

Poems by *Dick Davis*

Cythère

To S-G.H.

Though we can start with Botticelli-
The blonde hair streaming, and the eyes
Fixed in provocative surprise,
Her hand strategic on her belly-

Your avatars dissolve and morph;
Flesh volatized to soul, the whore
Whose flesh is cash and something more,
Punk wraith, unwieldy Willendorf,

The skinny-dipper at Lake Tahoe,
The floating world, la belle poitrine
Of a long dead Minoan queen,
The plenitude of Khajuraho...

But now, for me, you coalesce
As French, immediate, medieval,
Making improbably coeval
Iseut, Watteau, *Bonjour Tristesse*.

I see you now, your body bare
And welcoming, your eyes intense
With passionate intelligence.
Your hands in mine, adored Cythère.

DICK DAVIS

Hérédia

French was his mother's voice, sweet, close and warm,
Muffling the Spanish of their vast estate -
Their backwater baroquely out of date,
Time's flotsam from a long-forgotten storm.
Latin and Greek sustained him through the swarm
Of present truths his heart could not translate:
Paris would distance them: there the debate
Would poise contingency against pure from.

Paris returns the febrile compliment
And her Academician seeks the sea;
Sated with Rome and with the orient
He walks the barren cliffs of Brittany—
Gazing across the formless waves to where
The huge sun sinks beyond Cape Finistere.

Dick Davis is a Professor of Persian at Ohio State University. He has published seven collections of poetry; the most recent is "Belonging" (Swallow / Ohio University Press, USA, 2002; Anvil Press, UK, 2002) which was chosen as a Book of the Year by The Economist.