

**100 More Poems from the
Chinese:
From the *Shijing* to Mao
Zedong**

Translated by Earl Trotter

Peach Blossom Press



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Foreword

This volume is a follow-up to my *100 Poems from the Chinese: From the Shijing to Mao Zedong*. This book will serve to fill up some of the gaps in that work. That means there are more lesser-known poets and especially, more post-Tang poetry. Most of the poets appear for the first time. Explanatory material such as the Introduction has been adapted from that work. Both volumes together provide a wide range of poets and genres over time.

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Song Dynasty (960–1279) and later

After the Tang dynasty fell there was a chaotic period of the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms (907–979). But in 960, Emperor Taizu (927–976) of the Song seized power and established the Song dynasty. The Northern Song (960–1127) had its capital at Dongjing (now Kaifeng City). The government structured itself on the Tang legacy and at first it prospered and even expanded its territory. But in 1126, Jurchens invaded from the north and captured Dongjing. Emperor Huizong was captured but one of his sons, proclaimed himself Emperor Gaozong, and fled south, establishing the Southern Song (1127–1279) with its capital at Lin'an (Hangzhou). The Southern Song was prosperous but weak and finally the Mongols, under Kublai Khan, conquered the Song in 1276 and established the Yuan dynasty.

Printing flourished in the Song and literature became accessible to more people. The *ci* form was finally established through the work of Su Shi, who expanded its themes, and it became the dominant form. The early years saw a continuation of Late Tang style but some, such as Lin Bu (967–1028) returned to a simpler approach. Su Shi (1036–1101) is the greatest Song poet but Ouyang Xiu (1007–1072) is not far behind. Other noteworthy poets include Wang Anshi (1021–1086), Huang Tingjian (1045–1105) and Yang Wanli (1127–1206). China's greatest woman poet, Li Qingzhao (1084–1151), belongs to this era as well.

Yuan Dynasty (1271–1368)

The Yuan dynasty was part of the Great Mongol Empire. At first, very strong with able leaders, over time the quality of the rulers declined and the unrest of the populace grew. This led finally to their overthrow by the Ming in 1368.

In the realm of literature, drama was the main form. Poetry did not flourish other than a *qu*, which were poems included in the plays and related to the *ci*. It was a popular vernacular form. Just

like the *ci*, they were set to song patterns, in this case, about three hundred and fifty. The greatest *qu* poet was the playwright Ma Zhiyuan (c. 1260–1334).

Ming Dynasty (1368–1644)

The Ming dynasty was founded by Zhu Yuanzhang in the south. During the Ming there were vast construction projects, including the Forbidden City in Beijing, where the capital was moved to, and the rebuilt Great wall. The army was increased to about one million and there was territorial expansion. Trade, including trade with Europe, grew. Overall there was stability and prosperity. However, in the end, the combination of peasant revolts in the south and Manchu insurgency in the north led to the demise of the dynasty.

During the Ming, Tang poetry was emulated, leading to a lack of creativity. Although there were innumerable poets, none are regarded as outstanding, although there may be some hidden gems. Some poets regarded Song poetry as the pinnacle and wrote in a more self-expressive manner. Major figures include Gao Qi (1336–1374), Li Dongyang (1447–1516) and Yuan Hongdao (1568–1610). On the painter-poet side, there are Shen Zhou (1427–1509), Tang Yin (1470–1524) and Wen Zhengming (1470–1559).

Qing Dynasty (1644–1912)

The Qing dynasty reached its peak in the late eighteenth century but foreign interventions, revolts and worsening economic conditions, along with an inflexible bureaucracy, led to a slow decline. The invasion of foreign powers to crush the Boxer Rebellion made the situation untenable and in 1912 the dynasty and imperial rule were abolished and a republican government was established.

During the Qing, the novel was the predominant genre. In poetry, fixation on the past led to a stultification of form. Still, there were some fine poets. Outstanding was Yuan Mei (1716–1797) who valued freedom via creativity and self-expression. He also advocated women's literacy and fostered women poets. His poems express his innermost feelings and are skilfully crafted.

Other notable poets are Wu Weiye (1609–1671) and Nalan Xinde (1655–1685) who both excelled in the *ci* form. A fine female poet of the Qing is Wu Zao (1799–1862).

Modern Era (1912-present)

Although the modernist views of Hu Shi (1891–1962) and others led to the demise of classical verse and the rise of Western-influenced themes and forms, some still continued to write in the old manner. Most notable is Mao Zedong (1892–1976). He obviously had a modern sensibility but expressed his, mostly political, thoughts and feelings, in the classical forms.

Lin Bu (967-1028)

Lin Bu was born at Hangzhou. He studied the classics at an early age. He then took to a life of wandering. The last twenty years of his life, he lived as a recluse on Gushan Island on West Lake, near Hangzhou. He never married and referred to the plum blossoms on the many trees he had planted, as his “wife”, and the two tame cranes he kept, as his “children.” Later on this would spawn a whole art tradition, depicting Lin Bu by his plum blossoms and with his cranes. He grew vegetables, gathered fruit and fished for his sustenance. His fame spread and there were many visitors. He was also known as a painter and calligrapher, although only three of the latter survive. Two emperors had sent food to Lin and also requested him to enter public service, which he declined. He studied Buddhism and conversed with monks in nearby temples. After he died he was buried on Gushan and his tomb is now a tourist attraction.

About 330 of his poems survive. Lin Bu was rather the opposite of Bai Juyi in that the latter strove to see that his poems were preserved while Lin was indifferent about the whole matter. He wrote mostly about the scenery and his excursions on West Lake. His poems have a feeling of tranquillity and the style tends to the plain and simple versus the complexities of the Late Tang.

Lin Bu was quite famous in his time. Young literati like Ouyang Xiu (1007–1072) and Mei Yaochen (1002–1060), would come and visit him. In the next generation, the great Su Shi extolled him and composed “Writing a Poem after Lin Bu.” However, he gradually went out of favour. In studies and translations in English, he is quite neglected and there is, for example, no article devoted to him in the *Indiana Companion to Chinese Literature*. For this reason I am including a relatively large number of his poems.

Boating On West Lake In The Snow

Vast, the lake spreads wide over the empty reaches;
a heavy snowfall merges water and shore.
The boat suddenly shifts, jolting me back;
the mountains are near but still seem a solid mass.
On the ice-cold seat, I quietly drift about,
a thin trail of smoke coming from the stove.
Leisurely I chant "Summons for a Recluse."
Why should I sigh over leaving the herd?

Lin Bu (967-1028)

西湖舟中值雪

浩蕩彌空闊，
霏霏接水濱。
舟移忽自卻，
山近未全分。
凍軫間清泛，
溫鑪接薄薰。
悠然詠招隱，
何許嘆離群。

林逋

Butterflies

The two delicate antennae rise,
a match for only the tiniest enemy.
Slowly, slowly, the sun has nearly set
over the fragrant garden.
The pure night dew is on the flowers
and I should be content.
My quilted robe provides warmth against the wind;
I lack a lofty posture.
One must pity people whose custom
is excessive gaudiness.
It seems to me that Heaven
is the source of pure fragrance.
One can laugh heartily at the young birds
and scent on the wind.
You will comprehend the horn's tune
as it's being played.

Lin Bu (967-1028)

蝶

細眉雙聳敵秋毫，
冉冉芳園日几遭。
清宿露花應自得，
暖爭風絮欲相高。
情人歿後魂猶在，
傲吏齊來夢亦榮。
閑掩遺編苦堪恨，
不并香草入離騷。

林逋

Living In Seclusion On Gushan⁶⁴: Inscribed On A Wall

Not deep into mountains and rivers, gibbons and birds are few.
In this life, I still intend to move –
straight across from India Village, by the stream,
a single log for a bridge, I'll build a little hut.

Lin Bu (967-1028)

孤山隱居書壁

山水未深猿鳥少，
此生猶擬別移居。
直過天竺溪流上，
獨樹為橋小結廬。

林逋

64 Gushan Island on West Lake where Lin Bu lived.

Master Yicong's Mountain Pavilion

Beyond the forest, in the autumn mountains,
white birds fly.
Also, to come here, in the midst of such seclusion,
is a rare event.
At the West Village ferry crossing, you can see people
through the evening mist.
We sit and watch the fishing boats return,
two by two.

Lin Bu (967-1028)

易從師山亭

林表秋山白鳥飛，
此中幽致亦還稀。
西村渡口人煙晚，
坐見漁舟兩兩歸。

林逋

Plum Blossoms

Several times I return to the river's source
at the foot of the mountain.
I wander on my own, without rest,
to look at the fragrant blossoms.
I am persistent and love nothing more
than this pure freshness.
In this very quiet and secluded place
who can be anxious?
I tried teaching for a month but as I am old,
my eyes are getting weaker.
Because of the spring cold,
I only remained a little while.
I have finished with public affairs
which is the best for my future.
The wild plum truly
removes any feelings of shame.

Lin Bu (967-1028)

梅花

幾回山腳又江頭，
繞着孤芳看不休。
一味清新無我愛，
十分孤靜與伊愁。
任教月老須微見，
卻為春寒得少留。
終共公言數來者，
海棠端的免包羞。

林逋

Viewing The River In Autumn

On a vast sandspit,
 egrets and herons are sleeping.
On the sheet of water, there is no trace
 of the blue sky.
What I like most are reeds and flowers
 after the rain.
There's a puff of smoke and fire:
 they're cooking rice on a fishing boat.

Lin Bu (967-1028)

秋江寫望

蒼茫沙嘴鷺鷥眠，
片水無痕浸碧天。
最愛蘆花經雨后，
一蓬煙火飯魚船。

林逋

Liu Yong (c. 984–1053)

Liu Yong was born in Chong'an, Fujian province. His father was an imperial court official so Liu grew up in affluence and was well educated being somewhat of a child prodigy in literature. From early on, he did not have career ambitions and spent his time writing, associating with courtesans and singing girls, and enjoying nature. He did finally pass the imperial examinations at age forty-seven and received minor postings thereafter. He very slowly moved up the ranks until his death in 1053.

Liu is best known for his development of the *ci*. He used many forms, some obscure and also changed the structure of some. He invented new forms as well and used many colloquialisms. Finally, he started the trend towards longer *ci*. He was quite popular in his time.

To the Tune of “Crane Soars to the Sky”

The Golden List⁶⁶ of successful candidates was read –
by chance, I’ve failed my “dragon-head⁶⁷” hopes.
In clear-sighted times, the wise may for a while be left behind –
what’s to be done?
Though I didn’t succeed in my ambitions,
I’ll just live my life as I please.
Why should I grieve?
A talented writer of *ci*
is really a white-robed⁶⁸ minster of state.

On the streets of the red-light district,
there are red and green painted screens.
Luckily, the ones I desire are there,
and I’ll seek out
and snuggle up to a woman in red.
It’s an amorous affair –
a life of no restraint.
Being young means feasting and drinking.
Forget hollow fame
and swap it for the shallow cup and softly sung song.

Liu Yong (c. 984–1053)

66 List of candidates who passed the imperial examinations.

67 Appellation applied to those who passed.

68 Common people wore white robes.

鶴沖天

黃金榜上，
偶失龍頭望。
明代暫遺賢，
如何向。
未遂風雲便，
爭不恣狂蕩。
何須論得喪？
才子詞人，
自是白衣卿相。

煙花巷陌，
依約丹青屏障。
幸有意中人，
堪尋訪。
且恁偎紅翠，
風流事，
平生暢。
青春都一餉。
忍把浮名，
換了淺斟低唱。

柳永

Mei Yaochen (1002–1060)

Mei Yaochen was born in what is now Anhui province. He did not pass the imperial examinations until he was forty-nine years old. He served in various minor posts thereafter. He was friends with the major poet, Ouyang Xiu.

His surviving poems number more than 2,500. His early poems were politically motivated, highlighting social issues. But his most famous poems are more subjective and focus on the commonplace. He also wrote moving poems of mourning on the death of his wife and two of his children.

Offering a Sacrifice to my Cat

Since I've had my cat, Five-White,
the rats no longer encroach upon my books.
But this morning, Five-White died –
I offered a sacrifice of rice and fish.
Your remains, I relinquished to the river –
I'll pray for you, I won't neglect you.
You used to gnaw on a single rat,
hold it your mouth, and meowing, wander about the garden.
You longed to scare away all the rats,
to clear them out of my shack.
Together we'd go by boat,
staying in the same cabin.
My food, cooked or raw, though exceedingly scanty,
I could eat without droppings or having it stolen.
Truly you were diligent,
more diligent than a chicken or a pig.
Common folk extol their cart horses,
but I say that horses and donkeys are no good.
I'll stop! I won't say anything further –
but for you, I'll weep just a little bit more.

Mei Yaochen (1002–1060)

祭貓

自有五白貓，
鼠不侵我書。
今朝五白死，
祭與飯與魚。
送之於中河，
咒爾非爾疏。
昔爾齧一鼠，
銜鳴繞庭除。
欲使眾鼠驚，
意將清我廬。
一從登舟來，
舟中同屋居。
糗糧雖甚薄，
免食漏竊余。
此實爾有勤，
有勤勝雞豬。
世人重驅駕，
謂不如馬驢。
已矣莫復論，
為爾聊歎歔。

梅堯臣

Farming

At Nanshan⁶⁹, they planted beans,
but they were smashed by the wind and rain;
the only harvest was a bundle of beanstalks –
there was nothing to fill the cooking pot.

Mei Yaochen (1002–1060)

田家

南山嘗種豆，
碎莢落風雨；
空收一束萁，
無物充煎釜。

梅堯臣

69 In present day Zhejiang province.

Presented to the *Qin*-playing Monk, Zhibai

The Venerable Master came from the south,
bringing with him, Fuxi's⁷⁰ *qin*.
Respectfully, he paid me a visit,
walking right by my gatekeeper.
He entered the hall and played his golden *qin*,
profoundly attaining the essence of the ancients.
The breeze sounded bleak and strange
as tall bamboos swayed green in the night.
The magnificence of the music was beyond words –
the playing over, it could not again, be brought to mind.
The next day he advised that he was on his way,
arousing in me a futile longing for rivers and seas.

Mei Yaochen (1002–1060)

贈琴僧知白

上人南方來，
手抱伏犧器。
頽然造我門，
不顧門下吏。
上堂弄金徽，
深得太古意。
清風蕭蕭生，
修竹搖晚翠。
聲妙非可傳，
彈罷不復記。
明日告以行，
徒興江海思。

梅堯臣

70 Legendary cultural hero (c. 2000 BCE).

Lushan⁷¹ Mountain Journey

It's so sublime in this wilderness,
thousands of mountains, high and low –
as you go along, wonderful shifting views of the peaks;
down secluded paths, astray, I walk alone.
The frost has fallen – over there a bear climbs a tree;
in the empty woods, a deer drinks at a stream.
Where is everybody?
Beyond the clouds, the cry of a chicken.

Mei Yaochen (1002–1060)

魯山山行

適與野情愜，
千山高復低。
好峰隨處改，
幽徑獨行迷。
霜落熊升樹，
林空鹿飲溪。
人家在何許，
雲外一聲雞。

梅堯臣

71 A famous mountain in Henan.