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WAITING FOR THE UNICORN: POEMS AND LYRICS OF CHINA'S LAST DYNASTY, 1644-1911. Edited by Irving Yucheng Lo and William Schultz. (Chinese Literature in Translation Series). Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986. xviii, 425pp. Preface, Introduction, Notes, List of Abbreviations, List of Contributors, Illustrations, Selected Bibliography, Index of Names, Index of Tune Titles. $27.50.

TAI LIN CHI 待麟集 : Chinese Character Text of Waiting for the Unicorn: Poems and Lyrics of China's Last Dynasty, 1644-1911. Edited by Irving Yucheng Lo and William Schultz. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987. 127pp. $10.95 Paper.

Indiana University Press, in its Chinese Literature in Translation Series, has outdone itself with the addition of a poetry anthology compiled by two veteran editors: Irving C. Lo, co-editor of Sunflower Splendor (1975); and William Schultz, editor of the China Series of Twayne Publishers World Authors. This new volume of translation, with its exotic title and an elegant book jacket decorated with the image of a fabulous animal (called in Chinese legend ch'i-lin but bearing no resemblance to the 'unicorn' of Western mythology), is bound to arouse curiosity and speculation. The precise nature and scope of the book, however, are unequivocably defined by its subtitle: 'Poems and Lyrics of China's Last Dynasty' (i.e., the poetry of the Ch'ing dynasty in both sub-genres: the shih form with its regular meter, and the tz'u form, lyrical verse written according to the prescribed tune patterns of varied meter and rhyme).

Anthologies of Chinese poetry in English, along with various critical studies and monographs of Chinese poets, have appeared in increasing numbers during the last two decades. But, as far as I know, Waiting for the Unicorn (henceforth Unicorn) is the only volume devoted exclusively to the poetry of the Ch'ing dynasty, a poetry which,

despite its enormous quantity, has not enjoyed the popularity accorded its quintessential prototypes of the T'ang and Sung periods. Literary historians are partially responsible for its relative neglect. For in their generic periodization, the T'ang dynasty is known as the 'golden age' of the traditional poetry in the shih form. The Sung dynasty is recognized for its perfection of the tz'u or 'lyrics.' The Yüan dynasty is reputed for its drama, and the Ming dynasty is credited for the development of the novel, which is further refined during the Ch'ing dynasty. When one speaks of the utmost literary achievement of China's last imperial dynasty, Ts'ao Hsüeh-ch'in's great novel, Dream of the Red Chamber comes readily to mind. Moreover, literary critics in the past frequently ignored the originality and creativity of Ch'ing poets and branded them as mere upholders of tradition.

The purpose of this anthology is to fill the need for more detailed studies of an era closest to our own century, but whose wealth of poetry has remained largely untapped. This is not to say that Ch'ing poetry was completely unknown to the English-speaking world before the arrival of the long-awaited Unicorn. An earlier anthology, Sunflower Splendor (1975) edited by Wu-chi Liu and Irving C. Lo, contains at least fifteen poems belonging to this era in its broad coverage of three thousand years of Chinese poetry. And the most recent publication of the Columbia Book of Later Chinese Poetry: Yüan, Ming, Ch'ing Dynasties (1279-1911), translated and edited by Jonathan Chaves (possibly predating the Unicorn by a few months in 1986), also includes a number of poems from nine Ch'ing poets. However, either fortuitously or by design, there is little overlap—only a few poems in the Unicorn are duplicated in the other anthologies. It is, therefore, happily true that in the Unicorn the translations are 'almost entirely new' (p. xxiv).

This anthology is a fairly comprehensive presentation of Ch'ing poetry; it contains selected works of seventy-two poets, translated by thirty-nine experts (who are well versed in both English and classical Chinese). Chronologically arranged, the main corpus of the book is divided

into three parts: Part I, 'Poets of the Seventeenth Century,' consists of works of twenty-five poets, including those by the Ming loyalists, Ch'ien Ch'ien-yi and Wu Wei-yeh. The latter's 'Song of Yüan-yüan' is reminiscent in sentiment and style of the 'Song of Everlasting Sorrow' by the T'ang poet, Po Chü-yi. Poets belonging to the seventeenth century represented here are of diverse backgrounds and stations, ranging from the Manchu emperor K'ang-hsi (i.e., Hsüan Yeh) to the courtesan, Liu Shih, who became a concubine of Ch'ien Ch'ien-yi. The relative importance of the poets can be gauged by the space allotted their poems. Much space is given to the works of two famous tz'u masters, Chu Yi-tsun and Singde (better known as Nalan Jungjo, a Manchu prince and a great patron of Chinese poets).

Part II, 'Poets of the Eighteenth Century,' contains only sixteen poets. Prominent among these are Shen Teh-ch'ien, Cheng Hsieh (better known as Cheng Pan-ch'iao), who is also famous for his painting and calligraphy; and the most popular of all, Yüan Mei, who is represented here with fifteen poems. Part III, 'Poets of the Nineteenth Century,' contains the largest number of poets: thirty one. Among these poets, Kung Tzu-chen and Chiang Ch'un-lin are representative of those who best reflect the mood and temper of their times, beset by foreign invasions and internal turmoil. Aside from political involvement, some poets were engaged in literary reforms and poetical innovations. The most notable are seen in Chin Ho's 'Ballad of the Girl from Lan-ling,' and Huang Tsun-hsien's 'Song of the Exile,' both are long narratives in the meter of folk songs with frequent use of colloquial expressions. This section is also significant because it offers samples of the poetic endeavors of four women poets—the entire anthology includes only seven women. It must have been an arduous task for the editors to select only seventy-two out of so many known poets of the last three centuries to 'best exemplify the substantial riches and enormous diversity of that era' (p. xxiii). Even the women poets listed in Huang Hsiang's Ch'ing-tai nü shih-ren hsüan-chi (Selected Women Poets of the Ch'ing Dynasty) number more than five hundred, not counting those six thousand names in the Ch'ing Shih Hui (Selected Poems of Ch'ing Dynasty).

The editors have indeed done an excellent job in their careful selection. The biographical essays of the poets, the ample footnotes to their poems, and the selected bibliography of the poets' individual works, as well as secondary materials, all attest to their thoroughness of research and scholarship. Most illuminating is the general introduction, which identifies 'some of the primary historical and literary factors that helped shape the Ch'ing dynasty and particularly those ideas and events that held special significance for the poet engaged in the act of creation' (p. xxiii). Of particular value to the uninitiated are the sections under the subtitles 'Some Characteristics of Ch'ing Poetry,' and 'The Proliferation of Theories of Poetry.' Both provide insightful information helpful for a better understanding and greater appreciation of the poetry.

Since the contributors to this anthology are all authorities on Chinese studies, they were given no guidelines to follow with regard to style and method of translation, excepting that 'the integrity of the original poem be preserved with respect to meaning, structure, and informing spirit' (p. xxiv). As expected, the resultant translations, although for the most part literate and accurate, vary in degrees of faithfulness to the spirit of the original text, showing also much diversity in style and diction. The following English version, for instance, does not give a word-for-word translation. Yet the satirical tone and the defiant spirit of the original are captured, and the central imagery of the poem remains intact:

> A grieving heart can't be rolled up like a mat;
> This mat is good enough for a brief nap.
> Don't be disgusted because it is cheap,
> For it could still produce a Fan Sui. (p. 70)

Closer to the original in grammatical structure are the following couplets, which successfully preserve the original parallel structure as well as the natural imagery:

> Over shoreside trees the clouds are wholly black;
> In the river sky the moon is not yet born.
> (p.44)

And:

> At the ancient monastery, clouds hover among
> cranes;
> Above an empty pool, the moon shines on dragons.
> (p. 385)

However, when literalness of diction or form is stressed at the expense of the poetic expression or cadence, prosaism results, as in the following lines:

> How can a woman heed great plans of state,
> Or a hero help but be a man of passion?
> (p. 49)

The delicate lyric of Wang Kuo-wei fares no better in these lines:

> Cart tracks travel north.
> Homing dreams head south.
> I know there's no way
> to stop between.
> In the human world not a thing
> can be depended upon
> Save and except the two words
> 'not depend.'
> (p. 405)

While I find it hard to appreciate artless, literal translations, I also have qualms accepting, for instance, the renderings of shuang nung 霜濃 by 'forest was thick' (p. 71); ching-wu 景物 by 'the sunbright things' (p. 77); or t'i-wu 啼烏 by 'tower ravens' (p. 156). More disturbing is the use (or misuse) of 'deflower' in the lines: 'I am like the blossoms on your cloth coat / Which no spring wind can deflower' (p. 50), whereas the original verse 僕似衣上花 / 春風吹不去

only says that he [the persona] is like the flower [woven] on his coat, [so] the spring wind cannot blow it (the flower) away. This may be one of the instances in translation which the late James Liu would have called 'overinterpretation.' On the other hand, one of the concluding lines in the 'Song of Yüan-yüan':

珠歌翠舞古梁州 is unimaginatively rendered as 'Songs like pearls, kingfisher dances as in old Liang Province' (p. 49). (Also the appended footnote provides no useful information). It is a mistake to have the original term Liang-chou 梁州 rendered as 'Liang Province' here, because it does not function as a geographical term in this context. Granted the Tz'u-hai Dictionary does say that in antiquity Liang-chou was known as one of the nine provinces of China (which consisted of present Szchuan and the south-west of Shaansi). But the same dictionary further tells us that Liang-chou 梁州 is a variant of Liang-chou 涼州 , and is also the name of music tunes prevalent in the T'ang times—so-called because this music originated in Liang-chou, the frontier region, and was later adapted by court musicians to accompany court dances, such as 'Kingfisher Dance,' for which the Imperial Beauty, Yang Kuei-fei was famous. While I do not suggest that all classical allusions must be explained in the notes, well-informed notes could shed light to obscure references and enhance the enjoyment of Chinese poetry.

Despite some minor flaws, Waiting for the Unicorn is a useful contribution to Chinese poetry studies. Although its editors do not claim that the fruit of their labor of love (ten years in the making) is definitive, so far it remains the most comprehensive book of translation of this period in any Western language. It is therefore recommended to both specialists and non-specialists alike. Together with its companion volume of the Chinese character text, the book should be particularly useful to advanced students and teachers of Chinese poetry. It will prove a boon to those interested in Ch'ing scholarship as well as lovers of poetry.

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