

Preface

The year 2018 reverberates with the echoes of historical events—the end of World War I in 1918, the revolutionary protests of 1968. For the editors, contributors, reviewers and readers of this journal, there is a more particular echo: the founding of *Delos* at the University of Texas in Austin, Texas in 1968.

The wish to celebrate and commemorate *Delos* as a literary translation journal has led one of the editors to two research visits in the summer of 2018: one to the Greek island of Delos in the Cyclades Archipelago, and one to the Iwalewa-Haus, a cultural center for African art in Bayreuth, Germany. Iwalewa-Haus is significant because its first director was the late Ulli Beier, an important contributor to the second 1968 *Delos* issue. Two books, each full of photographs and graphic art as documentary evidence have been entered in the editorial library of *Delos*: Fotini Zaphiropoulou, *Delos: Monuments and Museum* (Athens: Krene, 2016), and Ulli Beier, *Neue Kunst aus Australien, Fidschi, Indien, Japan, Nigeria, Papua-Neuguinea und Tonga* (Nürnberg: Verlag für moderne Kunst, 2003).

The connection of our journal and its content today to Iwalewa-Haus, as part of the University of Bayreuth's and the State of Bavaria's commitment to African art and culture, is obvious. Transcultural communication between Africa and Europe, with English as the linking language, is central. And because of the explosion of cultural events and the valuable collection of works of art, this center of African art is well-rewarded by Bavarian banks, as evidenced by the fact that the Iwalewa-Haus, downtown Bayreuth, is housed in a former bank building.

In explicit celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of a journal of translation called *Delos*, we present in this issue a retranslation into Yorùbá of Ulli Beier's 1968 English versions of fourteen poems composed by Yorùbá oral poets. Beier and his friends never published the originals, and the reverse translation, which can be recited as the originals were, is explicitly an attempt to give back to Nigerians something of Beier, as the translator, Dr. Abidemi Bolorinwa, tells us.

The Greek island of Delos, a sanctuary of Apollo since 700 BCE, is perhaps less obviously connected to the pursuit of literary translation in the pages of *Delos*, but the original editors of the journal did not choose its name wrongly. The most prominent and accessible symbol of the sanctuary of the island is

the gallery of the over-life size sculptures of lions.¹ Certainly, one important function of those lions in the minds of the citizens and priests of Naxos and Delos back then was to safeguard the temples, statues and works of devotion from possible invaders and profane plunderers—of which there were many in the course of the centuries. The lion, often in the classical form of a pair, as guardian of valuable property and works of art has survived to this very day. It is not too fanciful to recognize the roaring lion as part of the credit picture of the Hollywood Metro-Goldwyn Mayer movies as a symbol of such guarding of the sacred function of art works and of art itself.

Another such symbol, though far more tormented, is the Sphinx, and this issue offers Stephen Rojcewicz's meditation on Oedipus, informed by history, early artistic depictions, and psychoanalysis. In a chronological leap, we move ahead to the European Middle Ages, Provence and Iceland, to a singable translation of a troubadour song and to a Saga account of a dark-skinned ninth-century Viking who retired to Breiðafjord.

Two French stories purportedly for children, written ninety years apart, follow. The earlier is by Théophile Gautier, and it evokes folklore and Christian lore with an irony that approaches the tragic, as the accompanying essay by the translator, J. E. Rivers, makes clear. The other is a lighter work; Marcel Aymé does not so much evoke as bounce off the tale of Red Riding Hood.

Our selection of twentieth-century Russian poetry includes Mandelstam, Brodsky, and the surrealist Nicolas Zablotsky. Finally, there are Ulli Beier's poems, with their Yorùbá retranslations, reminding us that, in the world of translation, literature may be a river into which one cannot step twice.

We have found some photographs and other illustrations to fit some of the works presented. Special thanks to Egisto Sani and Örn Óskarson for the use of their wonderful photographs!

Hal H. Rennert
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1 Our logo (based on a photograph) and the title page drawing by the late Hiram Williams depict one of the lions of Delos.