

*Picking the Best Ci Poems
From the Washing Jade*

茅于美

漱玉撷英

李清照词英译

中国文联出版社

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of
Jade*

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A Brief Introduction To the Translator

The translator of the verses in this volume, Professor Mao Yumei, was born in Nanjing City, Jiangsu Province, in 1920. Her father, Dr Mao Yisheng (茅以昇) was a well-known bridge engineer who designed and built the Qian tang River Railway Bridge(钱塘江桥) in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province in 1937. It was the first bridge in China to be built using modern engineering techniques. He naturally hoped that some of his seven children would follow his example and become interested in science and engineering and play a role in helping modernize the undeveloped country. But in Yumei's case it was not to be. From her early days at school she showed a preference for literature. At age sixteen she began to write poetry using the verse forms of the classical Ci (Tz' u 词) poetry. Her first volume of poetry, "Pearls in the Dark" (夜珠词) was published in 1945 in the wartime capital, Chongqing city, Sichuan Province.

Professor Mao Yumei obtained her B. A. from the English Department of the National Zhejiang University in Zunyi City, Guizhou Province, in 1943. Then she entered the National Qinghua University in Kunming City, Yunnan Province, for graduate studies. Later on she went to the

United States and obtained a Master of Arts Degree from the Department of English at Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri, in 1948. After that she continued with work towards a Ph.D. degree in the Department of English at the University of Illinois, Urbana – Champaign, Illinois. In September 1950, she and her husband, Professor Xu Xuan (徐璇) returned to China. Since then both have been teaching at various universities in China.

From the 1950 s to the 1970 s, Professor Mao Yumei translated indeed proved to be a bridge builder like her father. But rather than working in steel and concrete, she builds invisible bridges which span the void between Eastern and Western cultures so that people may cross from one side to the other and begin to understand each other better. She also transplants flowers from one soil to another and tends to them so they may grow and flourish in unaccustomed climates.

The purpose of embarking upon a translation of Li Qingzhao's poetry is: "Let Chinese Literature Enter the Western World." Therefore it is with particularly heart – felt emotions that she dedicates this particular plot of transplanted poetry in the Western Garden of Poetry, and she hopes it will take root there, bloom and bear flowers of full beauty and perfection.

译者简介

茅于姜，1920年生于南京。1938年至1945年先后在西南联大、浙江大学、清华研究院攻读中国文学和英国文学。1946年通过当时教育部留美考试。1948年在美国密苏里州华盛顿大学获文学硕士后，转入伊利诺州立大学攻读博士学位。1950年回国，先后在国家出版总署、中国科学院文学研究所工作。1962年起任中国人民大学中文系副教授、教授。1998年在美国探亲期间病逝于加州。

她的主要著作有《茅于姜词集》、《茅于姜词续集》、《易卜生和他的戏剧》、《中西诗歌比较研究》；主要译作有《漱玉撷英》等多种。她是《战争风云》的译者之一。《世界名诗鉴赏》的英美诗歌部分由她负责主编。

Acknowledgements

This book, *Washing Jade* was started and completed in 1978. By that time the cultural revolution was over and Chinese intellectuals were once again able to do some work. I had some spare time then, and “Let Chinese Literature Enter the Western World” was an undertaking I had long since wished to initiate. Since I am a writer of Ci poetry myself, I chose the poetry of Li Qingzhao as the place to begin, one special plant to be transplanted into my “Garden of the Transplanted”. Li Qingzhao is one of the best women poets in the long history of Chinese literature, and her poetry has enjoyed a great popularity and reputation down to the present.

In September 1988, I was invited by the American Council of Learned Societies and sponsored by the National Academy of Sciences in Washington D.C. to come to the United States as an exchange scholar. I am deeply grateful for this opportunity to visit the United States again and to be involved in a rich scholarly exchange of ideas. I lectured at several universities, including Purdue University and

Princeton.

After my lecture program, I was invited to return to Purdue University as a visiting scholar. I wish to particularly thank Professor Leon A. Gottfried, Head of the Department of English, for the opportunity he granted me to work and study in West Lafayette, and to enjoy the facilities which enabled me to continue my research.

At Purdue I was very fortunate to exchange views on the theory and techniques of translation with Professor Shaun F.D. Hughes, Assistant Head of the Department of English. The breadth of his knowledge of world literature is broad and profound, and I am impressed by his keen interest in Chinese poetry. I showed him the manuscript of *Washing Jade*, and he suggested that in order to have a western audience understand and appreciate it more easily, that certain changes be made and notes added. To assist in this, Professor Hughes read the entire translation critically in every detail, and discussed with me those points in the poems which were like to give rise to difficulties for a western audience. He emphasized the importance of reflecting accurately the meaning of the original verses and in his introduction has made comparisons between the various

English translations of Li Qingzhao' s poetry. I wish to express my respect for his eagerness to introduce Chinese poetry to the Western World, and to record my indebtedness for his help and encouragement. In addition, I wish to express my deep gratitude for the time he took out of his own busy schedule to assist me in my work.

I also wish to extend sincere thanks to Mr Wang Jihui, a graduate student in the Department of English at Purdue University, for his help in preparing the Pinyin romanizations of the Chinese characters.

Finally, I wish to thank my husband, Professor Xu Xuan, for his firm support while I was working on this project, and my son, Xu Antai, for his “after – school – hours” proof – reading, and his humorous comments.

Preface

There is general agreement that Li Qingzhao (1084 – c. 1155) is “one of the foremost lyric poets” (Liu/Lo 592) and “the most celebrated poetess China has ever produced” (Liu 198). Given such a reputation it is surprising how under-represented her work is in English translation. Not only is the poetry of the Song Dynasty (960 – 1279) overshadowed by the reputation of the verse of the earlier Tang Dynasty (618 – 907) and its chief representatives, Wang Wei (699 – 759), Li Bai (701 – 62), and Du Fu (712 – 70), but also even among her contemporaries, male writers such as Li Yu (937 – 78), Su Shi (1037 – 1101) and Lu You (1125 – 1210) are better represented in translation than Li Qingzhao¹ (cf. the bibliography in Liu/Lo 531 – 32). And despite her reputation among her contemporaries, her work has not fared well in the vicissitudes of time. Only 50 Ci from her six known volumes of poetry have survived, while thousands of poems by other writers have been thought worthy of preservation². The present volume contains thirty – two of these surviving fifty poems, translated by professor Mao Yumei of the People’s University of China in