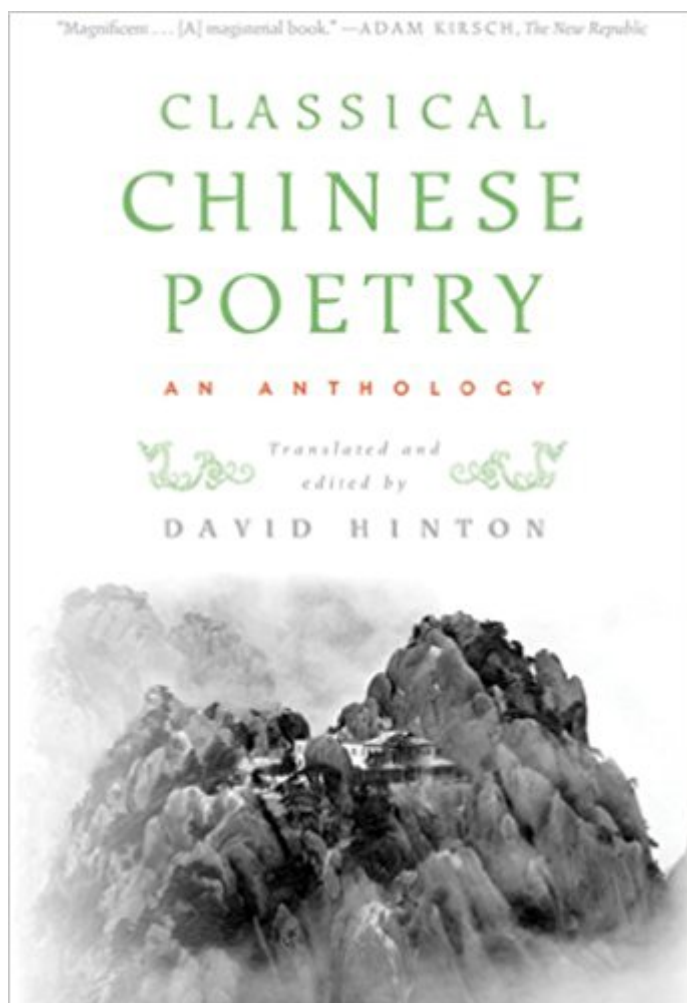


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Classical Chinese Poetry: An Anthology



Synopsis

With this groundbreaking collection, translated and edited by the renowned poet and translator David Hinton, a new generation will be introduced to the work that riveted Ezra Pound and transformed modern poetry. The Chinese poetic tradition is the largest and longest continuous tradition in world literature, and this rich and far-reaching anthology of nearly five hundred poems provides a comprehensive account of its first three millennia (1500 BCE to 1200 CE), the period during which virtually all its landmark developments took place. Unlike earlier anthologies of Chinese poetry, Hinton's book focuses on a relatively small number of poets, providing selections that are large enough to re-create each as a fully realized and unique voice. New introductions to each poet's work provide a readable history, told for the first time as a series of poetic innovations forged by a series of master poets. From the classic texts of Chinese philosophy to intensely personal lyrics, from love poems to startling and strange perspectives on nature, Hinton has collected an entire world of beauty and insight. And in his eye-opening translations, these ancient poems feel remarkably fresh and contemporary, presenting a literature both radically new and entirely resonant, in *Classical Chinese Poetry*.

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Customer Reviews

This anthology is itself a work of American literature---not something that can be said with any degree of confidence of most such compilations. For many years now Hinton has been quietly and tenaciously amassing a body of translations of classical Chinese poetry that is provocatively different from the Poundian model (which tends to favour a style that is spare, pellucid, minimalist and---by definition---'Imagist'). Hinton's versions, by contrast, are knotty, thoughtful, muscular and torsive. They are also intensely musical. They restore a measure of sheer passion and 'difficulty' to Chinese poems that, while it suits certain poets better than others, is always highly compelling. Hinton is steeped in Chinese philosophy (particularly Daoism) and this has led him to develop his own private 'philosophical' diction, which he uses pretty consistently throughout. We general readers sometimes forget how allusive Chinese poetry is, not just to Chinese history, astrology, medicine etc., but also to Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism. My only (very minor) reservation about this admirable collection, is that his style is so distinctive that it might be thought to impose a degree of homogeneity on his chosen source texts; and that this could be seen as a little misleading. The same charge could of course be laid against Waley's translations, or Burton Watson's---or even Ezra Pound's. Nor, when one looks more closely at the text as a whole, does it seem quite fair: Hinton's Shi Jing poems are unlike anything he's ever done before, for instance; and his renderings of Li He are likewise noticeably different from those of Du Fu or Meng Jiao.

I have been reading Chinese and loving Chinese poetry for about 25 years, over half my life now. I have also read many books of translations, for better and worse, but nothing in English so alive, so understanding and wide as this. I have an old experience of reading Chinese poems and thinking - this poem is so amazing, o if I could tell them... & had long given up the thought that I would ever see a group of translations I could so enthusiastically share with my non-Chinese speaking friends. Now I am buying this book for that purpose. When you sit long enough with a good thought you never know what exactly will happen. This is how I feel about this book. Regarding the book itself, it is miraculous to have such an English translation of so many poems at once, and to have the poems so intelligently selected and ordered to illustrate the changes in style and thought over time. It is completely delicious. It is like innocently visiting those Chinese places, those rivers, mountains and temples, in an English language time machine. I feel this especially with the Chan era poems of the Tang and Sung, with their emphasis on rendering immediate experience. In the context of their immediacy, they arrive as timeless, and so translate amazingly well in the hands of such a gifted translator. Technically, Hinton does a good job of dealing with the impossible problem, of rendering

the natural multivalence of Chinese imagery and syntax while maintaining the life-stream of fluency and clarity these poems have. I agree with the previous reviewer Maynard here, and like his adjectives for this translation: "knotty, thoughtful, muscular and torsive...musical." Maynard talks of the earlier Pound translations as "pellucid and minimalist." This is also the case.

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