

Modern Chinese reflectious

Kai-yu Hsu '48, **Twentieth Century Chinese Poetry**. New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc. 1963. 480 pp. \$5.95.

This anthology of Chinese poetry translated and compiled by Kai-yu Hsu, is indeed a timely and much needed publication, for most English versions of Chinese poetry are of works belonging to the remote past. While we are enchanted by the rich imageries of the *Book of Poetry* (c800-600 B.C.), or are exalted by the moving lyricism of Li Po or Tu Fu (Eighth Century poets), we cannot but wonder whether that lasting fountain of poetic flow has been stymied

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by the onrush of 20th Century mechanization.

Professor Hsu's translation more than satisfies one's idle curiosity; it presents a graphic description of the intellectual climate of a nation and the emotional fluctuation of a people swept along by the perplexing currents of modern times.

The selection is an excellent sampling of 20th Century Chinese poetry, ranging from the experimental verses of the "Pioneers" in the early 20s to the new folk poetry of mainland China in the late 50s. As well as representative poems from such identifiable groups as the "Crescent School," "Metaphysical Poets" and the "Symbolists," the anthology also includes a number of works by independent and individualistic poets. Although Western influences, such as Romanticism, Realism, and French Symbolism, are traceable in the techniques of many of these authors, the pitch and accent are unmistakably Chinese, and while the emotions expressed in them are universal and timeless, the problems treated are national and immediate.

Mr. Hsu, who is now on the faculty of San Francisco State College, is to be commended as a translator. He is perfectly at ease with the English language into which he renders the Chinese ideas without losing their original meaning, tone or image. His introduction is helpful especially to those who are not familiar with Chinese poetry, for not only does it outline the history and development of that genre, but it also offers keen criti-

cal insights into Oriental poetry in general.

If some of the poems included in this volume lack the sophistication, finesse or maturity characteristic to Chinese poetry of another age, the collection itself nevertheless remains an interesting and valuable document which reveals and registers the literary, social and political changes of China during the last 40 years through the poetic pulses and impulses of its people.—ANGELA JUNG PALANDRI