

Graeme Wilson

Three Translations of Early Medieval Japanese Poetry

In the Dead of Winter

So cold it is that even
Gravity has died.

From rock to rock between black pines
The falls hang petrified
And only the weightlessness of wind
Pours down the mountain-side.

Anonymous (12th century)

Just For a Moment

“Just for a moment,” I said to myself
As I stopped to unload
The dead-weight of this thing I am
At the side of the road
Where, cool, the willow-shadows fluttered
And, clear, the river flowed.

Priest Saigyō (1118-1190)

Sadnesses

Sad as they were, those nights I woke
From bitter dreams to weep
My heart out for your heartlessness,
Their sadness was less deep
Than that of my now-uncaring heart
In its *now-uncaring* sleep.

Toshinari's Grand-daughter (1171—1252)