



來中望所去 去中覓所來

——謝馨詩作賞析

施穎洲 等著

楊宗翰 主編

菲律賓·華文風叢書 04

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Introduction

Alejandro R. Roces

Translation is treason; done from Chinese to English, it is high treason. For the two languages are worlds apart. Chinese characters are monosyllabic; English words have varying number of syllables. Too, Chinese is tonal and this gives their prose and poems a musical dimension. It is terser, and more concise than English, which is why the Chinese originals in this book are all much shorter than their translations. Grammatically, the two have also very little in common. Declensions and conjugations do not exist in Chinese. The same character can function as a noun, an adjective, an adverb or verb. But even in translation the poems of Grace Hsieh-Hsing are revelations. In her world, walking through a Revolving Door becomes a surrealist experience. The Roxas Boulevard Reclamation raises metaphysical question:

Will the sea's swell still be felt in reclaimed land?

Will it heighten the horizon?

Can the fish still find their homes?

Traditional Chinese poetry culminated in the T'ang dynasty. No less than 900 volumes were officially compiled during that era.

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The poems shared a common theme: nature worship. Grace Hsieh-Hsing's poems are a departure from that tradition. Her poems often deal with clash between nature and culture. The Edifice is one example.

All poetry is biographical. But Grace Hsieh-Hsing's literally biographical. Profession: Airborne Service and Airport reveal her days as a flight stewardess. Her years in Manila are immortalized in her poems and go very deeply into things Filipino: Sabung, Halo-halo, and, yes, even Balot, which she sees from a Darwinian and Budhistic point of view.

The medium is Chinese but the poems are universal. In some aspects, she is more Western than Eastern. Her horoscopic poems are not about the Chinese Twelve-year cycle, that takes 60 years to complete, but about the Western 12-month calendar. Grace Hsieh-Hsing is not a versifier. She is a true poet-gifted with inner vision. You don't read her poems. You experience them. I went through her book and met a great soul.

The Best of October

by Isagani R. Cruz

The Philippine STAR/November 25, 1990

CRITIC AT LARGE ISAGANI R. CRUZ

Best of September were the short story included by Joaquin Sy in his “Isang kwentong pambata para sa hindi na bata” (Tulay, Sept.30) and “Asin” by Kyrene Soriano(Midweek, Sept. 19). Particularly worth reading in “Asin,” a story about a sociology teacher whose friendship by correspondence with a rebel leads to her decision to commit herself more actively to her country. Among the best of the September poems was ‘La Generala” (United Daily News, Sept. 6), written in Chinese by Grace Hsieh-Hsing and translated into English by John Shih. It’s too bad I cannot read Chinese; the translation indicates that the Chinese poem may be a masterpiece by a Chinese-Filipino poet.

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The Best of November

by Isagani R. Cruz

STARWEEK The Sunday magazine of The Philippine STAR

December 30, 1990

Not as much a believer in feminism as Reyes, Hsieh-Hsing agonizes over the role of Maria Clara in today's society. The nineteenth-century image of the Filipina as painted by Jose Rizal (although there are serious reasons to believe that Rizal did not mean Maria Clara to be taken as a model for Filipinas) seems not to be appropriate for our times, yet she may be just what we need. In John Sy's translation, the poet wonders about Maria Clara: "Perhaps you'd switch to a miniskirt, blue jeans/squeeze into the parading crowd/ and yell slogans of women's rights." This "liberated" image quickly dissolves, however, into a nostalgic description of Maria Clara in church "the glossy coiffure/clasped with a laced kerchief." Women can't have it both ways, and Hsieh-Hsing is not sure exactly which way is best.

Feminism has become a powerful force in our society today, not only in politics and social action, but in literature.

Consumido who ignore feminist sensibilities are taking great risk that in the future, when feminists will almost certainly wield academic and aesthetic power, they will be ignored.

Critic At Large Isagani R. Cruz
Critic's choice of poems for November

1. 'Storya, by Lina Sagaral Reyes (Midweek, Nov.7-14)
2. Kay Richard de Zoysa, Sri Lanka, by Perfecto G. Caparas II (Midweek, Nov.28)
3. Maria Clara, by Grace Hsieh-Hsing, translated from Chinese into English by John Sy (United Daily News, Nov. 1)
4. Ano ba ang Tula?, by Manuel Principe Bautista (Liwayway, Nov. 12)
5. Migrante, by Fidel Rillo (Midweek, Nov.7-14)
6. Huling Kabanata ng Isang Epiko, by V. de la Cruz (Liwayway, Nov.19)

Hope eternal

By FELICE STA. MARIA

THE PHILIPPINE STAR PAHIYAS

Filipino poet Grace Hsieh-Hsing, who writes in Chinese, captures the spirit of change in “Reclamation Area Thoughts.”

Standing on the reclaimed land
after the sea was filled.

can the movement of the sea
still be felt?

After those waters were pushed into
the ocean

will the horizon

be raised a trifle?

and those drifting fishes

that have been coming and going

will they go astray

and lose their way home?

Will Neptune break into sudden anger

And accuse man for invading his sovereign sea?

Moonlight shines in tranquility

and coconut trees wiggle gently

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and we start the big conversation...

The tale of Yu Kung's effort to move a mountain...

The myth of dispatching the wind and the rain...

The miracle of turning the day into the night...

And many many

wondrous twisting of events...

The need for renewal is inherent in cultures the world over. The Jan. 1 celebration comes from a Roman calendar that plot the sun's cycle. The Chinese calendar follows moon movement. Having more than one new year annually gives peace a fighting chance.

Sundry Strokes Refreshing Discovery

By ROSALINDA L. OROSA

My recent trip to China was a tremendous learning experience. Rita C. Tan, the country's foremost ceramics expert, took members of the Oriental Ceramics Society of the Philippines to various museums, and though I occasionally felt like an outsider looking in, I established a common bond with three of my traveling companions, having made the refreshing discovery that they write.

The first of these – she's no writer by avocation – is the formidable poet Grace Hsieh-Hsing who contributes to the literary page of the Chinese United Daily News. Her collection of poems *To the Flowers* carries an English translation by John Shih, and an introduction by Alejandro R. Roces, a highly esteemed writer himself who reveals, in his comments, a thorough conversance with the structure of the Chinese language.

Mr. Roces writes in part: "Traditional Chinese poetry culminated in the T'ang dynasty. No less than 900 volumes were officially compiled during that era. The poems shared a common theme: nature worship. Grace Hsieh-Hsing's poems are a departure from that tradition. Her poems often deal with the clash between nature and culture.

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“All poetry is bibliographical. Her years in Manila are immortalized and go very deeply into things Filipino: Sabung, Halo-halo, and yes, even Balut, which she sees from a Darwinian and Buddhistic point of view.

“Grace Hsieh-Hsing is not a versifier. She is a true poet gifted with inner vision. You don’t read her poems. You experience them. I went through her book and met a great soul.”

Curriculum Vitae

BRIEF PERSONAL RECORD

Name: Grace H. Lee

Maiden Name: Hsieh, Hsing

Born: January 6, 1938 Shanghai, China

Home Address: 12-A Greenrich Mansion, Pearl Drive cor. Lourdes
St. Ortigas Complex, Pasig, Metro Manila, Philippines

Marital Status: Married, four children

Spouse: Ignacio C. Lee

Citizen: Filipino

Telephone: 6332973, 6339184

Fax: 632-706-1121

Educational Background:

Graduated from Taipei Girls' High School, 1955

Attended Taiwan National College of Fine Arts, majoring in
Dramatic Arts, 1956

Attended International Writing Program at University of IOWA,
IOWA, USA

Attended English Seminar continuing Education at New Hampshire
College, USA

AS A WRITER

Publications:

BOOKS:

Changing (translation of Liv Ullman's Autobiography, English to Chinese), 1980

The Persian Cat (poetry), 1990

To the Flowers (with English translation by John Shih), 1990

Meditation In Stone Forest (Poetry), 2001

Essays by Grace Hsieh-Hsing, 2007

Compact Disc:

Mandarin Poetry Reading, Written and Read by Grace H. Lee, 1999

Honours:

1. "Striptease"- among the seven award winning poems chosen from hundreds of entries in the Short Verse Contest sponsored by the United Daily News on the occasion of the Poet Day in 1987, Taipei
2. 5 Poems winning the Superiority Award from The Epoch in 1994
3. "Eyebrows", "Rouge on the Lips", and "Blue Eye Shadow" included in Taiwan's Selected Poems of the year in 1985.
4. "The Elevator" included in Taiwan's Selected Poems of the year in 1986.
5. "Simplicity" included in Taiwan's Selected Poems of the year in 1989.

6. “City Wind” included in Taiwan’s Selected Poems of the year in 1993.
7. “La Generala” (English translation) selected as the Poem of the Month for September by Prof. Isagana Cruz in “Critic-At-Large” in Panarama in 1990.
8. “Maria Clara” (English translation) selected as the Poem of the Month for November by Prof. Isagana Cruz in “Critic-At-Large” in Panarama in 1990.
9. “Tandang Sora” (English translation) selected as the Poem of the Month for July by Prof. Isagana Cruz in “Critic-At-Large” in Panarama in 1991.
10. “Ongpin Street” (English translation) included in Traveller’s Literary Companion to Southeast Asia, England, 1994.
11. “Elevator” included in Three Hundred Modern Poetry of Nine-Song Literary Assos. Taipei.
12. “Meditation in Stone Forest” won first prize in the Poetry Category sponsored by the Federation of Overseas Chinese Assos. In 2002
13. “Flower Fan” was selected as the twenty best poems from among one thousand six hundred twenty-five entries in the competition titled “A Poem for Flowers” which was held under auspices of Taiwan Agricultural Bureau, Taipei University of Fine Arts and the Taiwan United Daily News.

Literary Activities:

1. The “International Writing Program” In 1991, IOWA, U.S.A.
2. International Literary Camp judge in Golden Award on Poetry, Singapore, 1992.
3. The Fifth “International Women’s Writer’s Association