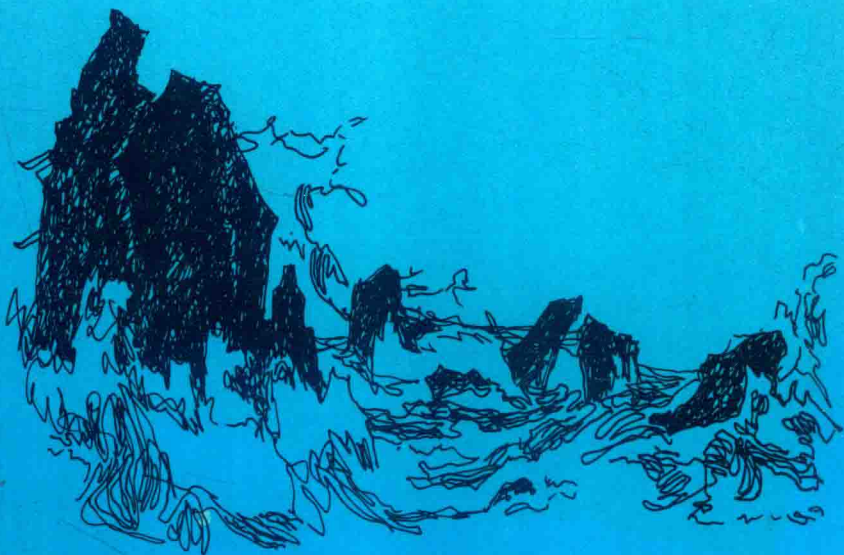


# SOARING

*Poems of Liao Chung-k'ai  
and Ho Hsiang-ning*



A JOINT PUBLICATION

# SOARING

## Poems of Liao Chung-k'ai and Ho Hsiang-ning

Translated and Annotated  
by Ma Wen-yee



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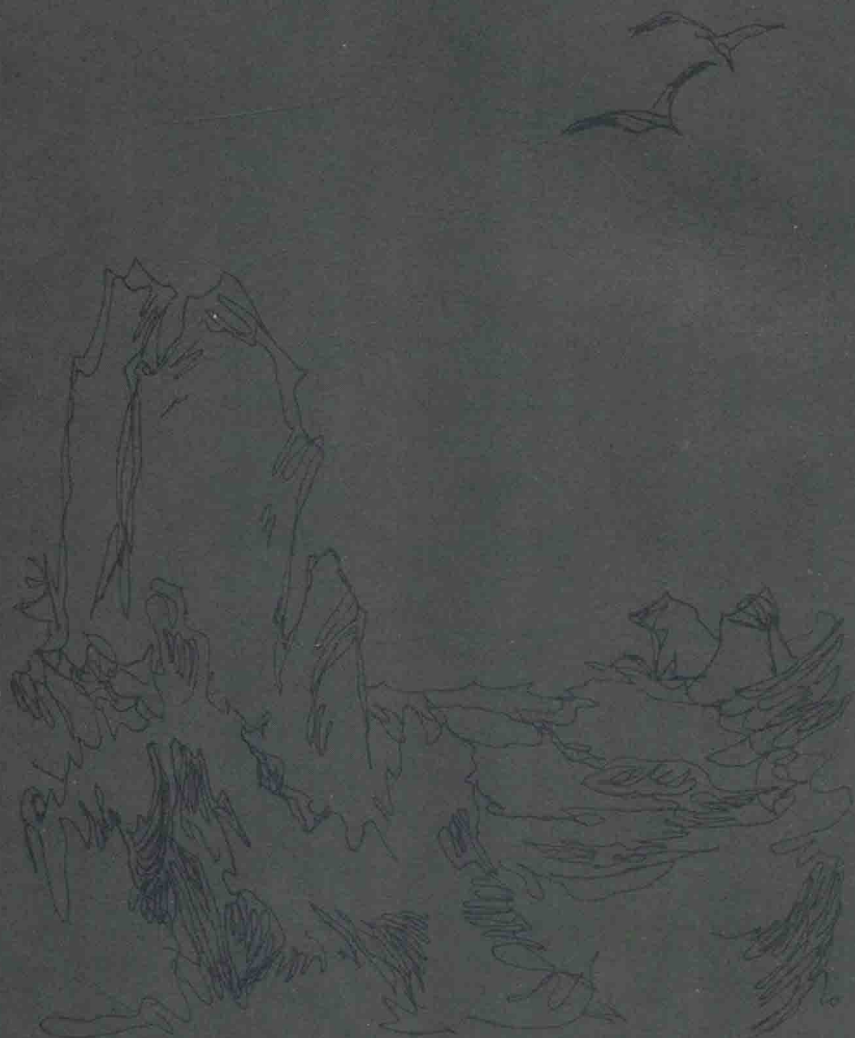
Poems of Liao Chung-k'ai and Ho Hsiang-ning



# 廖仲愷何香凝詩選

易文侯

譯 注



*To the memory of my grandfather*

MA HSIANG

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W.Y. Ma

## Foreword

Modern Chinese history is an epic which recounts the struggle of the Chinese people against feudalism, warlordism, and foreign aggression. It is an epic in which many people fought and died to restore peace, prosperity, sovereignty, and above all, dignity to the Chinese people. There were illustrious personages like Sun Yat-sen and Mao Tse-tung, and there were many others who had contributed greatly to the cause of China but were unknown to the West. The two protagonists of this book, Liao Chung-k'ai (1875-1925) and his wife, Ho Hsiang-ning (1877-1972), were among these unsung heroes who had played important roles in modern Chinese history.

Historically speaking, modern Chinese history, spanning more than a hundred years, is generally accepted as the period which begins with the opium war in 1840 and ends with the Communist takeover in 1949. However, since the objective of this book is limited to retracing modern Chinese history through the eyes of the two protagonists, the meaning of "modern Chinese history" in this book is necessarily limited to the period beginning in 1904 when Liao Chung-k'ai and Ho Hsiang-ning first participated in revolutionary activities in Japan up to the 1950s when Ho Hsiang-ning addressed her stirring poem to an old comrade and friend who had gone to live in Taiwan.

True to the traditional and, I must add, romantic image of the Chinese statesman, Liao Chung-k'ai and Ho Hsiang-ning were not only revolutionaries, but were also poets; and in Ho Hsiang-ning's case, she was an established painter as well. During the course of their eventful lives, they had written many poems which were inspired by momentous happenings



in modern Chinese history. Since their lives were closely interwoven with that of modern China, their poetry therefore constitutes a personal commentary on the course of modern Chinese history. Indeed, so powerful is the historical current in their poems that one cannot help but sense the flow of Chinese history in them. It is the intention of the translator to introduce to and to share with the Western audience the Chinese cultural heritage through the poems of this extraordinary couple. Since they were first and foremost revolutionaries, and their poems were the distilled sentiments occasioned by historical events, it becomes imperative for the translator to trace here an outline of modern Chinese history. In this way, the reader may gain a historical perspective into modern Chinese history in reading these poems, and consequently, will be able to enjoy them on literary and historical levels.

The birth of the Republic of China marked the end of more than two thousand years of dynasty rule. It also meant the destruction of the Confucian concept of government in which one family ruled China by the "Mandate of Heaven". The man who was the prophet and helmsman of the revolution which toppled the Ch'ing Dynasty was Dr. Sun Yat-sen. On Jan. 1, 1912, Sun became the provisional president of the Republic of China.

Throughout the turbulent years of the revolution and of the young republic, Liao Chung-k'ai and Ho Hsiang-ning were among Sun's staunchest supporters and his most trusted friends. They met Sun in 1903, and in the following year they both joined Sun's revolutionary party, T'ung-meng-hui. Many secret meetings were held at their house in order to foil the surveillance attempts of the Japanese secret police who acted on behalf of the Ch'ing embassy in Japan. So complete was his trust in Liao Chung-k'ai that Sun sent him to Tientsin in 1904 as his personal representative in the secret negotiation with a delegation of French socialists who were visiting China at the time. It was on the eve of Liao's departure that Ho Hsiang-ning wrote the stirring "A Farewell

to My Beloved". The nationalistic fervor already evident in this poem was to become the dominant trait in her later poems. In 1909, Liao was again sent by Sun to Kirin in Manchuria to organize the revolutionary forces in that area. It was on this trip, on the eve of New Year, that Liao expressed his loneliness and his longing for home in the moving poem "New Year's Eve in Kirin". Indeed, so often was he sent on missions during this revolutionary period that Liao Chung-k'ai and Ho Hsiang-ning poured out their feelings of longing for each other in some of their most intimate poems such as "Lament of a Soldier's Wife" by Ho Hsiang-ning and "All Night Long the Stubborn Rain Knocks at My Window" by Liao Chung-k'ai.

The founding of the republic did not bring peace and prosperity to China, nor did it solve her age-old problems of feudalism, civil strife, and foreign intervention. After only six weeks in the presidency, Sun was forced to cede the presidency to Yüan Shih-k'ai, the most powerful warlord in the north at the time. Within two years, Yüan was to abolish the constitution, dissolve the National Congress, and embark on a campaign of terror against the Nationalists by having the most prominent ones arrested and assassinated. Indeed, the political situation in China in 1914 had become so dangerous and untenable for Sun and his followers that they had to flee to Japan from whence they were not to return until Yüan's death in 1916. While in exile, Sun organized the Chinese Revolutionary Party which was to be reorganized and renamed the Chinese Nationalist Party (Chung-kuo Kuo-ming-tang) in 1919 in Shanghai.

In 1920, the military forces of Kwangtung province friendly to Sun captured Canton; and in May, 1921, Sun re-established the republican government in Canton with himself as president. Now there were two governments in China: the republican government in Canton, and the Peiyang government run by the Peiyang warlords in the north. However, the republican government was destined to be short-lived. On June 16, 1922, Ch'en Chiung-ming, warlord

of Kwangtung province and one of Sun's generals, staged a coup d'état against Sun. This act of treason was triggered by the success of Sun's campaign in neighboring Kwangsi province a few months earlier. Fearing the growing strength of the revolutionary army, Ch'en Chiung-ming conspired with the Peiyang warlords to overthrow the republican government. Sun's residence in Canton was surrounded by rebel troops and was bombarded heavily by artillery. It was through the valiant effort of their body guards, among them Ma Hsiang and Huang Hui-lung, that Sun and Mme Sun escaped to the safety of the warship Yung-feng which was awaiting them on the Pearl River. Two days before the mutiny, Ch'en Chiung-ming had Liao Chung-k'ai brought to his army headquarters at the arsenal Shih-ching and had him imprisoned. It was there that he wrote his wife a poignant poem of farewell. It was there also that he wrote several others decrying bitterly the traitors of the revolution. The treacherous Ch'en and his cohort were alluded to as rats in the poem "Night Drifts In" and as worms and swine in the poem "Lashing Storms Over the Pearl River". In another poem entitled "Mist of Evil Swirling", Liao alluded to the assassinations of General Teng Chung-yüan and of his best friend, Chu Chih-hsin. It was over the grave of Chu that new blades of grass, symbolizing hope and rebirth, were growing exuberantly. Aside from the theme of denunciation of the traitors, there is also the recurring theme of war and through it, the themes of devastation and of great sorrow. These poems written by Liao during his imprisonment are pertinent commentaries on the perilous times in which he lived. After sixty-two days of imprisonment, Ch'en Chiung-ming, in a moment of indecision and to the surprise of all, ordered Liao's release. Thereupon Liao and his wife rejoined Sun Yat-sen in Shanghai, and soon Liao was to embark on yet another mission for Sun.

In August, 1922, the Comintern had sent Adolf Joffe to China to make contacts with the Chinese in order to establish Sino-Soviet cooperation. In the winter of that year, Sun and

Joffre had their first meeting, and the results of that meeting were so encouraging that Sun asked Liao to continue the negotiations on his behalf. It was through these preliminary talks between Liao and Joffre that Sun reached final agreement with Joffre on Sino-Soviet cooperation which was proclaimed in the Sun-Joffre joint manifesto in January, 1923.

In the spring of 1923, the seesawing struggle for power of the warlords in the south made it possible for Sun to return to Canton where he immediately established a revolutionary government and assumed the title of generalissimo. After having been frustrated in his attempts to reunify China and to defeat the warlords backed by the imperialists, Sun Yat-sen realized now that the only way to save China at this perilous hour was to reorganize the Nationalist Party and to build his own army. Shortly after the Sun-Joffre agreement, the Soviets began sending military aid and a number of advisors to the revolutionary government. Among the advisors were Mikhail Borodin who was to help Sun reorganize the Nationalist Party, and General Galen who was to help build a party army.

In the winter of 1923-1924, Sun unveiled his new program, known as the Three Cardinal Policies, to the First National Congress of the reorganized Nationalist Party. The new program included alliance with the Soviets, admission of the Communists into the Nationalist Party, and assistance to the peasants and the workers. It was this program which caused the eventual split between the right wing and the left wing of the Nationalist Party in 1927 when the uneasy marriage created by the Sun-Joffre agreement between the Nationalists and the Communists was dissolved. Firmly convinced that the road to salvation for China was through radical changes in her political, social, and economic structures, Liao embarked on a series of propaganda campaigns to acquaint the Chinese people with Sun's Three Cardinal Policies. Already his uncompromising stand on the future course of China brought him into bitter struggles and

unreconcilable conflicts with the reactionary elements which represented the interests of the compradors and the imperialists. On June 23, 1925, the massacre of Chinese workers by imperialist troops in Canton triggered a massive strike in the Canton-Hong Kong area. Undaunted by the thinly-veiled threats sent by his enemies, Liao Chung-k'ai plunged headlong into organizing relief committees and political indoctrination rallies for the strike workers and their families. On August 20, 1925, five months after the death of Sun, Liao was assassinated in Canton on the order of the imperialists-compradors clique.

The death of Liao Chung-k'ai greatly saddened Ho Hsiang-ning. Yet, in spite of her private sorrow, she never stopped working closely with the revolutionary forces to promote the cause of China as she had vowed in the poem "In Memoriam" written shortly after her husband's death. As one of the original members of the T'ung-meng-hui and a member of the left wing of the Nationalist Party, she tried to stop the imminent split between the left wing forces and the right wing forces in 1927 by going to Nanking to intercede personally for the interest of national unity. Frustrated in her efforts, she wrote the emotionally-charged "In Remembrance of Our Martyrs" after a visit to Sun Yat-sen's mausoleum at the foothills of the Purple-Gold Mountain just outside Nanking. Throughout the period of the Northern Expedition and the war years with Japan, Ho Hsiang-ning was active in organizing fund-raising for the war effort and relief for the wounded soldiers. She was also one of the first political leaders who championed equal rights for women. During the war, she had endured many hardships and privation, yet it was characteristic of her to stand firm in the face of adversity. Her poems of this period bear witness to her courage and to her indomitable spirit. Repeatedly, she rallied the Chinese people to rout and to vanquish their enemies, and to restore sovereignty and dignity to their beloved homeland. The dominant themes in her poems of this period are patriotism, courage, and perseverance. As the plum

blossom is a traditional symbol of integrity and perseverance for the Chinese, and Ho Hsiang-ning specialized in painting plum blossoms, it is not surprising that many of her poems of this period were written in praise of the flower which blooms proudly in the midst of snow and chill.

After Mao's revolution in 1949, Ho Hsiang-ning returned to Peking where she lived until her death in 1972, at the age of ninety-five. Just as she had hoped and predicted in her early poem "Farewell to My Beloved", Liao Chung-k'ai and Ho Hsiang-ning did leave a shining example of valor and perseverance to posterity. By virtue of their sacrifices and their life-long dedication to the cause of China, their names shall be forever remembered in the annals of Chinese history.

Ma Wan-Yue  
馬文綺

## A Note about the Translation

The poems of Liao Chung-k'ai and Ho Hsiang-ning have been translated here in the manner of free translation. The objective of the translator is to transmit the message and to recreate the mood of the poems as clearly and as closely to the original as possible.

These poems were written either in the form of *shih* of the T'ang dynasty (618-907) or in the form of *tz'u* of the Sung dynasty (960-1127). Since the Chinese poem follows a concise and rigid form, and each character or group of characters conveys an image, a complex sentiment, or a multi-faceted idea, the translator finds in the free translation the necessary flexibility and fluidity with which to render the mood true and the message clear of the original poem.

Much poetic license has been taken in terms of word order, imagery, and the adding of new words. Sometimes a new imagery is created in order to make clear or to emphasize the elusive meaning of a particular Chinese character. Such is the case in the second stanza of "Night Drifts In" in which the feeling of futility in all human endeavors, expressed in the original by a single character "chih" which means "only", is rendered vivid by the added imagery of begging for "suspended moments before the Judge of Time". Sometimes new words or even lines are added to clarify the historical background of the poem so that the reader may grasp the message of the poem more readily and thereby appreciate it more fully. The poem "A Farewell to My Beloved" in which the first two lines were "invented" by the translator to set the historical tone is an example of this kind of poetic freedom. Still at other times, the translator has taken the liberty to add a playful dimension to a phrase while making sure not to change its meaning. For example, in the poem

entitled "Thoughts on the Plum Blossoms", the translator "plays" with the phrase, "painting plum blossoms", by transforming the action of painting into that of "gathering the plum blossoms, one by one, into the album". Another example of such "playfulness" can be found in "Ode to Plum Blossoms". Instead of translating closely by saying "with palette and brush, I paint blue haze and violet clouds", the translator has reversed the action by having the haze and clouds alighting on the scroll of the painter. Specific examples aside, it should also be noted that oftentimes the imagery or the idea is elaborated upon to promote harmony or variety of sounds and melody of lines.

It is hoped that the Western reader may gain an insight into Chinese culture and modern Chinese history through these translations; and most of all, it is hoped that he may enjoy reading them!



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