

Candidate evidence

Candidate 1

Advanced Higher Mandarin (Simplified) Portfolio

To what extent is nature used by Li Qingzhao within her poetry to convey her emotions during the different stages of her life?

Li Qingzhao (1084-1155) is a renowned poet who lived during the Northern Song Dynasty. Although only fragments of her work remain, Li is recognised as one of China's greatest and most influential female poets.¹ Born into a literary family, Li Qingzhao began composing poetry from a young age, writing 'delightful little lyrics on her excursions to the suburbs and nearby beauty spots.'² In 1101 she married Zhao Mingcheng, a student at the Imperial Academy. Their relationship was close, with Li's poetry at this time expressing her love for her husband, as well as the pain and loneliness she felt whenever they were separated. However, such happiness was short-lived due to the unexpected death of Zhao in 1129. Li grieved for the loss of her husband. Her poetry during these years was known to mirror her pain and 'pathos',³ a large contrast to her earlier, carefree youth. In almost all of her writings the poet can be seen to have focused upon her surroundings, using nature as a way in which to provide her work with an 'emotional intensity',⁴ as well as to convey the constant changes she experienced throughout her life. Whilst '如梦令 (尝记溪亭日暮)' portrays the young and innocent adventures of Li Qingzhao, the poem, '一剪梅 (红藕香残玉簟秋)' highlights a contrasting mood, depicting the period in the poet's life when she became separated from her husband. '声声慢 (寻寻觅觅)' also carries a similar tone, allowing Li to express

¹ Webster, Merriam, "Li Qingzhao." *Merriam Webster's Encyclopedia of Literature*, Merriam-Webster, 1995. *Academic OneFile*, http://link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/A148920573/AONE?u=ed_itw&sid=AONE&xid=e797b86f. (Accessed 24 Jan. 2019.)

² Wang, Jiaosheng, *The Complete Ci-poems of Li Qingzhao: A New English Translation*, http://sino-platonic.org/complete/spp013_li_qingzhao.pdf, Sino-Platonic Papers, (October, 1989), (date accessed:08/01/19) p. iv

³ J. Wang, p.v

⁴ <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Li-Qingzhao> (date accessed:08/01/19)

her grief and sorrow over the death of her husband. However, ‘添字丑奴儿.芭蕉 (窗前谁种芭蕉树)’ can be seen to refer to all stages of her life, directly conveying the changing moods and situations that Li Qingzhao faced. Through the changes in her life Li Qingzhao maintained links with nature within her writing, using it as a way in which to voice her emotions and reactions to the events around her.

‘如梦令 (尝记溪亭日暮)’ portrays a joyous excursion from Li Qingzhao’s youth. The poem, through its setting, reflects upon the simple and peaceful life led by the young poet, as she lived oblivious to the hardships of the world around her. Hao Cajiun asserts, ‘少女时代的李清照是一个活泼开朗, 天真无邪的女子,’⁵ thus emphasising Li’s state of happiness prior to her adulthood. The first line of the poem, ‘尝记溪亭日暮, 沉醉不知归路。’⁶ “溪亭”, “日暮”, “沉醉” immediately establishes a calming atmosphere, creating a vivid image within the reader’s mind. As argued by Ramon Lay Mazo, the setting, through its description of the ‘beautiful sunset, the “Brookside pavilion,”’ transmits Li’s emotive experience of the event.⁷ An isolated yet romantic setting is depicted, reflective of the dream-like state of Li Qingzhao as she wanders through the tranquil scene. The theme of romanticism is explored further into the poem through Li’s use of floral

⁵ Hao, Cajiun, *Analysis of the causes of sadness in Li Qingzhao's later poems*, (Zhengzhou university, Zhengzhou / Henan, 450001)

⁶陈祖美 编著, *李清照诗词评注* (published January 2003), p.1

⁷ Mazo, Ramon Lay, *Short Analysis and Appreciation of Some Ci by Li Qingzhao*, <http://www.icm.gov.mo/rc/viewer/20025/1119> (date accessed:08/01/19)

imagery, ‘兴尽晚回舟，误入藕花深处.’⁸ “兴尽”，“藕花” places emphasis upon the presence of the lotuses in the water, an echo of the young poet’s floating state of mind as she wanders amongst the flowers, lost in thought and detached from the world. Li can be seen to be completely immersed amongst nature, ‘当时的慌乱无主等场景都体现了作者沉醉于美景中.’ Her demeanour is peaceful, unaware and not yet tainted by the sorrows of life- a theme which becomes more apparent in her later work. The setting of ‘如梦令’ therefore symbolises the young Li’s innocence and simple lifestyle, an allegorical portrayal of the youthfulness and naïve character of Li Qingzhao at this stage in her life.

‘一剪梅，（红藕香残玉簟秋）’ written whilst Li Qingzhao and her husband were separated for some time, adopts a tone of sadness and unrest; a contrast to the peaceful atmosphere created in ‘如梦令.’ Li establishes her longing for the return of her husband through the imagery of flowers, ‘红藕香残玉簟秋，轻解罗裳，独上兰舟.’¹⁰ This opening line has been described as presenting the theme of ‘Eros lost.’¹¹ As in ‘如梦令,’ a lotus is used as a significant symbol within the poem, representing the fading presence of Li’s husband. Without him she feels a sense of emptiness and loss of love. The red lotus mentioned initially carries connotations of fortune and peace as demonstrated in ‘如梦令.’ However, all that is left of the flower is its fading fragrance, a portrayal of the misfortune Li feels without her

⁸陈祖美 编著, p.1

⁹边立红 and 刘果, 《如梦令·常记溪亭日暮》英译比较

¹⁰ 陈祖美 编著, p. 50

¹¹ <http://www2.hawaii.edu/~mccraw/womenop/Women-04A.pdf>, p.82 (date accessed:22/01/19)

husband present to provide a sense of warmth and comfort. The chill of autumn too, can be seen to mirror the cold, dulling effects caused by the absence of her husband. It is suggested that Li longs for the return of summer and the return of her husband, without whom she feels lost. 吴功正 asserts “在中国文学史上，妻子对远离的丈夫的思念之作，可谓史不绝书。自《诗经》以降，能传世者又能有多少？这首《一剪梅》令九百载后的今人不禁为之动容。”¹² Furthermore, the melancholic mood is continued through the image of the falling and fading petals, ‘花自飘零水自流，一种相思，两处闲愁。此情无计可消除，才下眉头，却上心头。’¹³ This acts as a metaphor for the separation of the couple, emphasising the sense of loss and isolation. However, as the ‘water glides on,’¹⁴ this presents the idea that despite the pain of events, the passage of time continues, unaffected by Li’s grief. Through the imagery of nature the reader is able to sense her loneliness and sadness.

In ‘声声慢,’ a similar theme of melancholy is explored. The poem, believed to have been written shortly after the death of her husband, highlights the sorrow of Li Qingzhao as she grieves for his loss. As argued by Sabina Knight, it was at this stage that Li’s poetry ‘reached heights of poignancy.’¹⁵ This is reflected through the poem’s bleak setting, mirroring the tragedy that has befallen Li. The opening line creates a clear image of the intense sorrow she felt, ‘寻寻觅觅，冷冷清清，凄

¹² 吴功正《李清照作品赏析集》，巴蜀书社 1992 年 9 月出版

¹³ 苏叔阳《中国优秀古诗词》[published August 2012] p.157

¹⁴ J. Wang, p.7

¹⁵ Knight Sabina, *Chinese Literature: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, 2012 p.39

凄惨戚戚。¹⁶ Ping Wang states that the ‘scene of chill and solitude echoes the sad and plaintive mood of the poet. The tragic feeling is further intensified by the excessive use of the doublets...where action and mood, scene and emotion, the exterior and interior are fused.’¹⁷ Such strong emotion is again evident later in the poem, ‘梧桐更兼细雨，到黄昏，点点滴滴.’¹⁸ Pathetic fallacy is used to depict a sense of grief as is the duplication of characters to contribute to this tone, its onomatopoeic nature reproducing ‘the torpid and lashing sounds of persistent rain drops in their monotonous and melancholic fall.’¹⁹ Additionally, floral imagery is used to convey Li Qingzhao’s mourning for her husband, ‘满地黄花堆积，憔悴损，如今有谁堪摘.’²⁰ The yellow flowers can be seen to act as a direct representation of a funeral. Just like ‘一剪梅,’ the fading flowers are a portrayal of the change occurring in Li’s life at her husband’s passing, leaving Li alone and in mourning.

Unlike the previous poems by Li Qingzhao, ‘芭蕉’ focuses upon several stages of Li’s life, using nature to describe the relationship between the different periods.²¹ The setting becomes a symbol of the changing situations and emotions that the poet has experienced. Initially the banana trees are used to portray a mood of happiness, ‘窗前谁种芭蕉树，阴满中庭.’²² As noted by 李晴 and 李丹妮, ‘它生机勃勃

¹⁶陈祖美 编著, _p.108

¹⁷ Wang Ping, *Sturdy Steeds, Autumn Wind, Apricot Flowers, Spring Rain: A Literary Stylistic Approach to the Lyrics of Li Yu and Li Qing Zhao*, School of Asian Studies, University of Sydney (August 2000) https://ses.library.usyd.edu.au/bitstream/2123/12118/1/STURDY_STEEDS_AUTUMN_WINDS.pdf ,(date accessed: (25/01/19) p.128

¹⁸陈祖美 编著, _p.108

¹⁹ Mazo, Ramon Lay, *Short Analysis and Appreciation of Some Ci by Li Qingzhao*, <http://www.icm.gov.mo/rc/viewer/20025/1119> (date accessed:08/01/19)

²⁰陈祖美 编著, _p.108

²¹ R. L. Mazo

²²陈祖美 编著, p.251

勃、绿映庭中，树繁情余，²³ thus this is reflective of the joyous and halcyon youth of Li Qingzhao as shown in ‘如梦令.’ However, the hint of shadows filling the courtyard provides a slight negative undertone, alluding to the challenges and ‘subtle disputes of her life.’²⁴ The poem then mentions the leaves of the trees, ‘brimming over with love’²⁵, symbolising the romance that once existed between Li and her husband. ‘阴满中庭，叶叶心心，舒卷有馀清。伤心枕上三更雨，点滴霖霖。点滴霖霖。’²⁶ Both 李晴 and 李丹妮 again assert that ‘“叶叶心心”的迭字又能增加清亮悦耳的乐感。’²⁷ Nevertheless, the tone again alters through the repetition of the rain ‘dripping ceaselessly, dripping ceaselessly,’²⁸ therefore, ‘而且有力地烘托了悲凉凄绝的气氛。’²⁹ Closely echoing the mourning tone of both ‘一剪梅’ and ‘声声慢,’ the poem can be seen to move swiftly from a calm atmosphere into a setting of melancholy, establishing at the end the poet’s final moments of grief and sadness.

It is evident that the poetry of Li Qingzhao relies upon nature as a way in which to present her emotions during crucial events in her life; nature is the background in which everything occurs. Li uses the symbolism of flowers, for example in their type and colour, as well as imagery in the falling petals, to convey her feelings

²³ 李晴： 李丹妮，芭蕉夜雨声，离人心中秋——读李清照《添字采桑子·芭蕉》南昌大学 [http://eng.oversea.cnki.net.ezproxv.is.ed.ac.uk/kcms/detail/detail.aspx?QueryID=1&CurRec=1&DbCode=CJFD&dbname=CJFD2009&filename=JSGZ200906147&uid=WEEvREcwSIJHSlRa1FhdKjVg1CTXc5aDV5akFRMjRlODMzCHdXQUl3cz0=\\$9A4hF YAuvQ5obgVAqNKPCYcEIKensW4IQMvWhtwkF4VYPoHbKxJw!!](http://eng.oversea.cnki.net.ezproxv.is.ed.ac.uk/kcms/detail/detail.aspx?QueryID=1&CurRec=1&DbCode=CJFD&dbname=CJFD2009&filename=JSGZ200906147&uid=WEEvREcwSIJHSlRa1FhdKjVg1CTXc5aDV5akFRMjRlODMzCHdXQUl3cz0=$9A4hF YAuvQ5obgVAqNKPCYcEIKensW4IQMvWhtwkF4VYPoHbKxJw!!) (date accessed:27/01/19)

²⁴ R. L. Mazo

²⁵ R. L. Mazo

²⁶ 陈祖美 编著, p.251

²⁷ 李晴, 李丹妮

²⁸ R. L. Mazo

²⁹ 李晴, 李丹妮

through the events that she encountered in her life. Additionally, the poet focuses upon the patterns of nature, such as the repetitive sound of the falling rain so as to demonstrate her strong sense of grief. Li Qingzhao’s life was immersed in nature so it is therefore no surprise that her poetry reflects this.

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