

**GEORGE ECONOMOU**

**ROUGH TRADE--ANACREON**

## **ROUGH, ROUGHER, & ROUGHEST TRADE**

“In representing more adequately what translation does, and in raising awareness even among translators of the implications of textual instability for their task, this book may encourage us to translate differently—to expand our notion of what translation can do, and to imagine modes of translating that break the mold in which the reigning (if often disguised) discourse of originality and derivation seems to have trapped us.”—Karen Emmerich, *Literary Translation and the Making of Originals* (Bloomsbury, 2017), p.31.

Having explored the possibilities off and on for several years of translating poems from ancient Greek in stages I thought of as rough, rougher, and roughest, I made a firm commitment in the early spring of 2017 to the effort by formalizing it in two sets of translations following this three-way paradigm entitled “Theocritus: Rough, Rougher, Roughest Trade and Commentary” for a special issue of *Golden Handcuffs Review*: “Bless thee, Bottom, bless thee! Thou Art Translated” (Vol. 11, #23, 2017). Put directly, the idea behind doing what I have come to call the “rough stuff” involves starting with a rendition that presents a version that is as faithful to the content and form of the original as I can make, followed by two more versions guided by the comparative and superlative degrees of “rough,” levels conceived and executed with the intention of exploring new and unexpected contexts and textures for the poem rather than by a wish to produce a more finished adaptation or do-over of the level of “rough.” As the “roughest” version in the latest addition to this project from Anacreon presented here begs, these final renditions can also—often should—be read as independent poems. My urge to reiterate—to tell again and again but with a difference—the poem in translation mirrors in its own way the textual condition of the variance of originals that Karen Emmerich so brilliantly explores in her rich and important new book *Literary Translation and the Making of Originals*. Though arriving a year later, it comes in good time for me to enjoy a sense of confirmation and newfound inspiration for this work in progress.

## **ANACREON**

(c. 563 – 478 BC) quoted by Athenaeus (c. 170 – 230 AD) *The Deipnosophists*, 12. 533e, following his observation that in these lines Anacreon says Artemon “shot from poverty to luxury”:

In the past he appeared in a shabby wasp-wasted covering,  
with wooden knuckle-boned dice in his ears, and a bald oxhide  
round his ribs, the never-washed wrap of a useless shield,  
hanging with women who sell bread or who choose to whore,  
pulling off a life of fraud--that arch rogue Artemon,  
whose neck was often strapped to the wheel or whipping stock,  
whose back was often lashed with a leather whip  
and his hair and beard plucked bare.  
But now low-life Kyke's son rides in a carriage sporting gold earrings  
and handles an ivory parasol oh so very ladylike.

\*

Once he was deeply down and out,  
and really looked it in his shredded threads--tricky Artie,  
who lived off recruited boys and girls on the street  
while dodging the cops and his competitors,  
too often without success.  
Yet here he is now rolling by on fancy wheels  
with windows down and volume up.

\*

Once he popped out  
at Coney Island Hospital  
he was bound to turn hedge  
fund tricks and Ponzi schemes--  
that fool for fraud, Marty--  
and raise the price of life saving drugs  
five thousand percent with his impishly venal  
smirk ear to ear but heading now with a hop  
skip and a jump into jail back in Brooklyn.  
That's the way the money goes--  
Pop goes the weasel!