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The Complete Ci-poems of Li Qingzhao:
A New English Translation

by
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Foreword

These are some of the most exquisite, feeling translations of Chinese poems I have ever encountered. Yet it was only by mere chance that they came into my hands. Jiaosheng Wang's renditions of Li Qingzhao's lyrics have impressed me so deeply that I felt compelled to share them with a wider audience rather than keep them jealously to myself.

The beauty of Jiaosheng Wang's translations lies in his ability to use simple but exacting language to convey the sentiments of the Chinese verse in English. He does not strive for preciosity or brilliance, but only to catch the spirit of the original and to convey it to his reader in the most unadorned terms possible. This attitude well suits the poetry of Li Qingzhao which often relies on guileless understatement to achieve a powerful effect. It is also evident that Wang has a lasting admiration for the material with which he is involved. Thus he does not work in haste, but is willing to go back over his versions of Li Qingzhao's lyrics again and again, slowly perfecting them until he is satisfied that he has them "just right". In this way, Wang's efforts as translator do not clash with or overshadow the poetic voice of the author. Rather, he strives to meld his own finely crafted lines with those of Li Qingzhao in an unusual esthetic harmony that merits repeated savoring. So often when reading Wang's translations of Li's lyric œuvre, I have the strange sensation that the two have merged into one. Experiencing Li Qingzhao via the pen of Wang Jiaosheng is as comfortably enchanting and absorbing as communing with Emily Dickinson on a dark, quiet Sunday afternoon.

Parting is all we know of heaven,
And all we need of hell.

May this lovingly prepared volume stand as a testimony to undiscovered genius wherever it may be. I shudder to think that I almost did not have the privilege of reading these wonderful works of art. What is all the more remarkable about the accomplishment of Jiaosheng Wang is that he has never left the soil of China.

I shall be happy to pass on the comments of readers to the aged and ailing translator who lives in Shanghai.

Victor H. Mair
Professor of Oriental Studies
University of Pennsylvania

August 16, 1989
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In the preparation of this volume, I have profited immeasurably from the experience and wealth of knowledge of many of my friends. To them I am most grateful for giving so freely of their help whenever it is solicited. I am especially indebted to my nephew Stephen C. Chen, California, for sending a considerable number of English classics published in the United States for my perusal and enjoyment over the past ten-odd years. From 1986 onwards he has further gone out of his way to encourage me by procuring many authoritative works on the art of poetry translation for my reference, as well as making many valuable suggestions, which have contributed in no small measure to my completing these translations of Li Qingzhao's ci-poems. My thanks are also due to Mr Zheng Lianghuan, formerly a student at the Shanghai Institute for Teachers' Advanced Studies where I was lecturing in the late 1970s, who has since become one of my close friends, for doing all the typing and collating of my manuscripts and for delightful conversations during the past six months and more at the expense of much of his valuable time.

Above all, I owe a deep debt of gratitude to Professor Victor H. Mair, Pennsylvania, for his appreciation of my work, and for all his encouragement and generous help, without which it would have been out of the question for this little book of mine, now honored with the Foreword he has so kindly written, to be issued in Sino-Platonic Papers.

W Js
Shanghai
mid-July, 1989
INTRODUCTION

I

Li Qingzhao (1084–c.1155), alias Yi An the Lay Buddhist, was born into a family of scholars and officials, in Jinan, Shandong Province. Her father, Li Gefei, was a professor at the Imperial Academy and a noted prose-writer; her mother had some reputation as a writer of poetry. Brought up in such a favorable environment and devoted to her studies, she acquired a deep knowledge of literature and the classics in her teens. Even as a young girl she took to writing delightful little lyrics on her excursions to the suburbs and nearby beauty spots. Ci-poems such as 'A Happy Recollection: To the tune In Dreamland' reveal her girlish naivete, her lively untamed spirit and love of nature.

At eighteen she married Zhao Mingcheng, a student in the Imperial Academy. The union was an ideal one, for they shared the same passion for poetry and the classics, ancient bronze and stone inscriptions and objets d'art, painting and calligraphy. Many were the hours they passed happily together composing poems to rhyme with each other's, and delving into points of nicety in the classics. They enjoyed touring the city and its environs and even out-of-the-way places in quest of favorite antiques and rare editions of ancient books. As a result, her poetic style became more quiet and refined. The exquisite ci-poems she wrote during this period expressed deep love for her husband as well as her feeling of loneliness whenever he happened to be away from home. But unfortunately this married happiness proved to be only temporary. In 1127 the Northern Song regime fell to the Tartars in the notorious Jing Kang Invasion when two Song emperors were ignominiously taken prisoner by the Jin army. The Zhaos suffered untold hardships flee the invaders, and were compelled to seek refuge south of the Yangtze. They lost most of their manuscripts and a great number of valuable books and antiques collected over several decades. Then in 1129 came the greatest catastrophe in Li Qingzhao's life: her husband died of typhoid en route to an official post. She was left an
outcast to wander aimlessly for years from one place to another. She finally settled in the Southern Song capital Hangzhou, to pass the rest of her days in loneliness and misery. Very little is recorded about the time of her death, but it is generally believed that she lived to about the age of seventy-one. The ci-poems she wrote in her declining years, replete with memories of her deceased husband and of her beloved northern homeland, are particularly admired for their pathos. But most of these were lost, like her other writings, in her precarious wanderings during those troubled years, which was an irreparable loss to Chinese literature.

II

Before discussing Li Qingzhao's ci-poetry, it may be not out of place to make a brief mention of certain technical points characteristic of the ci-form of classical Chinese poetry. Ci was originally a kind of melody tuned to folk music which later developed into a new form of written verse consisting of lines of different lengths. A ci-poem is limited to a fixed number of characters conforming to a strict meter and rhyme scheme. According to Wan Shu's *Tonal Patterns and Rhyme Schemes in Ci-poetry* more than 1100 types of Ci are now extant. Each type has a label of its own, usually symbolizing some circumstance or event which occurred when the original tune came into being. For example, the ci label Bodhisattva's Gold Headdress (Pusaman) dates back to about 850, when the Tang court received as tribute from the Man minority nationality a troupe of girl singers dressed beautifully in the costumes of fairies wearing golden caps. To celebrate the occasion the tune Pusaman was played in the palace under the emperor's orders. It is therefore evident that the labels of present-day ci-poems mostly have nothing to do with their content. In some cases, however, ci-poems may have titles under their labels giving some idea of the content of the ci. Such titles may have been written by the poets themselves, or later added by commentators or anthologists for the reader's edification. Needless to say, a ci-poem may have no title at all without detriment to its intrinsic merit.
The origin of Ci dates back to the Sui Dynasty (581-618). However, since no ci-poems belonging to that period now exist, the great Li Bai of the Tang Dynasty (618-907) is now credited with having composed the first two ci-poems in Chinese literature: 'To the tune Bodhisattva's Gold Headdress' and 'To the tune Remembering the Maid of Qin'. Ci gained in popularity when in course of time other noted Tang poets, Bai Juyi, Wen Tingyun and Wei Yingwu among them, began to write ci-poems simultaneously with shi-poems. But it was not until the end of the Five Dynasties (907-960) and the beginning of the Song Dynasty (960-1279) that Ci made rapid strides, with a great number of renowned poets turning to Ci as their favorite medium of poetic expression. Though Ci dominated the literary scene for only a limited period, its popularity continued almost undiminished through the Yuan (1271-1368), Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) Dynasties to the present century. And even today, new ci-poems are printed not infrequently in the Chinese press side by side with shi-poems. That ci-poetry still occupies an important place in classical Chinese literature is further evidenced by the publication in a recent issue of the magazine Chinese Literature of ten ci-lyrics unearthed in the Dunhuang caves. Beautifully translated into English by Mr Simon Johnstone, these poems have excited a great deal of interest among lovers of ci-poetry both in China and overseas.

III

Li Qingzhao lived at a time when Ci as a literary genre had attained to the acme of its perfection, with the emergence of two schools of Ci widely different in style and tone: the bold romantic style and the elegant restrained style. There is no doubt that Li belonged to the latter. But when it comes to the question of her status among the ci-poets, critics are prone to two extremes. While some laud her as the greatest writer of ci-poetry that China has ever produced, others deny her even the
privilege of ranking among the major Song ci-poets. The consensus today seems in favor of the Qing poet Wang Shizhen's view that while Xin Qiji was the foremost exponent of the bold romantic style of ci-poetry, Li Qingzhao was that of the elegant restrained style. She inherited and creatively developed all the fine qualities of her predecessors and finally surpassed them. She brought the elegant restrained style of ci-poetry to its highest perfection by evolving a new style of her own—the Yi An style, which exerted a profound influence on many distinguished contemporary and later poets. The great Xin Qiji was one of her admirers, and wrote a ci-poem entitled 'Going through Boshan Mountain Pass' in the Yi An style, which appears in Chinese calligraphy on Page 56. This poem suggests an atmosphere of serenity very much like that of Li Qingzhao's "Admiring Lotuses" on Page 12, with the white gull personified and in much the same mood as the egrets and gulls in Li's poem. Wang Shizhen composed no fewer than seventeen ci-lyrics rhyming with hers.

Particularly worthy of notice is Liu Chenweng, a patriotic poet who lived almost a century after Li Qingzhao in the declining days of the Song Dynasty. Like Li, he was greatly troubled by thoughts of the lost Northern Song homeland, and the sufferings of the people under the rule of the Tartar invaders. He wrote a ci-poem entitled 'To the tune Happiness of Eternal Union' to rhyme with one of Li's, with a prefatory note to the following effect:

It is now three years since I first read Yi-an's 'To the tune Happiness of Eternal Union', and was moved to tears. I cannot help feeling touched whenever I re-read it. So I have written one of my own to rhyme with hers, which, though much inferior as regards diction and style, is nevertheless even more permeated with grief.

Liu's poem with his Preface appears in Chinese calligraphy on Page 84. This incident shows that besides their literary excellence, Li Qingzhao's ci-poems, especially those written in
her later years, possess a deep social significance in that they exerted a far-reaching imperceptible influence on the thinking of the masses of that age.

IV

Speaking of poetry-writing, the noted Song Dynasty scholar and critic Wei Tai, in his Random Notes on Poetry, made a remark to the effect that poetry should be exact about the thing described, but refrain from directly expressing the feeling it is intended to convey. In this way the reader may be left to imagine for himself, and enter into the poet's inmost thoughts. Li Qingzhao's ci-poems pre-eminently possess this quality. Among the Song ci-poets she was unique as a master of poetic diction and literary devices. Her ci-poems abound in nature images drawn mostly from material things such as wine, tea and incense; window blinds and bed-cushions; flowers and plants like plum, cassia, crabapple and chrysanthemum; grass and willows; wild geese, egrets, gulls and other birds; as well as natural phenomena: the sun, the moon, the stars; rain, wind, snow, dew, frost, clouds and mists. These are sometimes followed by some description of a human event or action that presumably offers a sort of parallel to the nature images. But the poet refrains deliberately from telling her own feeling, so that the reader is left to imagine, as an aftertaste, what is disturbing her mind. For example:

No more incense smoke from the gilt lion-burner;
Quilts in the bed—a riot of crimson waves.

A jumble of parting thoughts,
Yet I hesitate on the verge of utterance
For fear of bitterness.
Of late I've been growing thin,
Not that I overdrink myself,
Nor from lament for the autumn.
Or: This year at the end of the Earth,
I find my hair greying at the temples.
Now that the evening wind is growing in force,
I shall be hard put to it to come by plum blossoms.

Except in the long poem 'A Galaxy of Beauties' Li Qingzhao seldom relied on classical allusions to achieve effect. Instead, she showed a marked preference for the metaphor and the simile. In several instances, her comparisons have a freshness all their own owing to her innovation of comparing inanimate objects, animals and birds to human beings instead of comparing human beings to these in the conventional way, as witness the following:

Sunny breezes, warm drizzle
Take the chill off the air
As the thaw sets in.
Willow sprouts like a girl's eyes,
Plum blossoms rosy-cheeked:
Already one feels the heart of spring stirring.

In 'Spring at Wu Ling', one of her best-remembered ci-poems, by the ingenious use of colloquialisms, she has created the metaphor 'grasshopper of a boat' to bring the smallness of the boat into charming relief:

I hear 'Twin Brooks' is still sweet
With the breath of spring.
How I'd, too, love to go for a row,
On a tiny skiff.
But I fear at 'Twin Brooks'
My grasshopper of a boat
Wouldn't be able to bear
Such a load of grief.

Li Qingzhao was also a gifted user of Personification, as shown in the following passages from 'Admiring Lotuses':

Beautiful beyond words
Are these verdant hills and sparkling streams
That endear themselves to me so warmly.
Dozing egrets and gulls on the sand  
Do not so much as turn their heads,  
As if they, too, resent my going away so early.

In her ci-poems we often find simple phrases used in preference to ornate expressions such as are frequently found in the work of her contemporaries. She had a remarkable gift for refining everyday colloquialisms and turning them into plain expressions with a literary flavor that sometimes even have a deep meaning. Her poems are enriched by a wealth of parallel sentences and reiterative words and phrases beautifully adapted from colloquialisms. Take one of her masterpieces "Autumn Sorrow, to a Long Melancholy Tune", which begins with seven pairs of characters ingeniously repeated—a literary feat characteristic of Li's genius that is much admired but hardly ever equalled by later writers. Such repetition not only lends a musical rhythm to the poem but serves as a powerful prelude to the nature images that follow: tantalizing weather, flavorless wine, howling evening wind, vanishing wild geese, faded chrysanthemums strewn neglected on the ground, fine rain dripping lugubriously on the leaves of parasol-trees, and lastly the author's own wizened self at the window in the deepening twilight. The melancholy picture called up by all these, summed up in the concluding sentence, cannot but enter deeply into us, and make our minds respond with ecstacy.

V

In her celebrated Essay On Ci-poetry, Li Qingzhao laid down hard and fast rules to define the difference between ci and shi, two forms of poetry different in their aims. While shi expresses the will, ci conveys the feelings. Ci is therefore a school all its own.

Li Qingzhao's shi-poems, of which only fifteen survive, were mostly written to satirize the Northern Song emperors' capitulationist policy, as the following translation of her well-known shi-poem Lines Written On A Summer's Day indicates:
In life we should be heroes among the living;
After death, let us be heroes among the ghosts.
To this day we miss that ancient hero Xiang Yu,
Who would rather die than cross to the East of the River!

This satire reveals the poet's clearcut stand against the North Song emperor who fled with his ministers to the South of the Yangtze when pursued by the Jin invaders. It is evident that shi-poems such as this one, though important from a political point of view as her favorite medium for expressing her political ideas, were different in some respects from her ci-poems.

When it comes to the question of style, there is no doubt that Li's shi-poems are far eclipsed by her ci-poems, because the former are mostly written in straightforward, matter-of-fact language, and lack the refined elegance and charm of the latter. It is therefore on her achievements as the leading exponent of the elegant restrained style of ci-poetry that her great fame rests today. The renowned scholar Zheng Zhengduo rightly comments: "As regards style and artistic concept, her five-character and seven-character shi-poems are none too good. But her ci-lyrics, it may be said, are peerless among the ancients, and likely to be so in the generations to come... And among poets of all time, she should not rank below either Tao Qian, Li Bai and Du Fu, or Ouyang Xiu and Su Shi." And Li Diaoyuan, in his Random Notes On Ci-poetry From A Rain-washed Village, has this to say: "There is not one of Li Qingzhao's ci-poems but is done with exquisite artistry."

In reading Li Qingzhao's ci-poems, we are conscious of a kind of lingering charm rarely to be found in the works of her contemporaries. This is because her verse with its rich imagery suggests and hints rather than directly expresses the feeling. It was perhaps this irresistible charm that the American poet Amy Lowell referred to as the perfume of a poem which she considered more important than its metrical form.
VI

In her lifetime Li Qingzhao is said to have compiled a book entitled Shu Yu Ci (Jade Rinsing Ci) in several volumes comprising most of her ci-poems written during the two periods of her eventful life (i.e. before and after the fall of the Northern Song in 1127). But all we now have of her ci-poems number only about seventy-eight, of which forty-three are believed to be from her pen, the remaining thirty-five, though generally attributed to her, are still of doubtful authorship despite scholarly debates in the many centuries since her death. However, some consolation may be derived from the fact that even this small number that survive reveal her versatile genius at its best.

This book of The Complete Ci-poems of Li Qingzhao: A New English Translation with the Original Texts in Chinese Calligraphy, contains a total of fifty-five ci-poems. Besides all the forty-three ci-poems written by Li herself, it includes twelve* chosen from those attributed to her, which have long enjoyed popularity because of their being written in the style of Li Qingzhao and their own intrinsic value as poetry.

Although the nuances of Li Qingzhao's ci-poems are too subtle for the translator to transplant effectively to another language, it is hoped that this slender volume will increase the reader's understanding and enjoyment of these treasured lyrics by one of China's greatest poets.


However, it must be pointed out that in a very few cases, while in one anthology a certain poem is listed as written by Li herself, in another it may be placed in the category of poems attributed to her. In such circumstances the translator has no alternative but to follow the anthologist he thinks most reliable, taking into consideration as well the intrinsic merits of the poem itself.
點綴青春天真

蹴罷秋千起來慵整紗紗手

霧濃花瘦薄汗輕衣透

見客入來憐著金釵滿和羞

走倚門回首半把青梅嗅
Stepping down from the swing,
Languidly she smooths her soft slender hands,
Her flimsy dress wet with light perspiration—
A slim flower trembling with heavy dew.

Spying a stranger, she walks hastily away in shyness:
Her feet in bare socks,
Her gold hairpin fallen.
Then she stops to lean against a gate,
And looking back,
Makes as if sniffing a green plum.
貪雲殘昨夜
紅波絃雨知
若夢人遠去
獨窗簾縷晝消消
Tune: "A Dream Song"¹

Spring Ends

Last night there was intermittent rain, a gusty wind.
Deep sleep did not relieve me of
The last effects of wine.
I ask the maid rolling up the blinds,
But she replies: "The crab-apple is lovely as before."
"Don't you know?"
"Oh, don't you know?"
"The green should be plump and the red lean?"²

¹A short poem noted for its swift turns of thought expressed with the utmost economy of words.

²A famous line in the Chinese text which almost baffles translators with its rich imagery.
Jiaosheng Wang, "Complete Ci Poems of Li Qingzhao"
Tune: "A Sprig of Plum Blossom"
Sorrow of Separation

The lotus has wilted, only a faint perfume remains;  
On the bamboo mat there's a touch of autumn chill.  
Softly I take off my silk dress  
And step on board my orchid skiff alone.  
Who is sending me the letter of brocade  
From beyond the clouds?  
When the wild geese\(^1\) return  
The moon will be flooding the West Chamber.

Flowers fall and drift away,  
Water glides on,  
After their nature.  
Our yearning is the sort  
Both sides far apart endure——  
A melancholy feeling there's no resisting.  
As soon as it leaves the eyebrows  
It surges up in the breast.\(^2\)

\(^1\)Wild geese were thought to be bearers of letters,  
especially love messages, because of their  
regular migrations from north to south and  
vice versa.

\(^2\)The original is a famous couplet that serves as  
a natural sequel to the foregoing three lines.
小重山
春到长门春草青
红梅些子破
未开匀碧云笼碾玉成尘
留晓梦驚破一危春
花影压重门
疏篱护淡月，好黄昏
二年三度负东君归
来也著意过今春
Tune: "Little Overlapping Hills"

Spring returns to my lonely chamber,¹
Once more spring grass is lush and green.
Some red plum blossoms are open,
Others have yet to bloom.
I grind tea bricks into fine jade powder
In a pot carved with azure clouds,²
Still under the spell of the morning's dream,
Till all of a sudden I am woken
By a jug of spring.³

Flower shadows press at the double gate,
Pale moonlight silvers the translucent curtains.
A beautiful evening!
Three times in two years⁴
We've missed the spring.
Come back without further ado
And let's enjoy our fill of this spring!

¹"Chang Men" (High Gate Palace) in the original poem used to be where Empress Chen of the Han Dynasty (206 B.C. – A.D.220) lived in loneliness when she was out of favor with Emperor Wu. It is a metaphor for "lonely chamber".

²An allusion to the Song custom of grinding tea bricks into fine powder in a carved pot which is then put over the fire to make tea.

³Delicious spring tea.

⁴"The Beginning of Spring" (li chun), the first solar term in the lunar calendar, sometimes occurs twice a year.
鷓鴣 天
枝上流鶯 和 淚開 新 嘯痕 間
啼痕 一 春 魚雁 無 消息 千 里 關
山 労 梦 魂  一語 對 芳 樽 安
排 賒 断 到 黄 昏 甫 能 炙 得 燈 兒
了 雨 打 荷 花 深 院 門
The migrant oriole on the bough—
Tears fill my eyes
As I hear its sweet trills,
Fresh tearstains mingling with old.
A whole spring—and no word from you;
A thousand li beyond the mountain pass—
I search for you in my dreams.

Wordless, facing the cup,
I resign myself to heart-rending sorrow till dusk.
No waiting for the lamp oil to run out. ²
I shut the door tight
As rain pelts the pear blossoms.

¹ The authorship of this poem has been the subject of some debate. I am in favor of the view of Professor Jin Jichang of Shanxi University that both the content and the style of the poem show it to be from the pen of Li Qingzhao rather than of Ouyang Xiu or Qin Shaoyu as some scholars believe.

² A Buddhist saying with an intriguing exotic flavor used to signify the tedium of waiting.
怨王孫 賞荷

湖上風來波浩渺 秋已暮紅
稀香少水光山色與人親說
不盡無窮好 蓮子已成荷葉老 清露洗蘋
花汀草眠沙鴨驚 不回頭似
也恨人歸早
Tune: "Complaint Against A Prince"¹
Admiring Lotuses

Wind on the lake sends the waves
Drifting far and wide.
Autumn deepens. A few lotus blossoms remain
With a lingering fragrance.
Beautiful beyond words are these verdant hills and sparkling streams
That endear themselves to me so warmly.

Lotus pods ripen into seed
As lotus leaves grow sere;
Duckweed and rushes fringe the bank
Fresh-washed by crystal dew.
Dozing egrets and gulls on the sand
Do not so much as turn their heads,
As if they, too, resent
My going away so early.

¹Written probably before the poet's marriage in 1101.
This poem is noted for two characteristics: it describes the scenes of autumn in a tone of cheerfulness rather than melancholy; it is entirely free from feelings of sadness or nostalgia such as we find in most of Li Qingzhao's ci-poems.
浣溪沙 春暮

小院開窗春色深 重簾未卷影
沉沉倚樓無語理弦琴
遠岫出雲催薄暮 細風吹雨弄
輕陰隔花欲 謝恐難禁
Tune: "Sand of Silk-Washing Brook"

Late Spring

A small courtyard, an idle window:
The mellow tints of spring.
Double blinds unfurled:
A room deep in shadow.
Upstairs, silently,
Someone plucking a jade zither.

Clouds emerging from far-off peaks
Hasten the fall of dusk.
A soft breeze blowing rain
Dallies with light shade.
Pear blossoms already past their bloom——
I'm afraid one can't keep them from fading.
碧玉妆成一树高，
万条垂下绿丝绦。
不知细叶谁裁出，
二月春风似剪刀。
Tune: "Drunk in the Shade of Flowers"

Double Ninth Festival

Fine mist, thick clouds:
A day of sadness drags on.
The incense in the gilt animal-burner is running out.
Once more the festive day of Double Ninth returns,
And my mesh-curtained bed and jewelled pillows
Are just drenched in the chill of midnight.

Beside the east hedge I drink after dusk;
A subtle fragrance fills my sleeves.
Don’t say one is not pining away!
When the west wind blows the blinds aside,
I am frailer than the chrysanthenums.

Legend says that the Ninth Day of the Ninth Month in the lunar calendar was originally a day when people in ancient times went to the hills to escape natural calamities, each wearing a bag filled with dogwood. Later it became a festival for groups of friends or members of a family to go picnicking on the hills to enjoy the brisk air and mellow tints of autumn—a custom immortalized in one of the Tang poet Wang Wei’s quatrains, in which the famous line "On festive occasions one thinks doubly of absent dear ones" is often quoted to this day.

This poem was written not long after the poet married Zhao Mingcheng, when the latter had to leave home at short notice to take up a distant official post. Its vivid images are pregnant with implicit feelings which she leaves for the reader to imagine. The concluding three lines, famous for their lyric charm, are frequently quoted. It is said that when her husband received the poem, he was overcome with admiration and took pains to compose fifty poems to the same tune to rival and surpass hers, but without success.
鳳凰台上憶吹簫 "別情"

香冷金猊被翻紅浪起，懶梳頭
任寶雀塵滿日上簾釘生怕離懷別
苦多少事欲說還休，新來瘦非干病
酒不是悲秋，休休這回去也千萬遍
陽間也則難留念武陵人遠煙鎖
秦樓惟有樓前流水應念我終日凝眸
凝眸對如今又添一段新愁
Tune: "Nostalgia for Fluting on the Phoenix Terrace"

Separation

No more incense smoke from the gilt lion burner;
Quilts in the bed: a riot of crimson waves.
A night of unrestful sleep,
And I am in no mood to comb my hair,
Heedless that my jewelled toilet-set is covered with dust,
And the morning sun peeping above the curtain-hooks.
A jumble of parting thoughts,
Yet I hesitate on the verge of utterance
For fear of bitterness.
Of late I've been growing thin,
Not that I over-drink myself,
Nor from lament for the autumn.

Finished! Finished!
Ten thousand Songs of Farewell failed to detain
The loved one—now gone far away
To Wu Ling Peach Blossom Springs.
Here in this mist-locked chamber
I sit brooding the livelong day,
With only the limpid stream showing me sympathy
As it glides quietly past the terrace.
A fresh wave of regret floods my heart
Where I gaze.

---

1 An allusion to a poem written by Wang Wei of the Tang Dynasty (618-907) to see off a friend, which in later generations came to be widely used as a song of farewell, with its last line "West of Yang Guan you'll have no more old friends" sung as a refrain. Yang Guan was an ancient pass in present-day Gansu Province.

2 The poet compares her husband to the fisherman who sojourned in the Land of Peach Blossom Springs in Tao Yuanming's Utopian essay.
蝶惠花离情
暖雨晴风初破冻柳眼梅腮已觉
春心动酒意诗情谁与共泪融残
粉花钿重乍试夹衫金缕缝山
枕斜欹损钗头凤独立浓愁无
好梦夜阑皱剪灯花弄
Tune: "Butterflies Lingering Over Flowers"
Separation

Sunny breezes, warm drizzle
Take the chill off the air
As the thaw sets in.
Willow sprouts like a girl's eyes,
Plum blossoms rosy-cheeked:
Already one feels the heart of spring stirring.
Oh the delights of wine and poetry—
Who will now share them with me?
The gold-petalled hair-piece feels heavy,
And tears melt my rouge.

I try on my lined dress sewn with gold thread,
Recline idly on a pile of pillows,
Crushing my phoenix hairpin.
No pleasant dream comes to one
Alone in deep sorrow.
At dead of night I sit up,
Trimming the tell-tale wick
Of my bedside lamp.¹

¹The wick of the candle burnt into a flowery shape was
thought to be a good omen, here presumably of the lover's return.
Jiaosheng Wang, "Complete Ci-Poems of Li Qingzhao"
Tune: "Sand of Silk-Washing Brook"

Late Spring

Spring colors, mild and rippling,
Usher in Cold Food Day.¹
Wisps of dying incense smoke
Wreathe the jade burner.
I wake from my dream to find myself
Still wearing the gold-petalled hair-piece,
Reclined on my pillows.²

Swallows have not come back from the sea,³
People are already competing in games of grass.
Riverside plums past their bloom,
Catkins appear on the willows.
Rain drizzles as twilight deepens,
Wetting the garden swing.

¹The Day of Cold Food customarily occurred two days before Qingming (Pure Bright), the fifth solar term in the lunar calendar. On this day people in ancient times abstained from cooking to lament the hermit Jie Zhitui, who let himself be burnt to death rather than obey the summons of the Duke of Jin in the Spring and Autumn Period (770–476 B.C.), when the latter set fire to the mountain forest where he was hiding.
²A line capable of two interpretations. The present translation follows the one preferred by most authorities.
³A stanza full of emotional significance. Each of the images given reflects some feeling that must be disturbing the poet's mind.
浣溪沙
暮春
髻子伤春懒更梳，晚风庭院落梅初绽，云来往月疏疏。
玉鸭熏炉开瑞脑，朱樱斗帐掩流苏。通犀犀还解避寒无。
Tune: "Sand of Silk-Washing Brook"¹
Late Spring

Languidly I leave my tresses uncombed,
Regretting that spring will soon be over.
Plum blossoms in the courtyard
Begin to fall in the evening breeze,
And moonbeams grow sparse
As light clouds drift to and fro.

The jade duck-censer idle
With the incense unlit.
Drooping tassels of many-colored feathers
All but conceal the small cherry-tinted bed-curtain.
My rhinoceros hairpin²—
Is it still proof against the cold?

¹Some critics pay tribute to this poem as being in the style of High Tang lyricism—replete with feeling through sheer imagery.

²A kind of rhinoceros horn said to diffuse warmth was sent as tribute to the Tang court by Viet Nam. Here it means "a rhinoceros cushion" or "a rhinoceros hairpin", both of which are relevant to the context.
减字木兰花

花

染轻匀

怕郎猜道奴面不如花面好

云鬓斜簪徒要教郎比并看
Tune: "Magnolia Flowers" (A shorter version)

From the flower vendor I bought
A sprig of spring just bursting into bloom—
Sprinkled all over with teardrops
Still tinged with traces of
Roseate clouds and morning dew.

Lest my beloved should think
I'm not so fair as the flower,
I pin it slanting in my cloud hair,
And ask him to see
Which of us is the lovelier:
The flower or I.
帝里春晚重门深院草绿
阶前暮天雁断楼上迟信
谁传恨绵绵
多情如有沾惹难拼舍
又是寒食也秋千巷陌人
静敛月初斜浸梨花
Tune: "Complaint Against A Prince"

Spring in the Boudoir

Late spring in the Imperial city,
A hall deeply secluded within double gates.
Once more the grass in front of the steps
Grows lush and green,
And from my upstairs window
I gaze and gaze at the last wild geese
Vanishing from the evening sky.
Nowhere to find a messenger to convey
My teeming thoughts far away.
I am in deep sorrow—
A sorrow that never abates.

The deeper your love, the more poignant
The feeling of sadness there's no resisting.
It is again Cold Food Day.
The garden swings lying idle,
The lanes deserted.
All is quiet save a bright moon
That slants down to drench the pear blossoms.
浣溪沙
寂寞

莫许杯深琥珀浓未成沉醉意
先融疏钟已应晚东风瑞脑
香消魂梦断辞寒金小髻鬟
松醒时空对蜡花红
Tune: "Sand of Silk-Washing Brook"

Solitude

Fill no more this cup of amber,
A feeling of intoxication comes over me
Before I am deep drunk.
Evening wind blows,
Echoing the intermittent chimes of bells.

The borneols have gone out, my dream is interrupted.
My tresses fall loose,
The gold-bird\(^1\) hairpin is so small.
I wake up and brood idly
Over the glowing candle flame.

\(^1\)An allusion to a bird which spit gold presented as tribute by Viet Nam to the King of Wei in the Period of the Three Kingdoms (220-265)
Jiaosheng Wang, "Complete Ci-Poems of Li Qingzhao"

點纒唇
寂寞深閨愁腸一寸愁千縷
惜春春去凡幾點催花雨
倚遍桐幹只是無情緒人何
雲連天哀草煢斷歸來路
Tune: "Rouged Lips"

Loneliness

Fine rain urges the falling petals,
And soon spring will be fled
Love it as I may.
A twinge in my aching heart,
And I am overwhelmed by a thousand sad thoughts,
Secluded in my lonely chamber.

Impossible to get out of this mood of depression,
Moving from one end of the balustrade to the other.
Where is he, the one dear to my heart?
The road by which he may return I cannot glimpse,
Withered grass stretching to the farthest skies.
怨玉孫春暮
夢斷漏悄愁濃酒懶寢枕
生寒翠屏向曉門外誰掃
殘紅夜東風
玉簫聲斷人何雲外春又去
忍把歸期負此情此恨此
際擬託行雲問東君
Late Spring

The clepsydra has stopped dripping;
My dream is broken.
Heavy drinking last night
Intensifies my sorrow.
A chill falls on my jewelled pillow
As the kingfisher screen
Faces a new dawn.
Who swept away the fallen petals outside my door?
Was it the wind that blew the whole night through?

Echoes of a jade flute die away,
The player gone nobody knows where.¹
Spring, too, will soon be fled,
Yet he has the heart not to keep
His date to return.
I ask the God of Spring
Through the drifting clouds,
What I should do with this longing, this regret,
This moment of time.

¹Legend has it that the daughter of Duke Mu of the State of Qin (c. 7th century B.C.) married Xiao Shi, a gifted flute player. The couple lived happily in a jade tower, and one day riding a phoenix they flew away together to the Land of Immortals.
Jiaosheng Wang, "Complete Ci-Poems of Li Qingzhao"
Tune: "Celebrating the Clear Serene Dawn"
To the Late Peony

Usurper of the last days of spring,
Canopied by low palace curtains,
Protected by exquisite crimson railing;
Delicate, unadorned,
Nature's very image untrammelled by art!
Let all other flowers hide away!
To you alone the dewy breeze of morn does bring
A hundred charms after your early toilet—
Envied by the wind and laughing at the moon,
Enough to make the God of Spring fall in love with you,
Ever reluctant to depart.

Perfumed carriages jostle one and all,
Through the southern streets,
To where sunshine bathes Brookside Hall
East of the city wall.
Who can succeed you when you become fragrant dust,
The banqueting once over?
Let all the golden cups be drained,
All the candles gutter out,
And yellow twilight fall unheeded in the west!
But miss not your boughs
Nestling beside the Palace of Brilliance,
By the Sun first softly caressed.

Presumably a popular resort to which people of rank and wealth flocked to enjoy shows of rare flowers and plants.

A luxurious palace built in the reign of Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty, reputed for its walls inlaid with pearls and its staircases and doors shining with gold, the whole palace being a blaze of light even on a dark night.

A pun meaning both royalty and the sun.
摊破浣溪沙
桂花

破黄金万点，轻剪成碧玉千层。
风度精神，如彦辅大鲜明。
梅蕊重重何俗，甚丁香于结苦粗。
生熏透愁人千里梦，却无情。
Tune: "Sand of Silk-Washing Brook"
   (a New version)
To the Cassia Flower

Your petals—twisted into ten thousand flecks of soft gold;
Your leaves—layer upon layer of carved emerald jade.
Graceful in bearing,
Noble and bright in spirit,
You are worthy to compare
With the ancient scholar Yan Fu.¹

Beside you how vulgar the plum,
For all its profusion of petals;
How coarse the lilac,
With its innumerable knotty branches.
But your all too heady perfume,
O you heartless flower!
Wakes my sorrowful dream
Of a thousand li away.

¹The style name of Yue Guang of the Jin Dynasty (265-420),
a scholar renowned for his erudition, wisdom and eloquence
as well as his upright character as an official.
嘉生王，"全词慵于 lí Qingzhao"
Tune: "Picking Mulberry Seeds"

A gust of evening wind and rain
Washes the heat of blazing sunlight away.
My piping done,
I lightly touch up my face before the mirror.

Smooth as snow, fragrant as cream,
My soft skin glistens
In my flimsy sleeping-robe of purple silk.
I smile and say to my beloved:
"Tonight, our mat and pillows will be cool
Inside the gauze bed-curtains."
浣溪沙·闺情

绣幕芙蓉一笑开，斜偎宝鸭衬香腮。眼波才动被人猜。

一面风情深有韵，半分娇恨寄幽怀。月移花影约重来。
Tune: "Sand of Silk-Washing Brook"¹

Longing in the Boudoir

A smile of happy recollection lights up her face
As she gently draws aside the curtain
Embroidered with blooming lotus,
And leans against the jewelled duck censer,
Her perfumed cheek on her hand, musing.
If she but rolls her eyes
She will immediately give herself away.

That first sweet meeting full of tenderest love!
She might as well send half a page
With endearing reproaches unburdening a pensive heart,
And have him come again
When the moon is moving the flower shadows.

¹This is one of the ci-poems attributed to Li Qingzhao
whose authenticity is questioned on the ground that
the content is unworthy of a woman of her moral status.
But it is included in many anthologies because the poet
expresses her love boldly in defiance of the feudal
shackles of her day and for some exquisite lines which
bring out her inmost feelings in a lifelike way.
雪里已知春信至，寒梅点缀琼枝腻。  
玉人浴出新妆洗，造化可能偏有意。故教明月玲珑地，共赏金尊沉绿蚁。莫辞醉，花不与群花比。
Tune: "Fisherman's Pride"

Early Plum Blossom

Glossy branches of jasper,
A sprinkling of early blossoms,
Touched up by snow bring
The first tidings of spring.
Soft and delicate in her new make-up,
Fragrant face half showing,
She emerges in the middle of the courtyard—
A beauty in the flower of youth fresh from her bath.

Nature must have regarded her with special favor,
To lavish on her such splendid moonbeams.
Come drain these golden cups of emerald
Till we are drunk.
Of all flowers this is the one beyond compare.
行香子

春归莺絮落梧桐正人间
天上愁浓云阶月地閟鎖千
重縦浮槎来浮槎去不相逢
星橋鹊驾經年才見想離情
别恨难穷牵牛织女莫是誰
中甚霎兒晴霎兒雨霎兒風
Tune: "On the Trail of Sweet Incense"

The Seventh Day of the Seventh Lunar Month

A deep gloom broods over Heaven and Earth.
In the rank grass crickets are chirping,
And parasol-trees, startled, let fall their leaves.
Clouds for stairs, the moon for floor,
To Heaven the way is blocked by a thousand barriers,
And floating rafts ply to and fro
To no avail.

On this night magpies form a star bridge to span the Milky Way,
Where Cowboy and Weaving Maid keep their yearly tryst.
Endless must be their murmurings of love and regret
After long separation!
But whence these sudden changes
Of sun and rain and wind
In the midst of their love-making?
Can it be that they are taking leave of each other
At this very moment?

1 A beautiful folk-tale dating back many centuries says that
the Cowboy and the Weaving Maid (the two stars Altair and
Vega on opposite sides of the Milky Way) loved each other
so much that they incurred the displeasure of the Emperor
of Heaven for neglect of duty and were permitted to meet
only once a year on the night of the Seventh Day of the
Seventh Month, crossing the Milky Way by a bridge formed
by magpies.

2 According to the "Book of Natural Science (bowuzhi)"
written by Zhang Hua of the Jin Dynasty, in ancient
times the Milky Way was connected with the sea, and
people setting out from the sea on a huge wooden raft,
would reach Heaven after sailing ten-odd days. There
they could catch sight of the Weaving Maid busy at her
loom in the palace and the Cowboy herding cattle on
the bank of the Heavenly River.
鶯花詞記

草草不堪手自織，細細殫心絹上題。
It was a day at Brookside Pavilion¹
That I often fondly remember,
When, flushed with wine,
We could hardly tear ourselves away
From the beautiful view at sunset.
Returning late by boat
When we'd enjoyed our fill,
We got lost and strayed
To where the clustered lotuses
Were at their thickest.

Pushing and thrashing,
Pushing and thrashing as best we could,
We scared into flight
A shoreful of dozing egrets and gulls.

¹A beauty spot in present-day Jinhua, Zhejiang Province, where the poet spent her girlhood years, and made delightful excursions to the suburbs, which she ever afterwards fondly remembered.
善

薩

蜜

懷

舊

歸

鴻

聲

斷

殘

雲

碧

背

窗

雪

落

爐

晝

煙

直

燭

底

風

釵

明

釵

頭

人

勝

輕

角

聲

催

曉

漏

曙

色

団

牛

春

意

看

花

難

西

風

留

舊

寒


50
Tune: "Bodhisattva's Gold Headdress"¹

Nostalgia

The honks of departing wild geese die away;
Only scattered clouds are lingering in an azure sky.
Outside the back-window snow falls thick and blinding,
Smoke from the incense burner rises straight and high.
My phoenix hairpin lurid under the candle's glow;
From the hairpin pendants of figurine and flower designs²
Swing languidly to and fro.

Bugles hasten the break of day,
As dawn stars³ fade in the Milky Way.
Futile my search for the first blooms of spring:
A wintry chill to the west wind does cling.

¹ Many authorities are of opinion that this poem expresses
nostalgic sentiments by the use of a series of images,
and that the characters ming and ging in the first
stanza are key words which imply a suggestion of melancholy.
In this translation I have therefore used "lurid" and
"languidly" instead of "brightly" and "lightly" for these
two characters respectively. However, there is one
annotator who thinks that the poem is a portrayal of
a young woman impatient for an outing to enjoy the sights
of early spring.
² Ornaments made of gold foil and colored silk thread to
decorate the hair with.
³ Dou and niu in the original text refer presumably to
the stars of Ursa Major.
贾晓生
《离骚》"诗经"《楚辞》
Tune: "Butterflies Lingering Over Flowers"\(^1\)

A Farewell Letter to My Sisters

Written at an Inn in Chang Luo

Tears stain my silk robe with rouge and powder
As the Song of Farewell is repeated
Thousands of times over.
I'm told the going's hard
Over these endless ranges of mountains
That block the view.
In my lonely lodge I listen all night
To the patter of mizzling rain.

Regrets at parting drive my mind to distraction:
I forget how full I filled your cups
As I bade you adieu.
Be sure to send word
When the wild geese pass.
After all Dong Lai is not so far off
As Peng Lai.\(^2\)

\(^1\) Written when the poet was en route to Dong Lai, i.e. Laizhou in present-day Shandong Province, where her husband had just taken a new official post. She must then be around 38 years of age.

\(^2\) According to legend, Peng Lai was an island in the Eastern Sea, where the Immortals dwelled.
Jiaosheng Wang, "Complete Ci Poems of Li Qingzhao"
Tune: "Fisherman's Pride"¹

A Dream

Billowing clouds surging across the heavens
Merge into dawn's hazy mist.
Sails in their thousands toss and dance
As the Milky Way recedes.
In a vision I find myself before the Heavenly Ruler,
Who asks solicitously
Where I wish to be off to.

"My journey is a long one," I reply.
"The sun is setting all too soon.
And my brilliant poetic attempts, alas!
Have come to no purpose."
Presently a whirlwind rises, and lo!
The Mighty ROC² is winging to the Empyrean
On a flight of ninety-thousand li.
Blow, O Whirlwind! Blow on without cease.
Blow my tiny craft to the three far-off isles³
Where the Immortals dwell.

¹Among all Li Qingzhao's ci-poems this is one unique in style and content. Written probably after the fall of the Northern Song Dynasty when she found herself an exile in South China with all her hopes and aspirations frustrated, it was a work of pure romance, conceived in a trance, worthy of the greatest masters of the romantic style of ci-poetry. It shows the versatility of her genius capable of producing a masterpiece in a style other than the elegant restrained style of ci of which she was generally recognized as the foremost exponent. Among its most enthusiastic admirers was Liang Qichao, a great essayist and critic in the last years of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911).
“千峰云起骤雨一霎风斜更递树斜
别有人家只消山水无事过这
一夏午醉醒时松窗竹户荡千清
鸥观着人欲下未下旧盟都在新
来莫是别有说书”
A fabulous bird first described in the works of Zhuang Zi in the Warring States Period (475-221 B.C.). When migrating to the South Seas it is said to strike the waters for 3000 li before soaring to a height of 9000 li on a whirlwind. Hence the popular saying "Roc's Journey" frequently used by the Chinese to this day to congratulate someone embarking on a career of lofty aspirations.

i.e. the three legendary isles "Penglai, Fangzhang and Yingzhou" in the Bohai Sea.
一年春事都来几，早过了三之
两岸暗红嫣湿，可事垂杨庭院
暖风篋幕有个人憔悴
买花载酒长安市，又争似家山
桃李不因春风笑客，泪相思难
表梦魂无据，唯有归来是
Tune: "Bowl of Green Jade"¹

Nostalgia

Spring's glory—how far is it advanced?
Two-thirds already gone.
Lush foliage deep in verdure,
Red blossoms all smiles:
Are barely passable.
A courtyard shadowy under weeping willows,
A room with curtains brushed by warm breeze:
Here's someone withering away!

A riot of flowers on sale for my choosing
As I ride through the streets of Changan,² wine my freight—
What are these beside the peach and plum of my native hills?
Blame not the east wind bringing tears to a wanderer's eyes!
Nostalgic feelings are hard to express;
Cherished dreams—a mere illusion.
What can I do but return to my home town?

¹ In view of its similarity in content and style to quite a few other ci-poems of Li Qingzhao this poem must have been written by Li after the removal of the Song capital to Jian Kang south of the Yangtze, though it is attributed to Ouyang Xiu or an anonymous writer by some annotators.

² "Changan" is here used as a synonym for "the capital".
春日薄暮卷帘闲，乍著心倩好睡起觉微寒。
梅花鬓上残故乡何事是忘？除非醉沉水畔时烧香消酒未消。
Tune: "Bodhisattva's Gold Headdress"

Nostalgia

A mild sun, a soft breeze,
The touch of a lined coat just put on:
Early springtime finds me
In a somewhat cheerful mood.
There's a bit of chill, though, on getting up,
And the plum blossom in my hair
Has wilted.

My old home—where may it be?
There's no forgetting about that
Unless I am drunk.
No scent left of the sandalwood incense
Lit overnight,
But the effect of wine
Is with me still.
蝶惠花
上已合親屬記夢
永夜悵惘逝意少空夢長安認取
長安道為報今年春色好花光月
影宜相照
随意杯盤雖草草
酒美梅酸恰称人怀抱醉莫插
花花莫笑可憐春似人将老
62
Tune: "Butterflies Lingering Over Flowers"

Giving a Party to My Relatives on the Third Day of the Third Lunar Month

A Dream

Low spirits, a long dreary night.
Idly I dreamed I was on my way back
To our beloved old capital—
The familiar road a blaze of
Beautiful flowers in the moonlight
As home I went with news of
This year's glorious spring.

A few home-cooked dishes at the party,
But just to our taste:
The plums sour, the wine delicious.
In my cups how I'd have loved to deck my hair
With a spray of bloom,
But for fear the flowers would chaff me.
But soon, oh how soon!
I woke to the stark reality:
We were both of us aging,
The Spring and I.

1 This refers to the ancient Chinese custom of holding parties of friends or families at the river's edge on the Third Day of the Third Lunar Month to ward off evils. It dates as far back as the Jin Dynasty, when Wang Xizhi, China's greatest calligraphist, wrote an essay in his imperishable calligraphic style celebrating one such event.

2 The party described in this stanza may be considered as either a continuation of the dream, or an event which actually took place. The former idea seems preferable.

3 An allusion to Ouyang Xiu's essay "The Customs of Loyang", which records that in spring the women of Loyang used to take delight in decorating their hair with flowers.
訴衷情
枕畔聞殘梅嘆香
夜來沉醉卸妝遲梅萼插殘枝
酒醒熏破春睡夢遠不成
歸人悄悄月依依翠
簾垂更接殘蕊更挼餘香
更得些時
Tune: "Airing Inmost Feelings"

I smell the fragrance of faded plum blossoms
by my pillow

Last night, dead drunk, I dawdled
While undoing my coiffure,
And fell asleep with a sprig of
Faded plum blossom in my hair.
The fumes of wine gone,
I was woken out of my spring sleep
By the pungent smell of the petals,
And my sweet dream of far-off love
Was broken beyond recall.

Now all voices are hushed.
The moon lingers and softly spreads her beams
Over the unfurled kingfisher-green curtain.
Still, I twist the fallen petals,
I crumple them for their lingering fragrance,
I try to recapture a delicious moment.
臨江仙
春四
序

欧阳公作蝶恋花词深深深深深深深深深深深深深深深深深深深深深深
之句其语作庭院深深落花人独立
扁柳梢梅萼渐分明春归秣陵树人老建康城感月吟风多
少事如今老去无成谁堪憔悴
更凋零试镫无心思踏雪没心情

Jiaosheng Wang, "Complete Ci-Poems of Li Qingzhao"
Prefatory Note. The Venerable Sir Ouyang, in his "Butterflies Lingering Over Flowers", has the line "Deep, how profoundly deep the courtyard is!" I very much admire it, and have composed a few rhymes beginning with the same words, the tune being the traditional "Immortal On the Riverbank".

Deep, how profoundly deep the courtyard is!  
Its rooms and casements  
Perpetually locked in mist and cloud.  
Willow sprouts and plum buds begin to show  
As spring brings a new lease of life  
To the trees of Mo Ling,  
Where I am fated to live out my little sojourn.

How many times we chanted verses together  
On moonlit evenings leaning against the spring breeze!  
Who cares I am now withering with age,  
Alone and with nothing accomplished?  
No point in pre-views of lanterns,  
No mood to go treading the snow.

^1 Mo Ling and Jian Kang were ancient names for today's city of Nanjing.

^2 This alludes to the Song custom of visiting shows of festive lanterns before the Lantern Festival was celebrated on the Fifteenth Day of the First Month in the lunar year.

^3 The poet recalls happy days in the past when she went with her husband for walks in the snow composing verses impromptu.
念奴娇·春思

茸条庭院又斜风细雨重门须闭笼柳

娇花零落近种种愁人天气险韵诗成

扶头酒醒别是洞滋味枉鸿过尽没千

心事难寄楼上几日春寒篇卷四面

玉桐杆慵倚被冷香消新夢觉不许

愁人不起清露晨流新桐初引多少游

春意日高烟尌更看今日晴未
Tune: "The Charm of a Maiden Singer"

Spring Thoughts

Slanting wind, misty rain
Once more assail a courtyard bleak and desolate.
The double-gate needs must be shut.
Favorite flowers, darling willows:
Cold Food Day approaches,
With unsettling weather in all its changing moods.
I finish a poem with difficult rhymes,
Sober up from the fumes of strong wine
With a queer sense of listlessness.
My multitude of thoughts—who will convey them
Now the wild geese have all winged out of sight?

Spring chill fills the upper rooms,
For days on end the curtains are drawn on all sides:
I am too languid to lean over the balustrade.
The incense burnt out, my quilts feel cold
As I wake from a new dream.
No dawdling in bed for one who comes to grief
When Spring is calling with all its diversions:
Young parasol-trees sprout new leaves;
Clear dew trickles in the first flush of dawn.
Now the sun is riding high, the fog withdraws.
Still I'd rather wait,
To see whether the day will really be fine.
鷓鴣天
寒日蘆花鎖客衣，梧桐應恨夜來霜。
聞酒聞更喜圖茶苦夢斷偏宜。
瑞腦香秋已盡日猶長仲宣懷遠更凄凉不如随分摘黄蘇醉莫負東籬菊蕊黄。
Tune: "Partridge Sky"

Solitude

The parasol-trees must hate
Last night’s hoar frost
As their shadows fall on my patterned window
Where the bleak sun is dismally climbing.
Bitter brick tea will just do for me after wine,
And the borneols smell good
Now my dream is interrupted.

Autumn ends, but the day is still long.
I feel more dreary than
The homesick Zhong Xuan¹ of bygone days.
Better be content with my cup
As is my wont,
And not miss the chrysanthemums
Blooming by the east hedge.

¹The style name of Wang Can (c.177-217), one of the seven masters of the Jian An style of shi poetry. He wrote a nostalgic prose-poem to vent his homesickness while living in a remote town after the fall of the Han Dynasty.
嘉生王 "全集" Poems of Li Qingzhao
Tune: "A Weary Lovely Maid"
When the Plums in the Back Garden Burst into Bloom

Body slim as thin jade,
Branches with crimson halo.
Petals like snowflakes scattering,
A perfume that intoxicates.
I regret I again missed seeing you
In the first flush of this spring.
Here at my riverside lodge,¹ I feel listless
As the stream that glides away
In the wake of leisurely clouds.
I spend the clear long day
Idly leaning against the balustrade
With the kingfisher-green curtain rolled low.

My guests arrive. We burst into song as we fill our cups—
A melody that flows on quietly as a rippling stream,
Halts now and then like scudding clouds.
Let the southern branches of blossom
Be cut diligently when good to deck the hair with.
Wait not till the mournful notes of a Tartar flute
Break out from the West Tower.²

¹The original Chinese translated literally is "a riverside tower in Chu", which means in effect a riverside lodge far away from home that revives nostalgic thoughts.

²"Falling Plum Blossoms" was a plaintive song played on a horizontal flute that reminded one of the transiency of spring. The poet Li Bai alluded to it in his "Hearing the Flute on Yellow Crane Tower". The last line here is a pun on the song and the jarring Tartar flute.
轉調滿庭芳
懷舊
芳草池塘綠陰庭院晚晴寒透窗紗玉
銅金鏡管是客來嘆寂寞尊前席上惟
愁海角天涯能留否餘釀落尽猶賴有
梨花
當年曾勝賞生香重袖活火分
茶極目雕龍駕馬流水輕車不怕風狂
雨驟恰才稱煮酒殘花如今也不成懷抱
得似舊時那
Tune: "A Perfumed Garden" (a new version)
A Reminiscence

A pond fringed with sweet-smelling grass;
A courtyard canopied by green shadows.
Evening chill seeps through
The window-curtains as the sun declines.
Suddenly there's a creak
In the jade curtain-hooks and golden door-locks;
It's my friends coming to visit.
Our dinner-party is not without a queer sense of loneliness,
My mind clouded by the thought
Of their leaving all too soon for lands far away.
Will the pear-blossoms help make them stay
Now the raspberries are all faded?

I recall happy days in the past
When fine carriages in streams
And horses like writhing dragons
Thronged the gate and guests in perfumed robes
Sipped tea brewed over a living fire.
Unafraid of sudden storms,
We had our fill of toasting
While we admired falling blossoms.
Now our moods are changed,
Will they ever return—
The good old days?
清平樂
年年雪里，常插梅花醉。gross
梅花開有何意，得滿衣清淚。
今年海角天涯，蕭萧兩鬃生。
草草取今晚風勢，故應難看。
梅花
Tune: "Pure Serene Music"¹

Year after year in the snow I used to get drunk
While picking plum blossoms to put in my hair.
Now twisting all the fallen petals to no good purpose,
I only drench my clothes with pure tears.

This year at the end of the earth,
My hair at the temples is streaked with grey.
Now that the evening wind is growing in force,
I shall be hard put to it to enjoy plum blossoms.

¹A poem full of pathos written probably after the fall of
the Northern Song. In the concluding line the poet seems
to anticipate further trouble for herself and the nation.
必明 昔

同程不道

故问误花时疑晚

便样多云断

秋晚 秋晚 秋晚 秋晚 秋晚
Tune: "Spring in the Jade Pavilion"

Red Plum Blossom

Soft red petals ready to unfold,
Luscious jade-green buds begin to break.
Tell me, are her southern branches all in full bloom?
I know not how much perfume she has in store,
I am only aware that her heart is throbbing

with boundless love.

The Taoist recluse at the spring window, how she pines!
No leaning against the balustrade, her mood so depressed.
Come have a drink, if you will, with no more ado.
Who knows but that tomorrow the wind may blow the

blossoms away?

1 Being virtually an exile in her later years, the poet may have considered herself a Taoist in her loneliness, though not actually a believer in Taoism.
小阁藏春，闲窗锁画堂，无限深幽。
篆香烧尽日影下，疏钩手种江梅更。
好又何必临水登楼，无人到寂寥浑。
似何遯在扬州，从未知韵胜难堪。
雨急不耐风揉更，谁家横笛吹动浓。
愁莫恨香消雪减，须信道迟扫情笛。
难言零落，良宵淡月疏影尚风流。
Tune: "Perfumed Garden"

Fading Plum Blossom

My small boudoir hides a sprig of spring
Behind locked windows where no daylight filters.
The painted hall adjoining—a retreat of profound seclusion.
The coiled incense burnt out,
Shadows of the sun lengthen below the curtain-hooks.
Lonely as He Sun in Yangzhou,
With no one coming to visit,
Need I go roaming distant streams and towers
In quest of wild blossom
Now that the plum I planted
Is blooming luxuriantly?

Unsurpassed in charm,
My Flower cannot stand being trampled on by wind and rain.
And whose is that horizontal flute
That wakes such painful memories?
Grieve not when her subtle perfume dissolves
And snow-white petals fall.
Even though no vestige of her remains,
Her tender love will endure!
And on calm evenings, her lacy shadows
Cast by a pale moon
Will be beautiful beyond words.  

1 A gifted poet in the Liang Dynasty (502-557) whose poems were much appreciated for their subtlety by the great Tang Poet Du Fu. When he was an official at Yangzhou, he very much loved a plum tree in the courtyard of his office. He missed it so much when he was transferred to Loyang, that his superiors granted his request to return to Yangzhou out of sympathy. Thenceforth the tree completely engrossed his attention so that he could hardly tear himself away from it. He loved to sit facing the tree and write poetry whenever he was free from official duty. Li Qingzhao evidently attributed his doting on this tree to a sense of loneliness he must have felt when he considered that to be an official was devoid of meaning.

2 A description derived partly from "Ode to the Plum Blossom" by the poet Lin Heqing of the Song Dynasty, generally considered the finest eulogy of plum blossoms in classical Chinese literature.
贾丰璠，

“将欲静而静如其心”

近者明月在中庭，云破冰消冷露凝。

欲与君王作地类，故应晴日暗时行。
Autumn chill steals into my small chamber,
Curtains hung low as the long night drags on.
It grieves me to see your creamy flesh
Damaged overnight by relentless wind and rain.
You are not like Yang Guifei flushed with wine,
Sun Shou with knitted eyebrows,
Jia Wu who stole royal incense for Han Shou,
Or Lady Xu who powdered half her face to please a one-eyed
emperor.
It would be inappropriate to compare you to these.
On maturer thoughts, your charm may fitly be likened
To that of Qu Yuan and Tao Qian.
Your subtle fragrance, wafted by a soft breeze
Has all the sweetness of blooming raspberries.

Pure as snow, slim as jade, at autumn's decline,
You lean towards people with infinite tenderness
And with as much pathos as the two fairy maidens
Who made a present of their belt pearls
To Zheng Jiaofu at Han Gao,
And Lady Pan writing a mournful poem on a silk fan.
Bright moon, serene breeze may be followed
By thick mists, dark showers.
It is Heaven's will that you shall wither
As your scented breath fades away.
There's no telling how long
Your beauty will yet remain, love you as I may.
But with me as your devoted admirer,
Need you envy the orchids gathered on the riverbank by Qu Yuan,
Or the chrysanthemums picked by Tao Qian beside the east hedge?
Yang Guifei, favorite concubine of Emperor Ming Huang of the Tang Dynasty (618-907), one of the most famous beauties in Chinese history.

Sun Shou, wife of Liang Qi in the East Han (25-220), notorious for her coquetry.

Jia Wu, daughter of a minister in the third century, who stole incense from the Imperial Palace to make love to Han Shou, then a minor official under the minister.

Lady Xu, a concubine of the one-eyed Emperor of the Liang Dynasty in the sixth century, said to be so coquettish that she powdered half her face to win his favor.

Qu Yuan, alias Qu Ping, great philosopher and poet of the Kingdom of Chu in the Warring States Period (475-221 B.C.). Slandered by his political adversaries, he was out of favor with the king, and his loyal efforts to serve the state were ignored. He was exiled, and finally drowned himself in the river Milo, on whose banks he used to wander listlessly before taking his own life. His "Elegies of Chu", in which he vented his political grievances, was an immortal contribution to classical Chinese literature.

Tao Qian, alias Tao Yuanming (c.365-427), one of China’s greatest writers of pastoral poetry. Abandoning the post of a petty official he enjoyed the life of a recluse in the quiet of his native fields, and wrote in praise of the simple way of living.

According to legend, Zheng Jiaofu was presented with belt pearls by two fairy maidens while passing Han Gao in present-day Hubei Province.

Lady Pan was a concubine of Emperor Cheng of the Han Dynasty (206-24 B.C.). Out of favor with the emperor, she aired her feelings in a poem inscribed on a silk fan. This attracted the emperor's attention, and she was finally restored to his favor.
鶯 鳥
天 桂花

暗淡輕黃體性柔情疏遙遠只香留
何須淺碧深紅色自是花中第一流
梅定妒菊應羞畫欄開眾冠中秋
騷人可煞無情思何事當年不見收
Tune: "Partridge Sky"

To the Cassia Flower

Fair Flower!
Dark, pale, light yellow in color,
Soft and gentle by nature.
Aloof and remote,
A subtle fragrance trails behind you.
What need for light green or deep crimson,
You choicest of flowers!

Let plum blossoms be envious,
Chrysanthemums be ashamed!
You are crowned Queen of Mid-autumn
At the Grand Exhibition of Flowers.
How unfeeling of the poet Qu Yuan
To be so cold towards you
As to deny you a place
In his masterpiece.¹

¹An allusion to Li Sao (Encountering Sorrow), a chapter in Qu Yuan's "The Elegies of Chu", in which he listed many precious flowers and plants as symbolic of men of high virtue, but omitted to mention the cassia flower, presumably out of bias.
Jiaosheng Wang, "Complete Ci-Poems of Li Qingzhao"
Tune: "Picking Mulberry Seeds"\(^1\)
(an enlarged version)

Banana Trees

Who planted the banana trees in front of my casement,
Filling the courtyard with shadows,
With shadows?
Each leaf a heart brimming over with love
As it closes or unfolds.

Patter of midnight rain on the leaves
Haunting the pillow—
  Dripping ceaselessly,
  Dripping ceaselessly.
Dismal sounds, painful memories:
An outcast from the North in the throes of sorrow
Cannot bear to sit up and listen.

\(^1\) Since banana trees grow in South China, this poem must have been written when the poet had fled to the South at the time of the Tartar invasion.
Jiaosheng Wang, "Complete Ci-Poems of Li Qingzhao"
Tune: "Remembering the Maid of Qin"

Jumbled mountains, rolling plains:
The view from this high tower
Blurred in thin gleaming mist,
Thin gleaming mist.
Across the sunset sky
Flash crows coming home to roost;
At fall of dusk
Calls a distant bugle.

Fading incense, remnants of wine:
A heart full of remorse.
Parasol-leaves falling,
Parasol-leaves falling—
Urged by the west wind.
Haunting me always,
Autumn's somber colors.
Never leaves me alone,
The pain of loneliness.
病起萧萧两鬓华，卧看素质教育
上窗纱袅袅连梢黄，熟水莫分茶
枕上诗书闲处好，门前风景雨来佳
终日向人多酝藉，花木犀花

Jiaosheng Wang, "Complete Ci-Poems of Li Qingzhao"
Tune: "Sand of Silk-Washing Brook"
(a new version)

On Recovering from a Long Illness

Beside the window, convalescent I lie reclined,
My sparse hair greying at the temples,
My mind serene as I watch a waning moon
Climb the gauze curtains.
A drink of cardamom\(^1\) leaf tips boiled over a living fire
Will do for me instead of tea.

An idler's boon:
Reading leisurely propped on pillows;
Lovelier after rain:
The view outside my door.
Sweet-scented cassia blossoms,
Delicate and loving,
Leaning towards me all day long.

\(^1\) A medicinal herb still needful to the poet in her convalescence because of its effects of dispelling stomach ache, alleviating vomiting, etc., which can, however, be counteracted by a drink of tea.
嘉靖戊子夏四月庚午
嘉靖戊子夏四月庚午
嘉靖戊子夏四月庚午
嘉靖戊子夏四月庚午
The wind has subsided.
Outside the curtains thick lie fallen petals:
A profusion of white and red.
The crab-apple blooms and fades:
A timely reminder
To lament the spring.

Drinking and singing done,
Cups of jasper empty.
The blue oil lamp flares and dims.
I fall into a trance.
Melancholy memories are unbearable—
Unbearable even without the call of a solitary cuckoo.
少年不识愁滋味，老来方知万事难。
Tune: "Dark Clouds of Chu"\textsuperscript{1}

Complaint Against A Long Absent One

Year after year I have wearied of
Doing my hair in the plum-petal palace-style,
Facing the mirror stand of jade.
It's one more year he's not come back,
And I dread to get news from South of the River.

Drinking—scarcely in the mood now he's away;
Tears—cried dry in the depth of sorrow.
I keep daydreaming of him
Lost deep in the dark clouds of Chu,
Farther away from me than the ends of the earth.

\textsuperscript{1}The authorship of this poem remains a matter of doubt, but it is generally believed to have been written by Li Qingzhao when she was in the Northern Song capital. Her husband was apparently away from home in Chu, a region covering present-day Hunan and Hubei then considered remote.
青玉案
异地相逢
征鞍不見邯鄲路
莫便忽忽歸
去秋風蕭條何以度明窗小酌
暗燈清話最好流連霎
相逢各自傷遲暮猶把新詞
話奇句繫家風人所許如
今憔悴但餘雙淚一似黃梅雨
Tune: "Bowl of Green Jade"
A Fortuitous Meeting

Haste not back so soon!
No glimpse yet of Handan Road
For all our peregrinations.
Autumn wind so dreary,
How are we to while our days away?
A drink under a clear window,
An idle chat beside a dim lamp,
Would be the ideal way to relax.

Each laments her declining years as we meet,
Chanting many a new verse with thrilling rhymes—
Poetic talent a family tradition people much prize.  
Now frail and decrepit,
Nothing remains to me but profuse tears
Falling like rain in the season of yellowing plums.

1 Legend has it that a scholar named Lu, while travelling on Handan Road, met a Taoist priest who gave him a magic pillow. When he went to sleep, he dreamed that he passed several decades living in wealth and prosperity. But on waking he found that the pot of millet he had left boiling on the stove was not yet done.

2 One day Xie An the Imperial Tutor (c. third century) was at home with his nephew Xie Lang and niece Xie Taoyun when it suddenly began to snow. He asked each of them good-humoredly what the snowflakes looked like. Xie Lang thought they might be likened to grains of salt dropped from the air. But Taoyun said the simile wasn't so good as 'willow catkins whirling in the wind'. Thenceforth 'salt and willow catkin' came to be regarded as a family tradition of literary talent.
Jiaosheng Wang, "Complete Ci-Poems of Li Qingzhao"
Deep, how profoundly deep the courtyard is!
Spring comes late to these casements and terraces
Buried in mists and clouds.
For whom do you pine away, O Flower!
And lose your lovely looks quite
When but last night I dreamed—
How sweet and vivid that dream—
Your southern branches were bursting into bloom?

That you should be frail as jade
And your boughs lose much of their crimson sweetness
As though weighed down with infinite sorrow!
Away with that Tartar flute in the South Tower
Blowing away your rich perfume
Nobody knows whither,
And let the days lengthen
When balmy breezes blow.
But do stay till the apricot blossoms round out!
序
世作梅词下笔便俗予试作一篇乃知前言不妄耳
藤杖纸帷朝眠起说不直无佳思沉
麝香断续玉壶寒伴我情怀如水笛声
三弄梅心惊破多少春情意
小雨疏风萧萧地又催下千行泪吹萧
人间天上没个人堪寄

孤雁儿
梅花

Jiaosheng Wang, "Complete Ci-Poems of Li Qingzhao"
Prefatory Note. People tend to be vulgar as soon as they start writing a ci-poem about the plum. Of this I was unaware till I had made an attempt myself.

Paper bed-curtains,
A couch of rattan.
No pleasant thoughts ease a troubled mind
When my morning sleep ends.
Sandalwood incense burning fitfully,
The jade censer fallen cold—
Companion to my feelings thin as water.
A flute playing "Falling Plum Blossoms" three times over
Startles the plum-trees into sudden bloom,
And the air is filled with all the sweetness of spring.

Fine rain, gusty wind:
Lugubrious sounds once more urge
A thousand lines of tears.
Gone is the flute-player,
Deserted the jade tower
Nobody now shares with one broken-hearted.
I pluck a spray of bloom,
But who can I send it to,
The two of us now so far apart—
In Heaven and on Earth?
Tune: "On the Trail of Sweet Incense"

Golden chrysanthemums just in bloom
Tell of the approach of the Double Ninth Festival.
A bounteous gift from Heaven these autumnal tints,
Which however bring sadness in their train
As circumstances change.
I try on my thin dress, taste new-brewed wine,
Aware that I am in for
A spell of wind,
A spell of rain,
A spell of cold.

Yellowing twilight fills my rooms
With gloom and anxiety.
Memories of heart-rending sorrow
Overwhelm me as I sober up from wine.
An unending night,
A full moon flooding an empty bed.
In my ears the dull thud
Of mallets on the washing-blocks,
The feeble chirp of crickets,
The monotonous dripping of the clepsydra.
永遇乐
元宵
落日镕金箔云合璧人在何寡染柳烟
浓吹梅笛怨春意知是几许元宵佳节融
和天籁次第谁无风雨来相召香车宝
马谢他酒朋好侣中州盛日闭门多暇
记得偏重三五铺翠冠儿册金雪柳裳
带香清楚如今憔悴风鬟霜鬓怕见
夜间出去不如向篝灯下听人笑语
Tune: "Joy of Eternal Union"¹
Lantern Festival

The setting sun—a pool of molten gold;
Evening clouds—discs of emerald jade.
Where is he—the one in my thoughts?
Spring willows robed in hazy mist;
"Falling Plum Blossoms" wafted by a plaintive flute:
 Lovely springtime—how far is it advanced?
Warm sunshiny weather at the Lantern Festival —
Who knows but it may be
A prelude to wind and rain?
My old wine and poetry companions send
Perfumed coaches, fine horses to take me for a ride,
But I decline all their invitations.

Sweet are memories of our old capital in its heyday!
Young ladies with time to spare
Made the Lantern Festival a special occasion for joy.
In kingfisher-feather caps and
Gold-thread jewelled hair ornaments,
They vied with one another for loveliness.
Now worn with care,
My hair wind-blown and temples frosty,
I dread going out on festive evenings.
I'd much prefer to stay behind the screen
And listen to youthful talk and laughter
As people pass by.

¹The advent of the Lantern Festival revived memories of the poet's happy days in the Northern Song capital, the loss of which to the Tartars was always in her thoughts. Nearly a century afterwards, the patriotic poet Liu Chenweng was deeply moved on re-reading this poem, and composed one of his own to rhyme with hers, the Chinese text of which with his brief preface appears on Page 84. A rough translation of the preface may also be found in the Introduction.
得于巴教已西多花开花已西
海棠殿中春雨落语落
海棠殿中春雨落语落
海棠殿中春雨落语落
A Long Melancholy Tune (Autumn Sorrow) ¹

Despair

Searching, seeking.²

Seeking, searching:

What comes of it but

Coldness and desolation,

A world of dreariness and misery

And stabbing pain!

As soon as one feels a bit of warmth

A sense of chill returns:

A time so hard to have a quiet rest.

What avail two or three cups of tasteless wine

Against a violent evening³ wind?

Wild geese wing past at this of all hours,

And it suddenly dawns on me

That I've met them before.

Golden chrysanthemums in drifts——

How I'd have loved to pick them,

But now, for whom? On the ground they lie strewn,

Faded, neglected.⁴ to

There's nothing for it but, stay at the window,

Motionless, alone.

How the day drags before dusk descends!

Fine rain falling on the leaves of parasol-trees——

Drip, drip, drop, drop, in the deepening twilight.

To convey all the melancholy feelings

Born of these scenes

Can the one word "sorrow" suffice?⁵
李清照词评论一斑

王士祯《渔洋续草蒙拾》中有云词有婉约豪放二派

谓婉约以易安为宗豪放惟幼安能兼之

皆谓渔洋此论非宋明人所及

郑振铎立《中国文学史》中有云她的五七言诗并不甚好她歌

词却是她的独调象她那样的词主张意境方面左宗格

方面却可以说是前无古人后无来者她是独创一格

的又立《文学大编》中又云易安即各时代的诗人中她

所占的地位也不能立陶潜李杜右阳修苏轼之下

胡云翼立《中国词史大编》等中云《漱玉词》每首莹莹玉润

令人把玩不忍释手如大珠小珠落玉盘又云清照后期

愁苦之词而反映的不仅是个人的感慨同时也是南渡人

士辞乡别土破国亡家的共同哀愁具有一定的社会意义
The character man in the label means "a long tune", not "slow". In this poem Li Qingzhao expresses her sentiments with rapidity and abandon but none of the characteristics of the elegant restrained style in which most of her ci-poems are written. The poem is in fact rather like a prose-poem (fu) which makes us recall Ouyang Xiu's famous prose-poem "Autumn Sounds".

This masterpiece of Li Qingzhao's is admired among other things for the three groups of re-iterated characters at the beginning of the poem. The three groups are ingeniously inter-related, the second group being the result of the first, and the third the result of the second. This heightens the pathos.

The word "evening" is used in most anthologies, but the eminent poet and prose-writer Yu Pingbo is in favor of using "dawn" instead of "evening".

Some commentators interpret the above lines as follows:
"Golden chrysanthemums in full bloom,
Their fallen petals in drifts——
Who would pick them
Now I'm withered and worn?
On the ground they lie strewn, neglected."

Li Qingzhao shows great creativity in saying that the word "sorrow" is inadequate to convey a multitude of melancholy feelings, instead of using hyperboles in the conventional way.
流连沙

晚来事

楼台宴饮欲归因

霜落庭空月照门

疏日淡晖明中路空

离他人渐远晖前留
Tune: "Sand Washed by Waves"

In Memoriam

Outside the curtains the howling fifth-watch wind
Blows away the last vestige of my melancholy dream.
Who will be my companion
When I go up the painted tower again?
I remember how he loved to chaff me
Poking the fire sideways with my jade hairpin—
A memory now vanished like the auspicious omen
In the seal-character incense.

Recollections flood my mind
Of happy days gone by
When the two of us climbed Purple Gold Peak\(^1\) hand in hand
Gazing at the hazy view below:
A river of spring waves wrapped in rain and mist,
Gliding away as if half-sober and half-tipsy.
I keep on my garment
Tears shed the day before—
To shoot to the wild geese
As they wing past.

\(^1\) Presumably an allusion to the Purple Gold Hill (Zhi Jing Shan) in today's city of Nanjing.
悼亡

天上星河转人间篱幕垂凉生
枕簟碾泪痕起解罥衣聊
阁夜何其翠贴蓬蓬小金
销藕叶稀旧时天气旧时衣
只有情怀不似旧家时
Tune: "A Southern Song"

In Memoriam

In Heaven the Milky Way turns,
On Earth all curtains hang low.
A chill steals on to my pillow-mat
Damp with tears.
I sit up to unloosen my silk robe,
And idly ask myself:
"What hour of night is it?"

The kingfisher-embroidered lotus-pods seem small,
The gold-stitched lotus leaves are sparse.
The same weather, the same clothes,
As of old.
Only my feelings are quite other
Than those of old times.
武陵春
春暮
风住尘香花已尽 日晚倦梳头
物是人非事事休 欲语泪先流
闻说双溪春尚好 也拟泛轻舟
只恐双溪舴艋舟 载不动许多愁
Tune: "Spring at Wu Ling"¹

Spring Ends

The wind has subsided,
Faded all the flowers:
In the muddy earth
A lingering fragrance of petals.
Dusk falls. I'm in no mood to comb my hair.
Things remain, but all is lost
Now he's no more.
Tears choke my words.

I hear "Twin Brooks"² is still sweet
With the breath of spring.
How I'd, too, love to go for a row,
On a light skiff.
I only fear at "Twin Brooks" my grasshopper of a boat Wouldn't be able to bear
Such a load of grief.³

¹Written in 1135, six years after her husband's death, when Li Qingzhao was living at Jinhua in today's Zhejiang Province as a temporary refuge from the Jin invasion.
²A stream in the southeast of Jinhua often visited by poets in Tang and Song times as a scenic resort.
³A line famed for the beauty and freshness of its imagery.
POSTSCRIPT

I

In the discussion of Li Qingzhao's *ci*-poem 'Autumn Sorrow, To A Long Melancholy Tune' in the Introduction, I missed an interesting piece of information which has since come to my notice. In Huang Mogu's Commentary On Li Qingzhao's Works (published comparatively recently) I came across a remark made by the noted critic Chen Tingzhuo (supported by two other critics) in his Random Notes On Ci-poetry to the effect that the seven pairs of reiterated characters at the beginning of the poem are merely a show of verbal dexterity that has little to do with the beauty and pathos of the poem as a whole. By comparison, he goes on to say, images in the second stanza such as chrysanthemums strewn neglected on the ground and the patter of fine rain on the leaves of parasol-trees in the deepening twilight seem far more touching. Nevertheless, these characters have been rhapsodized over by many other critics, among them Zhang Duanyi who praises them enthusiastically by comparing them to a magic sword dance performed by the famous ballerina Lady Gong Sun of the Tang Dynasty. Since opinions in favor of these characters are in the overwhelming majority, it seems that the consensus cannot be altered.

The frequent use of the characters shou and chou (meaning 'thin' and 'sorrow') also bores some readers. However, it must be remembered that Li's *ci*-poems were closely bound up with the ups and downs of her life. It was her forte that she never hesitated to lay bare her grief, though implicitly, as she actually felt it. For instance, she probably wrote the line "When the west wind blows the blinds aside, I'm frailer than the chrysanthemums" (pp.16-17) to substantiate the preceding line "Don't say one is not pining away!", with the additional implication that morally she is as pure as the chrysanthemums. Here the character shou is a key word indicative not only of a physical feature but of her longing for her absent husband. As to the character chou, its use seems to be fully justified in poems like 'Autumn Sorrow' written when she was actually overwhelmed with poignant grief or loneliness.
In short, criticisms such as these tell us that critics are likely to differ so widely in their views that the bewildered reader has either to depend on his own judgement or to take the consensus as his criterion. On the other hand, we should in fairness make reasonable allowance for certain idiosyncracies from which Li Qingzhao, like other great writers, was not entirely free, but which by no means detract from the intrinsic merit of her ci-poems.

II

Mention must be made of an incident in Li Qingzhao's later years that I omitted in the Introduction. As we have seen, her married life was little short of idyllic before the fall of the Northern Song in 1127. But after the death of her husband Zhao Mingcheng in 1129, she had to wander from one place to another in face of the Jin invasion, until finally she settled in Hangzhou, the capital of the Southern Song, where she lived in utter misery and loneliness as an outcast. It was during this period, presumably about the year 1132 when she was forty-nine years of age, that the most controversial event in her life occurred: she is said to have committed the folly of marrying Zhang Ruzhou, an unscrupulous petty official with the ulterior motive of seizing her property who maltreated her cruelly not long after their marriage. Luckily she succeeded in getting a divorce by appealing to the court about three months afterwards. Scholars in the Ming and Qing Dynasties wrote volumes to refute this sordid story of her re-marriage as a sheer fabrication deliberately invented by her adversaries to ruin her reputation. Since Li was uncompromising in her political opinions, and prone to harshness in her criticisms of many contemporary writers, these well-intentioned scholars naturally thought that she had many enemies in a dispute in which she was involved. However, as no reliable records are available, the matter will in all probability remain one of controversy for many years to come.
III

As we leaf through the pages of Li Qingzhao's ci-poetry, it is particularly refreshing to browse among its famous lines, to some of which I have already referred in the Notes to the poems in which they appear. These famous lines enchant us with their vivid imagery, and a rhythmic charm produced by arranging the words in the most appropriate order. They seem to come so effortlessly from the author's pen that the reader is enthralled without being aware of the pains she must have taken to write with such naturalness in spite of all the exacting demands of ci-prosody. Below are quoted some more famous lines which merit attention because they are admired by most authorities on ci-poetry.

1. huang hun shu yu shi qiu qian Translation:
   Rain drizzles as twilight deepens,
   Wetting the garden swing.
   From 'Late Spring, to the tune Sand of Silk-Washing Brook'
   (pp.22-23)
   The images in this line suggest that the writer, troubled by the feelings implicit in the preceding lines, is in a sort of reverie and at a loss what to do.

2. chong liu jiao hua han shi jin Translation:
   Favorite flowers, darling willows,
   Cold Food Day approaches,
   From 'Spring Thoughts, to the tune Charm of a Maiden Singer'
   (pp.68-69)
   A line admired chiefly for the beauty of the phrase chong liu jiao hua intended to convey the poet's anxiety for the willows and flowers in the approaching unsettling weather.

3. qing lu chen liu, xin tong chu yin Translation:
   Young parasol-trees sprout new leaves;
   Clear dew trickles in the first flush of dawn.
From 'Spring Thoughts, to the tune *Charm of a Maiden Singer* (pp.68-69)
A beautiful couplet with vivid imagery descriptive of the tempting calls of spring mentioned in the preceding line.

4. hong ou xiang can yu tan qiu Translation:
The lotus has wilted, only a faint perfume remains;
On the bamboo mat there's a touch of autumn chill.

From 'Sorrow of Separation, to the tune *A Sprig of Plum Blossom* (pp.6-7)
A line unanimously praised for the rhythmic effect created by its utmost economy of words. In seven characters it paints a lucid picture of four judiciously selected images depicting scenes both inside and outside the room: the bamboo mat and autumn chill; the wilted lotus and its faint perfume. These combine to suggest the poet's feeling of loneliness when her husband is away. She probably achieved this remarkable succinctness by learning from the great Du Fu of the Tang Dynasty, who is reputed to have explored language to its utmost limits in the parallelisms of his poems.
Biographical Note

Jiaosheng WANG, a native of Zhejiang Province, was born in Shanghai in January, 1905. His only formal schooling was a four-years' English course at a missionary school, where he graduated in 1925. Because of his aptitude for the English language, the school principal intended to send him to study abroad, and this inspired his early aspiration to be a writer. But circumstances drove him instead to work at a bank from 1926 until he became a teacher of English at a middle school in 1956. His great passion for English literature impelled him to devote his leisure hours exclusively to the study of English classics and practice in writing English. He profited by corresponding with the school principal, some university professors, and other learned friends. The early 1940s saw his first attempts at literary work when he published a series of sketches of life under the title "A Chinese Diary" in the *North China Daily News* and a few other articles in *The China Journal of Science and Art*, all on topics of literary and artistic interest. This was followed by the publication in *Chambers's Journal*, Edinburgh, of the first article he sent abroad. His retirement in 1972 afforded him the opportunity of lecturing on English grammar and usage at an institute for teachers and other institutions. He toured scenic places and wrote more than two dozen articles for *China Daily*, some of which were later included in his book *Travel Notes* published in 1986. Other publications of his during this period included translations of Zhu Ziqing's "Moonlight on the Lotus Pond" and Yu Dafu's "Autumn in the Old Capital" in *The World of English*, which won him the warm appreciation of its Editor.

Jiaosheng Wang's ill-health in recent years has not diminished his lifelong interest in literary work, which is now focussed on the translation of classical Chinese poetry in hopes of promoting cultural understanding between the people of China and of other countries. He has translated a number of Tang and Song lyrics for periodicals in Shanghai and Hong Kong. In his long apprenticeship to writing and translation, he is mainly self-taught. He takes a keen interest in Chinese calligraphy as a hobby.
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