
 The new rain extinguishes the old, new hopes become old fantasies fluttering their wings within memories.  
 In the evening you and he are finally fed up with winning and losing, over and over . . .  
 Fortunately, a boring card game can still transform fiction:  
 —he turns on the lamp . . . you read "The Tour Guide's Map."

(2002)

*Translations from the Chinese*  
*By Lucas Klein*

# Four Poems

## Heritage

*For Tsvetayeva*

The grain you saved is still fermenting  
It is the wine I must drink  
The lamb oil you saved is still sighing  
It is the night I must endure.

You walk around the galaxies all night long  
Smoke and cough there  
How hasn't your suffering ended?  
Still dragging that unbearable millstone.

I am still measuring the abyss you measured  
The mileage of your rain-clouds is still waiting for my breath  
Torment, an inexhaustible heritage,  
Compels me to walk to you.

Look at your picture, I cried:  
I meet my old self in the mirror  
Is it because of the hint in your eyes,  
White hair spreads quickly in my head like a fire.

## The Iron Anvil above My Head Is Singing

The iron anvil above my head is singing  
Earlier than the first beam of light in the dawn  
The iron anvil above my head is singing  
Later than the last yawn at night

From dawn to dusk, it is singing  
It is singing . . .  
Misfortune defines its principles by me  
Distills the everyday salt from the tears

Who puts it above my head  
Who gives me such a strong heart  
(One minute of self-pity  
will terminate life)

Hit it, beat it,  
My brothers, my enemies  
Deepen your anger a little bit more

## HAN YAN

## Mandelstam

A man on fire  
Broke into whose time?  
Please accept my smoky greeting

You cough into tears?  
Oh, I engulf the air  
Engulf the intimate distance between us  
No one loves strangeness in the blood more than me

When truth secretes venom in darkness,  
My people, let me test the sword of the executioner  
I already heard the rhythm of the gold,  
The bud of the century in the universe's placenta  
Suddenly wake up

Stone—rush to the stature  
“This terrifying acceleration”  
Never try to separate me from it  
“This poor element”  
People will talk about me many centuries later

Please listen to this incidental sound  
Please listen to this pacifying sound—  
“no Pure Land . . .”

## Tristia

The farewell was written in the gaze  
The grim hourglass counts every passing moment

Seeing you bleed dry, drop by drop  
Not a coincidental part in the chain of sacrifice

A soft, invisible chain,  
A vertebra gluing all lives together!

The chain extends in sleeplessness, luminous,  
Another person stands outside the queue.  
Why was the jade burned but the feathers fly all over the sky?  
Crowded with the living, who is talking to me?

The chain is extending, people cannot live without vertebrae  
Another star rolls into the throat of the hinterland.

*Translations from the Chinese*  
By Yongan Wu

HAN YAN (b. 1969) is the author of two verse collections, *Section* and *Echo*. She lives in Jinan.

YONGAN WU teaches Chinese at the University of Oklahoma and studies English education as a doctoral student. His research interests include Chinese-English literacy, Chinese history and literature, and educational technology.