

Translation Notebook, 2022

Laurence Z. W.

List of Poets

Qu Yuan 屈原

Anonymous

Li Bai 李白

Xu Ning 徐凝

Cui Hao 崔颢

Du Fu 杜甫

Wang Wei 王维

Li Shangyin 李商隐

Li He 李贺

December 30, 2022

previously published online at <https://leahsfiction.tumblr.com/tagged/my%20translation>

Classical Poetry Translation Notebook, 2022

Contents

List of Poets	2
Our Martyrs	4
Ballad of Mulan (excerpt)	6
Katydid Song	8
Gazing at the Waterfall at Mt. Lu	9
Mt. Lu Waterfall	9
Yellow Crane Tower	10
Sending Off Meng Haoran to Guangling at Yellow Crane Tower	11
Awful Heat in Early Autumn, Piles of Paperwork Keep Coming	12
to the night rains in spring	13
In the Mountains	14
Chang'E	15
Untitled	16
The Edge of the Sky	17
Leyou Heights	17
Song of the Bronze Immortal Leaving the Han	18
first drafts	22
A note on the typefaces	23

国殇

Our Martyrs

Qu Yuan

grasping Wu pikes
 wearing rhinoceros armour,
chariot axles enmeshing
 short-swords joining.
banners blotting the sun
 foes like clouds,
raining arrows twofold
 men eager to be first.
my formation scattered
 my line trampled,
my left horses dead
 my right sword-gashed.
a duststorm for two wheels
 traces a team of four,
“reinforcements!” the jade clappers
 “attack!” the drums call.
the heavenly hour resents us
 the mighty spirit rages,
sternly slaying first to last
 hometown fields abandoned.

going but not coming
 departing but not returning,
the plains untended
 the roads unending.
bearing long swords
 clutching Qin bows,
heads and bodies parted
 hearts still untried.
indeed both courageous
 and accompanied by Wu,
staunch to the end
 broken by none.
bodies stopped in death
 both spark and spirit,
steadfast souls
 heroes among ghosts.

木兰辞

Ballad of Mulan (excerpt)

Anonymous

at morning she left her parents behind,
by evening she made camp at the Yellow
River.

she does not hear her parents calling
for her,
only the Yellow River waters thundering.

at morning she left the Yellow River
behind,

by evening she climbed the top of
Mt. Hei.

she does not hear her parents calling
for her,
only the Yan Mountain cavalry whinnying.

ten thousand miles in the pursuit of war,
flying past fortresses and mountains.

metal clanks on the northern wind.
iron jackets gleam with cold.
in a hundred battles generals die,
in ten years heroes return.

she returns to meet with the emperor,
the emperor sits in a grand hall (...)

螽斯

Katydid Song

Anonymous

katydid song
we millions strong
listen all my children
we shake ourselves awake

katydid song
we swarm along
listen all my children
we all form our lines

katydid song
we bid you "so long"
listen all my children
and now we go to sleep

望庐山瀑布

Gazing at the Waterfall at Mt. Lu

Li Bai

a sunlit incense burner from which purple
 smoke emerges
a distant waterfall drapes like a curtain
 over the river
it flies straight down for three thousand
 feet
i could almost think it's the Silver
 River, drawn from highest heaven

庐山瀑布

Mt. Lu Waterfall

Xu Ning

the fountain falls through empty air a
 thousand fathoms wide
leaps thundering into the river without
 ever ceasing
forever and always the white silk has
 been flying
the sole mark, one stripe dividing the
 same mountain green

黄鹤楼

Yellow Crane Tower

Cui Hao

the yellow crane riders of old
 have already gone,
yellow crane tower
 stands empty here.
the cranes have flown,
 never to return.
a thousand white clouds
 sit in the vast air.
the temperate river's sunlight
 on every tree.
fragrant grasses, parrots flourish on an
 islet midstream.
at sunset where is the pass
 to our hometown?
mist hangs on the water
 like thoughts made form.

黄鹤楼送孟浩然之广陵

Sending Off Meng Haoran to Guangling
at Yellow Crane Tower

Li Bai

he's quit these western climes
flown the coop (you know the poems about
that haunt)

down to yangzhou.
his itinerary? april, month of mists and
flowers

the distant dot of his lone sail
swallowed up by the sky. well,

look at the River Yangtze, then,
i tell you--it reaches the horizon.

早秋苦热堆案相仍

Awful Heat in Early Autumn,
Piles of Paperwork Keep Coming

Du Fu

august sixth. baking in this awful
heat
about time for a hasty meal? think
again
it doesn't end. when night comes, so
do the scorpions--
only to be replaced, come fall, by
the flies
i'm going to go mad in my ties and belts.
i want to scream
ledgers and documents (*cannot be urgent*)
keep coming.
they keep coming

i'm travelling in my mind to those green
pine ridges south of here
oh the satisfaction of my bare feet
breaking through a crust of ice

春夜喜雨

to the night rains in spring

Du Fu

that spring the rains came back exactly
on schedule. they start with nighttime

droplets fine enough to ride the wind,
coating everything silently in films of
wet shine

while the sky puts a lid on walking unlit
roads. might spot a lone pinprick of a
boat out there.

wake up to everything gleaming, pinks and
puddles, the city decked out ankle-deep
in blossoms.

山中

In the Mountains

Wang Wei

at brake-lined creek with its flashes of
white stone
cold-blank sky has taken most of the
rusty leaves
rain--only after taking the mountain
trail
the jade-blue cosmos comes down to soak
one's shoulders

嫦娥

Chang'E

Li Shangyin

light deepens the shadow on
 mother-of-cloud screen
faint stars rest in the heavenly river's
 slow incline
elixir-stealing Chang'E sits
 in regret
each night thinking on boundless skies
 and seas

无题·相见时难别亦难

Untitled

Li Shangyin

it was hard just to meet;
it's hard now to leave
still some flowers survive once
the spring wind's power goes

silkworm in spring
spitting silk until it dies
a candle burns to ash
only tears left as a sign

i check my mirror at dawn,
my worries show at the roots
nighttime psalms in my mouth
as the moon only gets colder

from here to immortal mt. penglai
there's not far left to go--

the queen mother's crow
came to see me, you know

天涯

The Edge of the Sky

Li Shangyin

the spring sun is at the edge of
the sky
at the edge of the sky it tilts
once again
orioles sing as though they've got
tears to shed
that wet only the highest flowers

登乐游原

Leyou Heights

Li Shangyin

as night comes on my thoughts are
ill at ease;
i drive out to the ancient plateau.

the sunset there is a marvel beyond
all marvels:
it is the last moment of true dusk.

金铜仙人辞汉歌

Song of the Bronze Immortal Leaving the Han
Li He

In fall the youth Liu came lightly by
his flourishing mausoleum,
One heard his horse whinny in the night;
he left no trace at dawn.
The rich scent of autumn, hemmed
by osmanthus and balustrades,
Thirty-six palaces all
mossing over jade-green.

The procession begins its thousand miles,
led by the man of Wei,
Out the East Gate, a sour wind
like arrows to the eye.
The Han moon was lured outside
the royal walls in vain;
Our tears turn to drops of lead
in imperial solemnity.

Fading orchids in mourning garb
line the Xianyang road,
If the heavens too could feel,
the heavens would grow old.

Bearing our plate of dew alone
through moonlit desolation,
River and city far behind, the voice of
waves grown small.

In the 8th month of the 1st year of the Qinglong Era, Emperor Ming of Wei ordered his palace official to move an immortal of the Emperor Wu of Han south by cart. This immortal, holding a dew-plate, had been installed in front of the palace hall.

The immortal started its journey once the palace official dismantled and removed the plate, whereupon it shed silent tears.

Upon which Li Changji, scion of the Tang royal house, composed "Song of the Bronze Immortal Leaving the Han."

place name? ↓
 before he ?? was emperor??
 vision of the poet? ↓ contrast?

① mào líng líu kāng qiū fēng kè
 splendid will liú young man autumn guest
 flourish family son? wind traveller
 mans. sons??

In full the youth liú
 came lightly by the
 flourishing mansoleum
 ghost!!

② yè wén mǎ sī xiǎo wú jì
 night hear horse neigh dawn no trace
 footprint sign

One heard his horse
 whinny at night,
 with no hoofmarks
 left by dawn.
 no trace?
 all... vanished by dawn

③ huà lán guì shù * xuān qiū xiāng
 painted fence cypress trees hang autumn perfume
 decorated railing trees lift

The rich seat of autumn
 heaped by cypress
 and painted
 railings
 balconies.

④ sān shí liù gōng tǔ huā lí
 thirty-six palaces dirt flower jade-green
 bells
 "discoloration of artifice?"
 moss?

Thirty-six palaces
 gently turning all
 jade green.

⑤ wēi suān qiān ché zhī qiān lǐ
 Wei minister lead arrange for? thousand miles
 will forward?

Let in Wei, the official
 Marquis Wei shall lead the
 procession across a thousand miles
 The procession sets out for a
 thousand miles, led by Marquis Wei

⑥ dōng suān suān fēng shè mǎn zǐ
 East pass gate sneered wind shoot purple eye
 sour/sore stinging/kirg?

Out the east gate,
 a ^{sour} stinging wind
 as ^{as} like javarosa to the eye

⑦ kōng jiāng hān yuè chū gōng mén
 empty bring Han moon out palace gate in rem
 in rem? stay? 3 yrs period used to remember the Han
 The Han moon, ^{vision lived out} the ^{royal} palace gates

⑧ tì jūn qīng lèi rú qiān shuǐ
 recall sir dear tears like lead water
 the Moon? In royal remembrance turns tears to drops of lead.

⑨ shuāi / cāi lán sōng kè xiān yáng dào
 decline / fade / morning! orchid and guest Xinyang wad
 Xinyang bound off from Xinyang.

⑩ tiān nù yǒu qíng tiān yì lǎo
 heavens it have feelings heavens / eye also ^{lead-up?}
 If the heavens too could feel, the heavens would grow old.

⑪ xié pán dú chū yuè huāng liáng
 carry basin along go out moon bleak and desolate
 tray dish no collection?

⑫ wèi chéng yǐ yuǎn bō shēng xiǎo
 Wei city too? far waves sound small
 (Weicheng district, already? far far ^{river? lake? ocean?} Wei river?)

first drafts

Sky's End

the spring sun is (the sun in spring?) at the
edge of the sky

(the edge of the sky slants light in)
(it is once again listing)
at the edge of the sky it tilts once again

a warbler sings as though it's crying tears
that (to?) wet only the highest flowers

Sending Off Meng Haoran

my friend has left the western parts, his
haunt of yellow crane tower

gone down to yangzhou in april, when the thick
air is full of flowers

distant image of his lone sail, the blue sky,
all cut off

until all i see is the yangtze river--it will
reach the horizon

A note on the typefaces

The body text was set in Cascadia Mono, a coding typeface with some nice variable font features designed by Aaron Bell.

The titles were set in Palatino Linotype for the Latin script and Noto Serif SC for the simplified Chinese script. Palatino Linotype is based on the original design by Hermann Zapf. Noto Serif SC (a repackaged Source Han Serif) is a Song-style typeface designed by Changzhou Sinotype.

