

NEW SONGS FROM A JADE TERRACE

An Anthology of Early Chinese Love Poetry,
Translated with Annotations and an Introduction

Anne Birrell

ROUTLEDGE LIBRARY EDITIONS:
CHINESE LITERATURE AND ARTS



ROUTLEDGE LIBRARY EDITIONS:
CHINESE LITERATURE AND ARTS

Volume 16

NEW SONGS FROM A
JADE TERRACE



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

NEW SONGS FROM A
JADE TERRACE

An Anthology of Early Chinese
Love Poetry, Translated
with Annotations and an
Introduction

ANNE BIRRELL

First published in 1982 by George Allen & Unwin (Publishers) Ltd

This edition first published in 2022

by Routledge

4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge

605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

© 1982 Anne M. Birrell

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Trademark notice: Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-0-367-11183-0 (Set)

ISBN: 978-0-367-77060-0 (Volume 16) (hbk)

ISBN: 978-0-367-77063-1 (Volume 16) (pbk)

ISBN: 978-1-003-16962-8 (Volume 16) (ebk)

DOI: 10.4324/9781003169628

Publisher's Note

The publisher has gone to great lengths to ensure the quality of this reprint but points out that some imperfections in the original copies may be apparent.

Disclaimer

The publisher has made every effort to trace copyright holders and would welcome correspondence from those they have been unable to trace.

New Songs from a Jade Terrace

*An Anthology of Early Chinese Love Poetry,
Translated with Annotations and an
Introduction*

by ANNE BIRRELL

London
GEORGE ALLEN & UNWIN
Boston Sydney

© Anne M. Birrell, 1982.
This book is copyright under the Berne Convention.
No reproduction without permission. All rights reserved.

**George Allen & Unwin (Publishers) Ltd,
40 Museum Street, London WC1A 1LU, UK**

George Allen & Unwin (Publishers) Ltd,
Park Lane, Hemel Hempstead, Herts HP2 4TE, UK

Allen & Unwin Inc.,
9 Winchester Terrace, Winchester, Mass 01890, USA

George Allen & Unwin Australia Pty Ltd,
8 Napier Street, North Sydney, NSW 2060, Australia

First published in 1982

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

New songs from a jade terrace.

1. Chinese poetry – Translations into English
2. English poetry – Translations from Chinese

I. Birrell, Anne

895.1'12 PL2518

ISBN 0-04-895026-2

Set in 11 on 12 point Baskerville by Grove Graphics, Tring
and printed in Great Britain
by Mackays of Chatham

*To the memory of
Suzuki Torao (1878-1963)*

Acknowledgements

My sincere thanks go to Burton Watson, Chih-ting Hsia, Denis C. Twitchett, Angus C. Graham, and Piet van der Loon for their thoughtful comments on my manuscript and helpful suggestions. I am particularly indebted to Michael Loewe who, besides reading various sections with valuable insights, provided generous encouragement and sound advice at critical stages of my work. I am also grateful to my editors, Michael Radford, who brought painstaking critical acumen to bear on my manuscript, and John Hardy, who with never-failing courtesy adroitly steered my work through the Scylla and Charybdis of publication. My last word of thanks goes to many friends, especially Brigadier Philip Moran, Sir John Brooke, Miss Elizabeth S. Blair, and Ewen G. Cameron, for their good-natured interest. It is no exaggeration to say that without Mr Cameron's continued support this work would never have been realised.

Foreword

Some works of literature we prize for their universal and timeless qualities. Regardless of when or where they were created, they seem to speak directly to us today, their freshness and power unaffected by the passing of centuries. Others appeal to us for a quite opposite reason, because they so richly and vividly reflect the particular period and society that produced them; because in effect they are so unlike the literature of the present. Like artefacts from an old tomb, they tell us of customs and beliefs that have now vanished, of a way of life that fascinates us with its foreignness. They are witnesses not of the fundamental emotions common to all mankind, but of the infinitely varied ways in which those emotions find expression in different ages and climes.

The *Yü-t'ai hsin-yung* or *New Songs from a Jade Terrace*, an anthology of Chinese love poetry compiled in the sixth century AD, in a way belongs to both these categories. Many of the poems in it, especially those that appear to be of an earlier date, depict the joys and sorrows of love, and above all the sorrow of separation, in terms that are immediately understandable and moving to the reader of today. They reflect the timeless aspects of the anthology. But the reader, in addition to assuring himself that the Chinese heart in love beats much like hearts in that condition the world over, is at the same time intrigued to observe the particular conventions that governed courtships and romantic involvements in traditional China and the particular images and epithets that its poets employed in portraying the object of their affections.

And how different indeed are the conventions of love poetry in different lands and times! If men and women everywhere alike fall in love, each culture seems to have its own unique manner of giving expression to the feeling. Or so the poets would suggest. The ancient Greeks and Romans wrote of love with a frankness and exuberance that brought blushes to their cultural successors in later centuries of European history, and would most certainly have done the same to readers of traditional China. The troubadours of southern Europe, whose works had such a profound influence upon the European literary tradition as a whole, seemed to take a perverse delight in depicting lovely ladies who are cruelly chaste, forever demanding tokens of

devotion from their hapless lovers while withholding favors. How far removed are these chill mistresses from the voluptuous beauties of Sanskrit poetry, with their hair and clothing in disarray and their flesh battered and bruised from the violence of their lovemaking, or from the fretful Japanese ladies of the *Man'yōshū* who wait impatiently for a lover who slips into their room at night and slips away again at dawn. And, as the reader will presently discover, the lovers and loved ones of the Chinese tradition are different again from all of these.

Long before the compilation of *New Songs from a Jade Terrace*, the Chinese had had an earlier body of love poetry dating back perhaps as far as the ninth, eighth, or seventh century BC. But these ancient love lyrics were preserved, unfortunately perhaps, in an anthology that was believed to have been compiled by none other than the venerable sage and moralist Confucius. Since it was assumed that Confucius would not have been interested in anything so frivolous as romantic love *per se*, the Chinese scholars concluded that there must be weighty moral or political lessons hidden beneath the surface meaning of the poems, and set about with all the exegete's characteristic ingenuity and zeal to dig them out. Such an approach had the additional advantage that it allowed the scholars to gloss over what appeared to be indecorous passages in certain of the love poems, whisking them out of sight behind the curtains of allegorical interpretation before anyone could ask just why Confucius would have included works of this kind in his compilation in the first place.

But, if these earliest love songs were fated by circumstance to be thus forced into a didactic mold, no such treatment befell the poems of *New Songs from a Jade Terrace*. They were the products of a later age, one less dominated by Confucian concepts of morality, that frankly admitted its decadence and dared to take an interest in literature for its own sake, believing that love and physical attraction, whether that of a high-born lady of the aristocracy, a peasant girl or a professional prostitute, were fit subjects for poetry. These are the poems that laid down the patterns for later Chinese love poetry, and in many cases remain among the most popular and poignant treatments of the theme in the Chinese language. And now, thanks to Dr Birrell's excellent introduction and translations, the English reader can for the first time enter into and appreciate the world of *New Songs from a Jade Terrace*, savoring both the peculiarly Chinese charms and conventions of that world, as well as its more universal aspects. He can see for himself how the Chinese poet's depiction of love compares with those put forward by poets of other cultures, and in doing so perhaps acquire some fresh insight into the nature of both love and poetry.

BURTON WATSON
Osaka, May 1980

Contents

Foreword		<i>page</i>	ix
Chronological Table			xxvii
Map The Southern Dynasties			xxx
Introduction			I
Chapter One	Early Folk-songs and Ballads		
	(first and second centuries AD)		
<i>Anon.</i>	Eight Old Poems		
	Bittersweet		30
	Cold winds		30
	There is a time		31
	Fierce winter's cold air		31
	Joy of Love quilt		32
	The bronze censer		32
	Come back home		32
	My vow		33
<i>Anon.</i>	Six Old Folk-songs		
	Mulberry up the lane		33
	A grand house		34
	The perfect wife		35
	Don't make eyes at me!		36
	Today a keg of wine		36
	Two white geese		37
<i>Anon.</i>	Nine Miscellaneous Poems		
	The sound of strings and song		37
	A melody so sad		38
	On, on, ever on and on		38
	Despair will make me old		39
	Green, green riverside grass		39
	Stored memories		39
	How time passed		40
	Without a word		40
	Bright moon white		40
<i>Li Yen-nien</i>	A song		41
<i>?Su Wu</i>	If I die		41
<i>?Hsin Yen-nien</i>	The Imperial Guards officer		42
<i>?Lady Pan</i>	Regret		43
<i>Sung Tzu-hou</i>	Flowers fall		43

<i>Anon.</i>	A Ditty of the Han Era	
	Half across her forehead!	page 44
<i>Chang Heng</i>	Like sounds	44
<i>Ch'in Chia</i>	To my wife, three poems	45
<i>Hsü Shu</i>	Response to my husband, Ch'in Chia	47
<i>?T's'ai Yung</i>	Watering horses at a Long Wall hole	47
<i>Ch'en Lin</i>	Watering horses at a Long Wall hole	48
<i>Hsü Kan</i>	Bedroom longing	49
	Lack-lustre	51
<i>Fan Ch'in</i>	We pledged our love	51
<i>Anon.</i>	A peacock southeast flew	53

Chapter Two Poets of the Wei and Chin Dynasties (third and fourth centuries)

<i>T's'ao P'ei</i>	A newly wed knight parts from his bride	64
	A dull ache	64
	Empress Chen	64
<i>?Wang Sung</i>	Bedcurtains, two poems	65
<i>T's'ao Chih</i>	A wanderer's wife	66
	A weaving wife	66
	A hint of shadow	67
	Solitude	67
	In a land south	68
	A beautiful woman	68
	Sharing a quilt	69
	Floating alga	69
	The deserted wife	70
<i>T's'ao Jui</i>	Dull nights	71
	In close embrace	72
<i>Juan Chi</i>	We'll never forget	72
	Gay boys	73
<i>Fu Hsüan</i>	Green, green riverside grass	73
	Pity me!	74
	There's a girl	75
	Dawn song	75
	Bright moon	76
	Autumn orchid	77
	How does he ask after me?	77
	A pure wife	77
<i>Chang Hua</i>	Tour of duty	78
	Vigil	79
	Vacant shadow	79
	My tiny heart	80
	Marsh orchid	80
	Last sweetness	80
	He keeps away	80

<i>P'an Yüeh</i>	Homebound	page 81
	Homeward	82
	I mourn her passing	82
	Bereavement	83
<i>Shih Ch'ung</i>	Wang Chao-chün's Farewell	84
<i>Tso Ssu</i>	A dainty girl	85

Chapter Three **Poets of the Chin Dynasty** (third and fourth centuries)

<i>Lu Chi</i>	Sad echoes sweet	88
	Harmonies clear and sad	88
	I dream	89
	River without a bridge	89
	Soft, soft, sweet river grass	89
	At orchid time departed	90
	Deep longing	90
	Farewell to home!	90
	Estranged	91
	Broken threads	91
	Palace ladies	92
	Magic haunts	93
	Along the bank	93
<i>Lu Yün</i>	Four letter-poems between husband and wife	94
<i>Chang Hsieh</i>	No passing footsteps	96
<i>Yang Fang</i>	By your side	96
	Cling close together	97
	An empty room	98
	Crystalline	98
	Fine tree	98
<i>Wang Chien</i>	Seventh Night	99
<i>Li Ch'ung</i>	Parody of a lover	100
<i>T's'ao P'i</i>	In the night I hear fulling	101
<i>T'ao Ch'ien</i>	She drinks deep and sings	101
<i>Hsün Ch'ang</i>	A grand house	102
	Green, green riverside grass	103
<i>Wang Wei</i>	What do I desire?	103
	Who will know?	104
<i>Hsieh Hui-lien</i>	The Seventh	105
	Fulling cloth	105
	A gown near my body	106
<i>Liu Shuo</i>	On, on, ever on and on	107
	Bright moon white	107
	Fierce winter's cold air comes	108
	Green, green riverside grass	108
	Herdboy and Weaver stars	108

Chapter Four **Poets of the Southern Dynasties** (early fifth century)

<i>Wang Seng-ta</i>	Beneath the moon on Seventh Night	<i>page</i>	112
<i>Yen Yen-chih</i>	Weaver's poem to Herdboy		112
	A pure wife		113
<i>Pao Chao</i>	Admiring the moon from the west city gate		115
	Loyang capital		116
	Jealous hate		116
	Picking mulberry		117
	Dreaming of home		117
	One she knew long ago		118
	Swallows		118
	To my former love, two poems		119
<i>Wang Su</i>	Love's favour		119
<i>Wu Man-yüan</i>	Two white geese		120
	Sunny Spring Tune		120
	Long separation		121
	I'll always love you		121
<i>Pao Ling-hui</i>	Green, green riverside grass		122
	In the key of farewell		122
	Poem sent to a traveller		123
	An old theme addressed to a modern person		123
	Bright moon white		123
	His pillow makes me dream		124
<i>Ch'iu Chü-yüan</i>	The seven-jewel fan		124
	Rapturous song		125
<i>Wang Yüan-chang</i>	The hour of return		125
	Numb		125
	The balloon guitar		126
	The curtain		126
	Mount Wu high		126
<i>Hsieh T'iao</i>	In love for ever		127
	As the spring scene fades		127
	Resentment		127
	Singer in the night, two poems		128
	A former palace lady marries a supplies sergeant		128
	Autumn nights		128
	The lamp		129
	The candle		129
	The bed		129
	The mirrorstand		129
	Falling plum blossom		130
<i>Lu Chüeh</i>	I will end like them!		130
<i>Shih Jung-t'ai</i>	Playful laughter		131

Chapter Five

Poets of the Southern Dynasties
(the decades AD 490–510)

<i>Chiang Yen</i>	Separation	page 134
	Lady Pan's 'Poem on the Fan'	134
	Parted love	134
	Unhappy parting	135
<i>Ch'iu Ch'ih</i>	Nostalgia on campaign	135
	Bitter warfare?	136
<i>Shen Yüeh</i>	I climb high to look at spring	136
	Wang Chao-chün's Farewell	137
	For a young bridegroom	137
	Holding hands	138
	The one I love	138
	Night after night	139
	Spring	139
	Peach	139
	The moon	140
	Willow	140
	The flute	140
	I remember when she came	140
	I remember when she sat	141
	I remember when she ate	141
	I remember when she slept	141
	Embroidery on her collar	141
	Slippers on her feet	141
	Green, green riverside grass	142
	Three wives	142
	For nothing	142
	I dream of a lovely woman	142
	My inch of heart	143
	Early spring	143
	Bereavement	143
<i>Liu Yün</i>	Fulling cloth	144
	Alone, I never see him	145
	Over passes and mountains	145
	Parting is wrong	145
	Despair at Eternal Gate Palace	146
	Let's just say	146
	Getting up in the night to visit	146
	Threading needles on Seventh Night	147
	The bed	147
<i>Chiang Hung</i>	The singer	147
	The dancer	148
	Red notepaper	148
	A rose	148

<i>Kao Shuang</i>	The mirror	page 149
<i>Pao Tzu-ch'ing</i>	The painted fan	149
	Jade steps	149
<i>Ho Tzu-lang</i>	Bronze steps	150
	A measure of wine	150
	Moongazing	150
<i>Shen Man-yüan</i>	Her tiara flowers	151
	Parody of the other woman	151
	The coloured bamboo clothes perfumer	151
	The lamp	151
<i>Ho Sun</i>	Day and night I stare at the river	152
	Reckless	152
	Reflecting mirror	153
	Bedroom regrets	153
	Seventh Night	154
	The dancer	154
	I watch his new wife	154
	The singing-house	155
	White seagulls, a satire on separated people	155
	Green, green riverside grass	155
	A satire on the poet Liu Hsiao-cho	155
<i>Wang Shu</i>	Betrayed	156
	To a mulberry picker	156
	Adorable	156
<i>Yü Tan</i>	Autumn bedroom vigil	157
	One night I dreamed I went home	157

Chapter Six **Poets of the Southern Dynasties** (early sixth century)

<i>Wu Chün</i>	Spring silkworms	160
	I long for Liaotung	160
	Spring grass	160
	Sweet spring	160
	Who can bear?	161
	Her wild husband	161
	Palindrome brocade	161
	His mop-and-broom	162
	Fluttering to you	162
	Fleeting smoke	162
	Last gleam	162
	A few days	163
	Mulberry up the lane	163
	The King of Ch'in wraps a gift robe	163
	Picking lotus	164

	Holding hands	page 164
	Swallow	164
	Spring	164
	From a divorcée to her former husband	165
<i>Wang Seng-ju</i>	A boy	165
	Spring regrets	165
	His new mistress	166
	Bringing his glamorous lady home	166
	My neighbour's wife weaving at night	166
	Night sadness	167
	Spring bedroom resentment	167
	Fulling cloth	167
	Describing a dream for someone	168
	Near, yet far	168
	Bittersweet	168
	Through green wine	168
	For a woman to give her lover	169
	Anguish	169
	The one I love	169
	To someone's despairing mistress	170
	For a singer who feels hurt	170
	Autumn bedroom regrets	170
<i>Chang Shuai</i>	We met	170
	Wine	171
	Far betrothed	172
<i>Hsü Fei</i>	To my wife	172
	A poem on sweet promise sent to my mistress	173
<i>Fei Ch'ang</i>	Fulling cloth in the night	173
	Springtime betrayed	174
	In spring suburbs I watch pretty girls	174
	Reflection in a mirror	175
	Sunny spring brings warmth	175
	On autumn nights chill winds stir	175
	Picking caltrop	175
	Despair at Eternal Gate Palace	176
	Mount Wu high	176
	The one I love	176
<i>Yao Fan</i>	Picking mulberry	177
<i>K'ung Weng-kuei</i>	Lady Pan	177
<i>Liu Ling-hsien</i>	Reply to my husband, two poems	178
<i>Ho Ssu-ch'eng</i>	Lady Pan	179
	Old love	179
	In South Park I met a lovely woman	179
<i>?Liu Ling-hsien</i>	To my late husband's mistress	180

Chapter Seven **Royal Poets of the Liang** (the Hsiao Family)

<i>Hsiao Yen</i>	Fulling cloth	<i>page</i> 182	
	A grand house	182	
	Countless wounding seasons	183	
	Green, green riverside grass	183	
	For Su Wu's wife	184	
	This heart of mine	184	
	Flower of forgetfulness	184	
	Fragrant tree	185	
	Looking from a high terrace	185	
	The one I love	185	
	Purple orchid starts to bud	185	
	The weaving wife	186	
	Seventh Night	186	
	Bagatelle	186	
	<i>Hsiao Kang</i>	Love-song	187
		The kingdom of Shu	188
		My sad fate	188
Calm Joy Palace newly built		189	
Twin catalpas grow by a lonely well		189	
Sighs of a lady of Ch'u		189	
The road to Loyang		190	
Broken willow		190	
Sorrel horse		190	
South lake		190	
North beach		191	
The great embankment		191	
Buying from lotus boats		191	
I see a dropped hairpin reflected in the river's flow		191	
Spring nights		191	
Winter light		192	
Mosaic		192	
A singer's frustration		192	
Her hidden room		193	
Bagatelle for a lovely woman		194	
Night longing in an autumn bedroom		194	
She ruins cities		194	
Back in town on short furlough		195	
For someone's discarded woman		195	
Bagatelle attached to a letter		196	
Love-song		196	
Regret		196	
Night after night	196		
Seventh Night	197		

	Spring snow	<i>page</i> 197
	Out for a walk in late sunlight	197
	Dance	197
	The harp	198
	The dance	198
	Spring bedroom passion	198
	Her late boudoir	198
	Goddess or painting?	199
	A lovely woman's morning make-up	199
	Winemaid	199
	Singers by the wood	200
	Waning glimmers	200
	Beauty admires a painting	200
	His favoured boy	200
<i>Hsiao Lun</i>	A pure wife	201
	From my carriage I see a fair lady	201
	For a remorseful former mistress	201
<i>Hsiao I</i>	No more	202
	Love poem, a bagatelle	202
	Night visit to Cypress Studio	203
	Spring's beauty	203
	Late nesting crows	203
	Cold night	203
	Autumn night	204
<i>Hsiao Chi</i>	Watching a singer	204
	Dream in the night	204
	Dawning love	204
	From a boudoir lady to a man on campaign	205

**Chapter Eight Twenty Poets of the Liang Dynasty
(sixth century)**

<i>Hsiao Tzu-hsien</i>	Sunrise at the southeast corner	208
	A beautiful woman	209
<i>Wang Yün</i>	Spring months, two poems	209
	Autumn nights, two poems	210
	Roving gaze, two poems	210
<i>Liu Hsiao-cho</i>	A dropped earring	211
	Flirting	212
	Gleaming gamesboard	212
	Singer in the night	212
	Left for my love	212
<i>Liu Tsun</i>	Gay	213
	Back from camp to the city	213
<i>Wang Hsün</i>	If only	214

<i>Yü Chien-wu</i>	The one I love	<i>page</i> 214
	A beauty admires herself in a painting	215
	The road to Ch'angan	215
	Seeing a woman come back from South Park	215
	I met you in the park	215
	Spring night	216
	Winter light	216
<i>Liu Hsiao-wei</i>	In the wilds on a moonlit night	216
	Winter light	217
	For my wife	217
<i>Hsü Chün-ch'ien</i>	Sitting out New Year with my wife	218
	Out early in spring holding hands with my wife	218
<i>Pao Ch'üan</i>	Watching pleasure-seekers in South Park	219
	At sunset I watch people going home	219
<i>Liu Huan</i>	She ruins cities	219
	Cold bedroom	220
	Autumn night	220
	Winter dark	220
<i>Teng K'eng</i>	Just once more	221
	In the night I hear a singer's voice	221
<i>Chen Ku</i>	Spring passion	221
<i>Yü Hsin</i>	The dance	222
	Seventh Night	222
	In mourning	222
<i>Liu Miao</i>	Mulberry picker	223
	For a weaver	223
	Autumn bedroom	223
	Broken willow	224
<i>Chi Shao-yü</i>	Chienhsing Park	224
	Fun-loving girls	225
	Spring sun	225
<i>Wen-jen Ch'ien</i>	Spring sun	225
<i>Hsü Ling</i>	Bagatelle	226
	The dance	226
	In her bedroom watching for me	226
	A maid's thanks for a mirror	227
<i>Wu Tzu</i>	Spring bedroom despair	227
<i>T'ang Seng-chi</i>	The glint of gold	227
<i>?Liu Ling-hsien</i>	Lady Pan's regret	228
<i>?Liu, Wang Shu- ying's Wife</i>	Wang Chao-chün's regret	228

Chapter Nine

Love-songs in Irregular Metres (from second century BC to sixth century AD)

<i>Anon.</i>	Two Song Lyrics	
	Eastward flies the shrike	page 230
	Where the water midstream	230
<i>Anon.</i>	Song of the Yüeh Boatman	231
<i>Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju</i>	Cock-phoenix	231
	Hen-phoenix	232
<i>?Hsi-chün</i>	Lost horizon	232
<i>Anon.</i>	Two Ditties of the Han Emperor Ch'eng's Era	
	Swallow	233
	Cassia	233
<i>Anon.</i>	Two Ditties of the Han Emperor Huan's Era	
	Tall wheat green	234
	Crows on city walls	234
<i>Chang Heng</i>	Four Sorrows, four poems	234
<i>Ch'in Chia</i>	What's the use?	235
<i>T'sao P'ei</i>	Your poor wife	236
	So easy!	237
<i>T'sao Chih</i>	My sad fate	237
<i>Fu Hsüan</i>	Past autumn's nine	238
	Your carriage is far	239
	Yen women are lovely	240
	Four Sorrows, four poems	240
<i>?Su Po-yü's Wife</i>	Palindrome	242
<i>Chang Tsai</i>	Four Sorrows, four poems	243
<i>Anon.</i>	A Ditty of the Chin Emperor Hui's Era	
	That girl	244
<i>Lu Chi</i>	Love-song	244
<i>Pao Chao</i>	Magic cinnabar	245
	Enter my lord's breast	245
	I'll dance for you	245
	Spread jade mats	245
	The road is hard, four poems	246
<i>Shih Pao-yüeh</i>	The road is hard	247
<i>Lu Chüeh</i>	A throne crumbles away	248
<i>Shen Yüeh</i>	Autumn moon	248
	Spring wind	249
	On a spring day	251
	On an autumn day	251
<i>Wu Chün</i>	The road is hard, two poems	251

<i>Chang Shuai</i>	Staring	<i>page</i> 252
	Pining	253
<i>Fei Ch'ang</i> <i>Hsiao Kang</i>	In rhythm	253
	In unison	253
	The road is hard, two poems	253
	Hibiscus my boat	254
	Floating clouds like curtains	255
	Black ox, crimson hubs	255
	A wool-weave screen	255
	War	255
	Isolated manor grapevines	256
	Spiders' spun threads	256
<i>Hsiao I</i>	Lovely Huai river	256
	Peach pink	256
	Spring passion	256
	Unconscious thoughts	256
	Or nurse shame	257
	Moonlit night	257
	I steal a look	257
	Tangled	257
	As I dawdle	258
	<i>Hsiao Tzu-hsien</i>	Holding hands home
A secret palace		258
Sunny splendoured spring		258
Why do people part?		258
No regrets		259
Tearstained mascara		259
<i>Wang Yün</i>	I remember	259
	The road is hard	260
<i>Liu Hsiao-wei</i>	A poet meets his former mistress at a party	260
	Poor darling	261
<i>Hsü Chün-ch'ien</i>	Echoing song	261
	Deliberately	261
<i>Liu, Wang Shu-ying's Wife</i>	In brilliant spring	262

Chapter Ten

A Treasury of Short Love Poems (from third to sixth centuries AD)

<i>Anon.</i>	Four Old <i>Chüeh-chü</i> Poems	
	Where?	264
	What?	264
	How?	264
	I'll never forget	264

<i>Chia Ch'un</i>	Three Linked Verses Composed with My Wife, Lady Li	
	Why do I sigh?	page 265
	Our marriage	265
	Your heart	265
<i>Sun Cho</i>	A lower-class girl	265
	She didn't feel shy	266
<i>?Wang Hsien-chih</i>	I won't need oars	266
	It takes two	266
<i>?T'ao-yeh</i> (<i>Peachleaf</i>)	Love me!	266
	I'll count on its magic!	267
	To hide my face	267
<i>Hsieh Ling-yün</i>	Someone else's wife	267
	Someone else's husband	267
<i>Liu Chün</i>	Halt troops everywhere!	267
	Pitfalls on campaign	268
	Round and round	268
<i>Hsü Yao</i>	The gnarled pillow	268
	I've quite forgotten	268
<i>Pao Ling-hui</i>	Sent to a traveller	268
<i>Anon.</i>	Five Modern Western Songs	
	Stone City	269
	A merchant	269
	I heard her name	269
	Fresh flowers	269
	Old Mother Yang's boy	269
<i>Anon.</i>	Nine Modern Wu Songs	
	Spring song	270
	Summer song	270
	Autumn song	270
	Winter song	270
	Carried by its current	270
	Pomegranate blouson	270
	My tiny self	271
	Where's <i>your</i> bed?	271
	Sleep alone	271
<i>Anon.</i>	Three Modern Miscellaneous Songs	
	He married two	271
	Song of spring	271
	Silkworm silk	271
<i>Anon.</i>	A modern Miscellaneous Poem	
	I can't decide	272
<i>Meng Chu</i>	A pity I didn't	272
<i>Su Hsiao-hsiao</i>	Where?	272

<i>Wang Yüan-chang</i>	Where are you?	page 273
	Ever since you went away	273
	Autumn nights	273
	Flame	273
<i>Hsieh T'iao</i>	Jade steps lament	274
	A party at Golden Vale	274
	A prince went wandering	274
	The one I love	274
<i>Yü Yen</i>	The one I love	274
<i>Shen Yüeh</i>	If ever	275
	Out early, I met my former mistress	275
	True and false	275
<i>Shih Jung-t'ai</i>	Wang Chao-chün	275
<i>Kao Shuang</i>	Winemaid	276
<i>?The Fairy of Wuhsing</i>	Lone farewell	276
<i>Chiang Hung</i>	Just waiting	276
	I meet you once again	276
	Lured	277
	My grimy face	277
	Widow	277
	Winds crush a tree	277
	Her glamour	277
<i>Shen Man-yüan</i>	Wang Chao-chün's regret	277
	Wang Chao-chün's dreams	278
	Tumbled hair	278
<i>Ho Sun</i>	South Park	278
	Bedroom frustration	278
	For someone's pining wife	278
	Spring wind	278
	Autumn bedroom frustration	279
<i>Wu Chün</i>	Painful memories	279
	A blur of blooms	279
	Spiders dangle	279
	Wine of our farewell	279
<i>Wang Seng-ju</i>	Spring longing	280
	I ought to go back	280
<i>Liu Ling-hsien</i>	Cloistered	280
	No one suspects	280
	A twin-stemmed gardenia	280
<i>Yao Fan</i>	Powderpuff	281
	In a dream I saw my old lover	281
	She didn't come	281
<i>Wang Huan</i>	Party talk	281

<i>Hsiao Yen</i>	A border guard	<i>page</i> 282	
	The candle	282	
	The pen	282	
	The flute	282	
	The dance	282	
	He and she	282	
	I can't resist	283	
	A sweet thought	283	
	Sprays to send my darling	283	
	Lotus blooms	283	
	Flowers in her bedroom	283	
	A jade dish	283	
	Crimson peach	283	
	Full of laughter	284	
	Her mouth moves	284	
	True love harmonies	284	
	It's clear	284	
	Shy love	284	
	Morning sun	284	
	Richer than gold	284	
	A promise	285	
	Down south	285	
	A round fan	285	
	Jasper	285	
	A soldier departs	285	
	To let him know	285	
	Boys	285	
	<i>Hsiao Kang</i>	Cold bedroom	286
		Falling rain	286
		Rafter dust	286
		Florescent moon	286
		Night after night	286
		Back from camp I go to the south city wall	286
Spring river song		287	
First swallows		287	
I play my zither		287	
Sending her home at night by boat		287	
A pledge with wine		287	
I can sigh		287	
Soft echoes		288	
Going through the grove		288	
Pleasure-seekers		288	
To a beauty	288		
Admiring from a distance	288		

	In her mirror	<i>page</i> 288
	Floating clouds	289
	Cold bedroom	289
	Chic	289
<i>Hsiao Tzu-hsien</i>	Love in a spring boudoir	289
	A woman strolling in the park	289
<i>Liu Hsiao-cho</i>	From a distance	290
	Children picking caltrop	290
<i>Yü Chien-wu</i>	So far away	290
	My lord's young singers	290
	Eternal Trust Palace grass	290
	The singer of Golden Vale	291
<i>Wang T'ai-ch'ing</i>	Only a single person	291
	Saying goodbye	291
<i>Liu Hsiao-i</i>	Weaver	291
	Rock-lotus	292
<i>Liu Hsiao-wei</i>	Toying with her hair	292
<i>Chiang Po-yao</i>	Her exotic gown	292
<i>Liu Hung</i>	Gay	292
<i>Ho Man-ts'ai</i>	Mourning his wife	293
<i>Hsiao Lin</i>	Her petticoat	293
<i>Chi Shao-yü</i>	Guttering lamp	293
<i>Liu, Wang Shu-ying's Wife</i>	Chill at dusk	294
<i>Tai Hao</i>	Going to bed	294
<i>Liu Hsiao-wei</i>	Remembrance	294
<i>(encore)</i>		
	Beauty	294
Notes		295
Appendix Hsü Ling's Preface to the anthology		337
Background to Poets and Poems		344
Poem Titles		365

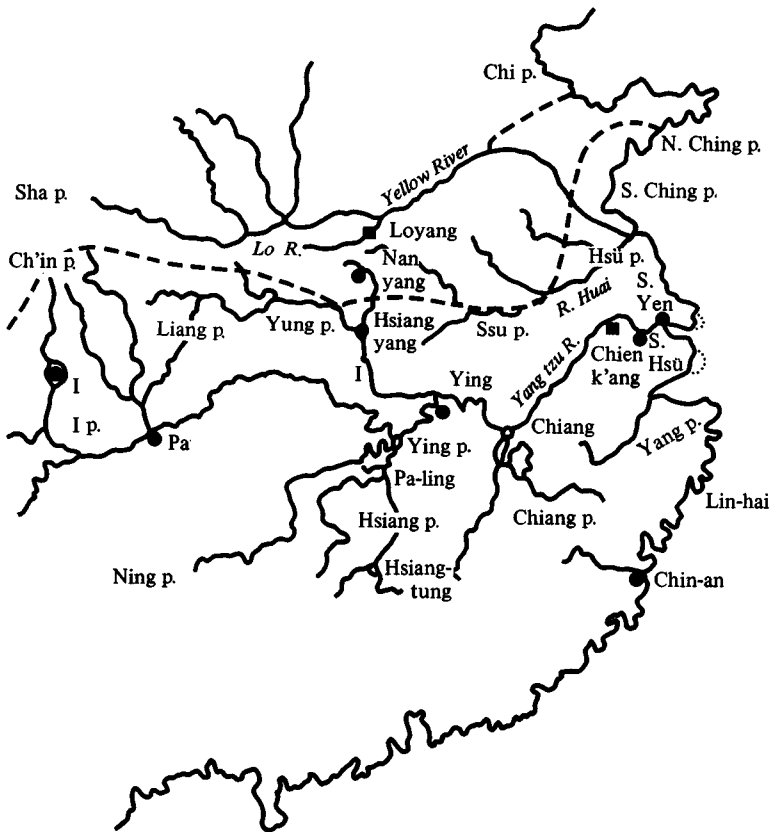
Chronological Table

(Dates and names prior to 841 BC are traditional)

<i>The Age of Culture Heroes and Sage Kings</i>	?2852-?2206 BC
Yellow Emperor	
Emperor Yao	
Emperor Shun	
<i>The Golden Age of the Three Dynasties</i>	
Hsia Dynasty	?2205-?1767
Shang (Yin) Dynasty	?1766-?1123
(beginning of archaeological evidence c. 1300 BC)	
Chou Dynasty	?1123-221
Western Chou	?1123-771
Eastern Chou	771-256
Spring and Autumn Era	722-481
Warring States Era	403-221
Ch'in Dynasty	221-207
The Han Empire	202 BC-AD 220
Former (or Western) Han	202-AD 8
Hsin Dynasty (Interregnum)	9-23
Later (or Eastern) Han	25-220
The Three Kingdoms	221-280
Minor Han Dynasty	221-265
Wei Dynasty	220-265
Wu Dynasty	222-280
Chin Dynasty	265-419
Western Chin	265-316
Eastern Chin	317-419
<i>The Period of Disunion</i>	317-589
(also known as the Six Dynasties, namely Wu, Eastern Chin, Liu-Sung, Ch'i, Liang, Ch'en, or the Northern and Southern Dynasties)	
The Northern Dynasties	386-580
The Southern Dynasties	420-589
Liu-Sung Dynasty	420-478

Ch'i Dynasty	479-501
Liang Dynasty	502-556
Ch'en Dynasty	557-589
Sui Dynasty	589-618
T'ang Dynasty	618-907
Five Dynasties	907-959
Sung Dynasty	960-1279
Yüan (Mongol) Dynasty	1280-1368
Ming Dynasty	1368-1644
Ch'ing (Manchu) Dynasty	1644-1911
Republic of China	1912-1949
People's Republic of China	1949-

New Songs from a Jade Terrace



The Southern Dynasties

Introduction

'Who can stop love once love happens?' (Yen Yen-chih). 'Autumn will come when all things wither, / And touch her body with nature's stealth' (Hsü Ling). 'A bed of love stares at its lonely shadow' (Hsiao Yen). 'I offer my love to her eyebrow kohl, / Whisper my passion to lipstick on her mouth' (Shen Yüeh). 'The sad way I am wasting / Is not that you like slim waists!' (Wang Seng-ju). Such are the voices of love, contradictory yet credible. They might belong to any time or place. In fact Chinese poets wrote these lines some fourteen centuries or more ago. This will surprise people who have read that Chinese poets prefer to write about their friends, not their lovers. The idea that Chinese poetry does not deal with love is a myth. Love, that un-failing interest of man, has also captured the Chinese imagination. The evidence lies in the broad range of love expressed within these pages: wooing, marriage, divorce; celebrations, obsessions, laments; new love, old love, dead love.

This book is a translation of a medieval Chinese anthology of love poems called *New Songs from a Jade Terrace*. It was compiled by a court poet, Hsü Ling, in about the year AD 545. It consists of 656 poems in ten volumes arranged in chronological sequence. What prompted me to undertake this translation is the fact that it embodies representative love poems from the second century BC to the mid-sixth century AD. As such the anthology testifies to the rich vein of love poetry in the Chinese tradition. Another factor that influenced me is that, except for some of its earliest pieces (notably translated by Arthur Waley and Burton Watson), and some later ones (notably translated by John D. Frodsham), this anthology has never been fully rendered into a Western language before. More important, however, apart from spanning seven and a half centuries *New Songs from a Jade Terrace* represents selected love poems from an entire era, the hundred or so years from the early fifth century to the middle of the sixth century AD. This era is known as the Southern Dynasties, that is the dynasties of the Sung, Ch'i, and Liang. Numerically speaking Southern Dynasties love poems dominate the anthology. It was in this period that a new poetic style crystallised from the royal patronage of Southern Dynasties courts, especially of the Liang Dynasty. The new vogue was dubbed at the time 'Palace Style Poetry', what we would term today the love poetry of Southern Dynasties court poets.

This volume of translations, therefore, serves a manifold purpose. First it will redress the balance regarding China's alleged dearth of love

poetry. It will also show the development of a major literary theme over several centuries. Furthermore, it will demonstrate the mature features of the new Southern Dynasties 'Palace Style Poetry'. As a corollary, forgotten poets and their poetry will be rediscovered. Lastly, this anthology will provide a necessary link between the more familiar landmarks of ancient China and the later medieval period of the T'ang Dynasty. Clearly, much of the originality claimed for T'ang poetry has to be put back where it rightly belongs – to poets of the Southern Dynasties.

Historical Perspective

Poets in general speak the language of their time and reflect something of the changing nature of their society. *New Songs from a Jade Terrace* appeared at a favourable juncture in time, during a period of relative present peace poised between past war and future political strife. This collection was a literary product of the Liang Dynasty, ruled by Emperor Wu from the southern capital of Chien'ang, modern Nanking. It was the literary inspiration of his son, the Crown Prince Hsiao Kang. In about the year AD 545 Hsiao Kang commissioned the court poet, Hsü Ling, to compile these love poems. The majority of them date from the fifth and early sixth centuries AD, when China was ruled in the south by a succession of Chinese dynasties, and in the north by foreign invaders. Men of the Liang Dynasty looked back on three hundred years of divisive warfare. Their ancient Han empire which for four centuries had dominated the Orient east to Korea, west to Turkestan, and south to Indo-China, collapsed in the year AD 220. China became a divided country. Reunification was only achieved after the passing of the Liang Dynasty in AD 589. The three and a half centuries between AD 220 and 589 were characterised by rivalry among regional warlords and foreign invaders. The crisis came in the year AD 317 when foreign tribes conquered the ancient Chinese capitals of Ch'angan and Loyang and drove the Chinese rulers and their court south into exile. Until reunification in AD 589 Chinese territorial power was eclipsed to a shadow of its former size and grandeur.

A major source of continued strife was the lack of coherence within the ruling groups of China. Powerful family warred against family for supremacy in the political sphere. Even within the great families internecine rivalry for power superseded the desire to achieve concerted dynastic aims. During these centuries there were twenty-nine different dynasties in north China and six in the south. This historical period is variously known as the Period of Division, or the Six Dynasties, or the Northern and Southern Dynasties. The result of this inter-family and intra-clan struggle was the proliferation of power bases among a

number of great families, rather than the concentration of power in one central dynastic house. The southern dynasty of the Liang itself was founded by an act of usurpation by Hsiao Yen when he destroyed the Liu-Sung royal house of which he was a member and proclaimed himself Emperor Wu of the Liang. He went on to enjoy a long and peaceful reign lasting fifty years. His son and heir, Hsiao Kang, was not so fortunate. He ruled for a mere two years before being assassinated by a Tartar general from the north.

The historical era of *New Songs from a Jade Terrace* was aristocratic. The southern Liang court was based at Chienk'ang and Emperor Wu conferred upon his numerous sons and relatives aristocratic rank and administrative power. The twenty-three provinces of his domain were ruled by civil and military governors related to him. Often they were figureheads enjoying the wealth, status, and privilege that went with their noble rank and official title. Actual governmental duties were carried out by educated men of the middle ranks of society. These imperial policies of conferring hereditary rank on members of the royal family and of recruiting officials from lower bureaucratic echelons meant that many men from great and illustrious aristocratic families were bypassed in political life. In some cases they directed their energies to the literary life of the capital and provincial courts.

Court Patronage of Literature

One of the striking features of southern aristocratic society was the system of literary patronage that operated in the imperial court at Chienk'ang and the minor courts of princes in the provinces. Much of the literary efflorescence of this era was lost when the capital was sacked and its libraries and cultural treasures destroyed in AD 555. *New Songs from a Jade Terrace* survived the holocaust. It owes its creation to one of the great men of early medieval China. Promoted to Crown Prince in AD 531, Hsiao Kang succeeded to the throne in 549, and is known to history as Emperor Chienwen. Like many Chinese dynastic rulers he managed to combine a political career with literary and intellectual interests. While he was Crown Prince he assumed the role of patron of the arts in his own court at Yung, west of the capital. His literary circle was attended by nobles, courtiers, and educated men of the gentry class. The composition of the anthology testifies to his royal patronage: of its ten volumes one whole volume is devoted to poets of the Liang royal house, and, of the 502 poems by fifty-one Southern Dynasties poets, Hsiao Kang is represented by seventy-six poems, his father Hsiao Yen by forty-one, and the Liang royal house as a whole by 166 poems. A nice case of flattery on the part of Hsü Ling, the compiler, who modestly included only four of his own poems.

In this aristocratic society the poet was not a special class of person. He was very different from the romantic Western image of a wild-eyed, unbuttoned, tousle-haired poet, an independent spirit moved by the divine muse to express himself in original verse. The Chinese poet of this era was more like a Victorian poet laureate who was also a civil servant. In order to be recognised the Chinese writer had to gain entry into the central or provincial court through family connections, imperial preferment, and literary talent. Once admitted, he was required to perform official duties and attend numerous court functions. On such occasions as formal banquets he was not only commanded to participate in poetry competitions, but also presented with a mandatory theme for competitive extempore composition. A number of poems in the anthology have tagged onto their titles the formal phrase 'At His Highness's Request', or 'Commissioned by His Majesty', or 'Composed at His Majesty's Banquet on Such-and-Such a Theme'. In this sense poetry was not simply an art, but also a form of social intercourse, and more importantly a means for official promotion and literary recognition.

In such an environment where literary success was dependent upon royal patronage it was natural for courtier poets to offer their compositions to their social superiors, albeit artistic peers. The honorific tag 'Respectfully Submitted to His Highness' appears in many poem titles of this period. Another way the court poet consolidated his official and literary career was to imitate the poems of his superior. Not only was the theme imitated, but more often the rhyme scheme of his superior's admired poem was matched. That this technique was extremely popular is evident in the large number of poems in this collection bearing the tag 'Respectfully Submitted to His Highness, Matching the Rhymes of His Poem'. The proliferation of these dedicatory titles in the anthology indicates the extent to which court poets felt the literary weight of royal patronage.

The Anthologist's Purpose

T. S. Eliot claimed with understandable poetic licence: 'Few things that can happen to a nation are more important than the invention of a new form of verse'. Certainly, poets of the Liang era would have glumly agreed as they witnessed their dynasty disappear into ashes. The most significant factor of court patronage of poetry was the development of a new form of love poetry. Historical annals credit various people with the invention of 'Palace Style Poetry' – Hsiao Kang, Hsü Ch'ih (Hsü Ling's father), Yü Chien-wu, and his son Yü Hsin. Regardless of who the actual innovator was, the last three names

were associated with Hsiao Kang's literary court. In his capacity of patron it was Hsiao Kang who set his seal of approval upon the new poetic vogue and thus ensured its success. The prevalence of imitation in poetry circles and the trend toward dedicatory verse meant that the fashion legitimised by a royal patron was destined to become popular. By commissioning Hsü Ling to garner the gems of the earlier tradition of love poetry and glean the finest contemporary models, Hsiao Kang was instrumental in immortalising this new form of verse.

Anthologies by their nature are in some respects ephemeral literary things. They are often based on literary views and sets of values which sum up an attitude to the past and present held at a particular moment by a particular person or group. *New Songs from a Jade Terrace* was for China in AD 545 what Francis T. Palgrave's *The Golden Treasury of Songs and Lyrics* was for Victorian England in 1861, essentially a contemporary collection. Of the 656 poems in the Chinese anthology 75 per cent are of the century or so before and up to its compilation. That is to say they were modern in their own day. Modernity is but one aspect of the word 'New' (*hsin*) in the anthology's title. Another is the compiler's personal predilection for poems representing the new poetic vogue. Linking these two aspects of modernity and fashion is the new aesthetic preoccupation of Hsü Ling and of his patron Hsiao Kang.

Although at first glance it seems that Hsü Ling selected love poems from the vast timespan of seven and a half centuries in order to demonstrate the richness of Chinese love poetry down through the ages to his own day, he did in fact make two important omissions in his selection. One was the body of love poetry among the 305 poems in *The Book of Songs*, traditionally believed to date from the ninth to the seventh centuries BC. The other was the corpus of erotic and elegiac rhapsodies of *The Songs of Ch'u*, dating from the fourth century BC to the second century AD. The reason for these glaring omissions cannot be said to be metrical, for both their metres, the archaic tetrasyllabic and the *sao*-song metres respectively, appear in Hsü Ling's anthology. The reason has more to do with a radical change in literary values in the sixth century AD.

In the early part of the Han dynasty (202 BC-AD 220) *The Book of Songs* was elevated to the status of a classic, together with four other works associated with the teachings of Confucius, and Confucianism was espoused by the state as official doctrine. The idea gained currency that Confucius had edited the 305 poems of this classic from an earlier collection of over three thousand poems. Authorities were appointed to supervise each of the five *Confucian Classics* and Han scholars began to write commentaries on them. Adhering to the belief that Confucius had edited the songs, these writers insisted that the sage

had implicitly editorialised in making his selection. Consequently, these scholars evolved elaborate explanations and interpretations of quite innocent songs, giving them a didactic tone. Thus a marriage song becomes an allegory for the exemplary marital relationship between a ruler and his consort. Or a lovers' elopement becomes an allegory for dissident peasants fleeing to another country. *The Songs of Ch'u* suffered a similar fate at the hands of exegetical writers. Its early poems written in a highly complex symbolic language were reduced to more prosaic allegory of a political, moralising nature.

The result was that later generations of scholars and writers extended the didactic values attached to these works, especially *The Book of Songs* as a state classic, to literature in general. The function of literature, they persuaded, was to edify and improve; literature was to provide a mirror of personal conduct. It was only some fourteen centuries later, when the forthright philosopher Chu Hsi (AD 1130-1200) punctured the pious excesses of Han and post-Han scholarship, that these allegorical distortions of classical poetry and literature in general were deflated and Confucian doctrine on the didactic value of literature was diminished.

In this context Hsü Ling and Hsiao Kang were avant-garde writers. When Hsü Ling compiled his anthology of love poems, didactic views of literature had long held sway. In his Preface to the anthology, however, he makes it quite clear that his purpose in literature is to give pleasure rather than instruction. Tilting obliquely at dour academics who managed to find moral meaning everywhere, Hsü Ling mischievously pictures his readers as women indolently passing days and nights in luxurious harem boudoirs. He archly states: 'The palace lady takes no delight in idle hours, / But devotes her mind to the latest verse'. Tongue-in-cheek, Hsü Ling brags about the popularity of his volumes of poetry among this female audience, who after preening themselves in their boudoir nonchalantly tuck his volumes under their pillow: 'They will always be tucked away in vermilion pillows'. He claims that ladies will 'for long hours be diverted behind their reading drapes, / My book always open in slim hands.' Hsü Ling ends his Preface with a series of humorous disclaimers: 'Certainly my book will be quite different / From Empress Teng's study of *The Spring and Autumn Classic*, / For a scholar's attainments are hard to acquire!' Empress Teng was famous in the Han Dynasty for her single-minded pursuit of knowledge, conning the *Confucian Classics* all day long, solemnly and earnestly. Finally, to make sure that his view of literature as entertainment is perfectly understood, Hsü Ling sardonically notes that poetry is better than drugs, such as 'the flower of oblivion', for alleviating boredom: 'For poetry can / Be a substitute for the flower of oblivion / And can banish the disease of ennui.' This ambience of boudoirs, cosmetics, pillows, and palace ladies is a world apart from the solemnities

of exegetical scholarship. It is an urbane acknowledgement that art is lightly to be pursued for art's sake.

Conventions of the Love Poem

Art and artifice were the hallmark of literary products in the Southern Dynasties era. To be successful the courtier had to be an accomplished artist in many different forms of literature. Not only must he compose correct memorials to the throne, obituary notices and eulogies for his superiors, treatises and epistles, but also works in various forms of verse for specific occasions. The diverse functions and forms of writing were appreciated quite early in the literary tradition. In the third century AD the poet Ts'ao P'ei, known to history as Emperor Wen of the Wei Dynasty, made a list of eight genres in his *Essay on Literature* (*Lun wen*). By the sixth century Hsiao T'ung, Hsiao Kang's older brother, had compiled an *Anthology of Literature* (*Wen hsüan*) which contained examples of no fewer than thirty-seven different forms of literature. Each of these literary forms had recognisable rhetorical, structural, and stylistic differences. Many of them were composed for a special social or official occasion. Success or failure depended to a large extent on whether the writer conformed to a particular literary model and had displayed technical virtuosity in its execution. It was no good confusing the diction and allusions of a prose obituary with those of a treatise, still less muddling the diction and allusions of a poem about a hermit with those about a lover. The genre was the thing in the writer's composition and in his critics' appreciation.

Depending on the different genres and sub-genres, therefore, the writer employed different systems of rhetoric. When he composed in the love poem genre, and especially in the sub-genre of 'Palace Style Poetry', the court poet not only respected the appropriate devices of rhetoric, but also observed a strict code of poetic convention governing subject, theme, mood, and attitude. This well defined system of conventions was an implicit agreement between the poet and his literary circle to impose certain restrictions upon and to take certain liberties with his treatment of the theme of love. These courtly conventions were strongly influenced by earlier love poems in the literary tradition – anonymous folk-songs, ballads, so-called ancient style poems, and the poems and rhapsodies of *The Book of Songs* and *The Songs of Ch'u*. Many features of these types of poetry were borrowed and adapted according to the dictates of Southern Dynasties literary fashion. Originally existing as disparate elements in varying literary sources stretching back over several centuries, they were welded together in the hands of later court poets into a unified, distinctive, well developed pattern of love poetry. The fascination of *New Songs from a Jade Terrace* lies

partly in the fact that the finest of these earlier love poems (excluding those of the two aforementioned collections) appear together with the later artefact. That the poems are arranged in the anthology in chronological order within metrical divisions heightens the reader's awareness of how the Southern Dynasties love poem developed from pastoral simplicity to courtly sophistication.

When the court poet composed a love poem, he would usually select as his subject a woman in love, rather than a man in love with a woman. When a man is featured in the poems, he is mostly portrayed as a homosexual love object akin to the way a woman is presented, or as a man mourning the death of his wife or mistress. The poet, usually male, takes on the literary persona of a woman in love, expressing in descriptive and lyrical terms her deep emotions. This literary pose had a long tradition before the Southern Dynasties era and derived mainly from the ballad, folk-song, and ancient style poem. What is significant in the new poetic vogue is that the female subject of the love poem conforms to a noble ideal of femininity. She would appear to be well-born and living in luxurious surroundings, preferably palatial. Even when the poet is clearly borrowing stock characters from the earlier tradition, such as a merchant's wife, a soldier's sweetheart, a courtesan, a country girl, or a barmaid, he gives them a courtly treatment insofar as their environment and appearance are concerned. His poetic portrait of a woman in love conveys impressions of noble breeding and pampered living through her physical appearance: she is slender, graceful, elegantly dressed, adorned with costly jewels, and heavily made up with cosmetics. This accent on glamour and wealth is a feature of the earlier ballad tradition, but in 'Palace Style Poetry' it is given a distinctly new emphasis.

Another obligatory convention of the love poem of this era is that the woman's lover must be absent from the love scenario. The court poet must depict her pining for him with unrelieved sadness. This melancholy mood pervades much of the ancient style poetic repertoire, and probably derives from the older poetic tradition of *The Songs of Ch'u*. This collection contains a pivotal poem dating from about the fourth century BC, 'Encountering Sorrow', and its later imitations, besides a suite of shamanistic songs. All these pieces are commonly characterised by the persona's pursuit of love – a mortal for a goddess, a shaman for his god or goddess, a courtier for his lord – and the ultimate frustration of such desire. Overshadowed by its literary precursor, the Southern Dynasties courtly love poem is imbued with a profound sense of obligatory melancholy. The woman portrayed therein should seem depressed but submissive in her acceptance of doomed love. Because of her literary role as a victim of love, she should strike a pose of appealing emotional vulnerability and pathetic physical weak-

ness. Her time must be spent conventionally waiting in the palatial ambience of her boudoir or its environs for her absent lover. The poet should describe certain items there with sensuous and metaphorical detail. His portrait of a woman in love is usually framed in an interior setting where nature is not too far off. For the natural world outside and the interior world within are poetically deployed to contrast with the beauty and fate of a woman in love, to pinpoint the ephemeral aspect of time, and to underscore poetic statements on the meaning of love and of life. The general tenor of the court poet's portrait is one of touchingly pretty pathos.

Images of Woman

As this degree of conventionality suggests, woman is depicted by the court poet as a type rather than as a realistically observed individual. The poet does not seek to inject into the fictionalised image of a woman in love some semblance of his own personal experience. Courtly love was never intended to be autobiography, or biography in verse. Western readers who set a high premium on originality in poetic creation should resist the temptation to construct a consistent autobiographical or biographical framework around these poems. One has only to compare a handful of poems with similar titles in the anthology, such as 'Green, green riverside grass', to realise that they share so many resemblances that the poets cannot be describing details drawn from the crucible of their own amatory agonies. On the other hand the 656 love poems of *New Songs from a Jade Terrace* do not by any means conform to an identical pattern of conventions in a narrow sense. That would be too monotonous, even for the most determined poetaster! One line of demarcation between the more loosely structured love poem and the stricter conventional love poem is temporal. About 150 poems dating from the second century BC to the late third century AD have a fairly flexible design, while the five hundred or so dating from the fourth to the early sixth century follow a recognisably conventional pattern.

This divergence between the old and new poetic styles is never more noticeable than in the physical portrait of a woman in love. In the older poems a woman is presented in an idealised way. Much of this mode of presentation derives from even earlier models in the literary tradition, such as the third century BC prose poem, *The Goddess*, attributed to Sung Yü, a courtier poet of Ch'u state. This image of divine femininity continues in an unbroken line up to the third-century AD poet Lu Chi, who gives this description of palace ladies :

Sweet looks glister in white sun,
Kind hearts soft and pure.

Lovely eyes spread gleams of jade,
Moth eyebrows like kingfisher plumes.
Fresh skin, oh so smooth,
Vivid bloom it seems one could nibble.
Meek, mild, full of grace,
Enchantingly clever wit.

This serene image of female beauty changes radically under the brush of later court poets. They prefer to show a woman not in terms of divinely perfect beauty but as the tarnished image of feminine loveliness. The flawless mask described in the earlier love poems surrenders to pathetic facial ruin. What has happened here is that the court poets have adopted the trend in earlier love poems toward expressing unhappy love and have extended it to its ultimate limits of personal neglect. A passage by Wu Chün (AD 469-520) illustrates this new mode of presentation :

From grief green-glinting hair turns white,
Pink cheeks from tears have paled.
Tears not only form beads of pearl,
But I see pearls change to drops of blood.

This change in perception marks a shift in sensibility from the earlier interest in woman as a divine image to the later preoccupation with woman as a victim of love's disease.

Furthermore, there is a marked contrast between the old and new love poetry in the manner of describing dress and adornments of a woman in love. In the older poems cosmetics, jewelry, and dress are described to be sure, but not to the same lavish degree as in the new style of love poetry. The court poets reveal a fascination for the opulent minutiae of feminine fashion. The typical portrait shows woman adorned with fine jewels, costly silk clothes, and elaborate make-up. She indicates her beauty and worth in a very material way through the sheer opulence of her personal decor. So closely and persistently is a woman's rich attire associated with her personal attractiveness that her portrayal as a desirable woman depends on the financial and status value of her costume. What this amounts to is an aesthetic convention of courtly love poetry : woman is adored when adorned. The effect of such an emphasis on material rather than personal, individual qualities is that human values seem to be less important than material values in the aesthetic consciousness of the court poets. A passage from a poem by Shen Yüeh (AD 441-512), one of the most popular poets of his day, typifies this way of presenting a woman in love :