

林语堂  
英译诗选



晋唐心印

外语教学与研究出版社

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# A Chinese Fantasia: The Song of Life

I have collected and translated here a group of poems by different Chinese poets of different ages, bearing on the central theme, the Song of Life. However infinite the variations and however separated the poets are in time and space, the burden of their song seems to be the same. It expresses a point of view.

## Tao Hungching<sup>[1]</sup>:

O tell me, friend, what thy hill lodge has got?  
Why, clouds around the passes, quite a lot!  
They are just for my own enjoyment, but  
To make thee presents—unfortunately not!

---

[1] This man is counted as one of the Taoist “fairies” and is reported to have ascended bodily to heaven. He lived from A.D. 452 to 536.

### Po Chuyi:

But yesterday he came to my sickbed;  
Today I saw with tears his coffin laid.  
O see ye and take this lesson well to heart.  
Bring out the *pipa*<sup>[2]</sup>, quaff the liquor red!

### Shao Yung:

Oh, when shall issues not new issues create?  
And plotter and plotted 'gainst their strife abate?  
Look each behind and each his footsteps mind;  
New grudges shouldn't old grudges complicate.

### Shin Yu-an:

One drunk is a free dispenser of his smiles,  
Forgotten all injustice, all men's guiles.  
Of late have I just come to realize,

---

[2] A guitarlike instrument, sometimes translated as a lute.



Spurn bookish wisdom and your ambition's wiles.

**Liu Chienfu:**

Oh, heard you of that old immortal quest?  
What of the virgins<sup>[3]</sup> sent by king's behest?  
No drink immortal yet has Yenti<sup>[4]</sup> made,  
And Laotse closed his eyes like all the rest.

**Anonymous:**

A thousand acres of clouds before this nook;  
God has the sea and I an angler's hook.  
I stretch a sleepy leg in the emperor's bed;<sup>[5]</sup>  
Who cares whose names stand in the Service Book?

---

[3] Five hundred virgins were sent by Tsin Shih-huang to the China Seas to obtain the elixir of immortality.

[4] The Chinese god of medicine.

[5] This poem celebrates the poet Yen Tseling, who was a childhood friend of Han Kuangwu before he became emperor (A.D. 25-57). He refused office but once slept with the emperor and in his sleep put his leg across the emperor's belly.

## Chuehwen:

What rich, golden farms below a hill!  
A newcomer harvests crops that others till.  
O rejoice not, newcomer, at your turn—  
One waits behind—a new newcomer still!

## Tung Chungfeng:

I love my bamboo hut, by water included,  
Where rockery o'er stone steps protruded;  
A quiet, peaceful study, small but fine:  
Which is so cozy—  
So delightful—  
So secluded!

No marble halls, no vermilion towers  
Are quite so good as my secluded bowers.  
The lawn embroidered so with buttercups  
Greets me in rain—

Or in shine—

Or in showers.

A short, low wall, with windows hid by trees;

A tiny, little pond myself to please;

And there upon its shady, rocky banks:

A pretty maid—

A little moon—

A little breeze!

And how about a quiet life leading?

From balcony watch the fish in water feeding.

And earn from moon and flowers a leisure life:

Have friendly chats—

Some incense—

And some reading?

For household use, some furniture decrepit.

'Tis enough! the hills and water so exquisite!

When guests arrive, to make it just perfect:

Put on the kettle—

Brew the tea—

And sip it!

O sweep thy yard, but spare the mossy spots!

Let petals bedeck thy steps with purple dots

As in a painting. What's more wonderful:

Some pine trees—

And bamboos—

And apricots!

Let bloom in order pear and peach and cherry!

The morrow lies in the gods' lap—why worry?

Who knows but what and when our fortune is?

And so be wise—

Be content—

Be merry!

When friend arrives that thou hast so admired,  
As by some idle nothing in common inspired,  
Ask him to stay for a good, carefree half-day:

And drink when happy—

Sing when drunk—

Sleep when tired.

A quiet home, far from the hustling crowd;  
Let no trivialities thy mind becloud.  
Gay and contented, being disenchanted,

And not be fussy—

Nor selfish—

Nor be proud.

Obey God's will, and wait on Heaven's pleasure.  
Thy purity of heart alone do treasure.  
Enough the library and the court of flowers

To lead a life of peace—

And contentment—

And leisure.

【咏怀集·集古】

南朝·陶弘景：

山中何所有，岭上多白云。

只可自怡悦，不堪持赠君。

唐·白居易：

昨日低眉问疾来，今朝收泪吊人回。

眼前流例君看取，且遣琵琶送一杯。

宋·邵雍：

生事事生何日了，害人人害几时休。

冤家宜解不宜结，各自回头看后头。

宋·辛弃疾：

醉里且贪欢笑，要愁那得工夫。

近来始觉古人书，信着全无是处。

宋·刘潜夫：

但闻方士腾空去，不见童男入海回。

无药能令炎帝在，有人曾哭老聃来。

宋·无名氏：

生涯千顷水云宽，舒卷乾坤一钓竿。

梦里偶然伸只脚，不知天地有何官？

元·觉隐：

一派青山景色幽，前人田产后人收，  
后人收得休欢喜，又有收人在后头。



元·中峰和尚：

水竹之居，吾爱吾庐，石磷磷乱砌皆除。  
轩窗随意，小巧规模，却也清幽，也潇洒，也宽舒。  
阆苑瀛洲，金谷红楼，算不如茅舍清幽。  
野花绣地，莫也风流，也宜春，也宜夏，也宜秋。  
短短横墙，矮矮疏窗，忒楂儿小小池塘。  
高低叠障，绿水旁边，也有些风，有些月，有些凉。





元·倪瓚 水竹居图