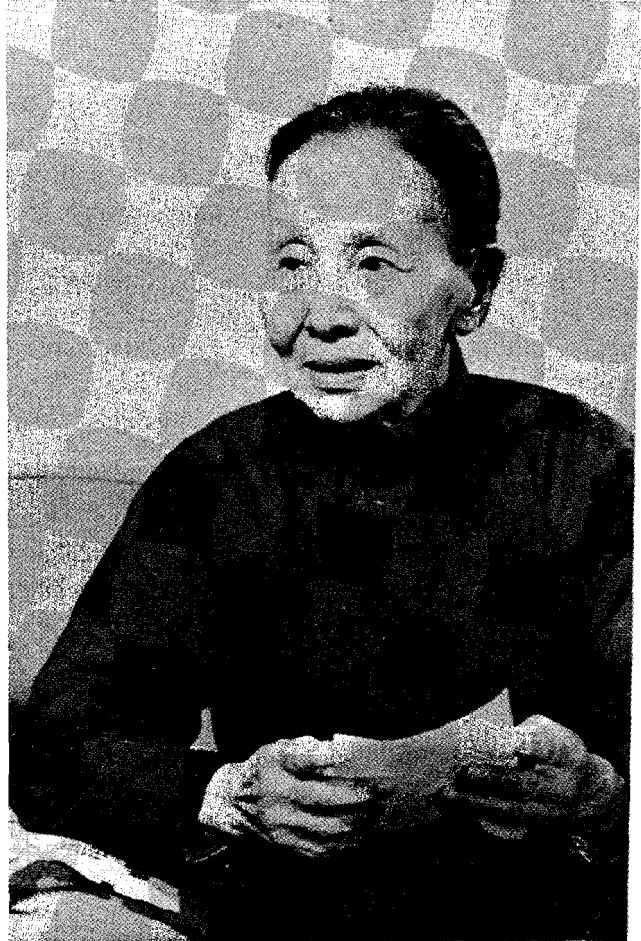


冰
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A Special Section on Bing Xin



Bing Xin in 1980

冰心傳略

Autobiographical Notes¹

Translated by John Cayley

MY REAL NAME is Xie Wanying, and I was born on 5 October 1900 (according to the lunar calendar this is the twelfth day in the intercalary eighth month of the year Gengzi) in Fuzhou, Fujian province (my “native district” is Changyue in Fujian). In 1901 we moved to Shanghai. At that time my father was an officer of the Qing Imperial Navy, serving as a Commander (literally, assistant Captain).

In 1904 we moved to Yantai (in Shandong) where my father was made Head of the Naval College. My early years were spent by the seashore and I became especially fond of the open ocean. This is why there are frequent references to the sea in my early works.

In 1911, just before the outbreak of the Republican Revolution, my father resigned as head of the Naval College. The whole family returned to Fuzhou. While we had been in Shandong I had not entered elementary school, but had been merely a “sit-in-pupil” in our private family school. When we returned to Fuzhou I entered the preparatory class of the Fuzhou Normal School for Girls.

After the founding of the Chinese Republic, my father went to Peking to serve as Director of the Naval Studies Bureau of the Admiralty, and in 1913 I arrived in Peking with my family.

In 1914 I entered the American Congregationalist Bridgman Academy for Girls in Peking, and on graduation in 1918, enrolled at the Peking Union College for Women. I was studying physical sciences there, and because of my mother’s weakness in the face of many illnesses, I began to set my heart on taking up medicine.

¹Printed in *Bing Xin lun chuanguo* 冰心論創作 (Bing Xin on writing). Shanghai wenyi, 1982, p. 3-5.

In 1919 came the explosion of the May Fourth Movement. At that time I was a secretary for the Student's Association of the Union College, and was composing occasional propaganda pieces. Riding the tide of the May Fourth Revolution, I began to publish some of the short pieces I had written in Peking's *Chen bao*.² The extent of my propaganda activities had their inevitable effects on the practical classes of my science studies, and the only thing for it was to switch to the Department of Literature. It was at that time that the Union College was amalgamated with Yen-ching (Yanjing) University.

In 1923, I graduated from the Arts Faculty of Yen-ching University with a B.A. in Literature, a "Golden Key" award and a scholarship to Wellesley College in America, where I wished to study English literature. I was also forced to spend seven months in hospital due to a recurrence of tuberculosis.³

In 1926 after finishing my studies and obtaining an M.A., I returned to China and taught at Yen-ching University, Qinghua University and at the Peking Women's Wenli College. Sometime after 1921 the Literary Research Society had published my collection of short stories *Superman (Chaoren)* 超人, and the poetic fragments *A Maze of Stars (Fan xing)* 繁星.⁴ In 1926 Beixin shuju published *Spring Water (Chun shui)* 春水 and the collection of prose pieces *Letters to Young Readers (Ji xiao duzhe)* 寄小讀者.⁵ In 1931 Beixin shuju published *The Collected Works of Bing Xin (Bing Xin quanji)* 冰心全集, while amongst the separate collections they published was *The Past (Wangshi)* 往事 and *Winter Girl (Dong'er guniang)* 冬兒姑娘.

In 1929, Bing Xin married Wu Wenzao 吳文藻. Wu had received his Ph.D. in sociology from Columbia University and later became chairman of the Sociology Department of Yen-ching University in Peking. The couple have three children.*

During the War of Resistance against Japan, I first went to Kunming in 1938, then to Chongqing in 1940, and wrote *About Women (Guanyu nuren)* which was first brought out by the Tiandi and later by the Kaiming shudian publishing houses.

After victory in the War of Resistance I went to Japan. From 1949 to 1950 I taught a course on "China's New Literature" at Tokyo University (previously the Imperial University). I recall that a few small pieces appeared in various Japanese newspapers and periodicals from Kyoto University at the time.

*This information has been added by the editor.

²At the time in question the editor of *Chen bao* was a cousin of Bing Xin's, Liu Fangyuan. *Chen bao* was one of the pioneering organs of the New Culture Movement and had an influential literary supplement.

³Bing Xin's notes say, literally, "blood disease". The *Biographical Dictionary of Republican China*, edited by Howard Boorman and Richard Howard (4 vols., New York, 1967) gives tuberculosis as the disease.

⁴Both *Fan xing* and *Chun shui* were serialized in *Chen bao fukan (Chen bao literary supplement)* and this may well have been their first appearance in print. *Fan xing* appeared intermittently during 1-26 Jan., 1922, and *Chun shui* in a number of similarly intermittent runs later in the year: 21-30 Mar.; 11-30 Apr.; and 15 May-30 June.

⁵Other sources say that *Chun shui* was first published as a book in 1923 following on from *Fan xing* (op. cit., *Biographical Dictionary of Republican China*) and *Bing xin wenji*, 1983, vol. 2, preface.



Bing Xin and Wu Wenzao in Peking during the 1970s.



In Tokyo, 1947.

After I arrived back in China in 1951 and finished such works as *After the Return* (*Guilai yihou*) 歸來以後, my creative life took a new turn. The People's Literary Press, Peking People's Press and Tianjin Baihua Press published my collections of short stories and prose, *Selected Prose and Short Stories of Bing Xin* (*Bing Xin xiaoshuo sanwen xuan*) 冰心小說散文選, *After the Return, We've Awakened the Spring* (*Women ba chuntian chaoxing*) 我們把春天吵醒了, *In Praise of Cherry Blossom* (*Yinghua zan*) 櫻花讚, *Gleanings* (*Shisui xiaozha*) 拾碎小扎, *The Little Orange Lamp* (*Xiao judeng*) 小橘燈, and *Late Clearing* (*Wan qing ji*) 晚晴集.

In 1958 I started to write *More Letters to Young Readers* (*Zai ji xiao duzhe*) 再寄小讀者.

After 1954 I had been elected as delegate to successive sessions of the National People's Congress and in 1978 I was elected to the Standing Committee of the fifth National People's Political Consultative Conference. In 1979, at the fourth meeting of the Congress of Literary and Art Workers I was elected council member of the Writers Association and vice-chairwoman of the Federation of Literary and Art Circles. In the same year I was elected vice-chairwoman of the Chinese Association for Promoting Democracy.

After the smashing of the "Gang of Four" I began to publish *Letters to Young Readers, III* (*San ji xiao duzhe*) 三寄小讀者 in the periodical *Ertong shidai* 兒童時代.

Apart from creative writing, over the years I have also translated Rabindranath Tagore's *The Gardener*, *Gitanjali*, *The Collected Poems of Tagore*, and many of his short stories; *Indian Fairy Tales* by Mulk Raj Anand; *The Prophet* by the Syrian writer Kahlil Gibran; *Poems of Mashendra* by this Prince of Nepal;⁶ and a collection of poems, *Lamplighter*, by the Maltese President, Anton Buttigieg.

My own works have been widely published abroad and translated into Japanese, English, German, French and other languages.

⁶Mahendra Bir Bickrum Shah Dev (1920-1972) who headed the government of Nepal from 1954 until his death.