

THE NIGHT WATCHMAN

Yu Kwang-chung

守
夜
人



中英對照詩集·余光中自譯

1958-1992

THE NIGHT WATCHMAN,

a bilingual selection of poems

by Yu Kwang-chung

守夜人

中英對照詩集

余光中自譯

Chiu Ko Publishing Co., Ltd., Taipei

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About the Author

Born in Nanking, China in 1928, Yu Kwang-chung is a writer well-known in Taiwan, Hong Kong and mainland China. He has taught English and Chinese literature at colleges in Taiwan, Hong Kong and the United States, where he was twice Fulbright visiting professor in 1964-66 and 1969-71. He is now professor of English at National Sun Yat-sen University in Kaohsiung, Taiwan, where he was dean of college of liberal arts in 1985-91.

A prolific and versatile writer, Yu has published 40 books, of which 16 are in verse and the rest in prose, criticism, and translation. In recent years, 7 books by or on him have been published in mainland China. A dozen or so of his lyrics enjoy popularity as songs, notably "Nostalgia," "Nostalgia in Four Rhymes," and "A Folk Song." Recipient of half a dozen major literary awards in Taiwan including National Literary Award in Poetry and Wu San-lian Literary Award in Prose, he was conferred honorary fellowship by Hong Kong Translation Society in 1991. Since 1990 he has been president of Taipei Chinese Center, PEN International.

Critical attention has focused on such verse collections of his as *Associations of the Lotus*, *In Time of Cold War*, *The White Jade Bitter Gourd*, and *The Selected Poetry of Yu Kwang-chung*. His lyrical essays, ranging in style from the fantastic to the humorous, have also won wide acclaim.

The Fire-Fresh Phoenix (1979), edited by Wong Wai-leung, is a selection of critical essays on Yu's poetry and prose. Among Yu's translations are *The Old Man and the Sea*, *Lust for Life*, *Bartleby the Scrivener*, *Anthology of Modern English and American Poetry*, and *Anthology of Modern Turkish Poetry*. His Chinese versions of Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* and *Lady Windermere's Fan* have been successfully staged in Hong Kong and Taiwan.

Foreword

Over the past forty years I have written some 700 poems and translated into Chinese more than 300 foreign poems directly from or indirectly through English. Apart from scattered appearances in anthologies and critical essays, translations of my own poetry have been published only in two books: the German version of *Lotos-Assoziationen* by Andreas Donath and the English version of *Acres of Barbed Wire* by myself.

Published both in 1971, the two books are now out of print. However, there has been an increasing need for translations of my poetry on occasions of international exchange. So I rearranged *Acres of Barbed Wire* and enlarged it into the present selection entitled *The Night Watchman*.

This bilingual edition with 68 poems is more substantial than my average collection and amounts to approximately one tenth of my total output in verse. Out of the 68, only 27 are taken from *Acres of Barbed Wire*; the rest are recent translations

A selection of poems in translation is, of course, quite different from ordinary selections of creative writing, where the simple aim is to choose whatever is best and most representative. The former, however, is limited by more complex considerations. Where a poem is unique for its historical background, cultural context or linguistic style, the translator is liable to achieve lamentably less despite painfully greater efforts. Thus I have to excuse myself for having refrained from tackling such demanding yet thankless poems.

For a poet to translate his own poems, the advantage is, of course, full understanding of the original, there being no risk of misinterpretation. Yet the author, because he knows his own work too well, is often discouraged by the feeling that it is impossible to do full justice to the original in all its subtle nuances so that, as soon as he commits himself to a foreign language, he is guilty of distortion. To keep my translation from degenerating into prosaic paraphrase, I had sometimes to give verve priority over mere correctness. Since the translator is the author himself, this liberty, I believe, was taken at nobody else's expense.

For the reader's convenience, each of the poems is num-

bered after the title so that he can quickly find its original or translated counterpart.

Yu Kwang-chung
Kaohsiung, Taiwan
August 31, 1992



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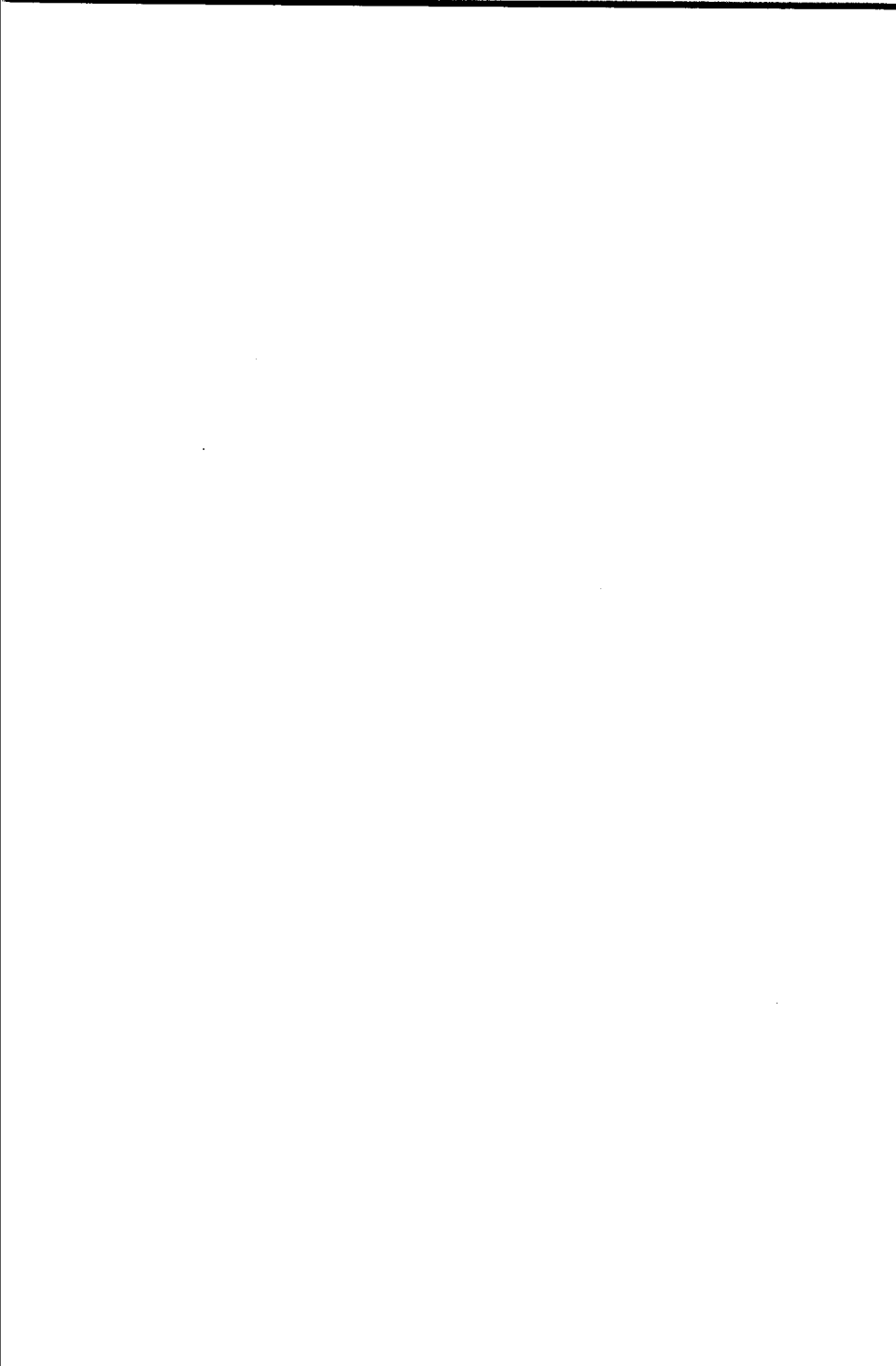
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Hsilo Bridge 1

Loomingly, the soul of steel remains awake.
Serious silence clangs.

Over the Hsilo Plain sea winds wildy shake
This design of strength, this scheme of beauty; they shake
Every nerve of this tower of will,
Howling and yelling desperately.
Still the teeth of nails bite, the claws of iron rails clench
A serious silence.

Then my soul awakes; I know
I shall be different once across
From what on this side I am; I know
The man across can never come back
To the man before the crossing.
Yet Fate from a mysterious center radiates
A thousand arms to greet me; I must cross the bridge.

Facing the corridor to another world,
I tremble a little.