

CHINESE POETRY OF LI PO SET BY FOUR TWENTIETH CENTURY
BRITISH COMPOSERS:
BANTOCK, WARLOCK, BLISS AND LAMBERT

DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

This study on Li Po's poetry finds that Chinese poetry (like the poetry of any language) loses its inherent qualities in translation. This is especially true of English translations of Chinese poetry because the two languages are so markedly different. This study explores the effects of translation on the character of musical settings of the eighth century poet Li Po by four British composers (Bantock, Warlock, Bliss, and Lambert). None of these composers had a working knowledge of Chinese language, poetic conventions, or traditional Chinese music. They all relied on the skills of translators of the Chinese poems they chose to set; the translators therefore played a key role in determining the aesthetic qualities of the musical settings in many ways. Because of a lack of musical common ground between traditional Chinese music and Western music, it was determined that this study would focus on two main aspects of this problem: (1) the examination of the relationship between the original poems and their

English translations, and (2) the comparison of the aesthetic values found in Li Po's poetry and those of the composer's particular musical settings. Bantock set "Adrift" and "Under the Moon" from *Songs from the Chinese Poets* (translated by L. Cranmer-Byng). Warlock set "Along the Stream" from *Saudades* (translated by L. Cranmer-Byng). Bliss set *The Ballads of the Four Seasons* (translated by Shigeyoshi Obata). Lambert set *Four Poems by Li-Po* and *Three Poems by Li-Po* (translated by Shigeyoshi Obata).

The study found that the Cranmer-Byng's Victorian style translations were not faithful to the aesthetics of Li Po, while Obata's imagist-influenced translations successfully reflected the aesthetics of Li Po. As a result, the Bliss and Lambert settings more closely approximate Li Po's poetic intentions, while the Bantock and Warlock settings are far less closely aligned with Li Po's poetic intentions. The study showed that misguided translations of poetry can lead to aesthetic misrepresentations in musical settings.

Dedicated to my parents

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THE SELECTED WORKS

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|--|-------------------|
| Selected works from <i>Five Songs from the Chinese Poets</i> | Granville Bantock |
| I. Under the Moon (from the first series) | (1868-1946) |
| II. Adrift (from the third series) | |
| | |
| Selected work from <i>Saudades</i> | Peter |
| Warlock | |
| I. Along the Stream | (1894-1930) |
| | |
| <i>The Ballads of the Four Seasons</i> | Arthur Bliss |
| I. Spring | (1891-1975) |
| II. Summer | |
| III. Autumn | |
| IV. Winter | |
| | |
| <i>Four Poems of Li-Po</i> | Constant Lambert |
| I. A Summer Day | (1905-1951) |
| II. Nocturne | |
| III. With a Man of Leisure | |
| IV. Lines | |
| | |
| <i>Three Poems of Li-Po</i> | |
| I. The Ruin of the Ku-Su Palace | |
| II. The Intruder | |
| III. On the City Street | |

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Chinese view their poetry as a type of rhythmic literature, known to them as *shih*. *Shih* has been written in many different forms and is represented by various styles in ancient Chinese literature. The origin and development of Chinese poetry can be traced back to the period of China's founding in the second millennium B.C. The study of Chinese literature is organized by the historic succession of imperial dynasties. Each dynasty has its own characteristic literature; Han *fu* for example, is a style of prose poetry or rhapsody that flourished during the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-220 A.D.) The poetry chosen for musical treatment by the four British composers (Bantock, Warlock, Bliss and Lambert) comes from the poet Li Po in the Tang Dynasty (618 to 907 A.D.) This period of time is considered the golden age of Chinese poetry. Li Po's poetry was known to western composers in the nineteenth century, notably Gustav Mahler with his *Das Lied von der Erde*, which is perhaps the most well known western setting of Li Po's work in translation.

The central aesthetic problem in this study is that none of the four composers had a working knowledge of the Chinese language used in the original poems. They relied on English translations of the Chinese poems. The appearance and grammar of the Chinese language is very different from that of English. Chinese script consists of ideographic (pictorial) script while written English represents the sounds of the language in Roman letters. Ideally the English translations of Chinese poetry would not only give purely objective information, but would also seek to provide keys to the understanding of an alien and exotic culture; the best translations attempt to cross both the language and culture barrier so that reader will experience a certain degree of intimacy with the emotions and spirit of the poetry in its original language. Therefore, an important task of this study is to reclaim the missing values of the original poetry from the English translated poetry.

Purpose of study

The purpose of the study is to examine how the four British composers present the poetry written by the prestigious Tang poet Li Po in their musical settings and explore the relationship between Li Po's aesthetic and the values found in the musical settings. Another purpose of this study is to acknowledge the four composer's effort in setting

Chinese poetry and to stimulate a revived effort in cross culture music making. The purpose of this study is to also acknowledge the four composer's effort in setting Chinese poetry and to stimulate a revived effort in cross culture music making. In the process, the study shows (1) the relationship between the original poetry and the English translation (2) the aesthetics of Li Po's poetry and that of the English translations, and (3) the ways in which the translated poems and their settings are related.

Limitations

The works selected for this study are limited to voice and piano arrangements, although instrumental arrangements for Bliss and Lambert's settings are available. Under this condition, the last song of Lambert's setting "The Long Departed Lover" for which there is no piano version available, will not be included in this study.

The Selected works

The works included in the study are "Adrift" and "Under the Moon" from *Five Songs from the Chinese Poets* by Granville Bantock, "Along the Stream" from *Saudades* by Peter Warlock, *The Ballads of the Four Seasons* by Arthur Bliss, *Four Poems by Li-Po*¹ and *Three Poems by Li-Po* by Constant Lambert. They were selected for the

¹ The correct way to write his name should be "Li Po" without dash. Because "Li" is the first name and "Po" is the last name; however, some of the publisher might be confused and put Li-Po.

differences and similarities they exhibit. All of the musical settings were original settings of poems by the Chinese poet Li Po, enabling the study to focus on one poet's aesthetic and its relationships to the musical settings. Each setting was written for solo voice with piano accompaniment. The choice of works spans two periods of British music history, Warlock and Bantock were composing in the Victorian period (1830-1914), and Bliss and Lambert in the early modern period (1915-1949). Regarding the translators, L Cranmer-Byng most definitely displays Victorian characteristics while Shigeyoshi Obata was influenced by imagism.

Review of related research

The dissertation *Chinese Influence in Four Twentieth Century Song Cycles by Roussel, Carpenter, Griffes and Britten* by Ti-Fei Hsu provided directions for specific terms such as “chinoiseire” and “Asian influence”. Her study focused on Chinese influence on four twentieth century composers who set ancient Chinese poetry in song cycles: Albert Roussel's *Deux Poème Chinoies* op. 35 (1907-8), John Carpenter's *Water Colors* (1916), Charles Griffes's *Five Poems of the Ancient Far East* (1917) and

Benjamin Britten's *Songs from the Chinese*. (1958).² She also points out that translations played a significant role in music settings by western composers.

A special term, "chinoiserie", is commonly used to label western music influenced by Chinese art, music and literature; the term refers to any artistic indicator or symbol of what would be perceived as Chinese by people in western society, such as the use of elaborate decoration and intricate patterns of Chinese origin³. "Chinoiserie" can be applied rather broadly when the influence appears in musical works. For example, Henry Purcell's semi-opera *The Fairy Queen* (1692) uses a Chinese garden in the fifth act masque merely as a fashionable theatrical effect that also reflects British awareness of Chinese culture during that time.⁴ There are also numerous theatrical examples of orientalism in Gilbert & Sullivan's *Mikado* and Puccini's *Turandot*. Gluck's first opera buffa *Le cinese* imitates Chinese instruments with the use of small bells, triangles, small hand-drums and tambourines in the opening sinfonia.⁵ Its subject and the exotic nature of the production reflect the fascination for chinoiserie in the eighteenth-century. Additionally, musical examples shown in Purcell's *The Indian Queen* have several *chinoiserie* features:

² Hsu Ti Fei. *Chinese influence in four twentieth century song cycles by Roussel, Carpenter, Griffes and Britten*. American Conservatory of Music. UMI Ann Arbor: 1988

³ Hugh Honour. *Chinoiserie; the vision of Cathay*. London: J.Murray, 1961, 37.

⁴ Curtis Price. "The fairy queen". *Grove Music Online*.ed. L. Macy. (Accessed 1 December 2003) <<http://proxy.lib.ohio-state.edu:2142>>

⁵ Jeremy Hayes."Le Cinese". *Grove Music Online*.ed. L. Macy. (Accessed 31 December 2003) <<http://proxy.lib.ohio-state.edu:2142>>

the insistent syncopated rhythm, the bare harmony with octave doubling, the Aeolian mode, and the pedal point. Another example occurring two centuries later, is the “bell song” in *Lakmé*, where the timbre of double reeds, tambourine and little bells, were all now an established part of an Orientalist musical code.⁶

In the twentieth century, composers learned to mix theatrical effects and to apply musical elements to impart a Chinese flavor. Stravinsky’s “Marche Chinoise” in Act 2 of *Le rossignol* (1913) and Ravel’s *L’enfant et les sortilège* (1925) used pentatonicism to characterize the Chinese cup in the “Five o’clock” dance. Moreover, for its subject matter, Puccini’s opera *Turandot* has always been cited as an example of the Chinese influence on Western music. This influence is seen in the costuming and heard in the use of one of the most famous Chinese folk tunes “Jasmine Flower” in Act 2 as the chorus enters.⁷

The concepts of “exoticism” and “orientalism” had a primary influence on the early stage of this study. Scott in his article “Orientalism and Musical Style” discussed the distinction between and the differences that developed in the representation of the exotic or oriental cultures and the confusion that sometimes occurred from this difference in representation. He discusses prominent examples of works by composers back to the

⁶ Derek B. Scott. “Orientalism and Musical Style”. *Musical Quarterly*. Spring 1998 Vol. 82, no.1.321

⁷ Ralph P. Locker. “Reflections on Orientalism in Opera and Musical Theater”. 10:48-64 n1 1993.

eighteenth century into which an oriental flavor has been introduced. He also traces the variety in changes in presentation and diverse oriental styles; as a result, a series of exotic musical codes was established. An awakening notion for composers interested in applying any Chinese elements was stated: "Oriental music is not a poor imagination of another culture practice: its purpose is not to imitate but to represent. Representations rely upon culturally learned recognition."⁸ In a similar way, Chou Wen-Chung discussed the awareness and practice of Asian influence on the Composer of 20th century.⁹ Here the Asian concept was broadened to Hungarian and Russian music. Chou gives high marks to composers like Debussy and Bartók who made substantial efforts in recognizing and bringing Eastern musical elements to light in different ways. The inspiring paragraph of Bartók's attitude towards studying eastern music, which stands as a model for composers in this study includes this statement: "in studying non-Western music, one must consider the character and tradition of its culture as well as all the inherent qualities of the material itself, not all of which are perceptible or definable according to establish Western concepts."¹⁰

⁸ Scott. 326

⁹ Chou Wen-Chung. "Asian Concepts and Twentieth-Century Composers" *Musical Quarterly*. April 1971. 211-229

¹⁰ Chou Wen-Chung. 213-124.

After Queen Victoria died, British Kingdom entered a new era under Edward VII's reign. Banfield called it "The Edwardian age"; even in this short era, English musical growth seemed to go through a phase that British composers found themselves exposed to wide-ranging musical influences: romantic experience from the German composers, nationalist styles from the Russian and East Europe composers, and the development of French impressionism. It was also an era of remarkable receptivity to poetry, with much interest on the part of the composers in "foreign or exotic texts such as translations from the Chinese (the earliest set to music being those of Herbert Giles)".¹¹

Organization of the study

The study has been organized into eight chapters, a bibliography, and appendices. The first chapter of the study presents an introduction specifying problems of poetry translations, the purpose of study, basic information of the selected works, limitation, review of related research and literature, and organization of the study.

Chapter two embodies an extensive review of literature related to three aspects: first, the characteristics of ancient Chinese poetry; second, the features and aesthetics value of Li Po's poetry; third, two styles of English translation and their aesthetics approach.

¹¹ Stephen Banfield. *Sensibility and English Song* "V The Edwardian age (I)". Cambridge University Press. 1985. 90

Chapter three encompasses the methodological construction of the study describing research design and procedures.

Chapters four through seven discuss the relationships between Li Po's aesthetics and the values found in the selected musical settings.

Chapter eight presents a brief summary of the preceding chapters; conclusions drawn from the study, and suggestions for practical application of the findings as well as additional research.

CHAPTER 2

General characteristics of ancient Chinese poetry

As much as the translators try to connect the bridge over English and Chinese, the ancient poetry more or less loses its true poetic character in translation. First, Chinese poetry was regarded as high literature and most pre-modern Chinese literature was written in lofty Classical language which differed from the contemporary spoken vernacular. Therefore, translating such literature takes a thorough knowledge of the ancient language and an understanding of the culture context in which it was written. Second, Chinese is a monosyllabic language without declension or conjugation that makes it possible to express the complex spoken utterance in written form using a single Chinese character. Moreover, in Chinese, the grammatical function of a word is determined by the structure of a given sentence, and in classical Chinese most words could be used as either nouns or verbs. This explains why Chinese poets could convey complicated feelings and portray the surroundings at the same time using only five words, but in an English translation, many more words are needed to make the meaning clear.

We will observe one example to illustrate the characteristics of Chinese poetry. This poem was written in the eighth century by poet Li Po (701-762). It is a quatrain-in four line that employs five characters each. The Chinese characters are on the left, and the word for word translation into English (character by character) is on the right.

靜夜思

quiet night thought

床前明月光

bed front moon lit bright

疑是地上霜

suspect is ground on frost

舉頭望明月

raise head watch clear moon

低頭思故鄉

bow head think old home

Translator, Shigeyoshi Obata offered this English version:

On a quiet night¹²

I saw the moonlight before my couch,

And wondered if it was the frost on the ground.

I raised my head and looked out on the mountain moon;

I bowed my head and thought of my far-off home

While Witter Bynner offered another version:

In the quiet night

So bright a gleam on the foot of my bed-

Could there have been a frost already?

Lifting myself to look, I found that it was moonlight.

Sinking back again, I thought suddenly of home¹³

¹² Shigeyoshi Obata. "On a Quiet Night". *Works of Li Po*. Paragon Book Reprint Corp.: New York 1965. 57.

¹³ Witter Bynner. "In the Quiet Night". *The Jade Mountain*. Alfred A. Knopf: New York. 1929. 53.

From the native speaker's point of view, Obata's translation is actually closer to the original poem, although Bynner did well to keep the flow of thought, but he seems to elaborate on the poetry in an effort to create a certain dramatic effect, perhaps not found in the original poem. Translating poetry is always in some way a process of re-composition. We can conclude that the works the translators provided to the four British composers are unfortunately expressively distant from the original Chinese. Witter Bynner, translator of the English version of *Three Hundred Poems of the Tang Dynasty* or *The Jade Mountain* stated at his introduction: "Because of the absence of tenses, of personal pronouns and of connectives generally, the translator of Chinese poetry, like the Chinese reader himself, has considerable leeway as to interpretation. If even in English, so much more definite a language, there may be varying interpretations of a given poem, it is no wonder that critics and annotators have differed as to the meaning of poems in Chinese."¹⁴

It may not seem so surprising to learn that Chinese poetry has even more qualities, including tones, rhymes and parallelism that are hard to preserve in translation. Some translators have attempted to achieve the effect of certain Chinese poetic qualities because rhymes and parallelism are common to both Chinese poetry and in some English

¹⁴ Bynner. xviii.

poetry such as Shakespeare and in the 19th century Victorian style. However, the fact that Chinese is highly homophonic (many words sound the same but literally mean different) and that each character has its fixed tone make those poetic qualities imitable but never identically the same when Chinese poems are translated into other languages.

The tonal features of the Chinese language provide an internal foundation for rhymed poems, particularly in the highly regulated poems of the Tang Dynasty. This rule concerns the five tones in the Chinese written language. The first tone is called the upper even tone (陰平); the second, the lower even tone (陽平); the third, the upper tone (上) ; the fourth, the departing tone (去); and the fifth, the entering tone (入), which only exists in the classical Chinese. The first two are in one group, named “even tones” (平), and the last three are in the other group and named “uneven tones”. (仄)¹⁵ All five tones are equally essential in ancient Chinese poetry writing because the rhyme system was highly regulated during the Tang Dynasty (618-907A.D.) Children would have to learn and memorize all the characters and rhymes by following the rules at school. The perfect rhymes and allowable rhymes were standardized by the *Imperial Rhyming Dictionary*. In this dictionary all characters are arranged first according to the five tones, and then according to different rhymes, the two even tones have 30 rhymes; the third, 29; and the

¹⁵ Kiang Kang-hu. “Chinese Poetry”. *The Jade Mountain*.xxxviii.

fourth, only 17.¹⁶ These rhymes were grouped so long ago that some of the syllables do not actually rhyme in the modern pronunciation of Mandarin Chinese, but when the poetry is read in Cantonese or Taiwanese dialects, the five tones and rhymes are easily recognized. The regulations of rhymes and tones eventually developed into distinct patterns in Tang poetry. Every line has to follow the tone patterns (Appendix B) that were gradually established by literati.

By using the same poetry above, the tones and rhymes are analyzed below, paralleled with its modern Mandarin pronunciation. This poetry is written in *gushi* style, which implied liberal adaptation of the regulations. The sign “P” indicates even tones, “T” indicates uneven tones and the symbol in the square brackets indicates rhyme.

1 Chuang qian ming yue guang	P P P T [P]
2 Yi shi di shang shuang	P T T T [P]
3 Ju tou wang ming yue	T P T P T
4 Di tou si gu xiang	P P P T [P]

¹⁶Kiang Kang-hu. xxix.

In ancient Chinese poetry, it was thought essential to provide a balance of the visual appearance of the verses as well as the use of words. Two effective devices employed in Chinese verse are parallelism and *pai-lü* or “arranged rule”. Parallelism refers to all the characters of one line being “parallel” with the parts of speech of the next line; thus noun with noun, verb with verb, even adjectives of colors, nouns or nouns of animals have to be “paralleled”.¹⁷ *Pai-lü* or “arranged rule” refers to the regulation that a word may not be repeated in a poetic structure within a given poem. The most impressive demonstrations of this device are found in long narrative poems, such as those in *gushi-yuefu* style, which have hundreds or even thousands of characters, yet in which not a single word is repeated. The principle of *Pai-lü* was not commonly adhered to in Tang poems while parallelism can still be observed in Li Po’s poetry, particularly the last two verses:

舉頭	望	明月	raise head	look out	moon
v.s.	v.s.	v.s.	vs (verb)	vs (verb)	vs (noun)
低頭	思	故鄉	bow head	thought off	hometown

¹⁷ Kiang Kang-hu. xxxviii.

The last feature in ancient Chinese poetry relates to the inherent musicality. Because Chinese is a tone-specific language, the poetry simultaneously carries a natural tonality and pitch difference in recitation. What might not be known to western composers is that there is a certain genre of poetry that was written to be set to music, known as *yuefu shi*, originating in the Han dynasty (206 B.C.-220A.D.) The Han court established the Yuefu (Music Bureau or Office of Music) to collect folksongs and ballades to learn about the common people and then to incorporate them into court performance.¹⁸ The *yuefu* poems flourished during the time of the division between northern and southern China, until the advent of Tang Dynasty (618-906 A.D.), when the old *yuefu* form gradually merged with the modern type of poem. Tang dynasty literati also produced numerous *yuefu* poems that could be sung as art song, however, some Tang poets of the eighth and ninth century used the term *xin yuefu* (“new *yuefu* poems”) for their poems of social criticism. These imitations, which were not set to music, were written like the old *yuefu* poems, in lines of uneven length; but their titles, content and style are rather different from old *yuefu* poems.¹⁹

¹⁸ “China II, History and theory: Qin to Tang dynasties”, Grove Music Online ed, L, Macy (2/5/2004), <<http://proxy.lib.ohio-state.edu:2142>>.

¹⁹ Joseph R. Allen. “Materials: The genre defined and redefined”. *In the voice of others*. The University of Michigan. 1992. 41.

Generally speaking, there are four styles of poetry that were commonly practiced in T'ang dynasty: *gushi*, *yuefu*, *lüshi* and *jueju*, but only *yuefu* were written to be set into music. Many scholars also believe that the *yuefu* poem is the forerunner of *jueju*, which provides the possibility that *jueju* can be set to music. Appendix C provides detailed illustrations to explain the relationship between each of the four styles of poetry. It is interesting to look at the selections of poetry that were set by the four British composers. Constant Lambert's selections of text combined *yuefu*, *gushi* and *jueju* styles, while Arthur Bliss, who set the *The Ballads of the Four seasons* are all *yuefu* style, Granville Bantock's two poems selected from *Songs from the Chinese Poets* are *yuefu* poems but his other settings vary in style and incorporate *gushi* and *lüshi*. One song that Peter Warlock set in his cycle *Saudades*, "Along the Stream" is in *jueju* form. It is highly probable that none of the composers was aware of this "musical tradition" of Chinese poetry; their choices of poems probably depended on inspiration they found in the translated texts, rather than on their knowledge about the traditional uses of the poems in their original language.

Although *lüshi* and *jueju* were particularly popular during T'ang Dynasty, the influence of *gushi* and *yuefu* also remained strong. Of the 1000 poems attributed to Li Po,

about one sixth are in *yuefu* ballade style, which means that they are reworking of themes drawn from the old folk song tradition.²⁰ It was generally agreed that *yuefu shi* used authentic language, and was narrative in style, yet less strict about tones, rhymes and the construction of thoroughness compared to the other three styles. Characteristically, *yuefu* style emphasizes simplicity, often genuinely expressive of emotions. During the Tang Dynasty, Li Po was best known for his *yuefu* style poetry; part of the reason is that this style agrees with Li Po's aesthetic view and entirely brings out Li Po's romanticism²¹.

The poet Li Po

In ancient China, a well-educated man was expected to contribute to the life of country, but Li Po took a rather unusual path in his life and career. At age 42, when Li Po finally decided to pursue his political ambition and went to the Capital city, both he and his poetry immediately gained public recognition. When Secretary-General He Zhizhang, himself a poet, was presented with Li Po's "Hard Road in Shu" (Appendix D), before he had even finished reading, he called him "Banished Immortal." The poet has been known as the "Poet Immortal" among the Chinese ever since. It was commonly believed that immortals who had misbehaved in Heaven were, as a punishment banished, to live on

²⁰ Burton Watson. "Introduction of Chapter 19 Li-Po" *Classical Chinese Literature An Anthology of Translations. Vol. I: From Antiquity to the Tang Dynasty*. John Minford and Joseph S.M. Lau ed. Columbia University Press. 2000. 722.

²¹ Here the "romanticism" refers to Li Po's personality and the characteristic of his poetry rather than the period literature genre.

earth for a fixed period, where they figured as wayward and extraordinary human beings.²² This moniker speaks to Li Po's wild character and free spirit. Although his treatment of poetry often violated the poetic rules and surprised his readers he still clearly abided within the boundaries of good taste.

Li Po (701BC-762BC) or Li Tai-Bai is considered the foremost romantic poet of the Tang Dynasty. Brought up in a wealthy family in Szechwan in western China, he was well-educated; however, he chose not to pursue the conventional examination system which was required for promotion to a government position. He started out at age 25 to travel extensively in the eastern and central regions of China. From then on his occupation became that of a wandering poet. Throughout his life he produced an abundance of poems on different subjects—particularly on the subject of nature, drinking, friendship, solitude and the passage of time. Even though he was interested in politics, he never had a chance to put his ideas into practice. He enjoyed drinking and making friends, developed a strong sense of chivalry, and learned how to use a sword while living among hermits. At the age of 42, he gained recognition from the emperor and was appointed to a post in the Hanlin Academy. Being favored and close to the emperor, Li Po found this was a great opportunity to contribute to his nation; however, court plotters found a way of

²² Arthur Waley. *The poetry and career of Li Po*. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1950.20

demonstrating that one of his poems was a malicious satire. Li Po was then released back to civilian life and retired to the mountains again. His political ambition ruined, the poet became a Taoist. At the end of the High Tang period, the political situation was becoming chaotic because local armed forces set up a separatist regime. During the An Lu-Shan rebellion (755-57), Li Po fled south and entered the service of Prince Young. The Prince was soon accused of intending to set up an independent kingdom and was executed. Li Po was arrested and imprisoned, but a high official saved him from execution, after which he was banished. Li Po resumed his life of wandering, troubadour-like; however, he did not give up thoughts of going to the battlefield and fighting for righteousness. He died of illness on the way home at Dantu. According to legend, Li Po died drunk while trying to embrace the moon's reflection on the water. This actually describes his frequently celebrated joy of drinking and his romantic character.

Li Po's poetry and the aesthetics it represents

Generally speaking, Li Po's poetic style may be divided into two periods: the first period is from his youth (720-742), traveling around China until appointed to the Hanlin academy in the capital Chang'an. The works of this period exhibit a solid training with potentially romantic, beautiful rhymed and structured format, usually employing

five-word regulated verse (*lǔshī* and *jùejǔ*)²³. Li Po is best known for his pieces describing voyages through imaginary landscapes or invoking exotic Taoist images. He colored his poetry with hyperbole, playfulness, and outright fantasy. In the second period, his style and technique began to reach maturity. It was also the period when the prosperous nation faced the chaos created by An Lu-Shan rebellion²⁴. Li Po saw the reality of politics and society during the conflict of the wars. He was torn between escaping to the mountains and confronting the political situation; therefore his poetic style captures the nuances of human experience of life and friendship during the wartime. Many of his poems written during this period also reflected his Taoist thoughts, advocating a return to nature and to the inner life, the carefree life of the recluse being one of the important themes in his poetry. The poem “Hard Traveling”, for example, (music setting “Adrift” by Bantock), was written in 744, after the poet was forced to resign from his post at the Hanlin Academy. In the poetry Li Po expressed his ambition of grand doings but also the contradictory idea of retiring to nature. Within the entire poem

²³ Chan Yeng. Translated. *Poetry of Li-Po*. Taipei: Jien Xiou Publisher. 1993.19

詹英等譯注. 李白詩. <中國名著譯選叢書>. 錦繡出版. 台北.

²⁴ The central government of Tang Dynasty gradually lost its control over the regional administration. A military commander named An Lu-shan rebelled in 755 and tried to topple the Tang ruler. He eventually conquered the capital Chang'an and proclaimed himself emperor. An Lushan was murdered two years later, but the revolt could not be beaten down with the help of foreign troops and the nation never recovered from endless civil wars ever since. An Lushan rebellion was the turning point as the glory of Tang Dynasty started to decay.

no bitterness was found but rather an expression of heroic aspiration. The final verse likely indicates the dark political situation of contemporary Tang life.

Unlike many other traditional literati in Ancient China, Li Po did not stand as a great model for the Confucian gentleman, but his art is inimitable and unique far beyond that of his contemporaries: Li Po's unusual life path included living with hermits, refining a longevity elixir, studying sword play, and traveling around the country while he was young. These experiences contributed to his free spirit and broad view of life. While most of the men of his age were sitting for the Civil Service Exam or serving as government officials, Li Po led a life embracing nature and fantasy. He eventually became an outsider to society and held values different from the conservative literati.²⁵ Without legitimate social status, the poet devoted himself to inventing personal idioms. His genius was often found in the strangeness of idea and choice of words. He bluntly upsets the balance of the poetic mood and goes to greater lengths to achieve a straightforward message and bright presence of imagination. "Hard Road in Shu" was acclaimed "strangeness on top of strangeness" by Li Po's contemporary Yin-Fan. Moreover, many of his poems seem to project a self-image. Li Po defined himself by singular personal acts, by gestures that

²⁵ Stephen Owen. *The Great Age of Chinese Poetry: The High T'ang*. "Li-Po." 113

separated him from others.²⁶ “Summer Day in the Mountains”, (Music setting “A Summer Day” by Lambert) and “Amusing myself” (“Along the Stream” by Warlock) help to define Li Po as a unique individual. Additionally, his fondness of drinking, which brought spontaneity and energy to his works, is often a subject of central interest. “Drinking Alone Under the Moon” (Appendix E) and “With a Man of Leisure” (Music set by Lambert) are examples of this preoccupation with drinking.

Most of Li Po’s poems belong to *yuefu* poetry style. *Yuefu* style sometimes includes “songs” or “ballades”; the most appealing themes are love and longing, the hardships of military service, and landscape. Li Po was best known for his daring use of irregular rhythms and meters, therefore the old poetic forms such as *gushi*, *yuefu* and long, tonally unregulated verse are more often employed in his compositions. These forms were favored for narrative works and by writers seeking a relaxed or imaginative style. Li Po’s vocabulary was relatively simple and his syntax was usually direct, abundant with colloquial phrasing. The more important effect in Li Po’s *yuefu* poetry is “a sense of freedom, a willingness to transcend common metrical rules with the same ease that he

²⁶ Owen. 137.

transcended thematic and modal proprieties”.²⁷ “The Ballads of the Four Seasons”

(Music set by Bliss) provides the best example of such characteristics.

To conclude, the spirit and aesthetics of Li Po’s work come mainly from his unique personal characteristics and the strength he gained from his life experience. Watson said:

“In spite of such vicissitude of fortune, Li-Po is little given to expression of unmitigated despair or bitterness, his poetry on the whole being unusually calm, even at times sunny in outlook. It appears to grow not so much out of actual scenes and experiences of his lifetime as it does out of certain convictions that he held regarding life and art, out of a tireless search for spiritual freedom and communion with nature, a lively imagination and a deep sensitivity to the beauties of language.”²⁸

Likening Li Po to other great Western poets, Du Halde said: “Under the Dynasty of Tang, *Li tasu pe* and *Tu te mwey* [Li-Po and Tu Fu] did not yield to Anacreon and Horace.”²⁹ L. Cranmer-Byng said: Li Po is “a kind of Chinese Paul Verlaine, with his sensitive mind of a child.”³⁰

Many of Li Po’s works are lost; nonetheless almost two thousand of his poems have been preserved. In a Ch’ing dynasty (1644-1912 A.D.) compilation *Chuen Tang Shih* “complete Poetry of Tang” contains 999 poems of Li Po. Another very popular collection

²⁷ Owen. 128.

²⁸ Watson. 722.

²⁹ John Minford and Joseph S.M. Lau ed. *Classical Chinese Literature An Anthology of Translations. Vol. I: From Antiquity to the Tang Dynasty*. Columbia University Press. 2000. 721.

³⁰ L Cranmer-Byng. *A Lute of Jade*. “Li Po”. E.P. Dutton and Company: New York. 1913. 58.

“Three Hundred Tang Poems” (1764) compiled by the Ch’ing scholar Sun Zhu collected 34 of Li Po’s poetic works that include every form and style.³¹

Two styles of translations

Translating Tang poetry into English started in the late eighteenth century and translations of the period mimicked contemporary English poetry. The styles and the aesthetics of translating Tang poetry were discussed in two approaches according to settings chosen by four British composers: old school-Victorian style, and modern style influenced by imagism. At the turn of the twentieth century, Herbert Giles, Chinese Professor at the University Cambridge, published works regarding Chinese literature and culture. Particularly *Chinese Poetry in English Verse* (1898), *Chinese Literature History* (1909) and *Gems of Chinese Literature* (1922) were regarded as highly influential. Several musical settings of Chinese poetry were based on his translations, such as John Carpenter’s song cycle *Water-colors* and Albert Roussel’s setting of three pairs of *Chinese Odes* setting. The French text of Roussel’s setting, translated by H. P. Roche, was actually based on the English translation by Giles, although some alterations were made.³² Giles’ approach to Chinese poetry is considered to ape Victorian rhetoric and is

³¹ Chiou Biangyou translated. *Newly Interpreted Three Hundred Tang Poems*. Taipei: Samin. 2003.12
邱變友譯注. *新註唐詩三百首*. 台北：三民書局.

³² Hsu Ti Fei. *Chinese influence in four twentieth century song cycles by Roussel, Carpenter, Griffes and*

somewhat scholarly. On the other hand, at the beginning of the twentieth century French symbolist poets overcame the dominant Victorian style while the imagist movement in English poetry was not far behind.

“Imagism” flourished between 1910 and 1920 and affected mostly American and British poets. Imagists focused mainly on the use of free verse, common speech patterns, clarity of expression through the use of precise visual images and poetic impersonality as a reaction to Victorian sentimentalism. It was influenced by Chinese and Japanese poetic styles, and the main technique imagists practiced was the subtle juxtaposition of images, a technique used by many Tang poets. The American poet Ezra Pound, who was considered the central figure of “imagism”, found that his poetic notions agreed with certain principles of T’ang poetry.³³ He believed Chinese poetry was frequently poetry of understatement: the poet would present a situation as concisely as possible, leave it to the reader to infer the emotional implication, and use natural scenes and backgrounds to render feeling and mood.³⁴ In 1915 Pound published *Cathay*, containing eighteen short poems selected from American orientalist and poet Ernest Fenollosa’s legacy of 150 translations of ancient Chinese poetry. It was the influence of Giles’ *History of Chinese*

Britten. American Conservatory of Music. UMI Ann Arbor: 1988.

³³ P.N. Furbank. *Pound*. “Imagism”. Open University Press: Philadelphia. 1985. 11-17

³⁴ *Ibid*. 34.

Literature: “By general consent Li Po himself would probably be named as China’s greatest poet”³⁵ that encouraged Pound to rearrange and recompose parts of these works set to Li Po’s poems.

L. Cranmer-Byng’s translation, which was used in the settings of Bantock and Warlock, is closely linked to the Victorian style of literature and his perception of Li Po is so highly romanticized that he may have confused the aesthetics and spirit of Li Po’s work. Born in the Victorian period, Launcelot Alfred Cranmer-Byng (1872-1945) nurtured a strong interest in Chinese culture and literature. He admitted, “I have drawn largely upon the prose translations of the great English and French pioneers in the field of Chinese literature, notably Professor [Herbert] Giles and the Marquis d’Hervey Saint-Denys.”³⁶ He published two collections of Chinese poetry *A Feast of Lanterns* (1924 first edition) and *A Lute of Jade* (1909 first edition), compiled a great deal of Ancient Chinese poetry, and he was apparently eager to share his knowledge about Chinese tradition and culture. He devoted chapters in his books to explaining Chinese legends, symbols, and poetic traditions. Unfortunately, despite all his efforts and passion, many lexical inaccuracies were found in his works. He also tended to add his own poetic

³⁵ Hugh Kenner. *Pound Era*. “The invention of China”. University of California Press. Berkley and Los Angeles. 1971. 192-222.

³⁶ Cranmer-Byng. 115

impressions to the original poems. For instance, his translation of “Song of Dancing Lantern” by poet Yuan-Mei (1715-1797), the original contains two hundred and ten Chinese characters. He only uses the original Chinese as a point departure and he makes no real effort at an authentic translation. He leaves out half of the text and adds some of his own material. This particular translation was actually set by Charles Griffes as “A Feast of Lanterns” in his song cycle *Five Poems of the Ancient Far East* without his knowing that the translation was inaccurate.³⁷ Although it seemed that in the early stage of translating ancient Chinese poetry, adaptations and alterations became common practice, (Li Po’s poetry in Mahler’s setting of *Das Lied von der Erde*, for example, was largely altered in the German text) these changes only serve to jeopardize the value of the original poetry of a great poet. Such errors found their way into the Bantock and Warlock settings of Cranmer-Byng’s translations in this study, translations that do not match the original poems.

This situation largely faults L. Cranmer-Byng’s credits on translation. His aesthetics and approach of poetic language is entirely romantic and Victorian in style employing rhymed and stanzaic forms. The translation of the same poetry by Li Po provided in Chapter one was shown below as an example to illustrate his translation style.

³⁷ Hsu. 119.

Thoughts in a Tranquil Night

Athwart the bed
I watch the moonbeams cast a trail
So bright, so cold, so frail,
That for a space it gleams
Like hoar-frost in the margin of my dreams,
I raise my head,
The splendid moon I see:
Then droop my head,
And to dreams of thee
My Fatherlands, of thee!

And, again, compared to Japanese oriental scholar Shigeyoshi Obata's version which is far more direct and close to the original poetry:

On a Quiet Night

I saw the moonlight before my couch,
And wondered if it was the frost on the ground.
I raised my head and looked out on the mountain moon;
I bowed my head and thought of my far-off home

Chosen for settings by Bliss and Lambert, Shigeyoshi Obata's translation revealed strong influence of "imagism". He stated in his translation of *Works of Li-Po*: "In spite of its [Cathay] small size and its extravagant errors the book possesses abundant color, freshness and poignancy, and is in spirit and style the first product of what may be called the new school of free-verse translators, who are much in evidence nowadays. I confessed that it was Mr. Pound's little book that exasperated me and at the same time

awakened me to the realization of new possibilities so that I began seriously to do translations myself.”³⁸ Because of the close relationship of Chinese and Japanese language, Obata was able to read Chinese efficiently and research extensively on relative subjects while translating, particularly Japanese and Chinese commentaries and existing European translations. Although the author explained that many of his translations are far from literal, “A literal translation would often leave a Chinese poem unintelligible unless supplied with a great amount of exegesis, and I did not wish to empty all the rich content of the original into footnotes.”³⁹ Comparing to L Cranmer-Byng’s, Obata’s translation style is much simpler and exact. Most importantly, he respects the original poetry completely. Obata’s translations, so clear and honest, equate the mood and spirit of Li Po’s poetry. Selected translations are listed in Chapter six and seven along with music analysis.

³⁸ Shigeyoshi Obata. *The works of Li Po*. “Preface” Paragon Book Reprint Corp. New York. 1965. vi

³⁹ Obata. X.

CHAPTER 3

History reveals that some western composers took a strong interest in Chinese poetry, music, instruments and philosophy, an interest that can be seen in some of their musical works. These composers used certain musical clichés to make easily recognized references to Chinese culture, and not always in a very flattering way. The clichés they used included pentatonic and whole tone scales, church modes, change of meter, blatant melodic parallel fourths and fifths, ornamented lines, elaborate melismas for voice, “magic” or “mystic” chords, and harp arpeggios.⁴⁰ Such features are also found in the selected musical settings in this study. However, from the Chinese perspective, none of these musical clichés present the true character of traditional Chinese music.

In Li Po’s poems, particularly those in *yuefu* style, the musicality was either overtly presents in the language itself or established in the pre-existing tunes for which Li Po’s poems were written. Chinese also believe the setting of lyrics to music is a process in which the textual message must penetrate the musical treatment, and performers often say

⁴⁰ Derek B. Scott. “Orientalism and Musical Style.” *Musical Quarterly*. Spring 1998 Vol. 82, no.1. 326.

that they must “first convey text, and then sing the tune”.⁴¹ For the Chinese language is pitch conscious and its tonal structure is highly emphasized in the rules governing poetry so that the primary concern of the text-setting process is to carefully balance melodic and linguistic parameters. Therefore, one method initially to be considered and used in the music analysis is to examine whether the composers take into account the poetic language tones concern when creating the musical setting. As a matter of fact, a kind of Chinese text setting system known as *banqiang* form (in which the music functions as a subsidiary element to the text) supports this method. According to the tonal and rhythmic requirement of the text and the aesthetic preference of the singer, the melodic formulae emerge differently; no two pieces composed according to the same *banqiang* will sound alike.⁴²

Unfortunately, such a method has to be negated on the process of western music analysis, since Chinese musical notation and performance practice are very different from those used in western music. In Chinese music, the single tone is of greater significance than melody. Chinese instruments use *lüs* to categorize tones. The *lüs* did not constitute a scale; however, the scale of Chinese music is pentatonic, which can be notated as five

⁴¹ Wu Ben. “China: living traditions: musical drama and narrative: musical settings” *Grove Music Online* ed. L. Macy (Accessed 5 February 2004), <<http://proxy.lib.ohio-state.edu: 2142>>

⁴² Wu Ben.

different modes by using western keys. (Figure 3.1) Vocal music is difficult to notate since, again, the melody is limited by the fact that melodic inflection influences the meaning of a word. Singers used the syllabic symbols for the five notes of the pentatonic scale while instrumental players used symbols that represented the pitch names of the *lüs*; but none of the notation indicated rhythm⁴³. Therefore, in order to represent the tonal structure of poetry verse, a sketch of pitch in the score according to western method will be provided and compared with the selected measures from the musical settings to examine the treatment of lyrics. One musical verse of each composer's setting was taken to compare with the Chinese poetry with its tonal sketch as examples. (Figure 3.2, 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5) As a result, it won't come as a surprise to find that the English translation and its prosody have little to do with the tonal structure of Chinese poetry.

⁴³ "Chinese music". The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, 6th ed. Columbia University Press. 2003.



Figure 3-1 Five Chinese modes

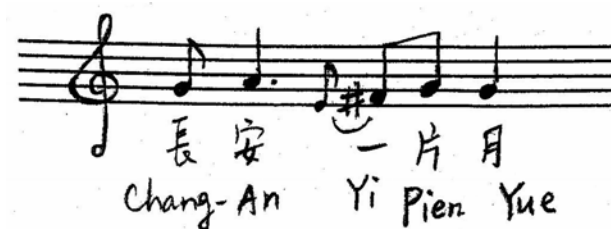
It is clear that none of the four composers attempted to represent an authentic image of ancient China because all of the selected settings use the piano as accompanying instrument. In T'ang Dynasty, two instruments that were often related to performance of poetry or are mentioned in the poetry became important components worth exploring: the *pipa*, a pear-shaped lute with four strings and four frets, which originated in Persia, is considered one of the most popular instruments in traditional Chinese music. The performance practice was not only seen in official documents but also in many poems, “Pipa journey”, for example, written by one of the leading poets in the Tang Dynasty Bai

Juyi. In this poetry the sound of the *pipa* was portrayed vividly. The other instrument, the *Guqin* or *qin* (also called “seven-stringed Zither”) originated in the Han Dynasty. (206 B.C.-220 A.D.) In accordance with the Confucian way, it was required for educated men and scholars to study and practice regularly on a musical instrument; therefore, the *qin* was the chosen instrument of the Chinese literati and was played for personal enjoyment and self-cultivation. This instrument is frequently referred to in ancient Chinese poetry, “A Man of Leisure” for example; Li Po indicated in this poetry that the *qin* was a source of common entertainment in Tang dynasty.

Because of a lack of musical common ground between traditional Chinese music and western styles of music, it is thought most productive to compare the aesthetic values of Li Po’s poetry with the aesthetic values of the composer as displayed in their particular musical settings. The present research seeks to explore the relationship of Li Po’s original poetry and the values found in the musical settings. In the process of examining each setting, this procedure will be followed: 1) a discussion of each composer’s musical career as it related to their interest in setting Li Po’s poetry. 2) a comparison of Li Po’s original poetry with its English translation as found in each setting to examine their accuracy and aesthetic values. 3) an analysis of each musical setting with a view to

exploring the composer's music idioms and devices, focusing on the dramatic situation of each poem and the dramatic character of its corresponding musical setting. Although each composer has his own individual style and musical language, Granville Bantock and Peter Warlock belong to the late Romantic period (1860-1910) while Arthur Bliss and Constant Lambert belong to the early Twentieth century (1900-1950). In this study, the musical analysis will concern the following musical elements as means of dramatic expression: style, tone color, texture, harmony, rhythm, melody, and form (as it relates to the poetic forms used).

Tonal sketch



Musical setting



Figure 3.2 “Under the Moon” by Bantock

Tonal sketch as seen as Figure 3-2

Musical setting



Figure 3.3 “Autumn” by Bliss

Tonal Sketch



Musical setting

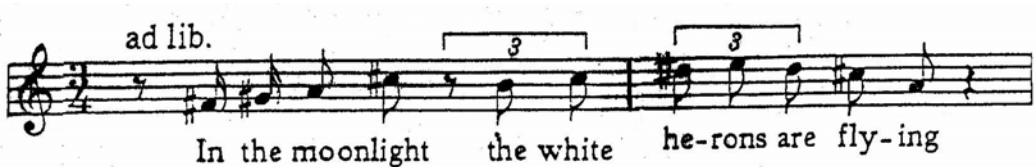
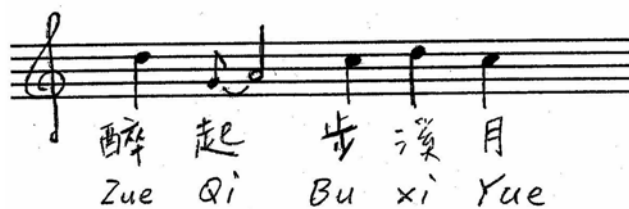


Figure 3.4 “Nocturne” by Lambert

Tonal sketch



Musical setting

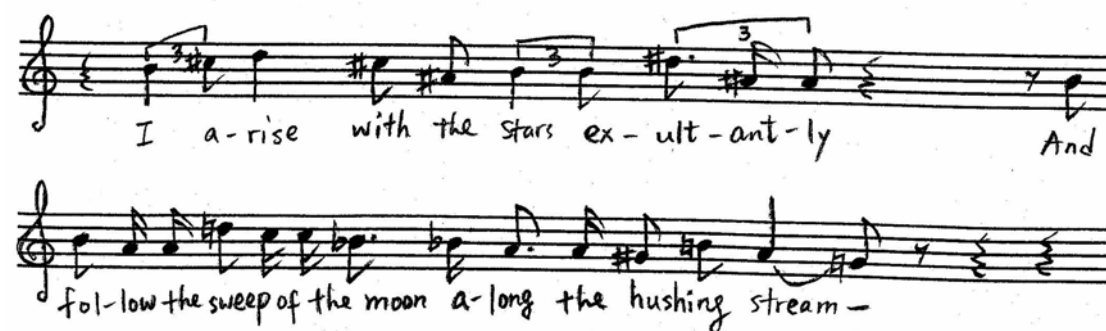


Figure 3.5 “Along the Stream” by Warlock

CHAPTER 4

Granville Bantock (1868-1946)

Granville Bantock is remembered today both for his musical compositions and for his prominent involvement with important educational organizations. His daughter Myrrha, describes him as a very generous man, having a strong influence on the development of young British composers during his lifetime.⁴⁴ On Edward Elgar's recommendation, Bantock was appointed Principal of the Birmingham School of Music, where he served from 1900-1934, while also serving as Professor of Music at Birmingham University from 1908 to 1934. He helped to establish the Midlands Competitive Festival and to form a professional orchestra for Birmingham.⁴⁵ Following his retirement from his Birmingham posts, he became associated with Trinity College of Music in London. In his later years, Bantock devoted his time to musical composition while staying socially active.

⁴⁴ Myrrha Bantock. *Granville Bantock: A personal Portrait*. London: J.M. Dent & Sons. 1972. 64

⁴⁵ Trevor Bray. *Bantock*. London: Traid Press. 1973. 7

Bantock completed his formal musical education at the Royal Academy of Music in 1888, studying briefly with Frederick Corder, whose influence on Bantock's style was "progressive but too easy-going."⁴⁶ The composer was prolific and his music was widely performed during his own time, and most of his works were published. Today very few of his works remain in the standard repertoire. It is generally thought that Bantock was under the spell of Wagner and Richard Strauss and that he failed to develop a distinctive musical idiom of his own. While his compositions often have grand dimensions and are tonality based, his works also reflect his exposure to Eastern music during his Civil service assignment in India. As a result, Bantock was attracted to exotic culture, particularly Eastern classical and cosmic subjects.⁴⁷ He is remembered for his cantata *The Firebird Worshippers* (1890), an extended three parts choral work *Omar Khayyám* (1906-1909) and the Celtic Symphony (1940).

Bantock set more than 400 songs, including some forty-five Chinese poems in translation, which Myrrha Bantock counted "among the most beautiful of his songs"⁴⁸. His interest in setting oriental texts began about the time of his marriage to Helen von Schweitzer in 1889. At her suggestion, Bantock produced six-song sets of *Songs of the*

⁴⁶ Peter J. Pirie. "Bantock and his Generation". The Musical Times. Aug 1968. 715.

⁴⁷ Peter J Prie/David Brock. "Sir Granville Bantock" *Grove Music Online* ed. L. Macy (Accessed 8 July 2003), <<http://proxy.lib.ohio-state.edu:2142>>

⁴⁸ Bantock. 161.

East (Songs for Arabia, Japan, Egypt, Persia, India and China), some with texts either translated or written by his wife. Although the composer never visited China, his friendship with L.A. Cranmer-Byng provided him great support and abundant materials for his song settings. They shared a passion of Eastern culture, “who wrote to one another in true oriental style, Captain Cranmer-Byng being the ever Valiant Warrior, Old Tin-Kap, and my father [Bantock] the Abbot of the Monastery of Golden Gongs in the city of Ming.”⁴⁹

Bantock set thirty-two of Cranmer-Byng’s translations in the six sets of *Songs from the Chinese Poets* published between 1918 and 1933. In the Chinese songs, Bantock chose poems from a very wide time span, all from Cranmer-Byng’s translations in “A Feast of Lanterns” and “A Lute of Jade.” The translations of Li Po’s poems were both selected from “A Lute of Jade.” As stated in Chapter two, Cranmer-Byng’s translations are sometimes problematic because of his tendency to depart too freely from the original Chinese poetry. Cranmer-Byng’s translation of “Drifting” or titled as “Adrift” is so far from any known text by Li-Po that it is not possible to conclude with confidence the actual source poem. Cranmer-Byng seemed to be most fascinated by the idea of Li Po’s fondness of drinking and his troubadour-like life style, describing him as

⁴⁹ Bantock. 161.

A poet with a sword by his side...Li-Po is many sided, and has perhaps more of the world-spirit than all of them [his contemporaries]. We can imagine this bold, careless, impulsive artist, with his moments of great exaltation and alternate depression, a kind of Chinese Paul Verlaine.⁵⁰

Cranmer-Byng sometimes failed to comprehend the full complexity of Li Po's original words and he often altered them to convey an interpretation based on his general impression of the poem; as a result, Cranmer-Byng's translations are not reliably accurate. Even his translations of poem titles do not always correlate with the original titles. For instance, there is no poem among any of Li Po's output having a title that can be translated, as "Adrift" or "Drifting". The Li Po poem closest to Cranmer-Byng's translation might be "Hard Traveling" (行路難). Below is Cranmer-Byng's translation, followed by the poem in its original form. The key words are enclosed in a square bracket in the following comparison with its original poetry.

Adrift

We cannot keep the [gold] of yesterday;
Today's dun clouds we cannot roll away.
Now the long, wailing flight of geese brings autumn in its train,
So to the view-tower [cup] in hand to fill and [drink] again,

And [dream] of the great singers of the past,
Their fadeless lines of fire and beauty cast.

⁵⁰ L Cranmer-Byng, *A Lute of Jade*. New York: E.P. Dutton and Company. 1913. 58.

I too have felt the wild-bird thrill of songs behind the bars,
But these have brushed the world aside and walked amid the stars.

In vain we cleave the torrent's thread with steel,
In vain we drink to drown the grief we feel;
When man's desire with fate doth war, this, this avails alone-
To hoist the [sail] and let the gale and the [waters] bear us on.

行路難 by Li Po

[金樽清酒] 斗十千
玉盤珍饈值萬錢
停杯投餽不能食
拔劍四顧心茫然

欲渡黃河冰塞川
將登太行雪滿山
閒來垂釣碧溪上
忽復乘舟[夢]日邊

行路難
行路難
多歧路
今安在
長風破浪會有時
[直掛雲帆濟滄海]

Stephen Owen's very close translation of Li Po's original text gives a very different impression of Li Po's poem:

A golden goblet and clear wine,
Ten thousand for a gallon,
A plate of jade with choices foods,
Feast worth a fortune-

I put down my goblet, drop my chopsticks,
Cannot eat,
Pull out my sword, look around,
Mind in a daze.

I want to ford the Yellow River-
Ice blocks the stream.
I decide to climb the T'ai-hang's,
But snow fills the mountains.
Then peace of mind comes-I drop my line
Down into emerald rivers,
And all of a sudden I am riding a boat
In dream beside the sun.

Hard traveling,
Traveling hard,
The byways too many-
Where am I now?⁵¹
But there shall come a time
When winds will smash the waves,
I'll just hoist my cloud of a sail
To cross the dark, dark sea.

Owen's translation shows that this poem is full of metaphors and symbolic meanings.

Written after Li Po was forced to resign from his official position in the Han-lin Academy, this poem indicates that Li Po's talent was not fully appreciated. Li Po's feelings were revealed in three aspects, and each aspect has its own psychological turn. The first stanza describes the physical settings. Li Po chooses to ignore the feast before him and instead;

⁵¹ The phrase *jin an zai* (今安在) is better translated as "now I am still here safe and sound".

he draws his sword and sets off into an imaginative wild world. In the second stanza, he wants to conquer the great mountain and river (which symbolize his political ambition). However, fishing by the cool stream far from trouble is inviting to him (indicating a desire to return to the nature), but his thought is only an idle fantasy. The concluding stanza expresses a brave and positive attitude, even though his journey [of life] has been hard, he has survived (行路難，多歧路，今安在) and the poet looks to the future with hope.

Cranmer-Byng's translation (if indeed it is a translation) is a far cry from Li Po's poem in every way. There are several explanations for this discrepancy: (1) Cranmer-Byng might have created a new poem based on his impression of the poem; or (2) Cranmer-Byng might have translated someone else's poem by mistake, thinking it to be Li Po's poem. Cranmer-Byng's translation focused on creating an atmosphere of nostalgia and expressing the vanity of life. Cranmer-Byng seems to make an effort to choose words that make the line ends rhyme, however, this approach always leads a translation away from an accurate interpretation, for example, the last two verses of the first part of the original poetry means "I drop my chopstick, cannot eat and I pull my sword and look around, mind in a daze" while Cranmer-Byng's translation is "so to the

view-tower cup in hand to fill and drink again”. Moreover, the second part of the original poetry uses metaphors such as “crossing the icy yellow river and climbing the great mountain full of snow ” to express the poet’s ambition while Cranmer-Byng’s translation of this passage is “dream of the great singers of the past, their fadeless lines of fire and beauty cast.” The obvious differences between the translation and the “assumed” original Chinese poem also lead one to conclude that the poem is not actually by Li Po at all.

The final stanza of the translation matches the Chinese poem, which supports the idea that “Adrift” is actually a translation of “Hard traveling,” perhaps Cranmer-Byng used this stanza as a point of departure for his “translation.” The Chinese poetic verse is “When winds will smash the waves, I’ll just hoist my cloud of a sail to cross the dark, dark sea”, and Cranmer-Byng’s translation is “to hoist the sail and let the gale and the waters bear us on”. Even though this ending verse of the translation corresponds with the Chinese poem, the mistranslation of the earlier stanzas misleads the reader to believe that the poem also sings of the mutability of all things⁵². It is true that often Li Po is preoccupied with poetry relating to drinking and which embodies the passive attitude of Taoism (accented in Cranmer-Byng’s translation). However, the Chinese poem also

⁵² Lewis Foreman. Note from the recording *Bantock: Songs from the Chinese Poets*. 10. Dutton 2002. . CDLX 7121

exhibits an optimistic spirit and knowing this is crucial to the reader's appreciation of Li Po's poem. Finally, the emotional complexity of this poem is lost in Cranmer-Byng's translation.

In such circumstances, Bantock's musical setting could only remotely relate to Li Po's original intention for its artistic expression. "Adrift" is from the *Songs from the Chinese Poets*, Series III no.3, dedicated to the tenor Frank Mullings, who championed Bantock's songs for many years. The edition in this study was published by Elkin Music's *British Composers Anthology*.

Bantock often uses devices of musical "chinoiserie", as mentioned in Chapter two, such as quoting a Chinese tune, employing pentatonic scales or octaves to give an "oriental feel" to the settings. Here, however, Bantock's approach is completely romantic, employing a Puccini-like lyric musical line: the c minor mode sets up the tragic, large-scale vocal line which is often doubled in the piano accompaniment. One of the features in most of Bantock's songs is his extensive use of expression markings. Here they appear at the beginning of each section as general indications: *poco largamente cantabile* (mm1-12) *poco animando* (mm13-16), *più moto* (mm17-24), *poco allargando* (mm 25-32), *affrettando* (mm 33-43), *A tempo, animando, poco a poco* (mm 44-50) along

with *marcato*, *tenuto*, *expressivo*, *molto* indications in vocal and piano parts. These expression markings reflect Bantock's detailed approach to the changing dramatic character of the texts as reflected in the musical setting.

"Adrift" was written in ABA' form, in common time and uses a wide range of dynamics from *forte* to *piano*. Bantock's dramatic dynamic changes are frequently related to, and often reflect the dramatic impressions of the text. The song begins with a melodic motive in the vocal part that unifies the A section and often time the piano doubles with the voice. In the A section, the motive that appears in measure 3-4 is highly lyrical; measure 5-6 seems to be a response to the motive. (Figure 4.1)

The musical score for "Adrift" mm 1-6 is presented in two systems. The first system features a Voice part and a Piano part. The Voice part begins with the tempo/mood marking "Poco largamente cantabile." and the dynamic "mp espress." The lyrics "We can-not keep the gold of" are written below the voice staff. The Piano part has a dynamic of "mp espress." and then "p espress." The second system continues the music. The Voice part has the lyrics "yes-ter-day; To-day's dun clouds we can-not roll a-way." and includes a "cresc. poco" marking. The Piano part continues with "mp espress." and "espress." markings. The score includes various musical notations such as treble and bass clefs, key signatures (three flats), time signatures (4/4), and dynamic markings.

Figure 4.1 “Adrift” mm 1-6

Bantock’s music often features rich textures and simple harmonic structure and progression. “Adrift” represents this style without exception. The octaves and major-and dominant seventh chords in the piano parts which are often employed make the texture rich and thick. Starting with the B section, the texture is made to seem even more dense by the repeated triplet chords along with an increase in the dynamic level. Rhythmically, triplets and juxtaposition of two against three seems to suit Bantock’s musical need for developing dramatic effect to the music. (Figure 4.2)

Bantock's reflection on the dramatic text is shown in his application of repeating key words. In the B section of his setting of "But these have brushed the world aside and walked amid the stars", he repeated these words twice with dense piano writing underneath. At the A' section final verse, Bantock repeated "and let the waters bear us on" twice. The lyric vocal line reaches to its highest range supported by the melodic motive in the right hand of the piano accompaniment. The triplet rhythm and two against three, again, was employed to develop a sense of drama. (Figure 4.2)

The composer's intention to create a tragic grand scene in this musical setting was achieved by the rich texture piano accompaniment and the expressive, lyric vocal line. Unfortunately, because the translation does not faithfully reflect the meanings of the Chinese poetry, the image and mood Bantock had in mind is not related to Li Po's poem.

len.
 — and let the gale — and the wa — ters, — and let the wa — ters bear —
espress.
p
espress.
dim.
rall.
molto
ten.
 us on, — and let the wa — ters bear us
p
espress.
cresc.
rall.
molto
f
ten.
 A Tempo, animando, poco a poco.
p *sostenuto*
 on.
p
più p
espress.

Figure 4.2 “Adrift” mm 38-46

Under the Moon

Bantock used another poem by Li Po from Cranmer-Byng's *Lute of Jade* called "Under the Moon". The original poem is "Midnight Ballade-Autumn" (子夜吳歌) which is *yuefu* style written to a Su-chou melody.⁵³ This poem is part of a series, which was set to a song cycle by Arthur Bliss. (See Chapter 6). Cranmer-Byng's translation this time stays closer to the original poem. The rhyme scheme is marked in square brackets after the Chinese character.

Under the moon

(Translated by Cranmer-Byng)

Under the crescent moon's faint glow
The washerman's bat resounds afar,
And the autumn breeze sighs tenderly,
But my heart has gone to the Tartar war,
To bleak Kansu and the steppes of snow,
Calling my lover back to me.

子夜吳歌

by Li Po

長安一片月，
萬戶擣衣聲；[sheng]
秋風吹不盡，
總是玉關情。[qieng]
何日平胡虜？
良人罷遠征。[zheng]

Clair de lune (editorial translation)

Sous le pale croissant de lune,
S'entend le battoir du lavandier
Et l'automne pleur tendrement
Mais mon Coeur s'enfuit vers les camps tartares
Le noir Kansuh, les deserts de neige,
Soupirant après l'amoureux.

⁵³ Witter Bynner. *The Jade Mountain*. 61.

China had constant battles with Tartar tribes on the border in the Tang Empire. The subject matter of much Tang poetry thus focused on the loss of family, and a longing for a husband's or son's return. Li Po is a master of capturing human emotions in poetic forms; the moon and the sound of the distant washerman's bat are reminiscent of loneliness and emptiness. The last two phrases take the form of a question: "When will the Tartar war be settled so that my love will stop traveling far away?" The poem was written in *yuefu* style and the rhyme scheme is on 2, 4, and 6, which is the most common scheme in Chinese poetry, but here it has no relation to the English translation. As seen in the English translation, the rhyme is on "glow", "afar", "war" and "snow". Even Cranmer-Byng's translation is more concerned with the rhyme of line-ends, but he added the phrase "the steppes of snow" which is not in Li Po's poem. And "Kansu", name of a China province (where the borderline and wars were located), is also not mentioned by Li Po. The title "Under the Moon" was taken from the first stanza, which literally translated as "The moon shines above the city of Chang-an".

"Under the Moon" was from *Songs from the Chinese Poets*, Series I, No.3. The edition under study was published by J. & W. Chester Company, London. A French translation of the song text was included along with the English translation but the

translator's name was missing. The French translation is even further away from the original Li Po's poem because it was translated from the English text! The French title translates to English as "Moonlight," a title twice removed from the original meaning. The third line of the Chinese poem translates to English as "the autumn wind blows endlessly" while the French translates to English as "the autumn cries tenderly". Most startlingly, the fifth line of the English translation is "To bleak Kansu and the steppes of snow" while the French translates to English as "The black Kansu, deserts of snow," which seems to confuse the words "bleak" and "black". Obviously, the quality of the French translation is so poor that it has little relationship to the original.

"Under the Moon" is a through-composed piece in 3/4 meter. Its style bears strong resemblance to that of Debussy's. The first two measures evoke an atmosphere similar to that found in Debussy's piano piece "Clair de lune". Debussy's influence on Bantock can also be seen in his *The Pierrot of the Minute* (1908). "Under the Moon" is based on augmented harmony, which the composer applied very consistently throughout. The augmented chords of the piano introduction almost create the illusion of a whole tone scale, and the harmony shifts freely between adjacent augmented chords. The cantors of vocal line conform to the augmented harmony and the melody often reiterates on three

notes (e.g., C, D, and E). By the use of dynamics, the whole piece is no louder than *mf* until the *forte* at end of the piece- the composer sustains a mood of tranquility until the dramatic moments at the conclusion. This technique reinforces the mystic atmosphere of the piece as indicated by the initial expression marking *Andantino mistico* while the overall texture has a simplicity that departs from the composer's typical song style.

(Figure 4.3)

The musical score for "Under the Moon" (mm 1-7) is presented in two systems. The first system shows the beginning of the piece with the tempo and mood marking *Andantino mistico.* The voice part starts with a rest, followed by the lyrics "Un - der the cres - cent" and "Sous le pâ - le crois -". The piano part begins with a *p* dynamic, marked *a piacere* and *espress.*, and includes a *sost.* (sostenuto) marking. The second system continues the vocal melody with lyrics "moon's faint glow" and "The wash - er - man's bat re - sounds a -", followed by "- sant de lu - - ne, S'en-tend le bat - toir du la - van -". The piano accompaniment continues with *più p* (più piano) and *espress.* markings, ending with a *dim.* (diminuendo) and *sost.* marking.

Figure 4.3 "Under the Moon" mm 1-7

The basic mood of this piece is established in the first two measures by the descending parallel major thirds. Bantock's mood painting can be found in the arpeggiated augmented chords that reflect the text "And the autumn breeze sighs tenderly". (Figure 4.4)

The musical score for "Under the Moon" mm 8-14 is presented in two systems. The first system shows measures 8-10, and the second system shows measures 11-14. The vocal line is in treble clef, and the piano accompaniment is in grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The key signature has one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 3/4.

System 1 (Measures 8-10):

- Vocal Line:**
 - Measure 8: *dim.* - far
 - Measure 9: *accel.* dier,
 - Measure 10: *Tempo I?* And the / Et l'au-
- Piano Accompaniment:**
 - Measures 8-9: *ppp* (pianissimo)
 - Measures 10-11: *morendo* (diminuendo)

System 2 (Measures 11-14):

- Vocal Line:**
 - Measure 11: *dolciss.* au - - tumn breeze sighs ten - - - der-ly.
 - Measure 12: tom - - ne pleu - - re ten - - - dre-ment.
- Piano Accompaniment:**
 - Measure 11: *pp* (pianissimo)
 - Measure 12: *espress.* (espressivo)
 - Measure 13: *dim.* (diminuendo)

Figure 4.4 "Under the Moon" mm 8-14

Bantock apparently considered the last phrase of the text “calling my lover back to me” the emotional highpoint of the poem. Here the piano doubles the vocal line while *sforzando* and *marcato* marks appear in the piano part as a reminder of the battle, and a *f sost* is indicated for the left hand resulting in a rich texture. The vocal line is marked *forte* along with an *Allargando* (becoming broader and louder) and the expression mark *con afflizione* (mournfully). The effect is desolate and moving. (Figure 4.5)

The musical score for "Under the Moon" (mm 25-28) consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is written in treble clef and is marked "Allargando. f con afflizione". It includes the lyrics "Call - ing - my - lo - - ver back to me. / Sou - pi - - rant a - - près l'a - mou - reux." The piano accompaniment is written in grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The right hand is marked "sf marc." and "dim.", while the left hand is marked "f sost." and "pp sost.".

Figure 4.5 “Under the Moon” mm 25-28

To conclude, Bantock’s setting of this poem focuses on the “moonlit night.” He emphasizes this idea by using basic augmented chords, which create a melancholy and mystical atmosphere. This song also has a harmonic ambiguity, a suspension of major and

minor contexts without resorting to atonality. With the influence of Debussy and the inevitable integration of melodic and harmonic structure, Li Po's poem became buried in a French impressionism cliché.

CHAPTER 5

Peter Warlock (1894-1930)

Peter Warlock is a composer whose pseudonym is better known than his given name Philip (Arnold) Heseltine. Warlock's career took several directions. He was the editor of "The Sackbut", a forthright periodical which was not only a vehicle for Warlock to present his view on music, but which also promoted comparatively unknown music and poetry. Warlock was considered an authority on Elizabethan music and in the course of his life he edited over three hundred Elizabethan and Jacobean lute songs for voice and keyboard, and also choral arrangements⁵⁴. His transcriptions of Elizabethan music were among the finest and most influential. Among all the contributions in his short life, he is primarily remembered as a composer of songs with piano accompaniments. From his school days to the last months of his tragically short life Warlock composed more than 120 songs.

⁵⁴ Barry Smith. "Peter Warlock." *Grove Music Online*.ed. L. Macy. (5 February 2004)
<<http://proxy.lib.ohio-state.edu>: 2142>

Warlock was interested in music from childhood but did not consider making music a career until Colin Taylor, his music teacher at Eton, introduced him to the music of Frederic Delius and later to the composer himself. Warlock spent three terms at Oxford before moving on to University College, London, to study journalism. The composer never received formal musical training, but spent much of his spare time studying all the Delius scores he could find; many of these he transcribed for piano, piano duet, or both. Warlock's early songs were strongly influenced by those of Quilter and Delius. Another profound influence on Warlock's growth was the Anglo-Dutch composer Bernard van Dieren. They met in 1917 and Warlock briefly studied with him and became a champion of his works. Warlock's deep admiration of van Dieren and dissatisfaction with his own growth as composer is seen in a letter he wrote to van Dieren:⁵⁵

I was so utterly overwhelmed by your music this afternoon, that all words failed me...What a profound impression my visit to you has made upon me. It has brought me to a turning point, opened out a vista of a new world...I have been groping about aimlessly in the dark for so long, which ever growing desperation-and at last you have shown a light, alone among composers whom I have met; for neither Delius nor any other has even so much suggested a practical solution of the initial difficulties of musical composition.

Bernard van Dieren's influence can be seen quite clearly in the music Warlock wrote in the period following their meeting. Through 1916 his songs are very similar to van

⁵⁵ Cecil Gray, *Peter Warlock*. London: Jonathan Cape. 1938. 139.

Dieren's in their harmonic language and conception; *Saudades*, a song cycle written towards the end of 1916, is almost indistinguishable from van Dieren's own work.⁵⁶ Warlock's piano accompaniments betray extensive borrowings from those of his mentor. While the young Warlock acquired a rich and fluent vocabulary of chromatic chords from Delius, van Dieren's influence was felt in matters of the conception and structure of melody. Warlock learned to compose his piano parts more contrapuntally and with an eye toward the importance of melodic invention and harmonic coloration.⁵⁷ In 1918 Warlock suddenly assimilated all these influences and produced his first mature songs. They were sent to Winthrop Rogers under the pseudonym Peter Warlock. Six were published that same year.⁵⁸

Saudades is Warlock's first published work, brought out by Chester in 1923 (composed during 1916-1917). The title *Saudades* comes from the Portuguese and Warlock includes a brief description of the word at the bottom of the title page: "That haunting sense of sadness and regret for days gone by which the Portuguese call *saudades*-a word which has no equivalent in the English language." Copley stated: "this

⁵⁶ Hywel Davies. "Bernard Van Dieren, Philip Heseltine and Cecil Gray: A significant affiliation". *Music and Letters*. Vol 69. 1988. 34

⁵⁷ Vernon Lee Yenne. *Three twentieth century English song composers: Peter Warlock, E.J. Moeran and John Ireland*. MI dissertation abstract. 1969.44

⁵⁸ Fred Tomlinson. Note from Recording *Warlock Songs*. Chandos Records. 1988 CHAN 8648.

must be regarded as a clue to the basic musical and emotional character of the cycle”.⁵⁹

Tomlinson stated: “and the words ‘haunting’, ‘sadness’ and ‘regret’ are key words when one thinks of these early Warlock personalities”.⁶⁰

Saudades contains three songs by poets from different cultures. The first song of the set, entitled “Along the Stream,” is dedicated to van Dieren. The text was translated from Li Po’s poem by Cranmer-Byng in his *A Feast of Lanterns*. Yenne stated: “The prevailing mood of the text is one of melancholy wistfulness, although not the deep despair found in Warlock’s most famous song cycle, *The Curlew*”.⁶¹ The second song “Take, O Take Those Lips Away” is a setting of a poem from Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure*. And the third song “Heracleitus” is a setting of a poem translated from the Greek librarian Callimachus (c. 300-240 B.C.) by William Cory. Warlock made a reference to his setting on Li Po’s poem in a letter of 10 November 1917 to Colin Taylor.⁶²

I am sending you another, and I think, much better song [than Heracleitus] I have just done--the first of a little group from Cranmer-Byng’s lovely collection of Chinese Lyrics--“A Feast of Lantern” (which, incidentally, contains the best essay on Poetry I have ever read). These songs are more or less studies for an opera...

⁵⁹ I.A. Copley. *The Music of Peter Warlock*. London: Dennis Dobson. 59

⁶⁰ Tomlinson.

⁶¹ Yenne. 46

⁶² Copley. 61

Apparently Warlock was fascinated by Cranmer-Byng's translations. The emotional theme that unites the three songs is the word "*Saudades*" and Warlock seemed convinced that "Along the Stream" represented a gloomy and sad atmosphere. However, a study of the original Chinese poem reveals that Warlock was misinformed by Cranmer-Byng's romantic interpretation. The English text of the setting "Along the Stream" is here compared line by line with the Chinese poem as follows.

自遣 (zi-cien) by Li-Po

對酒不覺暝
落花盈我衣
醉起步溪月
鳥還人亦稀

Along the Stream

(Translated by Cranmer-Byng)

The rustling nightfall strews my gown with roses
And wine flushed petals bring forgetfulness
I arise with the stars exultantly.
And follow the sweep of the moon along the
hushing stream where no birds wake.
[Only the long drawn sigh of wary voices
whispering: farewell.]⁶³

Compare Stephen Watson's word by word translation:

Facing my wine, unaware of darkness growing,
Falling flowers cover my robes.
Drunk I rise, step on the moon in the creek-
Birds are turning back now, men too are growing fewer.

This particular poem has many different translated titles. The meaning of this combination of two somewhat simple Chinese characters can be confusing.

⁶³ This verse was added by Cranmer-Byng instead of translating from Li Po's poem.

Cranmer-Byng chose to focus on the scenic language of the fourth line “along the hushing stream” in titling his translation of this poem. Other translators show their reluctance to translate the title directly: Stephen Owen translated it as “My Feeling” and Obata as “The Solitude of Night”, titles which suggest the overall content of the poem. However, the title holds the key to Li Po’s aesthetic view of this poem and invites a more literal translation. The first character “zi” in Chinese should be translated as “myself.” And “cien” should be translated as “amuse”, “leisure”, or “entertain”. Therefore, the title could be translated as “Amusing myself” or even “At leisure” or “To amuse myself”. According to the context, it is depicting a state of mind where consciousness is altered by drinking, and thoughts of unusual clarity inform one’s observations of both one’s self and one’s surroundings. Li Po’s art allows for different interpretations of simply stated ideas that allow the reader to use his phrases as doorways for self-discovery. Every reader therefore must confront a series of ideas in an order that makes the reader turn his attention away from himself to see broader truth. Watson pointed out that this type of poetry is “private” to Li Po because it regards an image of the self, and the activity is self-centered. Li Po was not interested in how the world was perceived or in creating a mood. Instead,

Li Po wrote about a grand “me”-how I am, what I am like, what I said and did. The world scarcely matters at all, except as a prop to hang his headband on. His was poetry of self-creation: while the meditative poet might define the self by introspection, Li Po defined the self by individuating acts, by gestures that separated him from others.

Li Po wrote about a grand “me”-how I am, what I am like, what I said and did. The world scarcely matters at all, except as a prop to hang his headband on. His was poetry of self-creation: while the meditative poet might define the self by introspection, Li Po defined the self by individuating acts, by gestures that separated him from others.

Many great poems of Li Po were written while the poet was intoxicated by drinking. Here Li Po observed the relationship between himself and nature. He finds himself intoxicated and alone in the dark, when he notices the petals on his robe. This introduces the reader to an elegant vision and symbolizes his consciousness of nature, a larger world view, or even his indefinite sense of mind. As romantic and free as the spirit of the poet was, he acted on his mood by following the reflection of the moon on the water. Following Li Po on his walk, the reader can relate to his intoxication, without being sure whether the poet is speaking of the present or of an illusion. The reader is surprised when Li Po abruptly ends the poem, leaving the readers rather puzzled over where this final statement comes from and how it relates to the rest of the poem.

Li Po uses “falling petals,” “moon along the stream” and the most effective last line “birds are returning and men are growing fewer” to evoke a sense of loneliness. However, the Chinese poem does not evoke the same kind of “melancholy wistfulness” associated with the word *Saudades*, but Cranmer-Byng’s translation does give that misleading impression. Li Po’s poem takes the specific form of a four line poem with five characters in each line for a total of twenty characters. Cranmer-Byng should have ended his translation with the fourth line but he elected to add his own fifth line “only the long drawn sigh of wary voices whispering: farewell.”

“Along the Stream” is a through-composed song with a tempo marking of *Andante*, with the eighth note equal to about 96. This piece shows the influence of van Dieren, using neither key signature nor bar lines. There is a fluidity of movement that rejects regular meter, and this rhythmic flexibility, as in van Dieren’s own music, complements the somewhat atonal progress. The breathlessness of the second half of “Along the Stream” is accomplished by tight contrapuntal piano parts and harmonic structure which is also a trait borrowed from van Dieren. A six note motif first occurs in the left hand of the piano accompaniment and it serves to unify the song (Figure 5.1) either in its original form or transposed.



Figure 5.1 “Along the Stream” motive

The motive is not melodically distinctive therefore it is easily concealed within the dissonant texture. Warlock employed this idea so subtly that the motive which appears both in the vocal and piano parts line up almost contrapuntally. (Figure 5.2)

(a)

Figure 5.2(a) shows the left hand piano and vocal line for system 4. The vocal line is in the treble clef, starting with a whole note 'a - rise' followed by a half note 'with' and a quarter note 'the stars'. The piano accompaniment is in the bass clef, featuring a series of chords and triplets. The tempo is marked 'marc. ma non pesante' and the dynamics include 'pp' and 'mf'.

(b)

Figure 5.2(b) shows the right hand piano and vocal line for system 5. The vocal line is in the treble clef, starting with a whole note 'fol - low the sweep of the moon' followed by a half note 'a - long the hush - ing stream' and a quarter note 'Where no birds'. The piano accompaniment is in the bass clef, featuring a series of chords and triplets. The tempo is marked 'Più lento.' and the dynamics include 'pppp', 'p subito', 'sempre p', and 'pppp'.

Figure 5.2 (a) See left hand piano and vocal line (system 4)
(b) See right hand piano and vocal line (system 5)

Vocally Warlock demands a *pppp* on the phrase “where no birds wake.” The whole song is no louder than *mp* and even the *sfz* at the end of the piece is written *pochissimo* (just a little). The first phrase of the song is a direct application of the pentatonic scale. (Figure 5.3) Warlock further developed his chordal pentatone in his later works as his own distinctive vocabulary and imbued it with a personal usage. This musical idiom can

also be found in “Take o take those lips away”, the second song which was actually composed first in the cycle.



Figure 5.3 “Along the Stream” system 2

Warlock’s skill in text painting is often amusing. The vocal line starts with a pentatonic scale until the word “forgetfulness” on a C natural key change which confuses the mode; this departure symbolizes the poet forgetting his way. The vocal line returns to the mode on the words “striding past.” (Figure 5.3) Another place is as shown at **Figure 5.2 (a)**, where both piano part and vocal line have the motive but they form a minor

seventh along with the triplet rhythm in the right hand piano accompaniment. The composer portrays the poet's intoxication by this change of harmony and rhythm under the text "I arise with the stars exultantly."

Warlock presents the poem in a way similar to the practice of reciting Chinese poetry, in that he avoids using stable meter and uses rests to separate poetic lines. The music is not entirely atonal but creates an oblique and illusive atmosphere. However, the image Warlock is apparently interested in this poem is the sad and sorrowful character that actually comes from Cranmer-Byng's translation, particularly the last add-in line which concludes the poem in a sepulchral tone differing from Li Po's interest in projecting his self-image that differs from others. Considering Li Po's personality and philosophy of life (see Chapter 2), this poem carries a sense of hermit life, in Chinese so called "*xian qieng yi qu*" (閑情逸趣), meaning carefree and happy recluse, or to live like lazy clouds and untrammelled cranes. Although this particular poem indeed carries a tone of solitude, the composer caught the nuance and established an even greater reflection of the translated text. Copley points out that Warlock's reaction to the imagery of the poem is a prophetic foretaste of *The Curlew*,⁶⁴ which was considered a milestone in the composer's output and a self-portrait.

⁶⁴ Copley. 61.

CHAPTER 6

Arthur Bliss (1891-1975)

Arthur Bliss, one of the most provocative and talented British composers of the twentieth century is remembered today for his *Color Symphony* and ballet *Checkmate*. His comprehensive knowledge of the repertoire and musical skill also made him a respected conductor throughout his music career. Bliss was knighted in 1950 and appointed Master of the Queen's music in 1953 both to honor his contributions as a musician and a worthy person. Like Bantock, Bliss encouraged and supported young British musicians. In his position as BBC music director (1942-1944), Bliss championed the works of British composers and constantly traveled abroad on behalf of British music. He also spent a great deal of time on committee work with BBC, and cared about the welfare of children.

Arthur Edward Drummond Bliss was born in London on 2 August 1891. His father was from Springfield, Massachusetts and his mother was British and a talented pianist.

Bliss and his two brothers were brought up in London. Bliss showed impressive musical potential at very young age. He received a thorough musical education and was exposed to opera and ballet while studying at the Royal College of Music in London during the year 1913-1914.

Although he fought in France during the First World War, Bliss managed to stay connected with music. Edward Elgar, who conducted his works in London during the war, offered the young composer great encouragement. After demobilization, Bliss went to Paris to meet artists like Pablo Picasso and Jean Cocteau. He was fascinated by the works of the members of *Les Six*, and the postwar Stravinsky. Inspired by their spirit of striving for new means of expression, in the next few years Bliss started to explore sound and color in his composition: *Madam Noy* (1918), *Rhapsody* (1919) and *Rout* (1920). These compositions were responsible for Bliss' reputation as the *enfant terrible* of the day because of their modernism⁶⁵. These vocal works also showed the composer's strong interest in human voices.

Bliss made a reputation as an innovator with his compositions, exhibiting a deliberate astringency that both shocked and delighted his audiences.⁶⁶ The composer's

⁶⁵ Christopher Palmer. *Bliss*. UK: Novello. 1976.6

⁶⁶ Stewart R Craggs. *Arthur Bliss*. Biography. 4

reputation as a force in English music was established first by his compositions and later by his conducting. His first major and most well-known orchestral work was *A Color Symphony* (1921-22), which exhibits influence from the music of Elgar. Bliss moved to America with his father in 1923. He spent some stimulating time at the upstate New York resort of Lake Mohonk⁶⁷ with a copy of *The Works of Li-Po*, a newly published translation by the Japanese scholar Shigeyoshi Obata. Here he wrote over a dozen settings (letter to E.J.Dent, 22 June 1923)⁶⁸ of these texts but only nine were published in two cycles: five as *The Women of Yueh* for soprano and a ten member chamber ensemble; four as *The Ballads of the Four Seasons*. Easterbrook believes that the two early vocal works are landmarks in his musical development because they are true song-cycles with unified themes, cohesive underlying musical treatments exhibiting consistency of mood.⁶⁹

In his memoir *As I remember*, Bliss described his social and professional life in detail. Ever a rather public figure, the composer pointed out that only in his music would his real and private personality be found.

⁶⁷ Near present day New Paltz, NY in the Catskill Mountains of New York; just north of New York City.

⁶⁸ Arthur Bliss. *As I remember*. London: Faber, 1970.

⁶⁹ Giles Easterbrooks: Recording note to Bliss: *A Knot of Riddles and other songs* (hyperion, 1998)

Vocal works of Bliss

The first solo song Bliss composed was in 1914 “Tis time I think by Wenlock Town”, text by A.E. Housman, almost two minutes in length. Then the following year, he had another solo song “The Hammers”, text by Ralph Hodgson, also about two minutes long. In 1916 came another short vocal solo “The Tramps” which was even shorter than previous works.⁷⁰ Bliss attempted to continue his composition during the wartime; however, the result was limited and frugal. Even after the war his compositional output was small and one might assume that Bliss was busy observing his contemporaries and waiting to regain his inspiration. A break through finally came in 1918 with *Madame Noy*, and every year thereafter Bliss composed at least one vocal work.

Even though Bliss wrote many songs with piano accompaniment, his passion and strength lies in works with instrumental ensemble, either with chamber ensemble or orchestra. After *Madame Noy*, all the vocal works were orchestrated: *Rhapsody* (1919) and *Rout* (1920) *Two Nursery Rhymes* (1920) and *The Tempest* (1921). As Stephen Banfield stated:

“...their musical style is not particularly progressive, drawing mainly on Ravel and the Russian idiom up to early Stravinsky, but nonetheless they helped to give Bliss the rather

⁷⁰ Sir Arthur Bliss Archive. <http://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/Departments/Music/Bliss/Musicsongs.htm>

misleading reputation of an *enfant terrible*...All Bliss is trying to do is move text and instrumentation close together in a gesture towards abstraction.”⁷¹

Fighting in the First World War had a profound impact on Bliss and his music. Early songs “The hammers” and “The tramps” can be classified as war songs. Other examples of his early works include *Serenade* for baritone and orchestra and *Morning Heroes* (1929), a choral symphony in five movements, which was a requiem for those killed in World War I, including his brother Francis Kennard Bliss. The last movement relates specifically to the war which Bliss himself had experienced. The third movement used a Li Po text, “Vigil”; in which a young wife who has been left alone is contrasted with her man on watch at the battlefield.⁷²

According to the Bliss memoir *As I remember*, the composer often chose from anthologies of poets of different ages and styles, such as Homer, Walt Whitman, George Chapman, Wilfred Owen, Roberts Nicholas and Li Po. Banfield points out that in early vocal works Bliss had the tendency to avoid serious poems but wanted only to exercise his music style and skill.⁷³ *Madame Noy*, for example, is described by the composer as “a witchery song” while *Rout* and *Rhapsody* used the voice as part of an orchestral

⁷¹ Stephen Banfield. *Sensibility and English Songs: Critical Studies of the Early 20 century* (2). Cambridge University Press, 1985. 365.

⁷² John Sugden. *Sir Arthur Bliss*. Omnibus Press: London. 1997. 47-48

⁷³ Banfield. 365.

combination without distinct text. In *Rout* the soprano sings a melody of made-up syllables, and in *Rhapsody* the mezzo-soprano and the tenor vocalize on “ah”. *Morning Heroes* has no melodic soloist, and no mediator (except the orchestra) between stark narration and the curiously unmelodic choral writing. Comparatively, Bliss started to associate with text more closely with his settings of *The Women of Yueh* and *The Ballads of the Four Seasons* (Both settings use the Chinese poetry by Li Po). Banfield believes “They represent a prolonged avoidance of expansive treatment of the solo voice, a disinclination to use it for lyrical or rhetorical self-expression.”⁷⁴

To sum up Bliss’ music style, Cole and Burn stated:

...strong ties bound him [Bliss] to his predecessors, most of all to Elgar, and for the rest of his life he was content to work within an idiom that owed much to earlier Romantic composers of the 19th and 20th centuries; but his music retained some of the characteristics of the advanced composers whose music had influenced him in youth: wide-ranging melodies, instrumentally rather than vocally inspired, recall the Viennese Expressionists; his brilliant orchestration is designed, like Stravinsky's, to separate parts rather than to blend and mix timbres; and the consonance–dissonance range is wide, dissonance being reserved for dramatic use, rather than appearing as a regular part of speech⁷⁵.

⁷⁴ Banfield. 366.

⁷⁵ Hugo Cole and Andrew Burn. “Arthur Bliss.” *Grove Music Online* ed. L. Macy (Accessed 1 Nov. 2003), <<http://proxy.lib.ohio-state.edu:2142>>

The Ballads of the Four Seasons by Arthur Bliss

Poetry by Li-Po

The title of this series of poems was inherited from the folk song which flourished in the Six dynasties of Wu (221-618 A.D.). A legendary woman named “Midnight” (zu-yie) who mastered singing this type of folksong, which was then named after her as “midnight seasonal songs.” Li Po wrote the poems in *yuefu* style to be set to music.

Spring

(Translated by Obata)

The lovely Lo-foh of the land of Chin,
Is plucking mulberry leaves by the blue water,
On the green boughs her white arms gleam,
And the bright sun shines upon her scarlet dress,
“My silk worms” says she, “are hungry, I must go,
Tarry not with your five horse, Prince, I pray!”

子夜四時歌：春歌

(Text by Li Po)

秦地羅敷女，
採桑綠水邊。
素手青條上，
紅妝白日鮮。
蠶飢妾欲去，
五馬莫流連。

The first poem of the series uses the old *yuefu* components. These stylized components became of increasing interest in the seventh century when poets used them to write fictional poetry. There was growing freedom in the way poets used them because the components usually related to famous historical legend. Li Po uses Lo-fo, a chaste young woman who first appeared in a Han dynasty (25-220 A.D.) *yuefu* poem “Mulberries along the field” (陌上桑), as one of his stylized components. “The land of Chin” is set in Shanxi province, in mid-western China. Lo-fo is plucking mulberry leaves

to feed the silk worms, until a pursuer approaches. “Five horses” was also a term that came from the same *yuefu* poem. Obata literally translated *u ma* (五馬) to mean “five horses.” In ancient Chinese the official’s wagon was pulled by five horses (the higher the political the position, the more horses pulled the wagon) therefore “five horses” traditionally means Tai-shou (太守), the official title of a provincial governor. However, here the official might not necessarily have come to see Lo-fo in his wagon since “five horses” is just a common way to refer to the provincial governor. This poem begins with an image full of vitality in springtime and a pleasant feeling for working. Li Po’s technique was to use the words, “blue water”, “green boughs”, “white arms”, “scarlet dress” and “bright sun”, to present a colorful view of this situation. The first four verses are written in a narrative way, while in the last two verses, Li Po’s genius for subtle characterization is apparent. Lo-fo steps out of the vignette and speaks; she called herself “qie” (妾). In the ancient Chinese culture, women were required to lower themselves and show their respect while talking to their husbands or any men whose position is superior. Li Po’s satire in this poem is honest and kind. He advised the official not to indulge himself with beautiful women. In Obata’s translation, Li Po’s meaning was understood and captured in the colloquial phrasing of the poem.

“Spring” was written in AA’B form, A flat major, common time, *Allegretto grazioso* with the quarter note equal to 88. The A section begins with a six measure piano theme that unifies the song and that conveys a pleasant springtime atmosphere. Bliss wrote a staccato ostinato pattern for the left hand while in the right hand he provided a chord progression ornamented by grace-notes. The ambiguity of harmony is seen in the use of two accidentals (c flat and f flat) in the chords before the vocal line enters; the harmony swings between A flat major and minor, depicting the instability of spring weather and of a young maiden’s heart. (Figure 6.1)

The musical score for "Spring" mm 1-7 is presented in two systems. The tempo is marked *Allegretto grazioso* with a quarter note equal to 88. The key signature is A-flat major (three flats). The time signature is common time (C). The first system shows the beginning of the piece, with the piano part starting in measure 1. The piano part features a staccato ostinato pattern in the left hand and a chord progression in the right hand, ornamented by grace notes. The vocal part enters in measure 4. The second system continues the piano part, showing the continuation of the staccato ostinato and the chord progression. The vocal part continues with the lyrics "The".

Allegretto grazioso ♩ = 88

VOICE

PIANO

p

simile

mf

The

Figure 6.1 “Spring” mm 1-7

Bliss provides a fluid, flexible vocal line for the text. The tonal ambiguity of the melody, achieved by the inclusion of three accidentals F flat, G flat, C flat seems to reflect Li Po's text. Bliss supports the vocal line with a new theme in measure 8. A new ostinato that appears in the left hand of piano accompaniment repeats a perfect fifth against the fanfare-like triplet chords in the right hand of the piano accompaniment. It seems to predict the coming of the royal personage. Bliss apparently saw significance in Obata's translation of "Tarry not with your five horses, Prince I pray." The use of parallel chords shows Bliss' fondness for sustained chords or progressions of chords in involving third relationships. This musical characteristic is actually applied very consistently for the entire cycle. (Figure 6.2)



Figure 6.2 “Spring” mm 17-22

The A' section repeats the same vocal line and the two piano themes of the A section. However, Bliss adds a three bar section in which the vocal articulation becomes recitative- like in response to the nature of text. The recitative-like vocal effect is accompanied by an abrupt change in the accompaniment from a rhythmic to a static motion, where the accompaniment becomes a sustained “chord cluster” that includes the pitches of B flat, C,D, E,F sharp, G and A. The voice of the maiden is heard in the *semplice e deliberamente* style for the colloquial part of the text. (Figure 6.3)



Figure 6.3 “Spring” mm 26-28

The final B section with its rhythmic drive follows immediately with *a tempo*. The voice part stays in the major mode and continues in a recitative-like style while the piano part independently pursues the fragment of the six bar piano theme, seeming to signify the prince’s leaving.

Summer

(Translated by Obata)

On the Mirror Lake three hundred *li*⁷⁶ around
Gaily the lotus lilies bloom.

She gathers them-Queen Hsi-shi, in Maytime!

A multitude jostles on the bank, watching.

Her boat turns back without waiting the moonrise,

And glides away to the house of the amorous Yueh King.

子夜四時歌：夏歌

(Text by Li Po)

鏡湖三百里，

菡萏發荷花

五月西施采，

人看隘若耶。

回舟不待月，

歸去越王家。

In the second poem “Summer” Li Po again uses the stylized components of the traditional *yuefu* poetry. The third line of the poem “Queen Hsi-shi” refers to the

⁷⁶ The word *li* was directly translated from the Chinese pronunciation as unit of measuring distance.

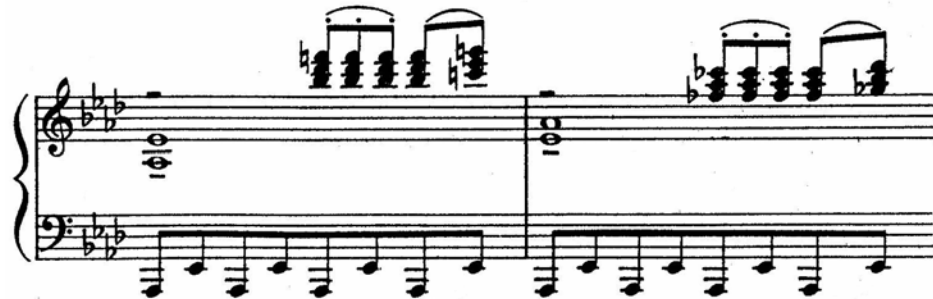
legendary beauty Hsi-shi (西施) who was taken to the king of Yueh and trained properly in order to be sent to corrupt the king of Wu using her beauty and charm. This was so that the forces of Yueh could accomplish their political scheme to eventually occupy the country of Wu. After the ruin of Wu, there were two sayings about the beauty: one is tragic, she returned to Yueh but the Queen of Yueh was worried that her beauty would take away the entire King's attention so she drowned Hsi-shi in the sea. Another is romantic: Hsi-shi escaped with the prime minister of the Yueh (they were secretly in love) before returning back to Yueh. Li Po undermines the beauty of lotus and Hsi-shi legend through hints that only the readers can understand. The appeal is the tension between the simple, sensual surface and its more complicated, tragic significance in terms of the Hsi-shi legend. For example, the final two verses of the Chinese poem have a twist in it; literally it is translated as "You (Hsi-shi) don't have to gather the lotus flower until the moon rises because your beauty is going to make you be chosen for the Palace of Yueh". Looking at the content of the poem it seems that Hsi-Shi was going to be royal and live happily ever after in the palace. However, the tension was built in the understanding of the reader that the beauty eventually became a victim of the political scheme. Western readers, who don't know the historical background, may only see this poem as drawing

room poetry, portraying the Queen Hsi-shi (she was never crowned but was a favorite consort⁷⁷) in a lovely setting. Yet Li Po's intention is for the readers to feel ambiguous through the fragment of Hsi-shi legend and the dramatic effect is inconclusive. Obata offers a flowing translation of the original Chinese poem. Although his understanding of the last two verses did not quite convey the tone of the Chinese poem, he leads the readers to wonder about the "amorous Yueh King". The word "amorous" added by Obata, could be taken as his own interpretation, but the final twist of the poem should not be limited by that one word.

It is unknown whether or not Bliss had the Hsi-shi legend in mind and intended to bring that aspect of the drama in his setting. "Summer" was written with no key signature, *moderato*; the piano opens with semitonal clashes in a staccato 6/8, recalling the fanfare-like chord progression in "Spring", which becomes more aggressive and distinct here. (Figure 6.4 a and b) The rising and falling parallel triads seem to appear whenever Bliss presents the royal personage: the prince in "Spring" and Hsi-shi in "Summer."

⁷⁷ According to Obata's note, Hsi-Shih (5th century B.C.) was queen to Fu Chai, the king of Wu, and is one of the most famous court beauties of China. Her dalliance cost the king his kingdom as well as his life.

(a)



(b)



Figure 6-4 (a) "Spring" mm 20-21
(b) "Summer" mm 39-40

When the meter changes to 9/8, the piano accompaniment settles into a rocking boat song, as the queen gathers lotus blooms. The vocal line seems to be formed by a frame of a pentatonic scale (EGACDE) even though the intrusions of C sharp, F sharp and G sharp are present to lighten the effect. The sixteen-note triplets sound like the ripples of the water. (Figure 6.5)



Figure 6.5 “Summer” mm 16-17

In this piece, chromatic scales or light-texture chord progressions are often employed in the piano when Bliss changes the mood or scene. The meter varies frequently between 6/8 and 9/8 while the interlude ends with an abrupt 4/8 bar. The 9/8 meters of measure sixteen return, but this time with a new rising chromatic figure in the right hand of the piano that seems to propel the boat towards the Yueh King. The tempo slows as Hsi-shi “glides away to the house.” The fanfares return in the last three measures to remind us of Hsi-shi’s mission to the king of Yueh. The gradual subsiding tempo and dynamics reflect the disappearance of the boat from the gaze of the crowd.

Autumn

(Translated by Obata)

The moon is above the city of Chang-an,
From ten thousand houses comes the sound of cloth-pounding,⁷⁸
The sad Autumn wind blows, and there is no end
to my thought of you beyond the jewel Gate Pass.
When will the barbarian foe be vanquished,
And you, my beloved, return from the far battlefield?

子夜四時歌：秋歌

(Text by Li Po)

長安一片月，
萬戶搗衣聲；
秋風吹不盡，
總是玉關情。
何日平胡虜？
良人罷遠征。

The third poem was also translated by L. Cranmer-Byng and set to music by Granville Bantock. (Chapter 4). The word for “cloth-pounding” has different interpretations. Several sources, including Obata’s, believe that it is referring to women doing laundry. Yeng points out that cloth-pounding is a preparation process before making heavy coats in ancient China⁷⁹. Before entering autumn, women who had family members on the battlefield would start to make winter clothes. The sound of cloth-pounding therefore refers to the feeling of missing loved ones on the battlefield. Obata’s translation of the Jewel Gate Pass is a literal translation of *Yu-men Guan* (玉門關), abbreviated as *Yu Guan* in Li-Po’s poetry, the pass located at the western extremity of Kansu province.

⁷⁸ Obata noted under his translation: “Cloth-pounding is the ironing part in the old-fashioned Chinese laundering process. On account of the hardness of the wooden stand and mallet employed for it, the pounding produces a shrill metallic sound. Women working late, and their mallets clanging through the night, have long been a popular theme for poets.”

⁷⁹ Zhan Yeng ed. Chinese classics series. *Poetry of Li Po*. Taipei: Jien Xiou Publisher. 1993.126
詹英等譯注. 李白詩. <中國名著譯選叢書>. 錦繡出版. 台北.

“Autumn” is written in ABABA’C and is developed in three dramatic moods. The A section is a *fortissimo* piano refrain (*Vivace* and *martellato*) consisting of complex 3 against 4 rhythms and descending triplets in the melodic motive. With this melodic motive bitonality returns periodically through the song. This stormy moment, according to Craggs, “is to generate an image of urban industry”⁸⁰ (Figure 6.6)



Figure 6.6 “Autumn” mm 1-6

The A section ends with a *forzando* dissonant chord cluster and is followed by the second dramatic mood, section B, which begins quietly in the left hand as a four bar *ostinato*. This sets up the solemn entry of the vocal line for the opening lines of the poem. (Figure 6.7) Then the powerful “falling triplets” piano refrain reappears. The maniacal

⁸⁰ Stewart R. Craggs edited. *Arthur Bliss: Music and literature*. England: Ashgate. 2002.

metallic refrains make a strong contrast with the quiet *Lento* section. The two moods switch back and forth until the voice joins in the *Vivace*.

The musical score for "Autumn" (mm 7-16) is in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The tempo is marked "Lento" with a metronome marking of 50. The piano accompaniment begins with a dense texture of chords, marked "lunga" and "Lento J = 50". The vocal line enters with the lyrics "The moon is a-bove the cit-y of Chang-an,". The piano part then transitions to a more sparse texture of single notes and chords, marked "pp".

Figure 6.7 “Autumn” mm 7-16

Bliss provides an even more dense piano texture at the beginning of the Section A' which uses the same piano refrain as the A section. It gradually decreases to one octave chords, leaving only the melodic motive only while the intensity is kept by strong dynamics supporting the vocal line. The higher vocal tessitura allows the voice to present a dramatic and emotional moment of the poem while evoking the beloved and crying out “when will the barbarian foe be vanquished, and you, my beloved, return from the far

battlefield?" The music ends on a heavy pounding dissonant chord, as if the sound of cloth-pounding was enhanced ten times louder into an unbearable dream. (Figure 6.8)

[Vivace]

When will the

bar - bar - ian foe be van - quished,

And you my be -

ff

mf

p

Figure 6.8 "Autumn" mm 43-54

The musical score consists of three systems. The first system shows the vocal melody with the lyrics "-lov - ed, re - turn from the" and a piano accompaniment with triplet eighth notes. The second system continues the vocal melody with "far" and "bat - tle - field?" and includes a forte (*f*) dynamic marking. The third system begins with a *rall.* (rallentando) marking and features a piano part with triplets and a final section marked *ff* (fortissimo) with a "Ped." (pedal) instruction and an asterisk (*) indicating a specific point.

Figure 6-8 continue "Autumn" mm 55-66

Winter

(Translated by Obata)

The courier will depart on the morrow for the front.
All night she sews a soldier's jacket.
Her fingers, playing the needle, are numb with cold;
Scarce can she hold the icy scissors.
At last the work is done; she sends it a long, long way,
Oh! how many days before it reaches him in Lin-tao⁸¹?

子夜四時歌：冬歌

(Text by Li Po)

明朝驛使發，
一夜絮征袍。
素手抽鍼冷，
那堪把剪刀！
裁縫寄遠道，
幾日到臨洮？

The final poem of the series continues the thoughts of the previous poem, describing a woman making a cotton-padded jacket for her son or husband who is far away on the battlefield. Obata's translation combines simple language and genuine emotion, which is the primary characteristic of this type of poem. The poem is sincere and profoundly intimate. Readers can easily visualize this unfortunate woman sitting in a cold, dim room, diligently moving her fingers with the thread, her eyes focused on the jacket. It is almost as if her love and thoughts are being knit into it. Obata added a few words, not for ornamentation or poetic self-indulgence, but to make the meaning clear. The final sigh "oh!" added by Obata, contains the emotion mixed with urgency, poignancy, and suspension, which is precisely the drama Li Po intended.

⁸¹ Lin-tao, a town on the frontier of Tu-fan, whose warlike tribes harassed the Chinese empire for centuries past.

In the manuscript found in the Lincoln Performing Center Library, the first twenty-five measures of “Winter” are crossed out, perhaps to show that Bliss might have wanted to revise this piece later. The *Alla Marcia* (in march style), 112 to the quarter note, opens the piece strongly with a eight measure piano theme, formed by two motives. For the first motive Bliss uses an *ostinato* in open fifths for the pounding left hand piano accompaniment (G-D-A alternating with C-G-D) which sounds like the footsteps of the soldiers. The right hand of the piano part is playing in parallel fourths (Figure 6.9 mm1-4). The second motive has a falling triplet melodic line (Figure 6.9 mm 4-8). Both motives join with the ostinato to point up the footsteps of the soldiers.



Figure 6.9 “Winter” mm 1-8 piano theme with two motives

The piano part reiterates these two motives throughout; in the middle sections they appear in higher octaves or in a thinner texture. The motives represent the constant thoughts in the woman's mind that she is sewing for the soldiers, that the winter is approaching, and that she must hurry to get the work done in time. The vocal melody is mainly a pentatonic scale (FGACDF), in which Bliss uses two accidentals e flat and b flat as word painting on "numb" and "hold". On the verse "at last, the work is done; she sends it a long, long way", the melodic mode becomes ambiguous as if to represent the character's change of mood. After the fermata, the music reaches its emotional climax in *ff*, *meno mosso*, and the voice cries "Oh! how many days before it reaches him in Lintao?" The key changes to major pointing up the character's emotional relief but the prolonged vocal line, particularly the last note, held for seven measures, reflects her yearning. (Figure 6.10)

A landmark in Bliss's development, *The Ballades of the Four Seasons* is regarded as a true song cycle because of its united theme and consistency of mood. Bliss was stimulated by the poise, disarming candor, deceptive simplicity and understatement of Li Po's poetry; in this case, the merit of Obata's translation cannot be ignored. Using references to the seasons as mood signifiers, Li Po uses the titles "Spring" and "Summer"

to evoke the mood of familiar historical events familiar to his audiences, while in “Autumn” and “Winter,” he associates these “seasons of loss” with the deepest human emotions relating to wars, separations and longing. Bliss’s musical response to Li Po’s poetry is immediate, although sometimes repetitive with motives and piano refrains. Perhaps the composer was still searching for his own language.

The underlying themes in “Spring” and “Summer” is the use of fanfare-like chords to symbolize royal members. The triplet rhythm is also favored in this cycle; Bliss employs it consistently almost in every single piece. His personal experience and emotion was expanded in “Autumn” and “Winter”. Experiencing the difficulties of World War I and the subsequent loss of his brother influenced the early stage of Bliss’s continuing search for expression. The impact of the war was later resolved and fully expressed in the *Morning Heroes*.

The musical score is arranged in three systems, each with a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (grand staff). The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 2/4.

- System 1:** The vocal line begins with a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic and a long note, followed by the lyrics "Oh!". The piano accompaniment features a forte (*f*) dynamic and a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand, with a triplet of eighth notes in the left hand.
- System 2:** The vocal line continues with the lyrics "how ma - ny days be - fore it". The piano accompaniment continues with the triplet pattern in the right hand and eighth notes in the left hand.
- System 3:** The vocal line concludes with the lyrics "reach - es him in Lin - - tao?". The piano accompaniment ends with a triplet in the right hand and eighth notes in the left hand, marked with a *dim.* (diminuendo) dynamic.

Additional markings include *etc.* at the end of the vocal line in the third system and various articulation marks like accents and slurs throughout the piano part.

Figure 6.10 "Winter" mm 60-70

CHAPTER 7

Constant Lambert (1905-1951)

Constant Lambert is primarily known as a British composer, ballet music conductor and later as a biting music critic. Lambert's father was a self-taught artist who achieved modest success and the family led a "bohemian" life. Young Lambert received piano lessons and later his family managed to send him to Christ's Hospital School where he started to develop interests in literature, music, and art. His health was delicate as a child, and his physical infirmity actually allowed him to indulge in an isolated world of reading, drawing and composing. He was considered a child prodigy; writing orchestral works at the age of thirteen. At age 20, Lambert became the first British composer to be commissioned to write a ballet (Romeo and Juliet) for Serge Diaghilev's Ballets Russes.

Lambert studied with Vaughan Williams at the Royal College of Music, with whom he formed a considerable friendship; however, he was mostly interested in the Baroque and neo-classical styles. Early in his evolving musical language, the influence of French

and Russian music, especially when associated with ballet, were basic ingredients.⁸²

Among all musical influences, jazz made the most impression on Lambert. He played a leading role among British composers in acknowledging the importance of jazz and popular music. Jazz style pervades his *Elegiac Blues* (1927), Piano Sonata (1928-1929) and his most famous composition of all, the *Rio Grande* (1927).

The most fertile compositional period of Lambert's career came in the late 1920's. Lambert was fascinated by exoticism, including Chinese music. Infatuated by the then famous film actress Anna May Wong, he set to music *Eight Poems of Li-Po* (1926-9). A second commissioned Ballet work *Pomona* (1927) for Diaghilev, and *Rio Grande* (1927), a setting of a poem by Sacheverell Sitwell for chorus and a small ensemble, were also completed during this period. The latter received immediate success but brought him into an unexpected stylistic stereotype, where all his works were generally classified "jazz-inspired."⁸³

Lambert is remembered primarily as a conductor of the Royal Ballet and Covent Garden. It was during the 1930's that Lambert took this career path. He was appointed as musical director of the Vic-Wells ballet (later the Royal Ballet) and as conductor of the

⁸² Otto Karolyi. *Modern British Music*. "Modernists in the making". Rutherford : Fairleigh Dickinson University Press ; London : Associated University Presses, 1994. 48

⁸³ Richard McGrady. "The music of Constant Lambert". *Music and Letters*. July 1970. 242

Carmago Society. In the meantime, his fascination for the 16th and 17th century literature and music blossomed in another vocal work, *Summer's Last Will and Testament* (1932-5). Afterwards he stopped his compositional activity and concentrated more on conducting and music criticism, for which he received general acclaim.

Using his broad knowledge in art, music and literature, Lambert accomplished his role as a music critic successfully. He wrote columns for the *Nation*, the *Athenaeum*, the *Sunday Referee*, *Figaro*, and also for famous music magazines such as the *Radio Times*, *The Listener* and BBC's *Music Magazine* (1944). His one extended work of criticism, *Music, Ho!* (London, 1934) reflects his aesthetic thinking, stating his views on neo-classicism, nationalism, and his predictions about 20th century music and composers.

As a side note to Lambert's biographical study, a very close friendship was formed with fellow composers William Walton and Philip Heseltine. (a.k.a. Peter Warlock). As part of the bohemian artistic circle and salon culture, Lambert was a regular visitor at Warlock's cottage at Eynsford, and Lambert's *Piano concerto* is dedicated to Warlock. Lambert and Warlock were both greatly influenced by van Dieren and championed his works after his death. Warlock's affiliation with van Dieren was discussed in chapter 5 in

this study. As Shead pointed out, the influence of Van Dieren shows “in almost any score of Lambert’s, but particularly *Horoscope* (1938)⁸⁴”

Lambert’s output is modest, consisting of fewer than 20 published works, which have fallen into relative obscurity today. *Eight Poems of Li-Po* is his only song cycle aside from two student works on Sitwell’s poems. Li Po’s poetry fascinated Lambert. He used the same English translation, by the Japanese scholar Shigeyoshi Obata, as Arthur Bliss. (*The works of Li Po*, published by E.P. Dutton and Co. of New York in 1922 and 1950) Lambert actually knew the *Women of Yueh* from Bliss’ setting of five of Li Po’s poems in 1923 and Lambert managed to get hold of the score long before the work premiered in Britain in 1975⁸⁵. It was also about the same time that Lambert was infatuated by the film actress Anna May Wong and had begun to immerse himself in all things Chinese: the art, literature, philosophy, food and wine. These songs were written to celebrate his interest in Chinese culture. Four songs were composed in 1927 and three more the following year.

In 1929, Miss Wong came to London for a theater production. The composer finally made her acquaintance, but discovered that the celebrity’s real interest wasn’t art but

⁸⁴ Peter J. Pirie. *The English Music Renaissance*. London: Victor Gollancz LTD. 1979. 96.

⁸⁵ Giles Easterbook. “Constant Lambert”. Recording note. Hyperion CDA66754. 1995.

rubies⁸⁶. By the time Lambert wrote “Lines” (number four in the final version), disillusionment had set in. His response was to change the order of the song cycle which ended with an added setting “The Long-Departed Lover” (Appendix F). The dedication of the original seven-song cycle, “To Wong Liu Song” (the lady’s real name) was altered: “To Miss Anna May Wong.”⁸⁷ The *Eight Poems of Li-Po* now survives in two versions: for voice and piano, published in three sets between 1927 and 1930, and for voice and instrumental ensemble (flute, oboe, clarinet, string quartet and double bass).

As stated in the first chapter, the surviving piano version of the settings was published in two sets: *Four Poems by Li-Po* and *Three Poems by Li-Po*. The last setting “The Long Departed Lover” was published separately and now only survives in an instrumental version. It therefore will not be included in this study.

The seven poems share significant attributes that are suitable for musical setting. For instance, the poetic form is more flexible and the language is more direct in expressing feelings. The subject matter of these poems shares a variety of characteristics, such as love and longing, feelings of nostalgia and the enjoyment of life. Lambert’s selection of these poems reflects his fascination with Chinese culture and his admiration of Miss

⁸⁶ Richard Shead. *Constant Lambert*. London: Simon publication. 1973. 70-71.

⁸⁷ Easterbook. “Constant Lambert”. CD program note.

Wong. Even though these poems are short, they are the most transparent and delicate among Li Po's works. Most important, Obata's translation shows remarkable quality that strives for word accuracy, fidelity to original poems, and sentence flow. All these factors make Lambert's setting more convincing and less problematic in presentation.

Poetry analysis of the *Four Poems by Li-Po*

The first published *Four Poems by Li-Po* contains "A Summer Day", "Nocturne", "With a Man of Leisure" and "Lines". Generally speaking, this group of poems is mostly delicate and light-hearted except the last love poem "Lines".

A Summer day

(Translated by Obata)

Naked I lie in the green forest of summer...
Too lazy to wave my white-feathered fan.
I hang my cap on a crag,
And bare my head to the wind that comes
Blowing through the pine trees.

夏日山中

(Text by Li Po)

懶搖白羽扇。
裸體青林中。
拖巾挂石壁。
露頂灑松風。

"A Summer Day," literally translated in Chinese should be "A summer day in mountain." The poetry is similar in personality to another poem "Along the Stream" (see Chapter 4), both represent Li Po's self-image. Contrasting to "Along the Stream" which reveals the romantic side of the poet in a daze after drinking, "A Summer Day" portrays the poet's wild side which tended to ignore the social standard and expectations of

educated men. However, the world Li Po created around him is so delightful and careless; “the white-feather fan” and “wind blows through the pine trees”, that action he describes as free actually betrays his self-cultivation. While looking at Obata’s translation, this mood is well-conveyed by simple wording. The first two couplets are switched in order. The first line in Chinese is “Too lazy to wave my white-feathered fan”, thus the second line results in “Naked I lie in the green forest.” For the sentence flow, Obata added “of summer” in the sentence of “Naked I lie in the green forest.”

With a Man of Leisure

(Translated by Obata)

Yonder mountain flowers are out.

We drink together, you and I.

One more cup--one more cup--still one more cup!

Now I am drunk and drowsy, you had better go;

But come tomorrow morning, if you will, with the harp!

山中與幽人對酌

(Text by Li Po)

兩人對酌山花開。

一杯一杯復一杯。

我醉欲眠卿且去

明朝有意抱琴來。

My translation:

Two friends drink together as the mountain flowers blossom.

One cup after another and another.

I am drunk and sleepy you could leave.

Tomorrow morning come with the *qin* if you want.

Li Po’s poetry on drinking is his trade-mark since it was known that the more he imbibed the freer and wilder was his writing. “With a Man of Leisure” is similar to “Along the Stream” in terms of drinking, but this time the poet has a companion. From

the content we learn this might be a simultaneous gathering rather than a formal social event. The Chinese like to drink a cup or two to celebrate nature and newly-blooming flowers. The two friends drink casually, without concern for courtesy. One of the toppers actually asked the other to leave so he can go to sleep! The first four words of the third line *Wuo zuei yu mien* (我醉欲眠) can be literally translated as “I am drunk and want to sleep” and the word *qieng* (卿) is used by Chinese to address a friend as “you” in a polite but intimate way. The use of *qieng* here could be taken as a measure of familiarity between the two. Obata, again, added to his interpretation in part of the translation. For example, he used “yonder” to describe the scene, but there is no such word in the original poem. His translation does not imply a desire to sleep, but is clear enough for readers to learn that the two friends enjoyed the drinking and might plan to do it again tomorrow, with some music!

Nocturne⁸⁸

(Translated by Obata)

Blue water...a clear moon...

In the moonlight the white herons are flying.

Listen! Do you hear the girls who gather water chestnuts?

They are going home in the night, singing.

秋浦歌（十七首之十三）

淥水淨素月。

月明白鷺飛。

郎聽採菱女。

一道夜歌歸。

“Nocturne” was selected from a series of poems called “Song of Qiou-pu” (秋浦歌). The style and characteristics of this poem evoke those of the “Ballads of the Four Seasons” because they share the same quality as “songs” or “ballades,” which carry a strong narrative style. In ancient China, girls who gather water chestnuts usually row boats and sing improvised tunes while working. The sounds of the girls singing, the swinging boat and the water blend into a lovely scene which provided a favorable subject for poets. This poem is full of luminous and illusive effects. The emphasis on the word “moon” *yue* (月) is apparent when looking at the Chinese because the same word also appears in the second line. The repetition is a particular and common technique in ancient Chinese poetry that stresses an important idea. When reciting this poem, its design provides a subtlety of intonation while the reader intellectually is guided through the visualization. Li Po wants the reader to envision the reflection of the moon first, then to

⁸⁸ This poem was selected from a series of poetry called “Song of Qiou-pu”. (秋浦歌) “Nocturne” is number thirteen out of seventeen short poems.

notice the real moon in the distance along with the motion of white herons flying. In this poem, the reader is not only “seeing” but also “hearing”. Li Po portrays the transparent view by “blue water,” “clear moon,” “moonlit” and “white herons” in the first two verses. Obata’s translation points out “Listen!” the singing probably comes from the dark and afar. At the third line of the Chinese poem, the word *lang* (郎) in Chinese refers to lover or husband as “you”.

Lines Written in Autumn

(Translated by Obata)

Cool is the autumn wind,
Clear the autumn moon,
The blown leaves heap up the scatter again;
A raven, cold-stricken, starts from his roost.
Where are you beloved?-When shall I see you once more?
Ah, how my heart aches tonight-this hour!

三五七言（秋風詞）

秋風清。
秋月明。
落葉聚還散。
寒鴉棲復驚。
相思相見知何日。
此時此夜難爲情。

The last song “Lines” is written in old *yuefu* style and constructed in irregular metrical patterns. This poem has another title “three-five-seven words” (三五七言) since it is not a consistent five-word or seven-word poem but couplets in odd numbers. This represents one of the forms that Tang poets, and particularly Li Po, tend to modify in order to deliver the text freely and also to make it easy to set in music. Moreover, this practice announced the early model of the *ci* (詞) style of poetry which flourished in the Song dynasty (960-1279 A.D.). Interestingly, Obata’s translation does not reflect this

technique while the previous translation of “Nocturne” seems to account for it; the first line was translated in a disjunctive manner while the Chinese verse is actually written in regular length.

The theme of “longing for someone” (*xiang si* 相思) was one of the most favorite traditional subjects of *yuefu* poetry. There are certain requisite components, such as autumn, cries of crickets, the chill of bed clothes, and seeing the moon alone. Here, Li Po uses “the autumn wind”, “autumn moon”, “falling leaves,” (Obata: “brown leaves”) and “cold-stricken raven.” The remarkable thing about Li Po is that he combines all of these well-known elements, making them a series of fragments of images and thoughts that pass through the reader’s imagination. As a result, this poem possesses an immediacy and affective power that generates within the reader feelings related to these conventional images and to the departed lovers. In terms of love and romance, the ancient Chinese tended to be implicit in their language and manner. But here Li Po boldly uses the strongest emotional statement in the last two verses in colloquial language, entirely baring the character’s mind and soul.

Poetry analysis of the *Three poems by Li-Po*

The later published *Three poems by Li-Po* includes “The Ruin of the Ku-Su Palace”, a seven-word *jueju* style poem; “The Intruder”, a five-word *gushi* style poem which is also the longest among all the poems in this set, and “On the City Street”, a five-word *yuefu* style poem. Each poem in this group has its own characteristics, with certain stylized components; Li Po’s poems present an immense variety in their manner.

The Ruin of the Ku-Su Palace⁸⁹

(Translated by Obata)

In the deserted garden among the crumbling walls
The willows show green again,
While the sweet notes of the water-nut song
Seem to lament the spring.
Nothing remains but the moon above the river-
The moon that once shone on the fair faces
That smiled in the king’s palace of Wu.

蘇台覽古

舊苑荒臺楊柳新。
菱歌清唱不勝春。
只今惟有西江月。
曾照吳王宮裡人。

This poem was written while Li-Po traveled in the areas of the ancient Kingdom of Wu and Yueh. Using the similar stylized components (King of Wu and his consorts), unlike the satire of “Summer” in *The Ballads of the Four Seasons*, the thematic character of this poem is the poet’s profound nostalgia, particularly referring to a kingdom’s

⁸⁹ Obata noted that the Ku-su Palace is where King Fu-chai of Wu with his beautiful queen His-shi held perpetual revelries till King Kou Chien of Yueh annihilated him. It was located in the present city of Soo Chow, which was the capital of Wu.

establishment and ruin. Li Po uses the new-grown willow and the singing of spring to make a contrast of the old ruined palace. While the reader sighs, nothing lasts, nothing is eternal, Li Po personalizes the moon that shines upon us forever thus drawing the reader's attention into the great nature with intimacy.

The Intruder

(Translated by Obata)

The grass of Yen is growing green
While in Chin the leafy mulberry branches hang low.
Even now when my longing heart is breaking,
Are you thinking, my dear, of coming back to me?
O wind of spring, you are a stranger,
Why do you enter through the silken curtains of my bower?

春思

燕草如碧絲。
秦桑低綠枝。
當君懷歸日。
是妾斷腸時。
春風不相識。
何事入羅幃。

The poetic title in Chinese is literally translated as “spring yearning.” The word “spring” has a double meaning here, one refers to the season, and another is as a metaphor for love. Yen is the ancient name of He-bei province, located in the north China where the grass grows slowly and thin because the weather is cold. In Chin, also an ancient name for a Shan-si province, located in the south of China, where the weather is warmer and the plants prosper in the mean time. Obata did not translate the first line of the poem as written, literally it should be “the grass of Yen is growing as green silk”, referring to it as thin and fragile. The third verse couplets with the fourth verse, which

translates as “when you thought of coming home, it is also the time I miss you like my heart is breaking.” Li Po’s genius is to introduce the reader to a scene which does not seem to associate with emotion at first, but once the mood of the poetic character is so touchingly portrayed, her chiding of the wind of spring seems to be genuine and tender.

On the City Street

(Translated by Obata)

They meet in the pink dust of the city street.
He raises his gold crop high in salute.
“Lady”, says he, “where do you live?
There are ten thousand houses
among the drooping willow-trees.”

相逢行

相逢紅塵內。
高揖黃金鞭。
萬戶垂楊裏。
君家阿那邊。

The title of this poem translated from Chinese literally means “acquaintance by chance.” There are many implications in the poem. Li Po delivers the poem with colloquial language thus creating a great simplicity in the character. Obata’s take on the word *hong chen* (紅塵) is “pink dust of the city” which combines romanticism and reality, while in Chinese it is literally translated as “red dust”. In Chinese “red dust” is used as a metaphor for the mundane world or even to refer to a prostitute’s hood. This poem might be an attempt to convey a vague image of flirtation. In ancient Chinese culture, a gentleman would never ask a girl’s name or ask where she lived in public. A girl who was

properly brought-up would never talk to any man on the street. Li Po, the man who always wrote against the rule, intends to make this controversial subject romantic and less forbidden. He uses “pink dust”, “gold crop”, “ten thousand houses” and “drooping willow tree” to make the idea of talking to stranger extravagant and intriguing.

General music analysis of the settings

Lambert’s setting conveys an overall nostalgic and melancholic musical mood that sometimes overpowers the mood of the original poems. As stated previously, Lambert set the music because of his infatuation with Anna May Wang. Knowing the personal motivation behind this composition, the song settings show aloof and ironic expression especially with the poems portraying love and longing. This impression is achieved by thin texture and unresolved harmonic dissonance in the music. Despite the miniature size of the poem, which might limit the development of musical thoughts, there are moments that contain profound emotion and poignancy within a simple context.

The musical settings display Lambert’s preoccupation with the Baroque and neo-classical music styles. His applications of Greek modes, ostinatos, ritornelli in the piano accompaniment and lyric recitative or arioso style in the vocal line are primary components. Lambert’s setting of these Chinese poems shows his interest in mood

painting. He supports this idea by three aspects. First, when Lambert emphasizes the text he uses a recitative-like vocal line. Second, when he writes the vocal and piano parts independent from each other, usually the piano plays the role of mood painting. Third, Lambert is particularly fond of ostinatos, which function as motives that unify the musical thoughts and also sets a general mood for the entire piece.

Music analysis of *Four Poems of Li Po*

“A Summer Day”

“A Summer Day” is through-composed, *Allegretto*, and in 3/4-meter. The piece begins with seventeen measures of piano accompaniment which establishes the refreshing and cool atmosphere of the green mountain. The prolonged vocal line, written in medium range, also enhances the easy-going character. The piece ends with the same piano “ritornello” as in the introduction. (Figure 7.1) The final mystic chord (C, E, G and B) *a niente* (fading), announces Lambert’s intention of exploring exotic timbre in later settings. (See “The Ruin of the Ku-Su Palace”)



Figure 7.1 “A Summer Day” mm 1-16

“Nocturne”

This piece is marked *Lento* and composed in ABA' C form. The piano part determines the form while the vocal line is free and independent. The eight-measure piano theme, built by glittering ascending scale figures, forms the A section. Lambert uses the piano theme to paint the tranquil night scene. The B section begins with the recitative-like vocal line that matches the speaking rhythm of the English translation. The A' section is a combination of the piano theme and the recitative-like vocal line. Lambert uses two “blues chords,” constructed with incomplete seventh chords

using both major and minor thirds to support the vocal line at “they are going home in the night.” The word “singing” *più mosso Andantino*, is highlighted by swaying triplet piano patterns in the right hand and with the left hand of the piano accompaniment playing quarter note arpeggios. The scenery Li Po created in his poem thus is lively painted by Lambert’s musical setting. (Figure 7.2)

The image displays a musical score for a piece titled "Nocturne" (mm13-21). It consists of three systems of music, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment.

System 1: The vocal line begins with a triplet of eighth notes: "he-rons are fly-ing". The piano accompaniment features a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand and a single eighth note in the left hand. The tempo marking "a tempo" is present. The vocal line continues with "Listen Do you hear the".

System 2: The vocal line continues with "girls who ga-ther wa-ter chest-nuts? They are go-ing". The piano accompaniment features a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand and a single eighth note in the left hand. The tempo marking "a tempo" is present.

System 3: The tempo marking "Più mosso Andantino" is present. The vocal line continues with "home in the night Sing - - - ing.". The piano accompaniment features a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand and a single eighth note in the left hand. The tempo marking "Più mosso Andantino" is present.

Figure 7.2 “Nocturne” mm13-21

“With a Man of Leisure”

Lambert seizes on the playfulness in this poem and extensively strives for stylistic components to match the poetic character. Written in *presto*, the meter changes from 3/4 to 4/4 providing an “off balance” quality. The bouncy grace notes in the right hand piano accompaniment also set a carefree atmosphere from the beginning. Lambert uses two

motives in the piano accompaniment, both written in four bars; one is in Phrygian mode and the other in Lydian mode, to symbolize two friends. (Figure 7.3 a & b) The expression marks for the motives reveal their characteristics: one is marked *sotto voce ma giocoso* and the other is *non legato* while both share the falling fourth in their melodic structure. The two motives also work as alternating *ostinato*, as if the two friends were alternating drinking.

(a)

(b)

Figure 7-3 “With a Man of Leisure” a. mm 1-4

b. mm 9-12

The inebriation of this drinking scene is depicted by the disjointed vocal melody.

While singing “one more cup”, the heightened energy is built by raising the tessitura and increasing note values. Both modes were somewhat obscured in the end by e flat and b flat indicating the characters are “drunk and drowsy”. (Figure 7.4)

The musical score for "With a Man of Leisure" (mm 26-33) is presented in two systems. The first system shows the vocal melody and piano accompaniment for the lyrics "I am drunk and drow - - - sy". The second system shows the vocal melody and piano accompaniment for the lyrics "You had bet - ter go, But come to -". The piano accompaniment includes dynamic markings such as *p* and *pp*, and a *morendo* instruction. The key signature changes from one sharp (F#) to one flat (Bb) and then to two flats (Bb, Eb). The time signature is common time (C).

Figure 7.4 “With a Man of Leisure” mm 26-33

“Lines”

This song is in through-composed form, with tempo marking *Lento*, in common meter. Although the expression marking is *lugubre* (mournful), Lambert’s reflection on this love poem seems aloof and ambiguous. The basic melodic structure is in Dorian

mode, but Lambert constantly obscures it by using b flat and f sharp, creating harmonic ambiguity. The melancholic atmosphere is established by a four-bar piano *ostinato*. Lambert captures the anxious emotion of the poetic character by using syncopated rhythm with *poco agitato* on “The blown leaves heap up and scatter”. Dramatic tension is reinforced by the syncopated rhythm and tonic seventh chords, and the music rises to a short climax at the wistful text: “Ah how my heart aches tonight- this hour!” (Figure 7.5)

The image displays a musical score for the piece "Lines" (mm 27-36). It consists of two systems of music. The first system features a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (grand staff). The vocal line begins with the instruction "ad lib." and the lyrics "Ah how my heart aches to - night- this". The piano accompaniment starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a "cresc. molto" marking. The second system is marked "Andante" and continues the piano accompaniment, with the vocal line resuming on the word "hour.". The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. A date stamp "October 1926" is visible in the bottom right corner of the score.

Figure 7.5 “Lines” mm 27-36

Music analysis of *Three Poems of Li-Po*

“The Ruin of the Ku-Su Palace”

The piece is in strophic form, tempo marked Lento, and the vocal line resembles *secco* recitative. The piano begins with isolated chromatic chords that support the vocal part. Lambert uses flexible rhythmic patterns which combine simple meters (2/4, 3/4 and 4/4) and compound meters (3/8 and 5/8). He works to present the word rhythms of the English translation. He also uses mood painting to reflect an overall picture of the poem rather than specific text painting. It is achieved by the timbre drawn from none western music chords reinforced with the nostalgia of the poem. The modal coloring of the accompaniment helps render the sadness and beauty of the ruined Kusu palace shadowed in the moonlight. Some of the tone color in this piece evokes Debussy’s small piano pieces. (Figure 7.6)

Figure 7.6 shows a musical score for the piece "The Ruin of the Ku-Su Palace" (mm 1-7). The score is written for voice and piano. The tempo is marked "Lento". The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The time signature is 4/4. The voice part begins with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic and a slur over the first four notes. The piano accompaniment also begins with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The score includes lyrics in English: "In the de-ser-ted gar-den a-mong the crumbling walls The wil-lows show green a-gain, While the sweet notes of the". The piano part includes dynamics such as mezzo-forte (*mf*), piano (*p*), and legato.

Figure 7.6 "The Ruin of the Ku-Su Palace" mm 1-7

"The Intruder"

A through-composed, *Allegro moderato* song. The major stylistic components appear in the texture and rhythm, which is achieved by a full but delicate harmonic structure along with emancipation from regular metric accent. The opening trill of the piano accompaniment triggers the fast paced sixteen notes, constructed of broken chords with meter changes from 4/4 to 3/2, to illustrate a fairly brisk and restless motion of the "wind of spring." (Figure 7.7)

Allegro moderato

VOICE

PIANO

leggiere

p

Con Ped.

The grass of

Yen is grow-ing green and

Figure 7.7 “The Intruder” mm 1-4

The voice part maintains a legato line in the middle range until the poetic character becomes emotional. Specific pitches in the melodic line, particularly the augmented fifth, emphasize the character’s agony. (Figure 7.8) To emphasize the statement, Lambert doubles the voice part in the piano part on the very last verse “why do you enter through the silken curtains of my bower?” However, the effect, accomplished by seventh chords, remains tender and graceful, keeping the complaint breezy rather than scolding.

The musical score for "The Intruder" (mm 11-18) is presented in three systems. The first system shows the vocal line with the lyrics "E-ven now when my long-ing heart is break-ing," and the piano accompaniment. The second system continues the vocal line with "Are you think-ing, my dear, of com-ing" and the piano accompaniment. The third system shows the vocal line with "back to me?" and the piano accompaniment. The score includes tempo markings: "poco rit." and "Tempo", and a dynamic marking "pp".

Figure 7.8 “The Intruder” mm 11-18

“On the City Street”

The song is a quasi recitative one-page piece written in an austere manner, containing only two accidentals and an occasional taut dissonance in the piano accompaniment. Lambert’s reflection on the text is rather sensational and does not necessarily relate to the poetic character. The piano begins *Andantino semplice* and

Lambert uses a falling seventh motive (mm1-3, also mm 9-11) followed by an augmented seventh, to illustrate a nostalgic atmosphere. The isolated chord progression keeps falling and rising until finally resolves to the dominant position in measure fifteen. The piano parts actually support the vocal line and make this piece very text-centered. The meter, varying between 4/4, 3/2 and 3/4 reflects Lambert's view of the English prosody.

Lambert writes a disjunct but elegant vocal line especially on "There are ten thousand houses among the drooping willow tree". The overall effect is striking simplicity and poignancy. (Figure 7.8)

ON THE CITY STREET

Andantino semplice

VOICE

They meet in the pink dust of the ci-ty street.

PIANO

p legato

He rais-es his gold crop high in sa - lute. "La-dy," says he,

rit. *Tempo*

"where do you live? There are ten thou-sand hou-ses a- mong the drooping wil-low trees."

rit. *Tempo*

Con Ped.

p rubato pp *a niente*

The musical score is written for voice and piano. The voice part is in a single line with lyrics underneath. The piano part is in two staves (treble and bass clef). The score is divided into four systems. The first system is marked 'Andantino semplice' and 'p legato'. The second system continues the melody. The third system has a tempo change from 'rit.' to 'Tempo' and includes the instruction 'Con Ped.'. The fourth system returns to 'rit.' and ends with 'a niente'. Dynamic markings include *p*, *pp*, and *ppp*.

Figure 7.9 "On the City Street" mm 1-24

CONCLUSION

General findings

The literature of songs, published with translated texts, is valuable in terms of cultural exchange and crossing the bridge between cultures. However, artistic concern arises when the languages involved are fundamentally different. The differences between English and Chinese and the problems that occur when translations are set to music were discussed in Chapter 1 and 2. Similar problems are also likely to be found in German and French songs with translated Chinese texts. The most problematic case found in this study is in Bantock's setting of "Under the Moon". A French translation which comes from editorial work is translated from the English translation. Its poor result causes the meaning of the original Chinese poem to be indistinguishable.

This study focused on settings from the works of eighth century T'ang poet Li Po, who is considered one of the greatest Chinese poets. The cultural value and aesthetic level of his poetry is worth exploration, particularly his unique application of Chinese language and the musical traditions associated with its poetry. Unfortunately, many

features of the original Chinese poetry are lost in translation. The four British composers in this study had interest in Chinese culture, but none of them had a working knowledge of the Chinese language or poetic conventions or traditional Chinese music. They relied on translations for their settings. The translators play an essential role in the musical setting and later proved to be partially responsible for the outcome of these settings.

Chapter 2 discusses the two translators whose work inspired the four British composers. Bantock and Warlock used L Cranmer-Byng's translations, while Bliss and Lambert used Shigeyoshi Obata's. Both translators received general acclaim for their knowledge of the Chinese culture. Obata's culture background is closely linked to the Chinese culture and his style is influenced by Imagism. Cranmer-Byng's translations are in a Victorian style associated with certain English poetic forms involving stanza and rhythm. On examining the relation between the original poem and its English translation in Chapter 4 and 5 regarding the Bantock and Warlock's musical settings, Cranmer-Byng's translation was found to be problematic in two settings. His translation of "Along the Stream," set by Warlock, has one extra verse that does not come from Li Po's poem. He added this verse according to his own interpretation and this led Warlock to decide the poem was about a sorrowful farewell. Second, his translation of "Adrift,"

set by Bantock, could not be matched to any of Li Po's original poems. It is possible that he took some of the components of Li Po's poetry as points of departure and re-created a poem under Li Po's name. This action caused the setting not to qualify as a true representation of Li Po's work.

Ancient Chinese poetry is a literature genre that uses simple language to convey complex emotions. Chinese poetry also has certain structures and strict regulations that require a thorough understanding. Translating Chinese poetry into any language is indeed a daunting task. Translators more or less will bring their own aesthetic values into their works, elaborating words on the original text in order to achieve clearer understanding of the context or reinterpreting untranslatable idioms (e.g. Obata: "red dust" to "pink dust" from "On the City Street"), and to some extent this is unavoidable. In terms of accuracy and fidelity to the original poetry, Obata's translations get high marks. As a result, the Bliss and Lambert setting are less problematic.

The composers in this study, aside from individual uses of pentatonic devices, did not employ traditional Chinese music techniques or instrumental practices. It was also found that neither the pitch inflections so characteristic of Chinese poetry nor the traditional means of setting Chinese poetry to music were observed by the four British

composers. Their insensibility to these features of Chinese poetry can be forgiven, seeing that their knowledge of them was severely limited. In Chapter 3, it was determined that the most productive way to approach this study was to focus on comparing the aesthetic values found in Li Po's poetry and those of the composer's particular musical settings.

Individual Findings

"Along the Stream" was chosen by Warlock for the song cycle *Saudades* because he was drawn by the sad and regretful mood of Cranmer-Byng's translation. *Saudades* actually means "a haunting sense of sadness and regret for days gone by," which has nothing to do with the characteristic of Li Po's original poem. This impression is mostly due to Cranmer-Byng's translation. Although the setting indeed evokes wistful melancholy, the aesthetic value of Li Po's poem is not well-presented.

Bantock, also using Cranmer-Byng's translation, set two of Li Po's poems "Adrift" and "Under the Moon." Bantock's musical style is highly romantic; his musical response to the poem of "Adrift" is lyrical and rich-textured. Unfortunately, the translation of this poem does not seem to match with any of Li Po's existing works, and therefore there can be no relationship between Li Po's aesthetic and this setting. A second setting "Under

the Moon” was influenced by Debussy’s musical language. Bantock’s response to the poem focused mainly on the mood of a moonlit night.

Bliss’ setting of Li Po’s poetry in the song cycle *The Ballads of the Four Seasons*, owes its quality to Obata’s translation. Obata used simple and direct language succinctly, attempting to match the artistic conception Li Po had in mind. This cycle is a landmark in Bliss’ progress as he matured as a composer. He set these translations of Chinese poems before he composed any other major vocal works that closely associate with text, such as *Women of the Yueh* and the *Morning Heroes*. His continuing search for inventive style and music language is reflected in this setting in his application of chord progression, the consecutive 6-3 chords, and triple rhythms. In this way he maintains an emotional flexibility to represent the poetic characters.

As a result of his infatuation with Miss Anna May Wang, Lambert set Li Po’s poetry as an expression of his affection. Using the same translation as Bliss, Lambert was able to seize a clear picture of Li Po’s poetic idea. Lambert’s neo-classical style and mood painting technique provided a perfect match for Li Po’s poetry. Despite his tendency to create a nostalgic and melancholic atmosphere, the simplicity and profound poignancy found in these musical settings is remarkable.

The most successful and valid musical settings of Li Po's poetry were made possible by translations that were faithful to the original poetry and that contained the original aesthetic value. The role translators play in such musical settings apparently is crucial because the qualities of translation made a significant impact on how the composers view Li Po's poetry.

Suggestions in future research

There is a considerable amount of vocal literature associated with Chinese poetry. This particular literature needs to be explored further in terms of clarifying the relationship between the original Chinese poetry and its translation. Also, for performers to achieve the finest artistry, an understanding of the background of the Chinese poetry is required. Therefore, it will be most valuable to have a guide to translations from native speakers or those with equivalent qualifications to provide information regarding the background and tradition behind the poetry set to music. Knowledge of the relationship and the differences between the original poetry and translated versions is important for a more thorough understanding of the values of the Chinese poetry.

The study also questions the issue of using translated text in composition and singing. When preparing to compose or perform vocal music that uses a translation from

foreign text, one cannot assume that the translation is accurate to the original text. Even if a translation is of high quality, much of the original aesthetic content of the original poetry may be lost because the poetic devices of language do not always translate. On the other hand, even though poetry may not translate well from one language to another, it is still possible for some subjective qualities of the poetry to be reflected in the musical setting, depending on the skill of the composer and the quality of the translation. Further research is needed in this area; particularly those languages and cultures that have considerable differences from the western world such as Russian, Greek or other Asian countries will need similar attention respecting the issue of translation.

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“Along the Stream” from *Saudades*
Four Poems by Li-Po
Three Poems by Li-Po

Appendix A Chronological order of China dynasty

Hsia dynasty 夏 (1994-1766 B.C.)

Shang dynasty 商 (1766-1022 B.C.)

Western Chou dynasty 西周 (1022-771B.C.)

Eastern Chou dynasty 東周 (771-249 B.C.)

Spring and autumn period 春秋 (771-481 B.C.)

Warring States Period 戰國 (403-221B.C.)

Ch'in dynasty 秦 (221-206 B.C.) The name of China is derived from this dynasty.
Also, the Great Wall of China was built during this period.

Western Han dynasty 西漢 (206 B.C.- 9 A.D.)

Hsin dynasty 新 (9A.D.-23 A.D.)

Eastern Han dynasty 東漢 (23 A.D. to 220 A.D.)

Three kingdoms 三國 (220-280 A.D.) Wei 魏, Shu 蜀, Wu 吳

Chin 晉 (265-420 A.D.)

Six dynasties 六朝 (420-590 A.D.)

Southern: Sung 宋, Ch'i 齊, Liang 梁, Ch'en 陳

Northern: Wei 魏, Ch'i 齊, Chou 周

Sui dynasty 隋 (590-618 A.D.)

T'ang dynasty 唐 (618-906 A.D.) A period of unprecedented brilliance and power in the history of Chinese civilization including in literature.

Five dynasties 五代 (906-960 A.D.)

(Later) Liang 後梁, T'ang 後唐, Chin 後晉, Han 後漢, Chou 後周

Sung dynasty 宋 (960-1260 A. D.) Northern 960-1127. Southern 1127-1260

Yuan dynasty 元 (1260-1368 A.D.)

Ming dynasty 明 (1368-1644 A.D.)

Manchu or Ch'ing dynasty 清 (1644-1912 A.D.)

The Republic of China 中華民國 (1912 A.D.- present) Taiwan

The People's Republic 中華人民共和國 (1949-present) Mainland China

Appendix B Ancient Chinese poetry tonal structure

The signs used in the charts are commonly adopted in Chinese poetry: “—” indicates an even tone; “|” indicates an uneven tone; “T” indicates that the character should be an even tone, but that an uneven is permitted; “⊥” indicates the reverse; “⊖” indicates the rhyme.⁹⁰

TONE PATTERNS FOR FIVE-CHARACTER MODERN POEMS

A								B							
8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
⊥	T	T	⊥	⊥	T	T	⊥	T	⊥	⊥	T	T	⊥	⊥	T
	—	—			—	—		—			—	—			—
	—		—		—		—		—		—		—		—
—			—	—			—		—	—			—	—	
⊖		⊖		⊖		⊖		⊖		⊖		⊖		⊖	

C								D							
8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
⊥	T	T	⊥	⊥	T	T	⊥	T	⊥	⊥	T	T	⊥	⊥	T
	—	—			—	—		—			—	—			—
	—		—		—				—		—		—		
—			—	—			—		—	—			—	—	
⊖		⊖		⊖		⊖	⊖	⊖		⊖		⊖		⊖	⊖

First line	}	First pair	}	First group		
Second line						
Third line	}	Second pair				
Fourth line						
Fifth line	}	Third pair	}	Second group		
Sixth line						
Seventh line	}	Fourth pair				
Eighth line						

⁹⁰ Kiamg Kang-hu. *The Jade Mountain* xxxviii.

Appendix C Comparative chart of ancient Chinese poetry styles

Gushi (old poem) and *yuefu* poem were developed in Han dynasty (25-220 A.D.) T'ang Poems adapted traditional verse forms and created new ones: *lüshi* (regulated poem) and *jueju* (truncated verse) were newly invented in T'ang dynasty (618-906 A.D.), known as “modern poem” contrasting to “old poem” (*gushi*). While *yuefu* was written in both styles: old form from Han dynasty (25-220 A.D.) or newly invented *xin yuefu* (New *yuefu*) style.

	<i>lüshi</i>	<i>jueju</i>	<i>yuefu</i>	<i>gushi</i>
Number of words	Five or seven	Five or seven	Unlimited before T'ang dynasty	Four, five, seven or unlimited before T'ang
Lines	Eight	Four	Unlimited before T'ang dynasty	Unlimited before T'ang dynasty
Tone pattern	Strict	Strict	Liberal	Liberal
Rhyme	Strict	Strict	Liberal	Liberal
Set to Music	No	Maybe	Yes	No
Ancestor	New	T'ang and <i>yuefu</i>	Han dynasty	<i>Fu</i> poetry

Appendix D “Hard Roads in Shu” by Li Po

蜀道難

噫吁戲
危乎高哉
蜀道之難難於上青天
蠶叢及魚鳧
開國何茫然
爾來四萬八千歲
始與秦塞通人煙
西當太白有鳥道
可以橫絕峨眉巔
地崩山摧壯士死
然後天梯石棧方鉤連
上有六龍回日之高標
下有衝波逆折之迴川
黃鶴之飛尚不得
猿猱欲度愁攀援
青泥何盤盤
百步九折縈巖巒
捫參歷井仰脅息
以手撫膺坐長歎
問君西遊何時還
畏途巖巖不可攀
但見悲鳥號古木
雄飛雌從繞林間
又聞子規啼
夜月愁空山
蜀道之難難於上青天
使人聽此凋朱顏
連峰去天不盈尺
枯松倒掛倚絕壁
飛湍瀑流爭喧豗

砮崖轉石萬壑雷
其險也如此
嗟爾遠道之人
胡爲乎來哉
劍閣崢嶸而崔嵬
一夫當關
萬夫莫開
所守或匪親
化爲狼與豺
朝避猛虎
夕避長蛇
磨牙吮血
殺人如麻
錦城雖云樂
不如早還家
蜀道之難難於上青天
側身西望常咨嗟

HARD ROADS IN SHU

Oh, but it is high and very dangerous!
Such traveling is harder than scaling the blue sky.
...Until two rulers of this region
Pushed their way through in the misty ages,
Forty-eight thousand years had passed
With nobody arriving across the Qin border.
And the Great White Mountain, westward, still has only a bird's path
Up to the summit of Emei Peak --
Which was broken once by an earthquake and there were brave men lost,
Just finishing the stone rungs of their ladder toward heaven.
...High, as on a tall flag, six dragons drive the sun,
While the river, far below, lashes its twisted course.
Such height would be hard going for even a yellow crane,
So pity the poor monkeys who have only paws to use.
The Mountain of Green Clay is formed of many circles-

Each hundred steps, we have to turn nine turns among its mound --
Panting, we brush Orion and pass the Well Star,
Then, holding our chests with our hands and sinking to the ground with a groan,
We wonder if this westward trail will never have an end.
The formidable path ahead grows darker, darker still,
With nothing heard but the call of birds hemmed in by the ancient forest,
Male birds smoothly wheeling, following the females;
And there come to us the melancholy voices of the cuckoos
Out on the empty mountain, under the lonely moon....
Such traveling is harder than scaling the blue sky.
Even to hear of it turns the cheek pale,
With the highest crag barely a foot below heaven.
Dry pines hang, head down, from the face of the cliffs,
And a thousand plunging cataracts out roar one another
And send through ten thousand valleys a thunder of spinning stones.
With all this danger upon danger,
Why do people come here who live at a safe distance?
...Though Dagger-Tower Pass be firm and grim,
And while one man guards it
Ten thousand cannot force it,
What if he be not loyal,
But a wolf toward his fellows?
...There are ravenous tigers to fear in the day
And venomous reptiles in the night
With their teeth and their fangs ready
To cut people down like hemp.
Though the City of Silk be delectable, I would rather turn home quickly.
Such traveling is harder than scaling the blue sky....
But I still face westward with a dreary moan.⁹¹

⁹¹ Translated by Witter Bynner. *The Penguin Book of Chinese Verse*. Edited by A.R. Davis, Penguin Books, 1962.

Appendix E “Drinking Alone Under the Moon” by Li Po

Drinking Alone under the Moon

Among the flowers, a single jug of wine;
I drink alone. No one close to me.
I raise my cup, invite the bright moon;
facing my shadow, together we make three.
The moon doesn't know how to drink;
and my shadow can only follow my body.
But for a time I make moon and shadow my companions;
taking one's pleasure must last until spring.
I sing--the moon wavers back and forth.
I dance--my shadow flickers and scatters.
When I'm sober we take pleasure together.
When I'm drunk, we each go our own ways.
I make an oath to journey forever free of feelings,
making an appointment with them to meet in the Milky Way afar.⁹²

月下獨酌

花間一壺酒
獨酌無相親
舉杯邀明月
對影成三人
月既不解飲
影徒隨我身
暫伴月將影
行樂須及春
我歌月徘徊
我舞影零亂
醒時同交歡
醉後各分散
永結無情遊
相期邈雲漢

⁹² Translated by Paul Rouzer. Assistant Professor of Columbia University. Provided by “Asian Topic” website.

Appendix F “The Long Departed Lover” by Li Po

The Long Departed Lover

(Translated by Obata)

Fair one, when you were here, I filled the house with flowers.

Fair one, now you are gone-only an empty couch is left.

On the couch the embroidered quilt is rolled up;

I cannot sleep.

Is it three years since you went. The perfume you left behind haunts me still.

The perfume strays about me forever, but where are you, beloved?

I sigh-the yellows leaves fall from the branch,

I weep-dew twinkles white on the green mosses.

寄遠

美人在時花滿堂。

美人去後餘空床。

床中繡被卷不寢。

至今三載聞餘香。

香亦竟不減。

人亦竟不來。

相思黃葉落。

白露濕青苔。

Appendix G Portrait of Li Po

