

春水選譯

## Selections from *Spring Water*

Translated by Grace Boynton

with an Introduction by Charlotte Boynton



Grace Boynton in the 1950s.

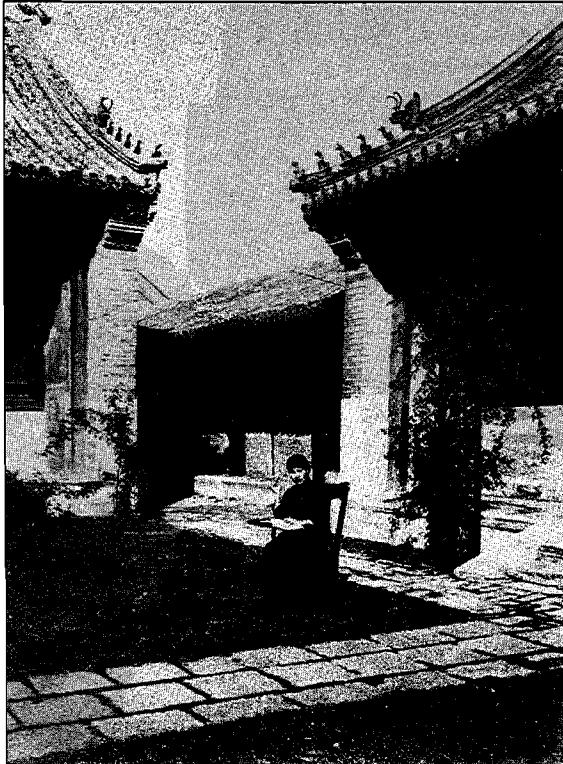
### **THE BRIDGE OF LOVE: Thirty Years of Friendship between Poet and Translator**

TO ARRIVE in China in 1919, as Grace Boynton did, was to find oneself in a country undergoing the pressures of external aggression and internal dissension, a maelstrom where warlords, concubinage and footbinding coexisted with ardent admiration for Bertrand Russell and reckless efforts to ingest all things Western, ideologies included. Teaching, which was Miss Boynton's mission at Yenching University in Peking, placed one in the midst of the tumultuous quest for change known as the May Fourth Movement.<sup>1</sup>

Out of this ferment a new literature arose. The classical literary language, divorced for centuries from common usage, was spurned as anachronistic, and writers – particularly students – experimented with writing in *baihua*, the colloquial language.

<sup>1</sup>A patriotic demonstration held on 4 May 1919 against Japanese encroachment on Chinese sovereignty. It triggered a cultural explosion affecting mores, manners and ideals as traditional values were vigorously challenged and increasingly defied.

Here Bing Xin was among the pioneers.<sup>2</sup> Hu Shi, one of the principal instigators of the new literary movement, told Miss Boynton that “Most writers in *baihua* were searching for a style suitable to the new form, and many of them were crude; some were vulgar. Miss Icy Heart, he understood, had been given a good grounding in the great Chinese poets; she had brought over into the new medium a delicacy and refinement which was at the same time fresh and direct.” “And then,” he added, “she carries on the traditional Chinese awareness of Nature, and the use of the image in her technique, so she is at once simple and exquisite.”<sup>3</sup>



Bing Xin in the garden of the Tongfu where Grace Boynton's study was located.

Originally Bing Xin was a pupil in Miss Boynton's English classes, but their relationship developed into a friendship that lasted over thirty years. Among Miss Boynton's papers few contemporary references remain pertaining to the beginning of the friendship, though the two apparently met within months of Miss Boynton's arrival in China. Letters home in 1921 are sprinkled with mentions of “my most

<sup>2</sup>The pen name “Bing Xin” (Ping Hsin) was explained as follows by Grace Boynton: “*Ping (Bing)* meaning ice, and *Hsin (Xin)* meaning heart, carry in the Chinese a connotation of a pure and crystalline quality which is different from our English emphasis on ice as chilly. However, in a well-bred Chinese girl, a certain amount of chilliness is regarded as only proper. Ping Hsin had her share of it.”

<sup>3</sup>From the introduction to *Yenchiao Diary*, unpublished MS, p. x.

promising student” and “my beloved little Chinese rose”. However, in 1965 Miss Boynton wrote about how it started:

Early one evening, perhaps three months after I had begun teaching her, Icy Heart came to the tall double doors of my study in the Tongfu.<sup>4</sup> I heard a soft hesitating knock. When I answered, one leaf opened just enough to allow a little figure to slip through. She was barely five feet tall, and every detail of her sensitive face, of her tapering fingers and her slim outline in demure schoolgirl black, had a remarkable delicacy. She stood with bowed head, in an attitude of deep respect until I asked her to sit down. A half hour passed before she rose to go, and I still did not know why she had come. As she stood in the crack in the door, she spoke in a whisper:

“Please, I need a friend, and please, don’t you laugh [at] me.”

Then she was gone, a shadow flitting into the deeper shadows of the high walls of my small court.

Soon she came again, and this time she got up her courage to explain herself further. . . . She had been publishing verse for two years, and from the beginning she had found herself embarrassingly popular. Her readers, mostly university students, seethed with curiosity about her, to her genuine distress. She belonged to an official family. Good breeding required women of her class to remain in modest seclusion, and modesty was very important to Icy Heart. She clung to her privacy. She never appeared in public. She used a covered ricksha to come to the college gates, and once inside she was safe from intruders, for miscellaneous young men were not encouraged to appear there. The few mixed classes already begun in Yenching were held at the Men’s College a safe distance away. There were times, however, when she needed an intermediary between herself and her public, and then I acted for her.<sup>5</sup>

In 1923 Bing Xin graduated from Yenching University and went to America to enrol in an M.A. program at Wellesley. The Boynton family home was in Medford, not far away, and the family apparently clasped Bing Xin to its collective bosom to such an extent that the poet referred to Miss Boynton’s mother, Mary Wilcox Boynton, as her second mother and to Medford as her second home. In their forms of address, her letters to Miss Boynton’s aunt Josephine Wilcox progress from “My dear Miss Wilcox” to “My dear American Auntie” to simply “Dear Aunt Jo”. Although she returned to China after completing her M.A. in 1926, Bing Xin continued to correspond with the Boyntons. At the time of her wedding to Wu Wenzao in 1929, she sent a copy of the handsome red-and-gold wedding invitation to Aunt

<sup>4</sup>Name of the former residence of the Dukes of Tong in Peking where Yenching’s Women’s College was at that time located.

<sup>5</sup>Op, cit., p. xii. Grace Boynton’s journals, in the form of handwritten originals and retyped copies, are on deposit in the Schlesinger Library at Radcliffe College, Harvard University. All cited letters and other documents (and copies of the retyped journals) are in the possession of the present writer, whom persons wishing to see these papers may consult. All rights are reserved by the Literary Executrix, Grace M. Boynton.



Bing Xin and Wu Wenzao were married in Peking, 15 June 1929. Grace Boynton is on Bing Xin's left. Towering between the bride and groom is Leighton Stuart, then President of Yenching University.

Jo, as well as a wedding photograph in which Miss Boynton and the President of Yenching University are the only foreigners. In 1930 she wrote to Aunt Jo announcing her pregnancy and her intention to name the child after Miss Boynton's parents; and indeed, in English-speaking circles her son, Wu Zongsheng, was to be known as Boynton Wu.

While Bing Xin was finishing up at Wellesley, Miss Boynton embarked on her translation of *Spring Water* in the relative seclusion of a village called Yanjiao. Teaching in English to students who were too intent on learning English to permit her to practise her Chinese had severely impeded her acquisition of the language. In 1925, therefore, Grace Boynton repaired to Yanjiao to immerse herself in Chinese, taking with her a copy of *Spring Water* which she intended to translate.

This time of isolation from academic demands, the only such sustained respite during Miss Boynton's thirty years in China, enabled her to properly focus on her translation. In later years she would express in her diary the desire to translate other works of Bing Xin's, but she would never again have such an opportunity.

In 1929 Miss Boynton had her translation privately printed in Peking. Very little documentation survives for this era in her life, but in an undated passage (probably written in the 1950s) she remarks: "*Spring Water* was done only for my own pleasure, but . . . the little work proved to have a place in the history of translation from Chinese to English which I did not guess for many years. Recently I have found two notices of it. Roy Earle Teele . . . [in] *Through a Glass Darkly* (Ann Arbor, 1949)

points out that my translation was among the first if not the very first book of modern Chinese poetry to be done into English. Mr Harold Acton in the preface to his book *Modern Chinese Poetry* (London, 1936, but I read it only in 1954) gives considerable space to the discussion of the work of Hsieh Ping Hsin (Xie Bing Xin) in my translation.<sup>6</sup> In deciding to publish it, she may have been inspired by her enjoyment of modern English poetry (on at least one occasion she scandalized a gathering of fellow missionaries by reading aloud an E.E. Cummings poem which they considered too risqué) to bring a sample of what modern Chinese poetry had to offer to an English-speaking readership.

After her return from Wellesley, Bing Xin became a colleague of Miss Boynton's at Yenching. Following the Japanese takeover of Peking in 1937, although Yenching continued to function more or less freely by emphasizing its American backing, Bing Xin and her husband felt that their place was in the Chinese territory outside the Japanese sphere of influence. In 1938 they left for Kunming. In her journal Miss Boynton wrote, "Wan Ying (Wanying) and her family are gone. We carried on gently and unemotionally to the end. Wan Ying told me her father was marvellous when she said goodbye to him, although he probably felt that he would not see her again (and he did not – GMB 1956). So I patterned myself on Admiral Hsieh (Xie) and went through the last days without a tear . . . Wan Ying was tenderly thoughtful of me even while she was so busy . . . When the train began to move, WY stood in a window with the youngest child in her arms, so lovely a sight that my tears came then. I walked along the slowly sliding train and begged to see Boynton, and he came to wave at me, then they were swept out of sight. It has been nineteen years that WY and her family have been dear and close to me. But I am proud to have them go. . . ."

Miss Boynton stayed in Peking until 1940, and took a furlough in the United States in 1941, as a result of which fortunate timing she was not interned with the other foreigners after Pearl Harbour. Determined to continue her work in China, she took the circuitous route to Sichuan by way of Hong Kong and Chongqing to resume her teaching at the refugee version of Yenching. On her way to Chengdu, Miss Boynton managed to visit Bing Xin outside of Chongqing.

Boynton was the first to see me, and hopped out to hug me like a young bear. Wan Ying fairly flew at me, and gave me a sound kiss, which she almost never has done before. The two little girls kissed Auntie Grace too; but Hsiao Mei [Xiaomei] [the youngest] was very puzzled when she saw me in the lamp light and said in astonishment, "Why, Auntie Grace is an outside country person!"

She had heard of me all her short life, and had never imagined that I was not Chinese. . . . Wan Ying looks white and worn, and yet her face in its maturity looks lovelier to me than ever. I spoke of the difficulties of her life in West China for her and Wen Tsao (Wenzao) and she said with her beautiful smile, "We have never been so

<sup>6</sup>Full references are: Roy Earle Teele, *Through a Glass Darkly: A study of English translations of Chinese poetry* (Ann Arbor: 1949, p. 126-7); and Harold Acton and Ch'en Shih-hsiang, *Modern Chinese Poetry* (London: Duckworth, 1936, p. 15-17).

happy." . . . When I tried to explain about myself to Hsiao Mei by saying that I was an "American person" she shook her little head and said "You are my mamma's person! When you came she gave you a great big kiss." Which Wan Ying herself remarked was not usual with her.

The remainder of the war kept them apart, and in 1946 Bing Xin went to Japan. The two continued to correspond and saw each other in Japan in 1950 as Miss Boynton was on her way back to the United States from China for the last time.

In 1951, as Bing Xin prepared to return to China, she sent a letter to Miss Boynton, which concluded, "*Of course* you know whatever the governments do to each other has nothing to do with our personal feelings. We will always feel grateful to you and love you and understand you. It seems to be unnatural to be telling you all this! With what we have between us all these years, you should take what we feel for granted! . . . Always lovingly, W.Y."

No direct communication ever passed between them again, though Miss Boynton would eagerly garner reports of Bing Xin from British friends who saw her on visits to China.

During the Cultural Revolution, a distressing rumour reached Miss Boynton which she mentioned in a letter to the present writer dated April 23, 1969: "I have had the sad news that Ping Hsin (Bing Xin) and her husband . . . died together in a suicide pact about two years ago. This was just one more tragedy brought about by the Red Guards who were intent on destroying everything connected with 'the old culture'. Wan Ying . . . was a most exquisite product of traditional Chinese culture. Wen Tsao, her husband, told me once that when he talked to Wan Ying's father about marrying his daughter he (Wenzao) said, 'She is the perfect combination of the loyalty, modesty and dignity of a Chinese lady and of the gaiety and freedom and self-confidence which she has learned from her contacts with the West.' This news came just as I went to bed and has been a deep sorrow."

Early in 1970 Grace Boynton died at the age of 79, not to know that the friend for whom she grieved was not only alive but would enjoy an honoured old age in the People's Republic. This cannot be remedied, but in assembling these materials it is as if the two old friends are meeting again, after all these years.

7

A step at a time with help –  
The half hidden purple peak –  
Why is it so high – so far?

8

O Moon –  
Why do people worship you?  
Because in the depths of the far heavens,  
There is only you to come and go.

11

The south wind blows.  
It brings the laughter of Spring  
From the world of waters.

七

一步一步的扶走——  
半隱的青紫的山峯  
怎的這般高遠呢？

八

月呵！  
甚麼做成了你的尊嚴呢？  
深遠的天空裏，  
只有你獨往獨來了。

十一

南風吹了，  
將春的微笑  
從水國裏帶來了！

Grace Boynton dedicated her translation of *Spring Water* to her mother, Mary Wilcox Boynton. The dedication reads: "This little translation is given by her two daughters. The child of the West she sent into a far country; the child of the East she received into her own heart and home; and to both, she stands witness to the Love that shall unite all nations."

13

White Lotus –  
You are too self-conscious in your purity;  
Can there be any objection if a pink lotus blossom  
In the same pool  
Encounters you?

十三

白蓮花！  
清潔拘束了你了——  
但也何妨讓同在水裏的紅蓮  
來參禮呢？

14

Nature called aloud and said –  
“Take your pen,  
Dip it into my ocean;  
Humanity’s heart is too dry and parched.”

十四

自然喚着說：  
“將你的筆尖兒  
浸在我的海裏罷！  
人類的心懷太枯燥了。”

17

The setting sun shines on the withered grass of the red wall.  
Go down quickly, O sun!  
You cause many young people to age early.

十七

紅牆衰草上的夕陽呵！  
快些落下去罷，  
你使許多的青年人顏老了！



23

Common little pool of water,  
The sun draws near you in its setting,  
And makes you a sea of gold.

27

A great wind rises.  
In autumn the cry of the cicada is gone.

35

Tender green leaves,  
You resemble the thoughts of a poet.  
The colour, leaf by leaf, grows richer.

36

An old man's past,  
And a young man's future,  
When you come to think of it,  
Are just the same thing.

## 二十三

平凡的池水——  
篩照了夕陽，  
便成金海！

## 二十七

大風起了！  
秋蟲的鳴聲都息了！

## 三十五

嫩綠的葉兒  
也似詩情麼？  
顏色一番一番的濃了。

## 三十六

老年人的“過去”  
青年人的“將來”，  
在沉思裏  
都是一樣呵！

37

Space!  
Tear away your net of stars.  
Let me see the face of your light.

39

Water flows eastward;  
The moon sets in the west;  
O poet,  
Can your feelings hinder either of them?

46\*

Acts of repression  
Give rise to thoughts of liberty.

47

The one on the gallery.  
With a book on her knee  
And the breeze breathing in her face,  
Knows that spring has come.

三十七

太空！  
揭開你的星網，  
容我瞻仰你光明的臉龐。

三十九

水向東流，  
月向西落——  
詩人，  
你的心情  
能將她們牽住了麼？

四十六

不解放的行爲，  
造就了自由的思想！

四十七

人在廊上，  
書在膝上，  
拂面的微風裏  
知道春來了。  
是你的朋友罷。

\* This poem was written in response to the Twenty-one Demands made on China by Japan in 1915.

62

I wish to bring back the light of past years:  
But the warp and woof of Time  
Are woven into the silken web of Now.

## 六十二

我要挽那“過去”的年光，  
但時間的經緯裏  
已織上了“現在”的絲了！

63

At the time of flying thistledown swallows come;  
At the flying time of the reed flowers,  
Swallows go.  
But the flowers are of the same pure whiteness.

## 六十三

柳花飛時，  
燕子來了；  
蘆花飛時，  
燕子又去了；  
但她們是一樣的潔白呵！

69

In the depths of solitary waters,  
There are reflected  
Forever the beautiful, red flowers of spring.

## 六十九

沉寂的淵底，  
却照着  
永遠紅艷的春花。

77

Sitting upon the steps telling jokes,  
I see the pavilion on the mountain top  
Under the sunset.  
Would not one think of climbing up there?  
I would not in one day enjoy all blessings!

七十七

只坐在階邊說笑——  
山上的樓台  
斜陽照着，  
何曾不想一登臨呢？  
清福不要一日享盡了呵！

79

I wish before I leave this world  
That I might softly, softly say to it –  
“O world –  
I thoroughly understand you.”

七十九

我願意在離開世界以前  
能低低告訴它說：  
“世界呵，  
我徹底的了解你了！”

82

My friend,  
Do not let the young spring wind deceive you.  
The colours of the flowers are not like their scents.

八十二

我的朋友，  
不要讓春風欺哄了你，  
花色原不如花香啊！

99

"Solitary orchid  
You are too lonely –  
Don't you think you ought to have comrades?"

"It is what I am searching after,  
But there are no other flowers  
That are willing to bloom in this valley."

100

When the burden on the shoulder of the young  
Suddenly lightens,  
The brave heart –  
Because of this very relief, becomes lonely and sad.

102

My questions,  
My heart  
Never answers in the midst of light.  
But my dreams  
In darkness, give me their solution.

## 九十九

“幽蘭！  
未免太寂寞了，  
不願意要友伴麼？”  
“我正尋求着呢！  
但沒有別的花兒  
肯開在空谷裏。”

## —〇〇

當青年人的肩上的重擔  
忽然卸去時，  
他勇敢的心  
便要因着寂寞而悲哀了！

## —〇二

我的問題——  
我的心  
在光明中沉默不答。  
我的夢  
却在黑暗裏替我解明了！

109

The night is long,  
It would be pleasant to have some rain.  
Outside the window at last it comes down.  
Now I can count the falling drops.  
Why am I still so sad?

118

The purple wistaria blossoms fall in the pool,  
Under the arbour.  
The day is long, and nobody comes.  
Only the little breeze blows among the leaves,  
And makes a noise of whispering.

123\*

The fine rain has fallen for several days;  
The message of the coming spring is delayed.  
In my solitude –  
Many clusters of dried flowers  
I lift delicately and think –  
“These are the words of last year’s spring,  
But can they be the comfort of today?”

\* Written because she has had no recent letter from her cousin.

一〇九

夜正長呢！  
能下些雨兒也好。  
窗外果然滴瀝了——  
數着雨聲罷！  
只依舊是煩郁麼？

一一八

紫藤夢落在池上了，  
花架下  
長晝無人，  
只有微風吹着葉幾響

一二三

幾天的微雨，  
將春的消息隔絕了。  
無聊裏——  
幾朵枯花，  
只拈來凝想。  
原是去年的言語呵，  
也可作今日的慰安麼？

138\*

The shadows of people were like ghosts,  
 And the flames of the candles were dim.  
 These things put the pain of eternal separation  
 And the puzzle of human existence,  
 Into my earliest remembrance.

144\*\*

The poet writes in vain,  
 One little heart –  
 Could it bring comfort  
 To wanderers suffering bitterly in the rain?

146\*\*\*

The flower of Experience  
 Bears the fruit of Wisdom,  
 And the fruit of Wisdom,  
 Has within it, the seeds of Pain.

\* This poem was written after the death of her uncle.

\*\* Written in war time.

\*\*\* The last two lines are missing in the 1929 edition.

## 一三八

幢幢的人影，  
 沉沉的燭光——  
 都將永別的悲哀，  
 和人生之謎語，  
 刻在我最初的回憶裏了。

## 一四四

詩人也只是空寫罷了！  
 一點心靈——  
 何曾安慰到  
 雨聲裏痛苦的征人？

## 一四六

經驗的花  
 結了智慧的果，  
 智慧的果  
 却包着煩惱的核！  
 又添了未曾相識的湖山，  
 頻來入夢。

158

O Pioneers!  
After you decide upon your course  
You must not look back.  
Once you give a glance behind,  
The weakness in your soul  
Will halt you.

169

The unborn child  
Within the sphere of life –  
Climbs to the window of birth, and sees,  
Dimly  
Opposite him the cavern of death.

177

My heart suddenly is burdened.  
Last night I dreamed  
That alone I wear the spotless silk of innocence –  
In the rush of the waves  
Sailing across this black sea.

178

On a cloudy day, I mount the stone steps,  
And sit alone.  
O green leaves,  
The roses are gone.  
Both the poet and you  
Feel lonely.

一五八

先驅者！  
前途認定了  
切莫回頭！  
一回頭——  
靈魂裏潛藏的怯弱，  
要你停留。

一六九

未生的嬰兒，  
從生命的球外  
攀着“生”的窗戶看時，  
已隱隱地望見了  
對面“死”的洞穴。

一七七

我的心忽然悲哀了！  
昨天夢見  
獨自穿着冰綃之衣，  
從洶湧的波濤中  
渡過黑海。

一七八

微陽的階上，  
只坐着自己——  
綠葉呵！  
玫瑰落盡，  
詩人和你  
一同感出寂寥了。