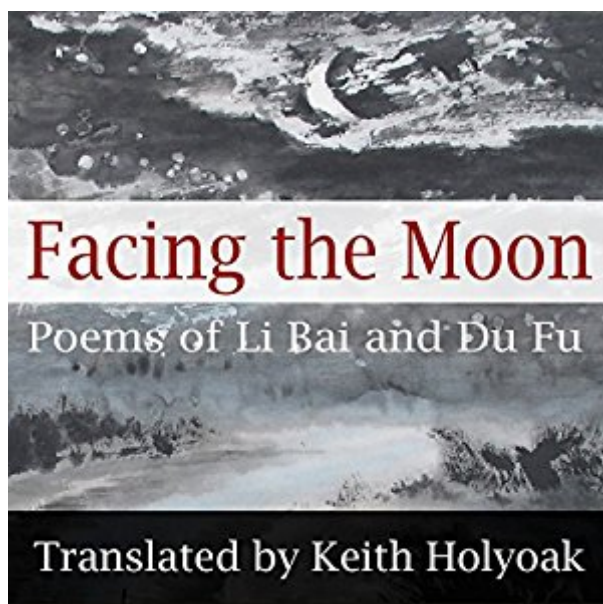


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Facing The Moon: Poems Of Li Bai And Du Fu



Synopsis

Beautiful translations of the Ancient 8th century Chinese poets Li Bai and Du Fu by Keith Holyoak. Read by the author and accompanied by background music featuring contemporary and traditional compositions on ancient Chinese instruments.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

My introduction to Li Po (Li Bai) and Tu Fu (Du Fu) came via my high school sophomore World History text. I thought it was strange to see poetry in the side bar then (1967) and I still wonder at its inclusion. But the poems seized my imagination and stayed with me. Later I discovered the translations of Whaley and Rexroth and my life-long love affair with Chinese poetry in translation was secured. So, why would I need yet another English translation? I feel strongly that you always need new translations; English changes, culture changes, scholarship changes, and tastes change. And no one is entitled to the last word, however great. The particularly refreshing aspect of this book is that the translator honors the formal aspects of the originals, giving careful consideration to their formal balance, a fact anyone can appreciate from looking at the originals (provided in facing-page format), even if they don't read Chinese. True, many translations of Chinese and Japanese poetry from the past have taken a more rapturous, whimsical approach. Catching a dreamy culture in dreamy, amorphous layout on the page. They can be effective, but they are a long distance from the "original intent." From there, as with all translations, it's the translator's game. All that moot technical stuff aside, I especially enjoyed reading the book as a sort of on-going conversation between two friends. The greatest poets of their age, and nearly exact contemporaries (Li Bai 701-762; Du Fu 712-770), we can only be certain that they met twice; but they went on to write poems addressed to

each other. It is wonderful to have this sort of handbook recounting their similar interests, their observations on similar topics, and their different takes on everything. Considered the Yin and Yang of Tang poetry, there's never a note of contention or jealousy between them. They honored each other as colleagues. None of this is to trivialize Holyoak's work. What he has achieved here is enormous and merits the investment of time in technical study and appreciation. But it should not be overlooked that his achievement starts with "first principals": the translations are immediately attractive. It is hard to believe we have the privilege of reading the work of poets writing 1250 years ago, yet Holyoak gives us just such a privilege.

Keith Holyoak has done a great job in bringing Chinese poetry to the fore of Western public. The translator deserves much credit for these poems read as if they were originally written in English. He brings us a big step closer to the music of an ancient and culturally distant century. Some poems take a more metaphysical tone but never fail to be touching and humane.

Facing the Moon: Poems of Li Bai and Du Fu, feature translations of two of China's most celebrated poets. They had a lasting impact on Chinese poetry throughout the ages, from classical sources down to Mao Zedong. The poems are by no means simple, declarative statements of harmony with nature or the Dao - despite the fog shrouded mountains on cover. They explore wrenching existential, political, and family problems. Yet one can't help but think of mist shrouded mountains, home to hermits in huts, when reading many of these poems. For westerners, there is the deep pull of this Chinese ideal of harmony "even when it is not truly there."

Keith Holyoak brings the mastery of these ancient eastern poets to life in our western context. Like Shakespeare these poets' works are timeless, themes of joy, despair, awe of nature and friendship in the artists' work ring true universally, crossing cultures and time lines. A rich historical account at the beginning of the volume is an added bonus.

Very serene. Simple, but descriptive. Keith paints cozy scenes of Far East life. I cannot only picture it, I can feel, taste and smell these places.

I was disappointed with the translations of the poetry in this book. Li Bai (or Li Po as he is also known) wrote my favorite poem of all time, called, "Question and Answer in the Mountains." I learned the poem this way: Ask me Why I stay on Green Mountain? I smile but do not answer My

heart is at ease
Peach blossoms on gently flowing water
Slip away into the distance
This is a world
which is not of men
But this book's translation was disappointing, as follows:
You ask me why I stay
up here
Alone on the green mountain
I smile but give no other answer --
And yet my heart's at
leisure.
The peach blossom floats away on the stream
Carried far by the water
Here apart from the
human world
I have heaven and earth together.

Extraordinary translations of ancient Chinese master poets. This is a must have book for lovers of poetry history and cross cultural exploration.

Lovely book of poetry even for those who are not overly into it.

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