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Elegies of the South

楚辞

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DOLPHIN BOOKS
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英譯，覺得非常了不起，當
算英·美文學里的一座高峰。

特此致信，祝其成功！

祝

夏安

寇志明
(Jon Kowallis)

1997.6.25.

敬上

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出版说明

许渊冲先生是当代翻译大家，他毕生致力于中西文化的互译工作，已经在国内外出版中、英、法文著作一百二十余部，并提出了中国学派的文学翻译理论，为我国的翻译事业以及中西方的文化交流做出了划时代的贡献。钱钟书教授曾经称赞许先生译文风格：“戴着音韵和节奏的镣铐跳舞，灵活自如，令人惊奇。”

本文集共二十七卷，重点收录了许渊冲先生中译外、外译中的翻译作品，涉及中文、英文、法文三个文种，涵盖了诗词、杂剧、散曲、哲学经典以及外国小说等。文集中收入许先生中译外的主要作品有《论语》、《道德经》、《诗经》、《楚辞》、《汉魏六朝诗选》、《唐诗三百首》、《唐五代词选》、《宋词三百首》、《元曲三百首》、《宋元明清诗选》、《西厢记》、《牡丹亭》、《长生殿》、《桃花扇》、《中国古诗词选》，外译中的主要作品有《一切为了爱情》、《水上》、《飞马腾空》、《昆廷·杜沃德》、《雨果戏剧选》、《红与黑》、《人生的开始》、《高老头》、《包法利夫人》、《哥拉·布勒尼翁》、《约翰·克里斯托夫》。另外还收录许先生珍藏的图片八十余幅。

除去翻译作品之外，许先生还有大量的文字，如学术专著、评论、散文和书信，以及许先生新近作品等，如果有条件，我们还会将《文集》接续出版。

CONTENTS 目录

Preface	3	序	165
Qu Yuan		屈原	
Sorrow After Departure	27	离骚	185
The Nine Songs	45	九歌	193
The Almighty Lord of the East	45	东皇太一	193
To The God of Cloud	46	云中君	194
To the Lord of River Xiang	47	湘君	194
To the Lady of River Xiang	48	湘夫人	195
The Great Lord of Fate	50	大司命	197
The Young Goddess of Fate	52	少司命	198
The God of the Sun	53	东君	199

The God of the River	54	河伯	200
The Goddess of the Mountain	55	山鬼	201
For Those Fallen for the Country	57	国殇	202
The Last Sacrifice	58	礼魂	202
Asking Heaven	59	天问	203
The Nine Elegies	78	九章	209
I Make My Plaint	78	惜诵	209
Crossing the River	82	涉江	211
Lament for the Chu Capital	85	哀郢	213
Sad Thoughts Outpoured	89	抽思	214
Longing for Changsha	93	怀沙	216
Thinking of the Fair One	97	思美人	218
The Bygone Days Regretted	100	惜往日	220
Hymn to the Orange Tree	104	橘颂	222

Grieving at the Whirlwind106	悲回风222
The Far-off Journey112	远游226
Divination121	卜居230
The Fisherman124	渔父232
Song Yu	宋玉
Nine Apologies.....126	九辩.....233
Qu Yuan	屈原
Requiem139	招魂.....239
Great Requiem.....152	大招.....244
Theory on Literary Translation of the Chinese School.....249	代后记253

ELEGIES
OF THE SOUTH

PREFACE

There lies a glassy oblong pool,
Where light and shade pursue their course.
How can it be so clear and cool?
For water fresh comes from its source.

— Zhu Xi (1130—1200)

Chinese poetry is a vast ocean where light and shade pursue their course. Its source is *the Book of Poetry* compiled in the 6th century B. C. and *Elegies of the South* composed in the 3rd. *The Book of Poetry* is the earliest anthology of realistic poems written by common people along the Yellow River in North China, including the richest State of Qi in the east, the most thickly populated States of Zheng and Wei in the Central Plain, and the most powerful State of Qin in the west. In the Valley of the Yellow River Confucius and his disciples had rationalized ancient tradition, myth and shamanism, humanized divinities and transformed extraordinary chaos into ordinary world order. On the other hand, *Elegies of the South* may be said to be the earliest collection of romantic poems written by poets of the largest State of Chu

along the Blue River or the Yangzi Valley, permeated with time-hallowed tradition, fantastic imagination and violent emotions of a mythical world.

Qu Yuan (340—278 B. C.) was the most important Chu poet who lived at a time when romanticism or shamanism in the South came into contact with realism in the North. He became the greatest lyrical poet in ancient China as a result of the contact. At first, he had won the confidence of the king of Chu, and held the high post of “left minister”. In view of the danger threatening Chu from the powerful State of Qin, Qu Yuan proposed reform in the government and alliance with the rich State of Qi to ensure the safety of Chu. But the king of Chu was surrounded by self-seekers who, having accepted bribes from Qin’s envoy, not only dissuaded the king from taking Qu Yuan’s advice, but brought about the poet’s estrangement from the king. Therefore, Qu Yuan wrote his autobiographic long poem *Sorrow After Departure*.

This long poem is not only one of the most remarkable works of Chinese poetry, but it ranks as one of the greatest poems in world literature. It describes the poet’s patriotism, his disillusionment with a society fallen into evil ways and his imaginary journeys in a chariot drawn

by dragon and phoenix to a supernatural world.

The Moon's Charioteer goes before, oh!
The curtain-rolling Wind runs after.
To clear the way the phoenixes soar, oh!
The Lord of Thunder bursts in laughter.

By means of rich imagery and skilled similes, the poet expresses his loyalty to the king of Chu referred to as "Fair One" or "Sacred One."

The Sacred One neglects his duty, oh!
He will not look into my heart.
The Slanderers envy my beauty, oh!
They say I play a licentious part.

Thus he builds up the tradition of using the beauty to symbolize the sovereign, and fragrant plants to represent loyal ministers. He also depicts, directly or indirectly, the social condition of that time and the destinies of the States of ancient China, for example:

The last king of Xia's stormy age, oh!

Abused all laws and he lost his crown.
That of Shang burned alive his sage, oh!
His dynasty was overthrown.

The conflicts between the ruling groups are repeatedly described while the poet affirms his determination to seek his ideal or beauty.

All men delight in what they please, oh!
Alone I always love the beauty.
My body rent, my heart at ease, oh!
Can I change and neglect my duty?

I bid the Driver of the Sun, oh!
To Holy Mountains slowly go.
My way ahead is a long, long one, oh!
I'll seek my beauty high and low.

His love for the ideal or beauty was so passionate that he could not bear the stern reality and finally he drowned himself in the River Milo on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month, which has become a holiday for Chinese people to commemorate his death, when a race of dragon boats is

held, it is said, to the rescue of the drowned poet.

In a certain sense, *Sorrow After Departure* may be compared with Homer's *Odyssey* composed 500 years earlier and with Dante's *Divine Comedy* composed 1,500 years later. Homer describes in *Odyssey* Ulysses' voyage on sea, his wisdom and his physical sufferings on his way back to his native State; Qu Yuan describes in his *Sorrow* his imaginary journey to Heaven, his qualities and his mental sufferings on leaving his native State in quest of an ideal prince or beauty as personified in the Nymphean Queen, the Swallow's Bride or the young prince's fair lady, or embodied in jasper tree, fragrant flower or sweet grass. Dante records in the *Divine Comedy* his moral and spiritual experience of illumination, regeneration and beatitude by describing his imaginary journeys down to the Hell and up to the Purgatory and then up to the Paradise. As Qu Yuan follows the ancient sages and consults the witch and wizard, Dante is guided by Reason in the person of Virgil and then by Beatrice, an incarnation of beauty and virtue, an image of goodness and divine wisdom. In *Sorrow After Departure*, Qu Yuan glorifies the three ancient kings and the founders of the Xia and Shang dynasties, and condemns their last monarchs; in the *Divine Comedy*, Dante glorifies only Christian saints

and condemns pagans, including the wise Ulysses and the brave Caesar. But modern attitude toward pagan heroes has changed in the West, while the glorification of ancient sages and the condemnation against evil and vice in China remain unchanged throughout the ages. This shows Qu Yuan's sorrow represents that of Chinese intellectuals down to the present century. Thus we may say *Sorrow After Departure* is no less important in the East than *Odyssey* and *Divine Comedy* in the West.

Other poems attributed to Qu Yuan include *the Nine Songs and the Nine Elegies*. The former are songs dedicated to gods or goddesses. Their form is suggestive of drama, in which a male or a female shaman donned elaborate costume and make-up, and singing and dancing, invited the god or goddess to an amorous encounter. As sacrifices to the gods were occasions for courtship, the mention of love in these poems is natural. Since the Han Dynasty the *Nine Songs* had always been attributed to Qu Yuan, until in recent years some scholars advanced the theory that they were ancient folk songs and not the work of any individual poet.

The Nine Songs can be divided into different types. The first type describes the sacrifice itself, as in *The Almighty Lord of the East and The Last Sacrifice*. The second type describes