

101 中華集詞  
CHINESE  
LYRICS

# 中華雋詞一〇一首

# 101 Chinese Lyrics

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(English — Chinese Bilingual Edition)

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*Compiled and Translated by Chu Dagao.*

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傅大浩 译

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## PREFACE

The present collection consists of two groups of my translations from the Chinese *ci* (lyric) type of poetry. The first group, a rather random selection, was done during my years of study at Cambridge University, and later on published by the University Press in 1937. It is now out of print. The latter was in recent years chosen more systematically from the entire field of *ci*, though a number of verses are from the same poets that have been represented in the former. Since the poets belong to the same period and the poems cover the same category, the two groups are now amalgamated into one. And for the same reason Prof. Quiller-Couch's erudite introduction is reprinted to precede all the translations. Another innovation is added to this edition, that is, the Chinese texts are set parallel to the translations, so that both Chinese and English readers and translators may refer to one and the other in the same book.

Chu Dagao (T.K. Chú)

May, 1985

## INTRODUCTION

It is with extreme diffidence that I introduce this small volume of translations by my friend Mr Ch'u Ta-kao; myself knowing nothing of the Chinese language and only so much about its poetry as I have gathered from renderings by other hands, and by listening eagerly to those who explained — whether in books or talk — its development in technique and its more constant ethical principles.

Of its technique — even apart from its straight-laced forms, its parallel appeal to ear and eye (so that to the Chinese, with their ideographics, the very calligraphy counts in their esteem of a lyric, or of a distich with a flower as companion ornament of a silken scroll or a vase) — I can only say the obvious thing and hazard a guess upon it. Quite obviously our tradition of stress and rhyme will never suit the Chinese lyric, whether to translate or to copy with any conveyance of its peculiar beauty: for the two work on different planes, ours accentual, the Chinese *tonal*. Yet our language in the daily speech of all classes is largely tonal; and from my guess I shall merely put as a suggestion to our younger poets, so busy just now with experiments in technical improvement, that they study the Chinese variation of tones. It will be hard, but it will do them no harm; and it may not only

lead ahead but backward to recapture the ancestral union of poetry with song or melodious recitation —

Sphere-born harmonious sister, Voice and Verse, which the Puritans almost dissevered when they banished Chamber Music.

That, however, is speculation at most. I feel on stronger ground in asserting that a study of the content of Chinese poetry — which is above all things reflective, seeking wisdom for its own sake — would surely be medicinal for any European poet in this era of confused alarms,

Where ignorant armies clash by night.  
For if Poetry has, in the scope of its divine purpose, an immediate task just now, it surely is to persuade men that this warfare they fear, but allow to fascinate them, is ignorance, which to face and despise is virtue — the proper eminence of man above the beasts who scatter in panic and perish. Now the Chinese hate war simply, finding it silly. Their few war-poems deal almost exclusively with the waste of it, the blind marching no-whither, the skeletons left and frozen into the sedges. The poet Li Hua of the eighth century has handed down a famous description of that waste, with musings on its imbecility, in his *Elegy on an Ancient Battlefield*:

The Warden shows me and says  
‘This is an ancient battlefield,  
Where army and army have fallen:  
At times the wailing of ghosts is heard  
When it is cloudy and dark ....’



Thus I have heard —  
During the state-levies of Ch'i and Wei,  
And the conscriptions of Ching and Han,  
The soldiers had to march thousands of miles  
And remained roofless year after year.  
They tended their horses in the morning along the  
sedgy shore,  
They crossed the river at night when it was ice-  
bound:  
The earth and the sky were so far and wide  
That they knew not where lay their homeward  
path.  
Their lives were naked to swords and blades, —  
To whom could they tell their feelings and  
thoughts?...

A victor of Chou returns: at the reception feast hon-  
ours are conferred amid much drinking 'with proper  
ceremony and high manners'. The First Emperor of  
Ch'in starts to build the Great Wall and mortars its ten  
thousand miles with the blood of his people. The  
poet comments —

Regard the numerous people under heaven —  
Is there anyone who has not parents  
Bringing him up and protecting him  
For fear that he might not live long?  
Who has not brothers,  
Helping one another even as hands and feet?  
Who has not husband or wife,  
Kind to each other as guests or friends?

Whether he (the conscript soldier) is alive or dead  
His folk are not sure:  
Even though others bring report  
They still hesitate to believe.  
He is ever in their restless heart and eyes  
Whether they lie awake or in dreams. ...

What, then, is the escape?  
Peace and good-will with all the neighbouring  
states.

Equally poignant and persistent recurs the burthen of  
lament of soldier and commander, from forts on the  
far northern frontier, as yet another winter closes in  
and the wild geese are clanging southward and  
homeward—

... the lonely citadel is closed.

A cup of poor wine, — my native land is ten  
thousand miles away;  
The Huns have not yet been conquered, I have no  
power to go home.  
The Tartar flute comes wailing over a land frost-  
bound;  
One can hardly sleep —  
The general's white hair and the soldiers' tears.

'It would not be an exaggeration to say', writes Mr  
Arthur Waley, 'that half the poems in the Chinese  
language are poems of parting or separation, and a  
great deal of it, to be sure, deals with the sundering  
of male friends.' But — and with all deference due to  
a scholar from one who has already confessed his  
own lack of learning — I must demur, and positively,

when he goes on to say that 'to the Chinese the relation between man and woman is something commonplace, obvious — a need of the body, not a satisfaction of the emotions'. In this I am assured (and indeed the body of Mr Waley's own translations supports the assurance) that he is mistaken. Yet how easily — and how much more easily — the similar but converse mistake might be made we may guess if we suppose a Chinese reader deriving his theory of *Western* love between man and woman from the evidence of our poetry. I dare say that nine-tenths of our amatory lyrics deal with the pursuing lover, his ardours or his despairs; whereas in my own observation of normal folk wedlock deepens love at least as often as not — and so deeply that they can no longer chatter about it:

Passions are liken'd best to floods and streams,  
The shallow murmur, but the deep are dumb.

On this point I, in my turn, may be mistaken. But the love-poetry of China dwells mainly on the growth of attachment after marriage. Until quite recently marriages in that country were arranged by parents or the chiefs of families (a custom not unknown in Western nations). Therefore to understand the Chinese emotion of love one must first consider the immense preponderance of poems that express the agonies of parting, the nostalgia of exile — of exile over distances hardly to be realised by us — and for stretches of time not determinable by the sufferer. It is out of these that his messages come, to reach his home

through hazard and delay, if ever. It is then that he speaks his affection; and at pains, not only because the difficult rules of his art command this, but just as any one of us will take more pains when writing to a friend in New Zealand than over a note addressed to someone in the next street. Consciously or not, we say to ourselves, 'This letter is important, having to travel far, and moreover it must convey to X, not in set words but by some under-current of tone, that our friendship, covering time and the bulge of the earth, abides as ever.'

To this must be added the ancient, rooted conviction of his race that the best reward of life is that a man be granted to retire betimes to his own fields and orchards; tilling them, subsisting on their fruits, watching the growth of his children and, in the leisure of a contented household, reading the poets and philosophers to confirm his own assurance of the true ends of existence:

With a bottle and cup I drink alone,  
Looking at the trees in the court I ease my heart;  
Leaning against the southern window to soothe my  
    high thoughts,  
I realise that comfort can be found even in the  
    narrowest room.

I pay a daily visit to my garden as a promenade;  
Though I have a door, it is always closed.  
With stick in hand I roam about or take rest at will;  
At times I lift up my head and gazed at the distance;  
The clouds come up freely from the peaks;

The birds, when tired of flying, know their way  
back.

The sun slowly westers,  
While I loiter around a lonely pine.

At last I have come home!  
I will have no more of the social intercourses.  
The world and I have dropped far asunder;  
What after all have I to seek?  
Intimate talks with my kinsmen will give me joy,  
My delight in my lute and books will keep me from  
worry.

When the farmers tell me of the return of spring,  
I set myself to work in the western fields.  
To go there, I take a cany wagon  
Or row a light boat,  
Meandering here and there along dales,  
Rambling up and down the hills.  
Cheerfully the trees flash to splendour,  
Gaily the rivulets brisk along.  
Admiring that every phase of nature has its time,  
I find my life drawing to its close.

Multiply this individual man by millions, and you get a people — not morose as Newman once suggested, or morose only as distrustful of any 'barbarian' intruding upon its own patient culture refined through ages. In their turn the Chinese seek neither adventure over-seas nor (and still less) aggression. A favourite poem, older than that of Li Hua quoted above — *The Peach-Blossom Fountain* of T'ao Ch'ien (A.d. 372-427) — tells of a solitary angler who, following

upstream to his river's source, found it issuing through a cleft in the rock of a mountain, passed through it, and found himself in a land of hospitable and completely happy villagers. They were a tribe, they informed him, whose ancestors had escaped hither with their wives and families from the Ch'in persecutions of books and learning. They showed no knowledge of the Han, not to speak of the Wei and the Chin dynasties. On hearing of these they were moved to sighs, and when the angler took his leave, enjoined on him 'This is not worth telling to outside folk'. Nevertheless he, deeming that maybe he had mistaken some tributary for the main river, set marks along his way back and arriving home imparted his adventure to the Governor of the City, who sent out a search party, but, whatever had become of the marks, the way could not be found, nor has been. The poet concludes:

Hidden for five hundred years  
Suddenly one day the Enchanted Land was disclosed;  
But because it was alien to the outer world  
Soon it was shut out again as before.  
Tell me, O you seekers after strange lands,  
What do you know beyond this world?

The following pages, while selected to represent the poets of one period, represent also the constant attitude of the Chinese mind, always through centuries pacific. I hope, too, that the reader will find the

cadences of Mr Ch'u's rendering as attractive to his ear as they are to mine.

ARTHUR QUILLER-COUCH

*Jesus College, Cambridge*  
*March 1937*

## 目 錄

張志和	
漁歌子	2
劉禹錫	
浪淘沙	4
溫庭筠	
夢江南	6
韋 莊	
菩薩蠻 I II	8
思帝鄉	12
木蘭花	14
李 珣	
巫山一段雲	16
呂 巖	
梧桐影	18
李存勖	
宴桃源	20
歐陽炯	
南鄉子	22
南鄉子	24
孫光憲	
清平樂	26



## Contents

ZHANG ZHIHE	
A Fisherman's Song . . . . .	3
LIU YUXI	
Tidal Wave of the Qiantang River . . . . .	5
WEN TINGYUN	
The White Lily Isle . . . . .	7
WEI ZHUANG	
The South Country . . . . .	9
A Stroll in Spring . . . . .	13
Late Spring . . . . .	15
LI XUN	
The Mystic Goddess Peak . . . . .	17
LÜ YAN	
Waiting for a Friend . . . . .	19
LI CUNXU	
Like a Dream . . . . .	21
OUYANG JIONG	
The Peacock . . . . .	23
South Country . . . . .	25
SUN GUANGXIAN	
Floating Dreams . . . . .	27