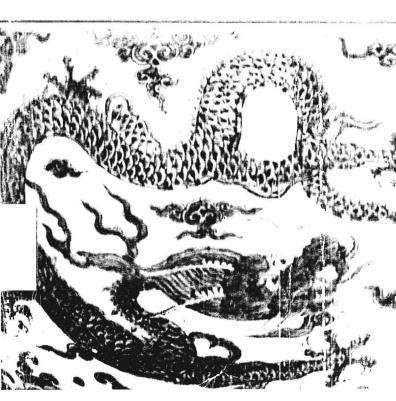
Chinese Poems

Arthur Waley



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ARTHUR WALEY

London UNWIN PAPERBACKS

Boston

Sydney

First published by George Allen & Unwin 1946
Reprinted four times
First published in paperback 1961
First published in Unwin Paperbacks 1982
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UNWIN®PAPERBACKS 40 Museum Street, London WC1A 1LU, UK

Unwin Paperbacks
Park Lane, Hemel Hempstead, Herts HP2 4TE, UK
George Allen & Unwin Australia Pty Ltd,
8 Napier Street, North Sydney, NSW 2060, Australia

© George Allen & Unwin (Publishers) Ltd, 1946, 1961, 1983

ISBN 0 04 895027 0

Set in 9 point Plantin and printed in Great Britain by Hazell Watson and Viney Ltd, Aylesbury, Bucks

CHINESE POEMS

Other translations by Arthur Waley

THE BOOK OF SONGS

MONKEY

THE NINE SONGS

THE NO PLAYS OF JAPAN

THE PILLOW-BOOK OF SEI-SHONAGON

THE POETRY AND CAREER OF LI PO

THE REAL TRIPITAKA

THE TALE OF GENJI

THE WAY AND ITS POWER

YUAN MEI

To Edith Sitwell

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

This book contains a selection of poems from *The Book of Songs* (1937) and most of the poems from *170 Chinese Poems* (1918), *More Translations* (1919) and *The Temple* (1923). The poems have been arranged as far as possible in chronological order. All the translations have been thoroughly revised.

The present order of the poems has of course no reference to the dates at which they were translated, and as my methods have changed a good deal in the last thirty years, the reader will find very literal, almost pidgin-English versions side by side with more finished work. I have made very few merely stylistic alterations; but the *Hymn to the Fallen* struck me as definitely bad, and I have, I think, greatly improved it.

Out of the Chinese five-word line I developed between 1916 and 1923 a metre, based on what Gerard Manley Hopkins called 'sprung rhythm', which I believe to be just as much an English metre as blank verse. The Chinese seven-word line is much more difficult to handle and I have not attempted

any long poems in this metre.

This brings me to the question of selection. My book is not a balanced anthology of Chinese poetry, but merely a collection of poems that happen to work out well in a literal but at the same time literary translation. This of course excludes poems of a highly allusive nature, requiring an undue amount of annotation. The fact that I have translated ten times more poems by Po Chu-i than by any other writer does not mean that I think him ten times as good as any of the rest, but merely that I find him by far the most remarkable of the major Chinese poets. Nor

does it mean that I am unfamiliar with the works of other great T'ang and Sung poets. I have indeed made many attempts to translate Li Po, Tu Fu and Su Shih; but the results have not satisfied me.

This book is intended to be essentially a book of poetry, and I have excluded the biographical and historical essays that formed part, for example, of 170 Chinese Poems.

1946

PREFACE TO THE FIRST PAPERBACK EDITION

This is a reprint of Chinese Poems (1946), except that the Additional Notes have been omitted, and a few translations made since 1946 have been included - a series of poems by Han-shan and a love poem by Fêng Mêng-lung. The Hanshan poems originally appeared in Encounter and the love-poem in the Evergreen Review. My book is not a balanced and representative anthology of Chinese poetry through the ages, but merely a collection of poems that I like particularly and that happen to work out well in translation. The translations were made over a long period - between 1916 and 1959. I have corrected some mistakes in those made long ago, but in two or three cases I have not altered inaccuracies because I found that I could not do so without spoiling the general effect of the poem. For example on page 53, line 18, lush verdure rather than wetness is implied, but I find it hard to express this satisfactorily.

1960

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