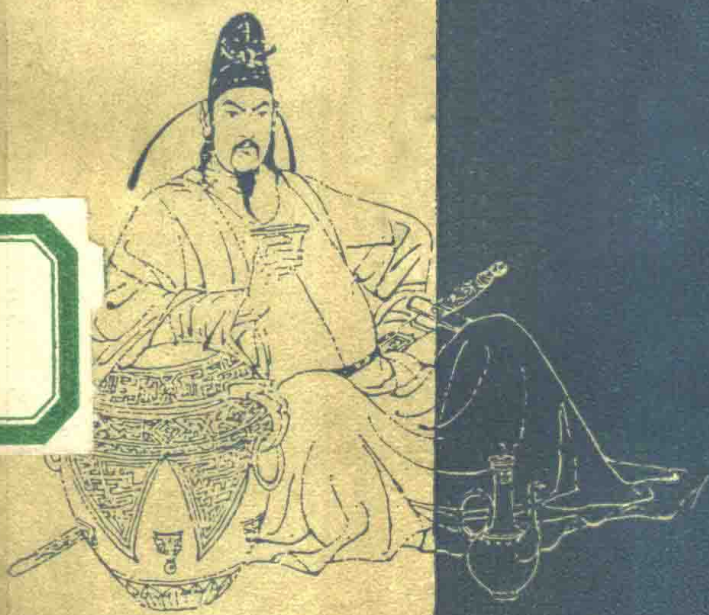


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# SELECTED POEMS OF LI BAI

漢英對照

## 李白詩選



Sichuan People's Publishing House

——汉 英 对 照——

# 李 白 诗 选

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许 渊 冲 译

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一 九 八 七 年 · 成 都

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月下独酌(其一)

傅抱石



渌水曲

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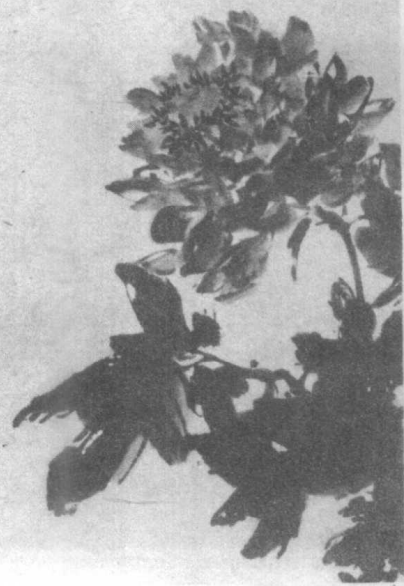
一枝濃  
豐露  
靚香

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潘天寿

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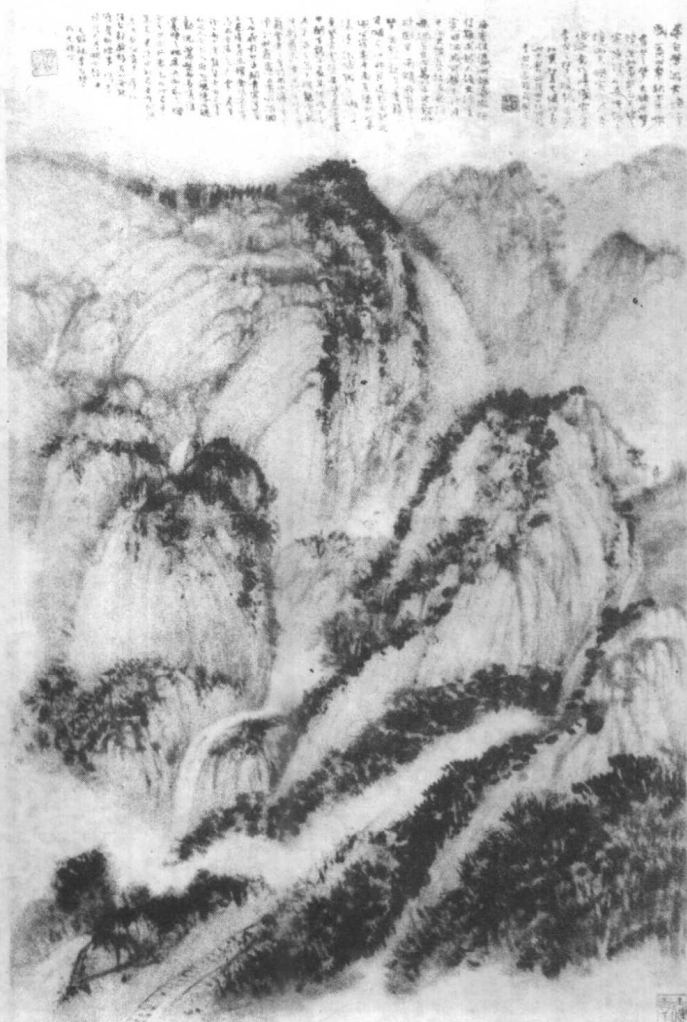
潘天寿

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清平调词(其二)

潘天寿



梦游天姥吟留别

贺天健

## FOREWORD

Li Bai (701-762) is regarded as the greatest romantic poet of the Tang dynasty (618-907) and of China of all times. Born in Central Asia, as it is believed, he moved with his family to Sichuan at the age of five. In 725, he traveled down the Changjiang (Yangzi) River when he wrote *The Moon over the Eyebrow Mountains* and *Farewell beyond the Thorn-Gate Gorge*, in which both the moon and water are personified, and which reveal his deep love of nature as well as of his native land. In 727, he was married to the granddaughter of an ex-minister Xu.

In 730, he came to Chang'an, the Tang capital, in the hope of meet-



ing people of influence who would help him to realize his political ideal. Disappointed, he wrote *Lovesickness* in which he compared his yearning to the love for a woman. *Hard Is the Way of the World* and *Hard Is the Road to Shu* which is supposed to be his most important work in the first period of his verse-making. In 735, he wrote *Invitation to Wine* in which he revealed his love of drink was due to his disappointment in his career. After the death of his first wife, he moved with his children to East Lu (present-day Shandong Province).

Famed for his poetry, he was summoned to the capital in 742 to write poems and songs for the emperor and his favorite mistress, of which the best-known are the three stanzas on *The Beautiful Lady Yang*. In 744, he left Chang'an for Luoyang where he met Du Fu and a warm friendship and exchange of poems began that lasted lifelong. In 746, he

traveled in the south and wrote *Mount Skyland Ascended in a Dream* which, according to S. Obata, might rival Coleridge's *Kubla Khan* in its transcendent beauty and imaginative power, but which was written more than one thousand years earlier. In 753, he visited Xuan-cheng (in present-day Anhui Province) and wrote many poems in the pavilion of Xia Tiao.

In 755, An Lushan raised the standard of rebellion, and Li Bai was called to join the loyal forces led by Prince Yong in an attempt to resist the rebels. His political aspirations revived and he wrote his *Songs of Eastern Expedition of Prince Yong*. When the prince was defeated, he was banished to Yelang (in present-day Guizhou Province) until an amnesty was declared in 759. When he regained his liberty, he wrote his joyful quatrain *Leaving the White Emperor Town for Jiangling*. In 760, he revisited the Lu Mountains (in present-

day Jiangxi Province) and wrote the *Song of Mount Lu* which manifests his conversion to Taoism. In 762, he died at the age of sixty-two, chanting his last poem "*On Death bed*".

Li Bai's poetry which frequently contains a strong element of fantasy and the supernatural, is known for its lyrical, innovative imagery and great beauty of language. His love of nature is revealed in many poems: for instance, *The Eastern Hill* epitomizes Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey*, his *Song of White Clouds* reminds us of Shelley's *Cloud* and his *Farewell to Two Friends on an Autumn Day* of Keats' *Autumn*. His love of solitude is manifested in his *Solitude* and *Sitting Alone in Face of Peak Jingting* which may be compared with the following verse of Byron's:

"Are not the mountains, waves, and  
skies, a part  
Of me and of my soul, as I of them?"

Childe Harold's Pilgrimage

Canto III, ll. 667-668.

His love of friends is shown in his poems to Meng Haoran, Wang Changling, Du Fu, Wang Lun and his elegies on Master Brewer Ji and on his Japanese friend Abe Nakamaro, the last of which reminds us of the following verse of Shelley's elegy on Keats:

“(Morning)

Wet with the tears which should  
adorn the ground,  
Dimmed the aerial eyes that kindle  
day;”

Adonais ll. 122-123.

His love of children is revealed in his poem *Written for My Two Children in East Lu* just as Wordsworth's in his Lucy poems. His love of drink can be equaled only by the French symbolist Paul Verlaine.

As to his love of beauty, read the following verse in his *Song of the Southern Lass*:

“The rippling dress vies with rip-

pling stream,

We know not which by which is  
beautified."

Some of his love poems are passionate as Shelley's *Love's Philosophy*, for instance, his *Love Song* selected in this anthology. Some deal with the love of beauty in appearance but with political aspiration in reality, for instance, his *Lovesickness*. Most of his love poems describe the longing of a wife for her husband or the sorrow of separation while English poets, as pointed out by Professor Zhu Guangqian, express the admiration of man for woman.

His sympathy for the oppressed people and lonely woman is shown in the *Song of the Tow-men* and *Song of the North Wind* which, strange to say, reminds us less of Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind* than of Keats' *Eve of St. Agnes*. On the other hand, his antipathy against the oppressing rulers is revealed in his *Satire on the King of Wu* and *Em-*

peror of Qin who sought elixir of immortality in vain. The latter poem ends by the following verse:

“We but see,

Buried in underworld, the ashes cold  
Of Emperor of Qin in coffin made  
of gold!”

Another satirical poem of Li Bai's, *Mounting a Height and Viewing the Sea* reminds us less of Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* than of Coleridge's *Kubla Khan*:

“It was a miracle of rare device,  
A sunny pleasure-dome with cave  
of ice!”

English romantic poets may be symbolized by the birds they sing of: Wordsworth by the cuckoo; Coleridge by the albatross; Byron by the eagle (“When day was beautiful to me, / As to young eagles, being free); Shelley by the skylark and Keats by the nightingale. Then, what bird can be the symbol of Li Bai but the fabulous rooster?

"If once together with the wind the  
roc could rise,  
He would fly ninety thousand miles  
up to the skies.  
E'en if he must descend when the  
wind abated,  
Still billows will be raised and the  
sea agitated."

Are not the American imagists Ezra Pound  
and Amy Lowell two billows raised by  
the roc? Sorry to say, their translations  
of Li Bai failed to "build up the  
blue dome of air" where the roc may  
fly, so "I arise and unbuild it again"  
and rebuild a dome over the agitated  
sea.

X. Y. Z.

Beijing University  
April 18, 1986.

——汉 英 对 照——

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