Spring Translations

春夜喜雨
杜甫

好雨知時節
當春乃發生
隨風潛入夜
潤物細無聲
野徑雲俱黑
江船火獨明
曉看紅濕處
花重錦官城

Fan Wu
Celebrated Rain (Spring Night)

A good spring rain knows its proper Season, arrives wreathed in life, shrouded
Under night wind’s secret cover.
Whisperless dew over summer.

Black clouds swell over rural road;
Riverside, a boat’s lit with a sole flare.
Dawn light spreads wet redness over my
Chengdu, beloved, ripe with blooming.
Rain on Skin (After Deleuze & Guattari)

… a perpendicular direction, a transversal movement that sweeps one and the other away, a stream without beginning or end that undermines its banks and picks up speed in the middle.

Deleuze & Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*

The machine springs its own trap,  
Isomorphic with the living its will brings.

And Bill out on the barge, whistling  
Waiting for the troutbringing tide.  
Ask a question of precision:

Does it split down the middle?

Allow such a law to be excluded.  
Soak & soil, wasp & orchid in anonymous tandem.

Life, in its quartered crevice of the elements,  
Shivers in body before mind’s eye’s shudder  
Spreads the dawn of knowledge ‘cross the woven city.
Want Knot (After Lacan)

He is originally the inchoate collection of desires—there you have the true sense of
the expression fragmented body—and the initial synthesis of the ego is essentially
an alter ego...
Jacques Lacan, Seminar III: The Psychoses

all wet all
the “I” with throat to speak is
rainshucked

seasons silt along torso presst to tongue
gonfle the wind flumes O
an oil man stokes the fire
my father:

river’s broken mouth disgorges
a bare of mist
my back a skiff

酸瀑忘世界

roof (shingles at my fingertips
life a laugh like cherry gut to
Chengdu deepest nesta strained net pulled
t’tth’ third order of heav’n
Sprung a Leak (After My Own Reflection)

Du Fu begins his poem with a prayer for rain’s propriety.

Normal weather brings life.

To work away at this poem in wintertime is to invite improper desire, abundant desire perfumed by linden trees, to your doorstep.

The second line claims the merely banal, a rehearsed equation between spring and revival.

This desire that skips like a stone from body to body has rusted over; no good, I need another.

But the banal arrives in a thief’s guise, bringing imperceptible change on stealing feet.

Nailed through the forehead in the dead of winter; pinned to the floor with the rest of the sin eaters.

Fleetfooted and sure its touch defrosts the hardness of winter.

The mania of translation: the failure to render his terse five-character line, which crosscuts the linear time of night & day and the cyclical time of season shift into eight perfectly symmetrical lines.

Thundercloud, portent of doom, opens the second half with the doubly-shaded way between life and death.

Chinese poetry’s condensation as Freudian dreamwork’s condensation: both share the property of collecting the unspeakable at the very surface of things.

A lonely fisherman, or a suicide-to-be (drowning then was common), keeps a vigil lit over the lake.

Reading this poem twelve centuries later, its terseness, blood on my tongue from biting at the corners.

Such a colour in fire extends across the dawn in a fabric of fog: spring’s tides, tidings.

“And if seeing was fire, I required the plenitude of fire, and if seeing would infect me with madness, I madly wanted that madness.”

In the last line, Du Fu names a city and gives Spring a place: Chengdu, the brocade city, now flowerheavy.

As though from a grave of light, from death springs life.