

Note: The following is a collection of translated Song dynasty ci poetry, compiled from composition-related research over the past three years.

Selected translations of Song dynasty *ci* poetry

Haotian Yu

Jiang Kui (1155-1221)

姜夔

Ge Stream Plum Tune¹

鬲溪梅令

In the second year² of the reign of Emperor Ningzong of Song, as I departed Wuxi for Hangzhou, I wrote this to capture my sentiments.

丙辰冬-自无锡归-作此寓意

The winter bloom does not await the fragrance-seeking one.

好花不与殢香人

The stream is gently rippled.

浪粼粼

I fear that once the vernal zephyr parts, the green will turn to darker hues.

又恐春风归去绿成阴

Where can one the jasper headdress find?

玉钿何处寻

I row my orchid raft through drifting clouds of dream.

木兰双桨梦中云

I lie in brief repose.

小横陈

In trance I drift toward the Western Lake,³ and there I find the maiden bloom.

漫向孤山山下觅盈盈

I wake—the birds intone amid the spring.

翠禽啼一春

¹ A *ci* title merely describes the generic song form which structures the poem, and therefore is generally unrelated to the thematic content of the poetry (except when subtitles are present).

² 1196.

³ i.e. West Lake, Hangzhou; Jiang Kui originally references “Gu Shan” (Solitary Hill), a small island at the northern end of West Lake.

Su Shi (1037-1101)

苏轼

Water Melody Prelude

水调歌头

On Mid-Autumn Day of the ninth year⁴ of the reign of Emperor Shenzong of Song, drinking joyfully through the night and getting immensely drunk, I wrote this, with longing for Ziyou.⁵

丙辰中秋-欢饮达旦-大醉-作此篇-兼怀子由

O, when did such a shining moon appear?
I raise my cup to ask the boundless sky.
Within high heaven's lofty palace walls,
What godly year reflects this earthly night?
I wish to ride the wind unto that place—
But also fear that, high upon the soaring
Cosmic crystal walls, I cannot bear the cold.
I start to dance: my shadow plays along.
O, what can best the joys of mortal life?

明月几时有
把酒问青天
不知天上宫阙
今夕是何年
我欲乘风归去
又恐琼楼玉宇
高处不胜寒
起舞弄清影
何似在人间

About the crimson house;
Between the silken blinds;
Upon the sleepless one...
The moon should have no cause for pain:
Then why, when one must say farewell, does it, in
fullness, shine?
This life has joyful nights and sad departing days.
The moon—its light—will always wax and wane.
Since days of old, we all have known this fate.
I only ask that all might live in peace.
Though far from you, we see the same bright moon.

转朱阁低绮户
照无眠
不应有恨
何事长向别时圆
人有悲欢离合
月有阴晴圆缺
此事古难全
但愿人长久
千里共婵娟

⁴ 1076.

⁵ Su Zhe (1039-1112), courtesy name Ziyou, Su Shi's younger brother, also a famed literatus.

Jiang Kui (1155-1221)

姜夔

Lament in an Ancient Mode (Song with Qin)

古怨 (琴歌)

Amid the dusk,
A hazy mountain mist
Obscures the bank ahead.
I wish to tie the boat to land: but where?
I cannot overtake departed souls,
Nor can I know the ones who've yet to come...
Alone I dream of ancient times.

日暮
四山兮烟雾
暗前浦
将维舟兮无所
追我前兮不逮
怀后来兮何处
屡回顾

What footing can be had in matters of this world?
A single hand can turn the clouds and rain...
In distant Golden Valley fell a flower:
Lü Zhu now lies amid the dust.
We mourn for her misfortuned life:
But who can bring her justice?
Can spring be gone, like this, for good?
...A maiden servant grieves amid the twilight dusk;
Her hair is turning white.⁶

世事兮何据
手翻覆兮云雨
过金谷兮花谢
委尘土
悲佳人兮薄命
谁为主
岂不犹有春兮
妾自伤兮迟暮
发将素

This life is short of joys: sorrows have no end.
My zither's strings⁷ about to break from bitter
sounds,
A mountain vista stands before my eyes;
Tears stain my feet.
Sire, do you not see: year by year,
Upon the waters of the Fen,⁸ only autumn
Geese fly by.

欢有穷兮恨无数
弦欲绝兮声苦
满目江山兮
泪沾屣
君不见年年
汾水上兮惟秋
雁飞去

⁶ This stanza refers to the story of Shi Cong, a wealthy Jin dynasty scholar; various interpretations on this reference exist. Sun Xiu, a government official, desired Shi Cong's wife and had Shi Cong executed by accusing him of treason; Shi Cong's wife, Lü Zhu, committed suicide. Jiang Kui laments the injustice of the state and the power of corrupt officials; alternatively, Jiang Kui laments the futility of riches (in this case, Shi Cong's) and the fragility of material happiness.

⁷ Referring to the *guqin*.

⁸ i.e. the Fen river, an ancient holy ground for early Chinese emperors, several of whom are entombed there. By Jiang Kui's time (about a thousand years later) it was remote and barren.

Huang Tingjian (1045-1105)

黄庭坚

Water Melody Prelude (A Leisurely Path)

水调歌头-游览

This jasper grass—it gleams like finest jade.
The gentle spring pervades the Wuling stream;⁹
About the stream, the flower blossoms bloom;
Amid the bloom, the songbirds make their nests.
I wish to part the blooms to find a hidden path,
To walk into the depths of white and tranquil
clouds,
To see the mist create a wash of light.
I only fear, within those bloomy depths,
The crimson dew will wet my scholar's sleeves.

瑶草一何碧
春入武陵溪
溪上桃花无数
枝上有黄鹂
我欲穿花寻路
直入白云深处
浩气展虹霓
只恐花深里
红露湿人衣

Atop a verdant rock,
I rest upon the jade,
My hand upon my qin.¹⁰
I seek celestial mountain seers:
For here there are no men to share my jeweled
seashell cup.
I search for Lingzhi¹¹ mushrooms and sacred groves
of grass,
Not seeking powdered cheeks or falsely colored
lips.
I start a drunken dance upon my homeward path.
The glowing moon reminds me—it is time for my
return.

坐玉石
倚玉枕
拂金徽
谪仙何处
无人伴我白螺杯
我为灵芝仙草
不为朱唇丹脸
长啸亦何为
醉舞下山去
明月逐人归

⁹ Wuling stream, here referring to Tao Yuanming's Plum Blossom Stream—in Tao Yuanming's literary work a valley leading to a hidden utopia. Here used metaphorically to describe a particularly beautiful and/or mysterious river vale.

¹⁰ i.e. *Guzhen*.

¹¹ i.e. Mushrooms of Immortality.

Xin Qiji (1140-1207)

辛弃疾

Tai Chang Melody (For Lü Shuqian,¹² Mid-Autumn
in Jiankang)

太常引-建康中秋夜为吕叔潜赋

A disk of autumn gleam alights upon the golden
waves;
The flying mirror has been glossed anew.
I raise my cup to ask the lunar nymph:
I suffer whitened hair—
O, who can bear its mocking hue?

一轮秋影转金波
飞镜又重磨
把酒问姮娥
被白髮
欺人奈何

I wish to ride the wind and part—
I cross a thousand *li* of sky;
Below, I see tall mountains and great streams.
They say if one can dare to cut the dancing
Fragrant lunar tree
One would see more bright and youthful days.

乘风好去
长空万里
直下看山河
斫去桂婆娑
人道是
清光更多

¹² Supposedly Xin Qiji's friend, of whom no biographical details are known.

Xin Qiji (1140-1207)

辛弃疾

Springtime in the Garden of Princess Qin (Seeing off Zhao Jingming¹³ as He Returns to the East)

沁园春-送赵景明东归再用前韵

I stand, in wait, by Xiao and Xiang¹⁴—

A yellow egret soars on high.

The one I seek has yet to come.¹⁵

We bear the eastern wind's relentless draft;

Beside the western shore, we speak

With anxious sighs and parting wine:

A sleeve to brush away the dust.

Oh, it would suit your lofty valor—

Indeed, your spirit, like a Lord's—

For you to be enfeoffed with lands ten-thousand *li* across.

Not having, now we know:

For one who seeks the graceful poems of the South,

There can only be Fang Hui.¹⁶

With colored sail and painted boat, you now depart.

How bleak, with snowy waves unto the sky, this river scene...

In yore, upon the southern shore,

When parting, I held out a branch;

And then, on seeing this, you gave

A winter bloom, to part our ways.¹⁷

With Luoma Mountain there behind us,

At Crying Eagle Tower's foot,¹⁸

They say that, there, the springtime bloom can grow to fill the town.

Cease now to think of this.

Oh, look upon the cloudscape high:

A *Peng*,¹⁹ in flight, meanders.

伫立潇湘

黄鹄高飞

望君不来

被东风吹堕

西江对语

急呼斗酒

旋拂尘埃

却怪英姿

有如君者

犹欠封侯万里哉

空赢得

道江南佳句

只有方回

锦帆画舫行斋

怅雪浪粘天江影开

记我行南浦

送君折柳

君逢驿使

为我攀梅

落帽山前

呼鹰台下

人道花须满县栽

都休问

看云霄高处

鹏翼徘徊

¹³ Zhao Ye (1138-1185), courtesy name Jingming, literatus.

¹⁴ Two rivers (in what is today Hunan province) which collectively symbolize Chu culture.

¹⁵ First three lines a paraphrase of *Songs of Chu*, "The Goddess of the Xiang River" (Song no. 3, *Jiu Ge*). Here, likely a poetic/mythological reflection on the locale, with broader connotations of longing and departure.

¹⁶ These two lines an allusion to the quatrain *A Letter to Fang Hui*, Huang Tingjian (1045-1105), in which Huang describes the elusive happiness of profound mutual understanding.

¹⁷ The act of offering a broken willow branch and plum blossom was a traditional ritual of farewell among literati, as civil servants would change posts (therefore begin to undertake long journeys) in early spring.

¹⁸ The Luoma Mountain and Crying Eagle Tower are associated with literati meetings, therefore wine and spontaneous poetic wit.

¹⁹ A large bird; in the context of Xin Qiji's life, perhaps an allusion to unfulfilled destiny (see *Zhuangzi*, ch. 1).

Li Qingzhao (1084-1156)

李清照

Nian Nu's Song (Sentiments of Spring)

念奴娇-春情

A bleak and quiet garden close—
The softly soughing wind and gently falling rain
Demand we shut the garden doors.
Willows, green, and graceful blooms foretell the
coming spring.
All kinds of dreary weather plague this time of
year.
I make new poems of awkward rhymes,
Or wake from slumbers brought by wine.
All this encased by tastes of ceaseless woe.
A migrant cygnet passes by:
Ten-thousand thoughts and worries—few can
words express.

萧条庭院
又斜风细雨
重门须闭
宠柳娇花寒食近
种种恼人天气
险韵诗成
扶头酒醒
别是闲滋味
征鸿过尽
万千心事难寄

The floor above has met with days of vernal cold,
And curtains drape about its sides.
I lean without intent upon the fence.
The cold puts out the incense flame and ends my
nascent dreams—
A troubled soul is not allowed to lose itself in
sleep...
The dew is pure amid the morn;
The budding trees make infant bloom.
They call to me with thoughts of springtime treks.
The sun was high but cast with mist.
Today, I look again to see if it has cleared.

楼上几日春寒
帘垂四面
玉阑干慵倚
被冷香消新梦觉
不许愁人不起
清露晨流
新桐初引
多少游春意
日高烟敛
更看今日晴未

Su Shi (1037-1101)

苏轼

Nian Nu's Song (The Red Cliff²⁰ Invokes my Thoughts of Ancient Days)

念奴娇-赤壁怀古

The River flows towards the East.
The waves, unceasing, wash away
A thousand bygone years of lofty men.
West of here, these storied ruins,
There stands, they say,
The scarlet cliff of Marshall Zhou²¹ of yore.
The jagged rocks incise the cloudy sky,
And violent waves collide against the shore,
Together carving, churning up a thousand foamy
snows.
This river-mountain scene is like a painted scroll:
How many heroes roamed these shores in distant
days gone by?

大江东去
浪淘尽
千古风流人物
故垒西边
人道是
三国周郎赤壁
乱石穿空
惊涛拍岸
卷起千堆雪
江山如画
一时多少豪杰

I think of Zhou Gongjin in his own time—
His peerless bride the Younger Qiao,
His stately posture, valiant gaze,
His fan of feathers, cap of silk.
O, how he laughed and joked amid
The flying flame and smoke of Cao Cao's
vanquished fleet!²²
Were I, in dream, to journey to this distant time,
My sentimental thoughts...these heroes, they would
mock:
My hair would quickly turn to snow.
This life is but a dream.
This wine I pour, as a libation, unto the moonlit
waters.

遥想公瑾当年
小乔初嫁了
雄姿英发
羽扇纶巾
谈笑间
檣櫓灰飞烟灭
故国神游
多情应笑我
早生华发
人间如梦
一尊还酹江月

²⁰ Red Cliff, on the Yangtze river, site of famous battle between allied forces of Sun Quan (182-252) and Liu Bei (161-223) against Chancellor Cao Cao (155-220), Three Kingdoms Period

²¹ Zhou Yu (175-210), courtesy name Gongjin, supreme commander of allied Sun and Liu forces.

²² Zhou Yu destroyed Cao Cao's fleet and his military dominance by tactical superiority despite being outnumbered. Zhou Yu set fire to Cao Cao's fleet, blocking the Chancellor from crossing the Yangtze.

Xin Qiji (1140-1207)

辛弃疾

The Waves Against the Shore (Hearing a Bell, At
Midnight in a Mountain Temple)

浪淘沙-山寺夜半闻钟

Long years of life rest in this cup of wine.
Ten thousand worries—emptiness...
Since ancient days the world has seen but three or
five great names.
The rains descend and storm-winds blow: can one,
today, unearth
The halls of Han or gates of Qin?

身世酒杯中
萬事皆空
古來三五個英雄
雨打風吹何處是
漢殿秦宮

In dream, I journey back to worldly youth—
Days of karmic song and dance.
By accident, a monk, in depth of night, impels the
temple bell.
Roused, I sit against the Western bay and cannot
fall asleep.
The westward wind sighs across the earth.

夢入少年叢
歌舞匆匆
老僧夜半誤鳴鐘
驚起西窗眠不得
卷地西風

Li Yu (937-978)

李煜

Yearning for Jiangnan

望江南

I

其一

Oh, who can count my tears?
They streak my face and quiver on my chin;
I fail to vent my agonies with dripping tears and
words.
Oh, do not sound the courtly pipes upon this day of
tears
And make more keen the wounds within my heart.

多少泪
断脸复横颐
心事莫将和泪说
凤笙休向泪时吹
肠断更无疑

Oh, who can count my pains?
Last night I wandered off amid a dream
And returned, it seemed, to tour the royal groves of
yesteryear.
The chariots passed like running water, horses
pranced like waves,
The moonlit blooms adrift in vernal wind.

多少恨
昨夜梦魂中
还似旧时游上苑
车如流水马如龙
花月正春风