Julia C. Lin. MODERN CHINESE POETRY: AN INTRODUCTION. University of Washington Press, 1972, ix, 264 pp., $10.

Chinese poetry has gained increasing appreciation in the United States in recent years. This fact is borne out not only by the growing number of anthologies of Chinese poetry in translation, but also by the appreciable influence of Chinese poetry on contemporary American poets of the post-Poundian era. A few names come to mind: Kenneth Rexroth, Gary Snyder, Kenneth Henson, James Wright, and Wendell Berry, among others. (The first three, incidentally, have translated Chinese poems themselves.) However, interest in Chinese poetry focused in the main on its classical periods; the existence of modern Chinese poetry was practically unnoticed until K. Y. Hsu brought out his anthology, *Twentieth Century Chinese Poetry* (Doubleday) in 1963, which has gone through several printings. Hsu's volume is supplemented by two more recent anthologies: W. Yip's *Modern Chinese Poetry* (University of Iowa Press, 1970) and my own *Modern Verse from Taiwan* (University of California Press, 1972), both devoted to Chinese poetry from Taiwan, which was excluded in Hsu's anthology. To this hardly cultivated new field, Julia C. Lin's *Modern Chinese Poetry: An Introduction*, is a welcome new contribution to the study of modern Chinese poetry.

The book is comprised of three parts. Part I, "Before 1917," contains two chapters. In its first fifteen pages under the title "Tradition," the author zooms through two millennia of China's poetic achievement, illustrating its highlights with translations (mostly her own) from the *Book of Odes* (12th-7th century B.C.) down to the dramatic verse of the Yuan Dynasty (13th century). At the same time she touches upon the evolution of the Chinese written character as well as the traditional rules of prosody. This may seem a little too heady for the uninitiated and too sketchy for the well-informed; yet it is, nevertheless, a tour-de-force which drives home her main point, which she sums up brilliantly: "The brocade that these traditional poets had woven throughout the dynasties is an old and resplendent one. In spite of the resistance on the parts [sic] of many new poets, its powerful influence shines through the contemporary fabric of much of their verse. . . ." (p. 17)

Part II, 1917-37, constituting more than half of the book,

is definitely its most substantial and informative section. It discusses three groups of modern Chinese poets (Pioneers, Formalists, and Symbolists). The poems of eleven poets selected by Mrs. Lin represent the experimental, the formulative, and the flowering stages of modern Chinese poetry prior to the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War.

Part III presumably covers the longest period, from 1937 to the present—its last example, "A Living Lesson," is dated 1969. (p. 251) It gives, however, the profiles of only three major poets (Ai Ch'ing, T'ien Chien, and Kuo Mo-jo).

On the whole the book succeeds in fulfilling the purpose stated in the author's "Preface": to introduce and evaluate modern Chinese poetry. (p. viii) As an introduction it contains more than adequate information for students interested in the poetry of modern China. Mrs. Lin's interpretation and evaluation are for the most part valid, though I find a certain bias in her presentation (Kuo Mj-jo, for instance, is given greater space than any other poet, whereas a host of important poets such as Tsang K'o-chia, Ho Ch'i-fang, Hsu Hsu, and Hu Feng are omitted.).

My main stricture is reserved for the last chapter of the volume. Chapter 7, "Poetry after 1949," falls short of the promise indicated by its title. There are thirty some poems cited here. Some are translated by Mrs. Lin, some are in translations taken from *Chinese Literature*, a monthly in English published in Peking. They are equally unpoetic and "baldly propagandistic." (p. 235) It is hard to rate, by any standard, such slogans as poetry:

> The people are industrious and courageous:
> Enforce national defense, revolutionize traditions,
> Strong is the leadership of our Communist government,
> Herald of the proletariat. (p. 229)

Nor can one detect poetic sparks in such lines as:

> Fighters' hearts turn toward Peking,
> No pass, no mountain, can obstruct our vision;
> No sea, no river sunder our deep feeling,
> For in Peking lives
> The red sun in our hearts;
> We fighters have boundless love for Chairman Mao,

Are boundlessly loyal to him! (p. 247)

Granted Mrs. Lin is not responsible for the quality of these poems, for "under such crippling confines some writers fell virtually silent and some left the country." But modern Chinese poetry, if not geographically or politically specified, need not be confined to works of those "who remained to adjust their beat to the flaming tempo of revolution." (p. 228) These represent only one side of the dual existence of modern Chinese poetry. It seems that while "the Communists in one cataclysmic sweep not only obliterated the old political, social, and economic order of China, but ruthlessly altered the course of the arts," (p. 228) Mrs. Lin in her "catalysmic sweep" has obliterated the other strain of modern Chinese poetry of the post-1949 era, merely because it is not produced within the confines of the mainland. Whether one considers Taiwan as a part of China or a separate China, a study of Chinese poetry of our own era cannot afford to overlook that body of poetry existing on Taiwan, especially if there is nothing better on the mainland than those examples offered by Mrs. Lin.

A few minor inaccuracies may be pointed out in passing. Hu Shih's *Experimental Verses* (*Ch'ang Shih Chi*) was published in April, 1920 (see Hu's "Preface" to the second edition of *Chang Shih Chi*, in *Hu Shih Wen Ts'un*, vol. I, p. 213), and not in *1919* as Mrs. Lin insists (pp. vii & viii). Hu Shih, by the way, should be placed before and not after Huang Jen-ying, in the alphabetically arranged "Selected Bibliography" (p. 258).

Some other errors of typographical or transcriptive nature may be of interest to students of Chinese only. To wit: the supposedly ancient forms for "above" and "sit" (p. 5) are misleading if not deceptive (an error for which the printer may be solely responsible). The correct pronunciations according to Wade-Giles (used by Mrs. Lin) for: *p'io p'o* (p. 6) should be *p'iao p'o; miao t'io* (p. 6) should be *miao t'iao*; *p'io p'io* (p. 24) should be *p'iao p'iao*; *h'u* (p. 37) should be *hu*; *we she me* (p. 38) should be *wei shih me*; *tuan tuan chen chen* (p. 43) should be *tuan tuan cheng cheng*; *ch'e* (p. 48) should be *ch'ih*; *kuan* and *chuan* (p. 57) should read *kun* and *nien* (even if it means sacrificing the supposed rhyme Mrs. Lin claims); *shou* (p. 74) should be *shwo*; *chiai* (p. 86) should be *chieh*; *ch'ui* (p. 87) should be *ts'ui*; *t'u* (p. 89) should be *t'o*; *ch'ing yin* (p. 107) should be *ch'ing ying*; *ts'an k'o* (ibid.)

should be *ts'an k'u*; and all the *lin's* on page 107 should read *ling*.

Julia Lin's volume is No. 21 in the series of Publications on Asia of the Institute for Comparative and Foreign Studies of the University of Washington. It is to her credit that this series which has been consistently leaning toward the social sciences is expanding its spectrum to include literary contributions.

Angela Palandri • University of Oregon