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With a view to increasing cross-cultural interaction and introducing readers to contemporary poetry from different parts of the world, Transnational Literature includes a small guest editor slot in its poetry section, curated by – and partly featuring the work of – an established poet from a country where English is not the first language. In this issue we're honoured to have a selection of Chinese poetry curated by award-winning poet Iris Fan Xing. Fan draws attention to the importance of translation as an act of cultural exchange and as a vehicle for enriching and informing languages.

The Chinese Poet as Translator: An Introduction
Iris Fan Xing



Detail from Qing dynasty dish. More information:
<https://www.artic.edu/artworks/42879/dish-with-europeans-playing-musical-instruments>

The three contemporary Chinese poets featured here – Zhou Zan, Bao Huiyi, and Chris Song Zijiang – have one thing in common: they are translators of world poetry. Writing from three different megacities – Beijing, Shanghai, and Hong Kong – they have translated poetries from as far away as Bunyah in Australia and from as long ago as the fourteenth century into modern Chinese.

Zhou Zan published her translation of Margaret Atwood's *Eating Fire* in 2013, with a second edition appearing two years later. She has also translated Carol-Ann Duffy, Selima Hill, Pascale Petit, and Polly Clark. As a scholar of feminist theory and writing, Zhou has introduced the work of Hélène Cixous to the Chinese reader through her translation. Bao Huiyi's 2015 bestselling translation of Elizabeth Bishop's *Poems* just had a second print run last year. Apart from Bishop, Bao has also translated Sylvia Plath, Bob Dylan, and contemporary Irish poets such as Paul Muldoon and Harry Clifton. As a scholar of Old and Middle English poetry, Bao has published research on the 'Gawain Poet' and continues to work from the original manuscripts towards a Chinese translation. Chris Song Zijiang published his translation of Les Murray's poetry in 2018. It is the first time Murray's work has been collected in a single volume in Chinese. As a scholar of translation studies, Song has also written extensively on the history of modern American poetry in Chinese translation. Last year, Song published his translation of a selection of poems by Rita Dove. This year, he brought out a selection of H.D.'s poetry in Chinese.

These are just a few examples of how contemporary Chinese poets are engaging with other poetries in the world. This engagement through translation, which began in the early twentieth century, has extended all the way through to the present day and become a tradition among Chinese poets. One cannot talk about 'new poetry' (or modern Chinese poetry) without talking about the translation practice of modern Chinese poets,¹ and how their translations of Anglo-American and European poetries have helped enrich the imagery and reform the language of Chinese poetry.

So why do Chinese poets translate? What motivates them to become the translators of poets from other cultures? What is the relationship between translation and their own poetry? These are the questions that this small selection of poems tries to bring forth.

Iris Fan Xing
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Notes

¹ E.g. Feng Zhi, Mu Dan, Bian Zhilin, Zheng Min, Chen Jingrong

Iris Fan Xing

Iris Fan Xing graduated from the University of Western Australia with a PhD in comparative literature and creative writing. She has published two bilingual books of poetry: *Lost in the Afternoon* (2009) and *South of Words* (2018). Fan was awarded first prize in the Poetry Section of the Hong Kong City Literary Awards in 2011. Her poems and translations can be found in *Wings*,

Cha: An Asian Literary Journal, Fleurs des Lettres, Voice & Verse, Poetry Monthly, Chinese Western Poetry, Cordite Poetry Review, and Westerly.