

READING EDITION

COMMENT IN MOTION

TRANSLATIONS

November 1967

NUMBER 04

FLUCTUANT SYLLABIC VERSE

COMMENT IN MOTION

A Quarterly of Fluctuant Syllabic Verse

Number 4 · November 1967 · Los Angeles

*Set from the scan of the magazine. The poems, their titles, the poets'
names and the figures at the feet of the leaves are the printer's; everything
in this color is this edition's.*

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Followed by translations of poems by Louise Labé, Lamartine,
Leopardi, Rosalía Castro. — GROVER JACOBY, *Translator*

The printer set his contents page at the BACK of this number, on the leaf after Des Morgens. It is set at the front here, where a reader looks for it, with his order, his titles, his names and his figures. Under his three Rosalía Castro lines he printed: "The poems of Rosalía Castro are numbered as they are in the selection from her works issued by Espasa-Calpe Argentina, S.A. in 1943."

His contents page names neither the page of readers' reactions, which stands on an unnumbered leaf at the head of the number, nor The Avalanche of Sinification, which is a supplement with a title leaf and an imprint of its own and is bound in after the contents. Both are set here where he put them.

The Avalanche of Sinification

A SUPPLEMENT TO COMMENT IN MOTION

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REACTIONS TO FLUCTUANT SYLLABIC VERSE AND COMMENT IN MOTION

"The technique is most accomplished, and the result lovely, at once free and rhythmic—an organic beauty owing much to discipline and sensibility." Ruth Pitter, author of *A Trophy of Arms* (Preface by James Stephens), *A Mad Lady's Garland* (Introduction by John Masefield), *Urania*, and other books of poetry.

"I like your translations very much, and find your discussions of fluctuant syllabic verse and rhyme rhythm interesting and useful." Barriss Mills, translator of Theocritus and Catullus. (His versions have been published by Purdue University.)

"Less well-known, but outstanding, are the poems by the nineteenth-century Galician, Rosalía Castro. Also of special interest are the translations of sonnets by Louise Labé of sixteenth-century France. In these, Grover Jacoby's fluctuant syllabics and slant rhyme combine to produce a dense and unusual line structure." Anne Stanford in the *Los Angeles Times* (January 10, 1967).

". . . Comment in Motion translations of poetry are receiving wide kudos." The Poetry Society of America Bulletin (October 1967).

"In his brief preface, Mr. Jacoby tells us, 'Translation should be comment in motion; in other words it should set forth or present without becoming static. If the disposition of the host language is properly respected, there is no danger of such congealment. We should not demand from translation that which we do not ask of criticism or the essay in general: a mirror that turns all things to stone'.

The second number continues this enterprise in the same spirit." *Poetry* (Chicago), July 1967.

FOREWORD

Anyone interested in translation will perceive much about its nature in the great passages of paraphrase in Ronsard, Du Bellay, Quevedo, Heine, and other major poets. The derivation of the word “translation” from the Latin *translatus*, which is used as a past participle of *transferre*, leads to the question: “What is it that is being transferred from one language to another?” In the case of the renowned examples of inset paraphrase, it was not a cargo of vocabulary equivalence that was being carried over, but rather the wind of life, the creative pressures in the air itself that are experience, movement, emotion, vision, music, and a myriad other transcendent and mere things.

Grover Jacoby

NOTE CONCERNING FLUCTUANT SYLLABIC VERSE

It is advisable that the reader of the fluctuant syllabic verse be somewhat caesura-conscious; however, this special awareness is not necessary for reading the translations from the poetry of Hölderlin and Rosalía Castro in this volume.

Translations in Fluctuant Syllabic Verse

Comment in Motion · No. 4 · Issue p. 104 · Scan p. 10

AFTER THE FESTIVITIES OR
THE EVENING OF THE DAY
OF THE FIESTA

Giacomo Leopardi

Windless and clear the night and with a sweetness;
Quiet it is through gardens, over roofs,
And the moon rests: each end of distance is
A mountain's stillness. Athwart the balconies
Few of the nocturnal lamps come lighted through;
You are now sleeping, for no made-difficult slumber
Rules in your quiet rooms, no gnawing at you
Of whatever care; nor do you know or think
What wound you opened at center of my breast.
You now are sleeping; I go to see the guiltless-
Appearing heavens and that antique nature
Who presents herself omnipotent
And wrought me for my sorrow. I deny all hope,
She says, all hope to you—and with nothing
Will they sparkle—your eyes—but only tears.
The day has overwhelmed, but far from its allure
You take repose; you may recall in dream
The many pleased by you, and then the many
All so pleasing to you: not I, not that I could hope
To come to mind, your mind. Meanwhile I ask: of time
How much is mine to live; against the ground
I throw myself, shudder and cry out. O horrid days
In this green season! Ah, along the ways
I hear the momentary, solitary song,

The day-worker singing, the late-returning
After some distraction at the meager inn;
And wildly then my heart oppresses
For thinking all is but in passage,
And leaves so little trace. See! It is gone,
The festive day, and to it succeeds the vulgar
One where time then—time carries off
All human happening. Where now is the sound
Of ancient peoples? And where the cry
Of all the famed, preceding us, and that great empire
Possessed of Rome, the armies and the din
Now striding over earth, now over ocean?
All is peace and silence, and here the world
Comes to a stop, and spoken recollections too.
In my life's earlier hour, when I awaited
The festivities' enticement, I, thereupon,
When all was over, saddened, lay awake
Within the feathered softness; and late at night
A song, then heard among ways taken,
Was distancing, was dying more and more,
In similar manner, oppressive to the heart.

THE LAKE

Alphonse de Lamartine

Thus ever compelled past succession of shores,
In eternal night irrevocably drawn,
Shall we never, not once, on the ocean of ages
Cast anchor at dawn?

O lake! Scarce touched is the end of the year,
And near beloved waves for her eyes rightly meant,
See! I come alone to sit by your shore
On the stone where we sat.

You always moaned through the deep-set rock
And shattered yourself on its uneven sides,
While wind flung the foam of your waves, O lake,
Where she went her ways.

One nightfall, remember, we sailed in silence.
We heard from afar, under sky, over wave,
The beat of the rowers sounding in cadence
As the waters laved.

Yet unknown to the earth, words of a sudden
Struck through the echoes athwart their charm;
The wave was attentive; in the voice of my dear one
The slow accents came:

‘O time, stop your flight! and you smiling hours,
Let your passage cease;
Let us savor together all the swift pleasures

Of this moment's peace.

'Many unfortunates beg you, implore;
Flow on for them, flow;
And end with their days all devouring care,
But joy's end forgo.

'I ask of you vainly a few moments more,
Time escapes me, is gone.
I say to this night, "Only be slower";
Night scatters in dawn.

'Continue, our love, in this fugitive hour,
Enjoy and make haste,
For man has no harbour and time has no shore;
It shifts and we pass.'

Do inebriate moments of joy, jealous time,
When love pours out happiness in a great flood,
Take flight with a speed in fashion the same
As days dull and sad?

Indeed! Is there nothing that we may preserve?
Is it all forever—ah! entirely—lost?
This time that can give, this time that removes,
Does it leave us with aught?

Blank naught, eternity, past time, somber chasms,
Where are the days your greed has consumed?
Tell us at last, where are those blisses
You should never have seized?

O lake! mute rocks! grottoes! forest obscure!

You whom time spares or can always revive,
Preserve of this night, preserve, lovely nature,
One mem'ry alive.

Possess it in quiet, have it in storms,
In the slope, dear lake, of your joyous shore,
Or in the black pines, in the savage rocks
Hung over your water!

Or there in the zephyr that shivers and passes,
In sounds from your shores that your shores repeat,
In the silver star's brow that whitens your surface
With its soft light.

Let the reed sigh it and the wind mourn,
Let lightly the drift of your scented air,
And let everything say in sound, breath, vision,
"They have known love here."

SONNET III

Louise Labé

O long-held desires! O hopes held in vain,
Saddest of sighs and destined tears
To engender in me all of these rivers
Of which my two eyes are spring and fountain;
O hard and inhuman, O cruel ways,
Compassionate gaze of all of the stars,
Of the pierced heart you initial passions,
Are you designing to heighten my pain?

May love upon me try all with his bow,
May he hurl new fires, let fly new darts,
Do all of his worst and fill with spite:

For I am so hurt—all over, I know
That on me new wounds can find no place—
Anywhere on me—to worsen my fate.

Other Translated Poetry

Comment in Motion · No. 4 · Issue p. 111 · Scan p. 17

THE BELLS

Rosalía Castro

In the wind's low rumor
I love and hear them
Like the flow of a fountain,
The bleating of a lamb.

Suddenly, like birds,
Whenas in the skies
Appears the dawn's first ray,
They greet it with echoes.

In the notes' repetition,
Over plain and hill
There is something ingenuous,
Quieting, merciful.

If they turned silent,
What sadness in air and sky!
What silence in the churches,
Estrangement of all who die!

FROM "EN LAS ORILLAS DEL
SAR" — 70

Rosalía Castro

70

It recalls the bird's trilling,
A kiss's quick whisper,
Sound running through forests
When through them the winds stir,
And the tempests at sea
And the rough voice of thunder—
In the harpstrings of genius
All find an echo there.

But that beat of heaviness
From the heart, grown sicker
With death—dying for love—
In the breast sounding here,
Like thud of a string's split
Within a sepulcher,
It returns in no echoes
Of a genius. Never!

FROM "EN LAS ORILLAS DEL
SAR" — 60

Rosalía Castro

60

Through the air's incandescence
The fox roams the abandoned ways!
 The clear brook waters
Assume a brackish and unhealthful taste,
 And inconstant lips of the breeze
Leave the pine motionless and waiting.

 An impotent silence
Is draining the strength of space;
 Only humming insects are heard
Among the humid reaches of the shade,
 Monstrous and constant
As from death's throat and with like weight.

Indeed mid-day in such a summer
 Well deserves the name
Of night in which man wearies of his struggle
 Where more than ever irritate
Matter's imposition of its power
And the soul's infinity of pains.

Return, O nights of cold winter,
All our old loves of other days!
Come back with your frost and roughness
To refresh the blood enflamed
By summer sad and insupportable . . .

Sad! with thorns and branches trailing!
Cold and heat, Autumn or Spring,
Where! Where is all that is gay?
Lovely are all the seasons
For him who in himself has kept joy's ways,
But for the soul orphaned and desolate
There is no season smiling or fortunate.

DIOTIMA

Friedrich Hölderlin

You endure and suffer, none comprehend you,
The holiest life, withering away and speaking not;
For, alas, infeasible among ruffians,
Though in sunlight, to seek out your own,

The souls great and tender, those not existing now!
But time hastens. Still not unperceived is the day
By my mortal song that, Diotima, alongside
The Gods with heroes places you, equals you.

MAN'S PRAISE

Friedrich Hölderlin

Is my heart not holier, full of more lovely life
Now that I love? Why was I valued
When found more rebellious and proud,
Freer with words, and emptier?

Alas! Crowds enjoy the way of the market-place,
And the slave's awe waits on the powerful.
To the divine those only are drawn
Who themselves are so.

EMPEDOCLES

Friedrich Hölderlin

Life is sought by you, truly sought, wavering up—sparkling,
Divine fire from the depths of the earth—
And you then shudder with longing,
Fling yourself downward in the fires of Etna.

So the exuberant queen fused the wine
With her pearls. A commendable deed! For did not you
All of your richness, O poet,
Offer up in the smoking chalice.

But you are all holiness, as the force of earth
That took you away from us, bravest of dying ones!
And I would follow you downward,
Were I free of love's hold, you the hero.

DES MORGENS

Friedrich Hölderlin

Aglitter the grass with dew; with greater stir
The limp brook hastens along; the beech bends
Her swaying head; in all her leaves
Goes a rustle and shimmer; through grey clouds

Weave streaks of red flame
Welling upward in still announcement;
As waves on shore, these inconstant ones
Heave ever higher and higher.

Come now, O come, and hasten not over-quickly,
You golden day, off to the peak of heaven!
For more open and trusting my gaze flies toward you,
You happy one, to you, so long as you

Look down in young beauty and not yet
Become overly splendid, too proud toward me;
Ever hasten, as you will, and could I,
Godly wanderer, but go with you! You smile

At my gay excesses, that would
Set me beside you; rather bless me then
And my mortal striving and once more glow
Kindly! on this quiet path of mine.

THE AVALANCHE OF SINIFICATION

When Anne Morrow Lindbergh spoke in a refined and plaintive whisper some decades ago of the wave of the future, she made the decisive verbal contribution to the start of World War II. Whether she knew it or not, she was herself enacting the same role in relation to that conflict as did Mrs. Stowe in respect to the American Civil War with the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The thick book and the thin phrase both did their work on a rather explosive scale.

An increase in the world opposition to the present danger, the avalanche of Sinification, would reinforce the efforts of South Vietnam, the United States of America, and its allies in preventing World War III, even as such resistance to the wave in the year that Mrs. Lindbergh formally introduced it by name, would have avoided the catastrophe of 1939-45. Mrs. Lindbergh made the mistake of allowing the wave to appear irresistible, but at least she did present its terrible iridescences and transparencies in such a way that the awakening came at last. No historical wave or avalanche can push for any length of time against the counterforce of an aroused free world at any stage where at least ninety percent of that world (as at present constituted) still exists. All international resistance that precedes the moment of crisis results in the saving of countless lives.

Because of the courage and sacrifices of South Vietnamese, American, Korean, and Australian troops, one can speak of an avalanche of Sinification in connection with China without danger of the risk taken by Mrs.

Lindbergh. Unending horror could have resulted after sinified forces first invaded South Korea and, again, when sinified armies crossed the borders of South Vietnam. Success of both these campaigns would have sinified Japan (industry) and Southeast Asia with India (resources and population). Then, automatically, Russia would have become thoroughly sinified too. Now, though Russia still makes gestures of cooperation toward China for diplomatic reasons, they are yet inadequate, fortunately indeed; and the whole length of the common boundary of the two countries ignites like some wire in arpeggios and grace notes of incandescence that glow off and on in border incidents with a pattern similar to that of the dispersed action of the keyboard of a player piano.

These figures of speech, the wave of the future and the avalanche of Sinification, are like dramatic performances in which years, and even decades, assume the role of moments, and thereby satisfy the modern mind's appetite for the perspectives that come from compression whether enjoyed from airplane windows or in books.

Sinification is a danger that threatens all mankind. The first victims outside of China itself have been the important yellow peoples of Korea and Vietnam. The Chinese people of Taiwan themselves are attempting to destroy the Chinese imperialism of those on the mainland who are their adversaries and the world destroyers.

Because of the exemplary boldness of President Lyndon Johnson and some of his predecessors in office in providing the resistance to the Chinese advance when they knew such a course would be confronted with a sizable popular disapproval, we know that the horrors of the Sinification (according to Mao's formulas) of France, Germany, Italy, and Spain will not at any rate occur within the next few decades.

Since those countries are the homelands of Ronsard, Baudelaire, and Louise Labé, of Goethe, Hölderlin, and Heine, of Dante and Leopardi, and of Bécquer and Rosalía Castro, *Comment in Motion* departs from its usual province of prosody and translation to make an incursion into that desert of continental proportions, geopolitics.

Grover Jacoby

NOTE: There exist two sets of terms: sinify and Sinification on the one hand, and Sinicization, Sinicism and sinicize on the other. It is necessary to take for granted that there is a distinction between them. Sinify and Sinification must carry with them the connotation of the spread and promotion of current Chinese influence through war, propaganda, and political initiatives. Sinicism and its derivatives can be reserved as terms for the diffusion in past centuries of the great ancient Chinese cultural values.