

薛濤

XUĒ TĀO

CHINA (781–832)

LANGUAGE: CHINESE

蟬

CHÁN

露 滌 音 清 遠，

Lù dí yīn qīng yuǎn,

風 吹 故 葉 齊。

fēng chuī gù yè qí.

聲 聲 似 相 接，

Shēng shēng shì xiāng jiē,

各 在 一 枝 棲。

Gè zài yī zhī qī.



Xuē Tāo is one of the few known female poets from the Chinese Tang dynasty—a period that lasted from 618 to 907 AD. Xuē was taught to write poetry at the age of eight by her father, a minor official in the Tang dynasty. Sadly, he died while she was still a child. The regional military governor was impressed with her wit and intelligence and made her his official hostess, which allowed her to meet the famous poets of the time. Xuē was a great calligrapher and invented a new type of writing paper used for recording poems. The Wangjiang Tower, over one hundred feet tall, was built in her memory and is a popular tourist destination overlooking the Jin River in Chengdu, Sichuan. The poem shown here was probably written during her childhood.

(A pinyin version has been included below the Chinese characters.)

TRANSLATOR'S GLOSSARY			
CHARACTER	PINYIN	DEFINITION	POSSIBLE SYNONYMS
蟬	chán (n.)	leaping, chirping insect	cicada, cricket, grasshopper
吹	chuī (v.)	to move in a way that creates an air current	blows, gusts, blusters
滌	dí (v.)	to wrinkle and contract	shriveled, dried up, withered
風	fēng (n.)	the perceptible natural movement of the air	wind, breeze, gust, airstream, current of air
各	gè (pron.)	used to refer to the total of two or more people or things, regarded and identified separately	each, all, each and every, the whole lot
故	gù (adj.)	having the characteristics or showing the signs of age	old, decaying, crumbling, frayed, disintegrating
露	lù (n.)	water droplets on cool outdoor surfaces	dew, water droplets
齊	qí (v.)	to become linked or connected to	come together, join, link, unite, team up with
棲	qī (v.)	to alight or rest on something, especially something high or narrow	perching, roosting, resting on something (like a bird in a tree)
清	qīng (adj.)	perfect and unblemished	clear, pure, clean, untainted
聲聲	shēng shēng (v.)	to shed tears audibly	cries, weeps
似	shì (prep.)	indicates characteristics; resembling	as if, is like, are like, similar to, such as
相接	xiāng jiē (v.)	to intermingle	join, come together, join each other, blend, bring together, merge

CHARACTER	PINYIN	DEFINITION	POSSIBLE SYNONYMS
葉	yè (n.)	parts of a plant that grow from a stem	leaves, foliage
一	yī (adj.)	used to distinguish one from another	one, solitary, singular
音	yīn (n.)	distinct kind of sound	tone, sound
遠	yuǎn (adj.)	not physically close	far away, distant, remote, far-off, far
在	zài (prep.)	indicates position	is on, lying on, resting on
枝	zhī (n.)	part of a tree that grows out of the trunk	branch, bough, limb

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

PHRASE BY PHRASE

蟬

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REFLECTING AND FINDING MEANING

Group Member Names:

Date: _____

Pick a scribe for the group, and work together to answer the questions.

What are the best parts of this translation, and why do you think they are good?

What elements of the original poem did you lose in the translation? What did you manage to keep?

Did you achieve something new with your translation, and if so, does it make sense in the poem or not?
