

英漢對照韻譯

毛澤東詩詞

辜正坤
譯注

POEMS
OF
MAO
ZEDONG

with rhymed versions
and annotations

Translated and annotated

by

Gu Zhengkun

Peking University Press

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POEMS OF MAO ZEDONG

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Beijing, China, 1993

This book includes 45 poems by Mao Zedong, with rhymed English versions and lucid, matter-of-fact annotations. The translation is superbly done, faithful to the original in content, beautiful in form and diction; the annotations are detailed and instructive, enlightening the reader with regard to allusions, themes and general background Mao's poetry. The book is thus praised as a version of rare quality ever produced both at home and abroad. Moreover, a long introduction is given, offering a general survey of Mao's poetry with regard to its ideological content, artistic style, imageries, language and so on. Three letters of Mao discussing poetry are provided in the Appendices, helping the reader gain an insight into Mao's aesthetic view of poetry. In addition, the original, as a contrast to the English version, is printed in the traditional complex form of Chinese characters along with their phonetic symbols.

FOREWORD

The poet whom we are to read occupies a curious but assured position in the history of 20th century Chinese literature. Curious, because he was one who theoretically advocated with all his heart the development of modern poetry—the free verse written in the vernacular—and even hopefully asserted that the bright future of Chinese poetry lay right in the development of folk-songs, yet in practice, he himself never wrote poetry in plain Chinese but in a completely traditional and classical style; assured, because he composed the poetry so well that, at his best, few modern Chinese poets can rival him. To western minds, he is a political giant who, though shaking old China to its foundation, remains a debatable figure as to his contribution to the creation of a better world. But what captures our attention here is Mao the poet, not Mao the statesman; still politically a subject of controversy, at home and abroad, he is, however, almost universally acknowledged as a successful poet of rare talent, even, to a moderate degree, by his sworn enemies.

Needless to say, when we approach this man called Mao Zedong (1893—1976), we will not forget he was the leader of the People's Republic of China, a country teeming with the largest population in the world, as well as a son of a peasant family in Shaoshan, Hunan Province. True, as a poet he wrote in a tradition of thousands of years from the ages of *The Book of Odes* through

Qu Yuan (340 B. C. -278 B. C.), Li Po (Li Bai, 701—762), Du Fu (Tu Fu, 712—770) to Su Dongpo (Su Shi, 1037—1101). He did, however, distinguish himself from his predecessors; and what particularly marks him out as a celebrated poet is, as many believe, his enormous breadth of mind, unbounded aspiration and his dauntless daring, which often go beyond the commonly conceived poetic universe. And this alone, I make bold to say, is justification enough to rank Mao among the poets of the first order.

Remember, too, the fact that he was not one of those professional lyrical singers who spend all their lives improving their art, but a fighter as well as a military commander charging and storming fortresses, composing a few lines here and there between life and death. Each piece finished is believed to be a window into his personality, an insight into his whole being, a mouthpiece of his spirit and soul.

To do him justice, as a poet playing upon a traditional lyre, he sings occasionally out of the classical tune, but on the whole, his rhymes sound so pleasant to the ear that during the Cultural Revolution the whole China echoed his songs with a frantic enthusiasm so that he was more quoted than any other poet in any other country in any other age. The great impact of Mao's poetry upon the contemporary Chinese culture, particularly, contemporary Chinese literature, is strongly felt everywhere in the east. And this, as you may agree, justifies rendering Mao's poetic efforts into a foreign language.

To say Mao's poetry is characterized by an enormous breadth of mind and an unbounded aspiration does not mean Mao writes with pure high-sounding slogans; instead, Mao seems de-

liberately to avoid revealing his ambitions in a straightforeward way. Often, he favours the technique that puts landscape and human emotion side by side so that the landscape becomes the exponent of his aspirations. Here are lines from his much-quoted "Snow" that surely make the reader spellbound and serve to exemplify my point:

*A thousand li of the earth is ice-clad aground
Ten thousand li of the sky is snow-bound.
Behold! At both sides of the Great Wall
An expanse of whiteness conquers all;
In the Yellow River, up and down,
The surging waves are gone!
Like silver snakes the mountains dance,
Like wax elephants the highlands bounce,
All try to be higher than heaven even once!*

Never before has modern Chinese literature had a poet whose description of landscape can rival that of Mao in breadth and power! The endless earth, the unbounded sky, the longest wall, the largest river, the dancing mountains, and boundless highlands, all are submerged in an expanse of whiteness—snow and ice, and meanwhile, all come alive through the strokes of Mao's painting brush, for it is a picture both poetically existing in the mind of poet's eye and realistically seen "on this small globe": realities and illusions overlap and merge themselves, thus one cannot tell whether it is the grand scene that comes in the eye of poet's mind, or the mind that gives birth to the grand scene. If we know that in Chinese "rivers and mountains" usually

is a metonymy for political power, we understand what Mao here drives at: "All try to be higher than heaven even once": a possible allusion to cruel strifes for state power on the part of so-called "heroes".

Of course, the poet is not content with just giving a majestic description of the spatial view, further, his mind's eye penetrates through the heavy curtain of time into history gaping for the ambitious adventurers;

*With so much beauty is the land endowed,
So many heroes thus in homage bowed.
The first king of Qin and the seventh king of Han,
Neither was a true literary man;
The first king of Song and the second king of Tang,
Neither was noted for poetry or song.
Even the Proud Son of Heaven, for a time,
Called Genghis Khan, in his prime,
Knowing only shooting eagles over his tent
With a bow so bent.*

All those emperors and kings so illustrious and renowned once in history are only worthy of a casual mention; according to Mao's standard, they are not "truly great men".

Thousands of li of space and thousands of years of time thus criss-cross under Mao's pen like a network of meridians and parallels. The poem begins with the majestic sweep of heaven and earth, yet ends with a note of regret;

*Alas, all no longer remain!
For truly great men,*

One should look within this age's ken.

To draw a conclusion from the ending lines that Mao entertains an imperial ambition is obviously at odds with Mao's own explanation that "truly great men refer to the proletariat" (see note 8 to the poem in the text), i. e. a group of great men, not only one. The point here is — I hope the assertion will not be wide of the mark — that Mao himself never refused to claim to belong in the group. He deserves the name, and more.

A similar note rings familiar in many of Mao's other poems such as "To Yang Kaihui" where the poet is believed to attempt a revolution in the south of China:

*Just as Mount Kunlun suddenly topples down,
Or the typhoon sweeps the world adown.*

or as "Changsha" where the young scholar, standing "in the autumn chill", "under the frosty and vaulted sky", "with feelings and thoughts evoked to" his tongue,

*cannot help asking the land so immensely wide and long
Who can hold up or sink you down?*

.....

*We were young as schoolmates,
All in our prime without taints,
Imbued with young scholars' daring,
We defied all restraints.
We criticised the state affairs then,
With vigorous strokes of the pen,
To us, nothing but dung were those big men!*

or as "March from Tingzhou to Changsha" where the commander trumpets a call:

*To uproot the corrupt and evil in June
God sends armies strong
To bind roc and whale with a cord
of ten thousand feet long.*

or as "Jinggang Mountain" where Mao hails proudly:

*Only, our sentiments and aspirations so high
Are like the bright moon hanging in the distant sky,
Like the wind and thunder majestically sweeping by.*

or as "Mount Liupan" where the poet chants aloud:

*High on the peak of Mount Liupan,
In the west wind red flags flap and sound.
We now hold the long cord in hand,
When will the Dragon be bound?*

or as "Seeing Jūu Ichro off to Japan" in which Mao brings his fellow men to attention:

*Take care of the cultivation
of your body and mind, and do
Keep the sun and moon
in your heart beautiful and new.
Just five hundred years past
since the birth of the last great man,
All the other figures in power now
are of a mediocre clan.*

These lines were written early in 1918 alluding to Mencius' well-quoted prophesy: "There must appear a great king every five hundred years." (See the part ii of the chapter "Gong Sunchou" in *The Book of Mencius*.) It is thought inappropriate to call Mao a great king, but it is agreed in the communist world as proper and fitting to call him a great man. The greatness of such a great man must accordingly characterize his poetry, thus the breadth of mind, the great aspiration and the daring in spirit become almost necessary attributes to the poetry of Mao Zedong, as if to confirm old Buffon's dictum: "The style is the man himself."

But it may do Mao Zedong injustice to think that his poetry is merely characterized by boldness, breadth of mind, or high aspirations. The bulk of his poetry that amounts to about 50 pieces does include those sounding in different notes; some are romantically tender, or even sentimental enough to coax us into tears. Read his "To Yang Kaihui" and you find how young lovers can be deeply attached to each other and how they can be heartbroken bearing an inevitable separation:

*Hands waving from you off I start,
How can I bear to see you
face me with an aching heart.
Retelling me your sorrows as we part.
Grief is written over
your brows and in your eyes;
You wink back the hot tears
about to break ties.*

.....

In this world only you and I

*in each other's hearts dwell;
For how can heaven tell
If man suffers hell?*

.....

*With a sound of the whistle
our hearts break and moan,
Henceforth I embark on a journey
to the world's end alone.*

So this man of herculean build was not always a fighter with a heart of stone but also one in whose soul burnt an inner-most longing for true love and tenderness. This persistent love-longing stuck to the poet so strongly that even 34 years later in 1957 in a poem entitled "Reply to Li Shuyi, to the tune of Butterflies Love Flowers", Mao still passionately lamented the loss of his wife Yang Kaihui, the proud Poplar:

*You lost your darling Willow and I my Poplar proud,
Both Poplar and Willow soar gracefully above the
cloud.*

Perhaps it needs to be pointed out that what differentiates Mao from other poets in treating the love theme is Mao's efforts to avoid an utter indulgence in love's illusions bordering on sentimentality. Often, his songs end in a spirited tone or merry mood that helps both the author and the reader exert themselves for loftier aspirations; thus in "Reply to Li Shuyi" we read

*The lonely goddess of the moon spreads her sleeves long,
To console the loyal souls she dances in the sky with a
song.*

*Suddenly the news about the tiger subdued comes from
the earth,
At once the rain pours down from our darling's tears of
mirth.*

Similarly in "To Yang Kaihui", the poet does not allow himself to be a slave to sadness of separation for long; the ending couplet again echoes the author's usual militant spirit.

Sometimes, Mao tends to invest his lines with a touch of philosophical meditation. For instance, in "The Immortal's Cave", Mao concludes that

The unmatched beauty dwells on the lofty and perilous peak.

This seems to suggest that superb victory must be accompanied by a lot of hardships and setbacks and that God prefers to put the best things where people do not frequent. In "The People's Liberation Army Captures Nanking", Mao declares, not without a note of pride, that "The change of seas into lands is man's world's true way."

In "Reading History", one of the masterpieces in Mao's collection of poetry, we are deeply impressed by Mao's genuine concern for man's destiny and by his view of man's history:

*In the human world it is hard to find a grinning smile;
Killing his own brethren was man's practice vile.
Alas, the land so fair
Is soaked in blood everywhere.*

The lament is soul-shaking; the mankind's history is one of suffering, blood and death. The fair land is put in sharp contrast to

the ugly side of human nature; men have kept slaughtering each other for thousands of years.

Comparatively speaking, there are not so many classical allusions in Mao's poetry as in the outpourings of the most traditional singers. But Mao surely never deliberately avoids using them; whenever he feels it necessary he always makes use of them properly and successfully. For example, in "Against the First 'Encirclement' Campaign", Mao gives a note to the proper name "Mount Buzhou" in which a legendary figure "Gong Gong" is referred to as a hero who can even turn the heaven and the earth upside down. A careful reader might notice that in Chinese "Gong" in the name "Gong Gong" and the "Gong" in the name "Gong Chan Dang" (the Communist Party) are the same both in spelling and pronunciation, thus he can easily relish Mao's pun: Gong Gong in the 24th - 23rd century, B. C. is compared to "Gong Chan Dang" (the Communist Party of China) in the 20th century, A. D.. Another example is the use of the historical figure Xiang Yu (232 B. C. — 202 B. C.) in the poem "The People's Liberation Army Captures Nanking": "Ape not King Xiang for a fame of mercy in a lucky hour". Xiang Yu was a leader of nobles of the Qin Dynasty, who, like Liu Bang, was later a rebel leader rising in arms against the Qin Dynasty. After the downfall of the Qin Dynasty, Xiang Yu was supposed to be the strongest of the rebel leaders, yet, for a name of playing fair with one's opponent, Xiang Yu gave up two chances to kill Liu Bang. And, as foreseen by Xiang Bo, Xiang Yu's military advisor, Liu Bang later on, by going back on his promise, staged a surprise attack upon Xiang Yu and finally destroyed his powerful troops. With Mao, the allusion

is related to a suggestion made by some people at home and abroad that the Chinese Communist Party could come to terms with the Kuomintang government before the People's Liberation Army crossed the Yangzi River on condition that C. P. C. be the master of the land north of the Yangzi River while K. M. T. be the ruler of the land south of the River. Mao refuses such suggestions by adroitly employing the allusion above which clearly visualizes his viewpoint more convincing than any other long article: Chiang Kai-shek is Liu Bang and C. P. C. is not going to be Xi-ang Yu or to be destroyed by a possible breach of the peace treaty on the part of K. M. T.. Allusions of the kind are many in Mao's poetry; a close examination of them will bring to light what lies beneath the surface of the poetic diction. This sort of examination has been made in translator's notes to each poem.

To appreciate Mao's poetry, one needs to know something about Mao's aesthetic view of the poetic creation. In a letter to Chen Yi, Mao firmly maintains that poetry conveys ideas through images (See Appendices "A Letter to Chen Yi about Poetry"). And in practice, Mao's reliance on concrete imagery is evident; this can be further attested by his extensive use of rhetorical figures such as similes, metaphors, personification and metonymy. One of the most distinguishing features of Mao's poetry that Chinese scholars have so far failed to point out, is that, Mao never put into his traditional-styled poems such words as Soviet Revisionism, U. S. Imperialism, feudalism, bourgeoisie, Marxism, Leninism, the Communist Party, Japanese invaders, which, as is often the case, appear in most works of the other communist writers or poets, with a frequency so high as to dampen the read-

er's enthusiasm for relishing a literary work. Literature, after all, is an art, speaking in the form of emotion, imagery or plot, not merely in a set of concepts or terms. As a poet, Mao did know his line, much better than many Chinese contemporary poets, say, Guo Moruo, who has been frowned upon by some readers for using too many slogans and technical terms in his traditional-styled poems, highly vernacular as well as undisguisedly flattering. It does not mean that Mao's poetry is immune to political propaganda; on the contrary, many scholars clearly perceive that each piece penned by Mao in the collection is highly political. One should remember Mao's noted essay "Talks at the Yen-an Forum on Literature and Art" (May 1942) in which Mao asserts that literature and art are bound to, and must, serve politics. Mao's poetry is the very exponent of his own literary theory; the point is that in poetic wording Mao tends to poetize politics rather than politicalize poetry, at least on the surface. Thus we experience a strange or unique literary phenomena, i. e. Mao's highly political poetry does not sound political at all while some so-called love poems by modern Chinese poets often read like political demagoguery or moral sermons. A foreign reader may, at a glance, feel puzzled over some recurring words in Mao's poems like "thunder and storm", "red", "dragon", which often, though not always, symbolize revolution, the Red Army forces, Chiang Kai-shek, etc., respectively. Take "Winter Clouds" for example, where "winter clouds" stands for the grim political situation in 1962 for C. P. C; "flowers" for Marxist parties in the world; "cold waves" for the revisionist trend of thought; "warm breeze" for the gradual rising of the Marxist organizations and parties; "heroes" for the prole-