

A Close Encounter: Classical Chinese Literature in English



Chinese literature is among the richest in the literary world. Over the years, many scholars have ventured to translate Chinese literary gems into the English language. The 1171-page *Classical Chinese Literature: An Anthology of Translations*, represents a comprehensive collection of their efforts. It contains the works of Arthur Waley,

David Hawkes, James Legge, A.C. Graham, and many other luminaries of the field.

The one thousand plus selected writings are chronologically arranged by genre, from the Oracle Bone inscriptions to the poems and lyrics of the Tang Dynasty. Each section is introduced with quotes by pre-eminent observers of China across the ages. The editors have made a good attempt to encompass the classical Chinese literature in its various forms, including songs, poetry, biographies, drama, fiction, as well as works of early Chinese philosophy and history.

Bibliographies, explanatory notes, copious illustrations, a chronology of major dynasties, and two-way romanisation tables coordinating the Wade-

Giles and *pinyin* transliteration systems provide helpful tools to aid readers in exploring this rich tradition of world literature.

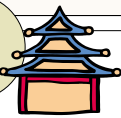
This collection has taken over 10 years to complete. Joseph S.M. Lau (劉紹銘), who has taught Chinese literature in the U.S. since 1964, initiated its publication in 1985. Lau is the co-editor of *The Columbia Anthology of Modern Chinese Literature* with Howard Goldblatt. He is currently Chair Professor of Translation and Head of the Department of Chinese at Lingnan University, Hong Kong.

Lau's partner in this project is John Minford, a world-renowned sinologist from the U.K. He has vast experience in teaching Chinese literature and literary translation in mainland China, Hong Kong and New Zealand. He is noted for his translation of the last 40 chapters of Cao Xueqin's *The Story of the Stone* (曹雪芹《紅樓夢》). His current projects include the *Strange Tales of Pu Songling* (蒲松齡《聊齋誌異》) and the martial arts fiction of Hong Kong novelist Louis Cha (金庸).

This landmark anthology is jointly published by the Chinese University Press and the Columbia University Press.



采風



談



《文訊》創刊號跟大家談過名與字的問題。其實，古時的人，除名和字外，大多還有“號”。號是固定的別名，又稱“別號”。名和字多有意義上的聯繫，但名和號卻不盡然。名、字與號的根本區別是：名、字由父親或尊長取定，其中多體現長輩對子女的期望；號則由自己取定，可自由寄托或標榜自己的某種情操。

古人取號，多有獨特意思，如東晉詩人陶潛自號五柳先生，原因是“宅邊有五柳樹，因以為號焉”（《五柳先生傳》）。

另有別號是用以表達志趣，或抒發情懷，如北宋歐陽修自號六一居士，就是以一萬卷書、一千卷古金石文、一張琴、一局棋、一壺酒，加上

他本人一老翁，共六個“一”取號，暗寓自己寄情琴棋書畫，鄙棄功名利祿。又如明代畫家朱耷（音“答”）取號八大山人，以“八大”兩字上下連寫似“哭”非哭，似“笑”非笑，借以抒發心中對故國的懷念。

中國古代不少名人因別號為後人所熟悉，其本名反而較少為人所知，如鄭板橋（本名燮）、章太炎（本名炳麟）等都以號聞於世。《紅樓夢》作者曹雪芹，人所共識，但“雪芹”只是其號，而不是本名。曹雪芹本名霑，字夢阮，號更多達三個，分別為雪芹、芹圃及芹溪。

古人以號寓志，以號表達處世心情，可見取號並不只是為了附庸風雅。一個別號，說不定能夠幫助我們認識某位歷史人物的性格和抱負。