

Translations in Focus

Editor's Note

This section highlights exemplary translations of classic and contemporary poems, presenting the original text alongside its translation. The goal is to showcase the translator's skill, the interplay between source and target language, and the aesthetic resonance achieved in the translated work.

Contributor

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Commentator

Dr. Zhang Guangkui, Professor of English Literature, Shenzhen University

Original (English):

Song: To Celia

Ben Jonson

Trans. Wentao Zeng

Drink to me only with thine eyes,

And I will pledge with mine;

Or leave a kiss but in the cup,

And I'll not look for wine.

The thirst that from the soul doth rise,

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Citation: Jonson, B. (2025). Song: To Celia (致西莉娅) (Zeng, W. T. Trans.). *Verse Version*, 14(2), 191-194.

Doth ask a drink divine;
But might I of Jove's nectar sup,
I would not change for thine.

I sent thee late a rosy wreath,
Not so much honouring thee,
As giving it a hope, that there
It could not withered be.

But thou thereon didst only breathe,
And sent'st it back to me;
Since when it grows, and smells, I swear,
Not of itself, but thee.

(Source: Selected from *Complete Works of Ben Jonson*, Delphi Classics, 2013.)

Translation (Chinese):

致西莉娅

本·琼森

曾文桃 译

你的双眸满盛脉脉深情，

我也同你一起交杯啜饮。

何妨一留香吻在杯底，

且忘手中琼浆甘泉醴。

魂灵深处的干渴难捱，

所求不过是舌尖品酩。
便是天神琉璃盏，
但愿长持不愿易。
近来曾予你一环繁花，
与其说是将敬意传达，
不如让它们得沐芳泽，
也有望免落得叶谢花枯。
你在花间附上一缕鼻息，
将其重又送到我的手里，
自是此般花绽时，
定然思君意最炽。

Commentary

Wentao Zeng's translation of "To Celia" is an impressive and faithful adaptation that captures both the lyrical beauty and emotional subtleties of Ben Jonson's original. The translator skillfully preserves the romantic intimacy and delicate imagery, conveying the longing and admiration in a way that resonates in Chinese.

The Chinese version maintains the musicality and rhythm of the English original, while carefully rendering idiomatic expressions into elegant, natural phrasing. Notably, elements such as the "rosy wreath" and "kiss in the cup" are translated with sensitivity to both literal and emotional meaning, allowing Chinese readers to experience the imagery vividly.

This translation exemplifies a balanced approach: it honors the structure and tone of the original poem while adapting it into fluent, poetic Chinese. The result is a version that is both readable and aesthetically pleasing, demonstrating the translator's skill in bridging cultural and linguistic contexts without losing the charm of the original.