

舒婷詩七首

Shu Ting: Selected Poems

Translated by Eva Hung

with an Introduction by Tao Tao Liu

At first reading the poetry of Shu Ting gives the impression of insipidity. Her vocabulary is generally bland, using the most ordinary everyday words. The emotions expressed are the simplest and most universal. Her tone is quiet and unaggressive, distinctly feminine. These traits may seem remarkably unremarkable to us, but to the spiritually and emotionally hungry young people of China in the 1970s, when as a young worker in a Fujian factory Shu Ting was beginning to make her poetry known, she brought an emotional awareness and expressiveness that was like a breath of fresh air. This was during the last years of extreme left rule in China, when Party control was at its most totalitarian; terror and humiliation were its main weapons, supplemented by threats of physical hardship and separation from family. Publishing was strictly supervised and poetry was reduced to lyrics capable of being sung as hymns to the “Revolution” and the Party, and the tone was either obsequious or strident. The poetry of Shu Ting articulated the gentleness that had so long been left unexpressed.

In her poems she asked for acceptance of the emotional needs of the people and expressed this in a quiet manner that stood out amidst the stridency and mindlessness of the so-called poetry of the day. Her poetry was totally apolitical. To be apolitical in a land where literature’s only raison d’être was to be political, was actually a political act in itself, and was to attract people to her work. She never made any direct reference to politics or even to society: her statements were all made through poetic imagery without direct commentary or instruction to the reader, a mode of literary expression that caused difficulty for those of the Cultural Revolution era who were quite unused to it. Such poetry when it appeared in the seventies was christened menglong 朦朧 (misty, vague), even though Shu Ting’s can hardly be more concrete in its imagery.

In a brief preface to her poems published in Shikan in October 1980¹ she wrote:

¹At the conclusion of the “Youth Seminar on Poetry” organized by the *Shikan* editorial board, the poems of young poets like Shu Ting, Jiang He 江河, Gu Cheng 顧城 and Xu Jingya 徐敬亞 were published.

Oh, People, please understand me.

I never thought that I was a poet. I know that I shall never become a thinker (however much I should like to be). I know in my deepest consciousness that people today are in dire need of respect, trust and warmth. I want to do my utmost to express my concern for "people".

Obstructions must be removed, masks must be taken off. I believe that people can understand each other, because it is always possible to find a road to the heart and soul.

In the West we are used to poetry which is assertive and enjoy lines that arrest our attention. The other misty poets of Shu Ting's generation, publishing during the "Peking Spring" of 1979, employ striking opening lines such as,

*Baseness is the password of the base,
Honour is the epitaph of the honourable . . .*

Bei Dao: "The Answer"

Shu Ting by contrast seems almost feeble, but she works by stealth,

*A small boat
For whatever reason
Lay marooned on its side on
A desolate stony bank
The paint had not quite gone
But the mast was already broken
There were no green trees to give shade
Or grass willing to grow*

"A Boat"

Undramatically but powerfully the poem goes on to describe the isolation and desolation of the boat, and its separation from the sea, and expresses a sense of intense longing for union, for love, for friendship and for normality, all conveyed by the image of a battered boat beached on the sand. On occasion, however, her opening lines can be arresting too, like the ones in "Walls":

*I have no way of resisting walls
Only the wish to resist them . . .*

but what she describes proclaims passive resistance: a rock-like interior allied with a pliant exterior. This ability to hold on to an inner strength has been the last refuge of many Chinese in times of difficulty.

Her poetry records emblems of her time, such as the beached boat, the unspoken feelings, the claustrophobic walls, dead leaves falling from a tree. Generally her method is to choose an everyday object, not particularly invested with meaning or emotion, and to work round it or upon it. Symbols play an important part in what she tries to say. The speech is modest in what might be termed a "womanly" manner. This is an important characteristic of her poetry.

In Chinese society, although there are models of strident socialist females much admired for having played key roles in the Chinese revolution, these images are far from everyday truth. The traditional model of the quiet-spoken and reassuring woman who takes a back seat is still preferred. People are very conscious of differences in behaviour and speech between men and women. The clearly feminine qualities of Shu Ting's voice may appeal to such a preference for a quiet and apparently vulnerable womanhood.

The impression of insipidity may arise from the low profile she adopts. The simple vocabulary she employs is part of the image that she projects. In addition, an occasional note of

something akin to impersonality can be attributed to the collective society that she has been brought up in, even more collectively organized than traditional Chinese society, which was hostile enough to expressions of individuality. Her individuality is expressed indirectly, through poetic images and through her vision of life.

Since those early productive days in the 1970s her poetic output has been more sporadic. There have been comments that she has sold out to the establishment, which seems an irrelevance when applied to her poetry since she never attacked the establishment directly. Some of her more recent poems, such as the one written in 1985 on the subject of the stuffed birds on the walls of a German restaurant, present as agonized a vision of life as anything she might have written ten years earlier:²

For many years
 Flapping their wings
 These birds
 Never managed to fly out of
 These walls
 Firelight from the open fire
 Activates all kinds of wings

It seems unfair now to castigate her poetry for having remained consistent.

Her poems made new departures in the harsh political climate of Marxist China, yet she shares the belief of Marxist literary theorists that literature is mainly social in intent. Her poems express her belief that poetry can teach people something about themselves and about the human condition. They are more expressive of her vision of external reality than her individuality. This trait is very much a part of the Chinese literary tradition, and as such finds sympathy with Chinese people. The Marxist-Leninist view of literature excludes individualism; writers and artists are required to suppress their individuality and write only about society. The likes of Shu Ting do not suppress their individuality, but make it a vehicle for writing about society.

²Renmin wenxue, 1986, 1, p. 98.

Homeward Bound

The wind tonight
Seems full of echoes
Wind in the pine, fireflies, lamplight from a hydro-electric
station
All reminding me of a distant dream
My memory is like a small overloaded wooden bridge
Spanning the banks of time
Does moonlight still scamper merrily down the steps on the
other side?
My heart trembles, fearful of starting the journey

Don't think back, don't think back
My wandering feet are tired
I rest my head on the shoulder of the mountains
I seem to have walked a long, long way
Yet I'm back where I started
Innocent eyes rise again like the stars
Shining on me, just as ten years ago
Maybe if I hold out my hands
A golden apple will fall
A waterfall of blood
Brightens my soul as though it's in flames

This can't be true, can't be true
Youth has turned its back and walks through a dense forest of
cries
Toward oblivion

還鄉

今夜的風中
似乎充滿了和聲
松濤、螢火蟲、水電站的燈光
都在提示一個遙遠的夢
記憶如不堪重負的小木橋
架在時間的河岸上
月色還嬉笑着奔下那邊的石階嗎
心顫抖着，不敢啓程

不要回想，不要回想
流浪的雙足已經疲倦
把頭靠在羣山的肩上

彷彿已走了很遠很遠
誰知又回到最初出發的地方
純潔的眼睛重像星辰升起
照耀我，如十年前一樣
或許只要伸出手去
金蘋果就會落下
血液的瀑布
使靈魂像起了大火般雪亮

這不是真的，不是真的
青春的背影正穿過呼喚的密林
走向遺忘

When You Walk Past My Window

When you walk past my window
Bless me
Because the light is still on

The light is on—
In the heavy, gloomy night,
Like a fisherman's light drifting.
You can think of my tiny house
As a tiny boat tossed by a storm
But I have not sunk
Because the light is still on.

The light is on—
The curtains may reflect a shadow,
Showing me an old and feeble man,
With no expansive gestures any more,
My back more hunched than before,
But what has aged is not my heart,
Because the light is still on.

The light is on—
It answers with fervent love
Regards sent from all around;
The light is on—
It looks with commanding pride
Down on seen and hidden oppression.
Oh, when did the light assume such strong character?
When you began to understand me.

Because the light is still on,
Bless me,
When you walk past my window . . .

April 1976

當你從我的窗下走過

當你從我的窗下走過，
祝福我吧，
因為燈還亮着。

燈亮着——
在晦重的夜色裏，
它像一點漂流的漁火。
你可以設想我的小屋，
像被狂風推送的一葉小舟。
但我並沒有沉淪，
因為燈還亮着。

燈亮着——
當窗簾上映出了影子，
說明我已是龍鍾的老頭，
沒有奔放的手勢，
背比從前還要駝。
但衰老的不是我的心，
因為燈還亮着。

燈亮着——
它用這樣火熱的戀情，
回答四面八方的問候；
燈亮着——
它以這樣軒昂的傲氣，
睥睨明裏暗裏的壓迫。
呵，燈何時有了鮮明的性格？
自從你開始理解我的時候。

因為燈還亮着，
祝福我吧，
當你從我的窗下走過……

1976年4月

To an Oak

If I love you—
I won't be like the trumpet creeper
Flaunting itself on your tall branches,
If I love you—
I won't be like the love-sick bird,
Repeating to the green shade its monotonous song;
Nor like a brook,
Bringing cool solace the year round;
Nor like a perilous peak,
Adding to your height, complementing your grandeur;
Nor even sunlight,
Nor even spring rain.
No, these are not enough!
I must be a kapok tree by your side;
In the image of a tree standing by you,
Our roots clasped underground,
Our leaves touching in the clouds.
With every breeze
We salute each other,
But no one
Will understand our language.
You have your trunk of steel and iron branches,
Like knives, like swords,
And like spears.
I have my huge, red flowers,
Like heavy sighs,
And like valiant torches.
We share the burdens of cold, storms, lightning;
We share the joys of mists, vapours, rainbows.
We may seem forever severed,
But are life-long companions.
This is the greatest of love;
This is constancy:
Love—
I love not just your robust form,
I also love the ground you hold, the earth you stand on.

27 March 1977

致橡樹

我如果愛你——
絕不像攀援的凌霄花，
借你的高枝炫耀自己，
我如果愛你——
絕不學痴情的鳥兒，
爲綠蔭重覆單純的歌曲；
也不止像泉源，
常年送來清涼的慰藉；
也不止像險峯，
增加你的高度，襯托你的威儀。
甚至日光，
甚至春雨。
不，這些都還不夠！
我必須是你近旁的一株木棉，
做爲樹的形象和你站在一起。
根，緊握在地下，
葉，相觸在雲裏。
每一陣風過，
我們都互相致意，
但沒有人
聽懂我們的言語。
你有你的銅枝鐵杆，
像刀，像劍，
也像戟，
我有我紅碩的花朵，
像沉重的嘆息，
又像英勇的火炬。
我們分擔寒潮、風雷、霹靂；
我們共享霧靄、流嵐、虹霓，
彷彿永遠分離，
卻又終身相依。
這才是偉大的愛情，
堅貞就在這裏：
愛——
不僅愛你偉岸的身軀，
也愛你堅持的位置，足下的
土地

1977年3月27日

A Roadside Encounter

The phoenix tree suddenly tilts
The bicycle bell's ring hangs in air
Earth swiftly reverses its rotation
Back to that night ten years ago

The phoenix tree gently sways again
The ringing bell sprinkles floral fragrance along the
 trembling street
Darkness gathers, then seeps away
The dawning light of memory merges with the light in your eyes

Maybe this didn't happen
Just an illusion spawned by a familiar road
Even if this did happen
I'm used to not shedding any tears

March 1979

路遇

鳳凰樹突然傾斜
自行車的鈴聲懸浮在空間
地球飛速地倒轉
回到十年前的那一夜

鳳凰樹重又輕輕搖曳
鈴聲把碎碎的花香拋在悸動
的長街
黑暗彌合來又滲開去
記憶的天光和你的目光重疊

也許一切都不曾發生
不過是舊路引起我的錯覺
即使一切都已發生過
我也習慣了不再流淚

1979年3月

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As the wind sighs through the trees
by Zhou Sicong

Assembly Line

On the assembly line of Time
Nights huddle together
We come down from the factory assembly lines
And join the assembly line going home
Overhead
An assembly line of stars trails across the sky
By our side
A young tree looks dazed on its assembly line

The stars must be tired
Thousands of years have passed
Their journey never changes
The young trees are ill
Dust and monotony deprive them
Of grain and colour
I can feel it all
Because we beat to the same rhythm

But strangely
The only thing I do not feel
Is my own existence
As though the woods and stars
Maybe out of habit
Maybe out of sorrow
No longer have the strength to care
About a destiny they cannot alter

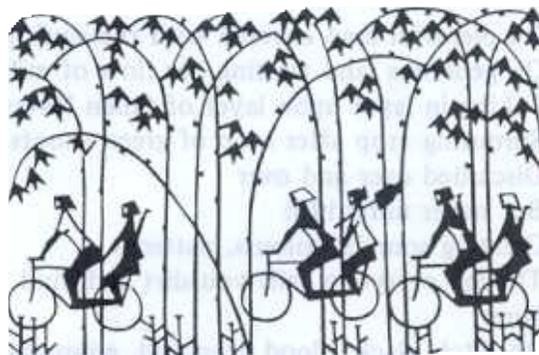
Jan.-Feb. 1980

流水綫

在時間的流水綫裏
夜晚和夜晚緊緊相挨
我們從工廠的流水綫撤下
又以流水綫的隊伍回家來
在我們頭頂
星星的流水綫拉過天穹
在我們身旁
小樹在流水綫上發呆

星星一定疲倦了
幾千年過去
它們的旅行從不更改
小樹都病了
煙塵和單調使它們
失去了綫條與色彩
一切我都感覺到了
憑着一種共同的節拍

但是奇怪
我唯獨不能感覺到
我自己的存在
彷彿叢樹與星羣
或者由於習慣
或者由於悲哀
對本身已成的定局
再沒有力量關懷



1980年1 - 2月

A Love Song for this Land

I love this land, like
I love my taciturn father

Oh this land warmed by tides of hot blood
Oh this land greased by fermenting sweat
Palpitating under the weight of plows and bare feet
Driven by the immense heat at its heart
 rising and sinking
Shouldering statues, monuments, museums
Yet writing its last judgement on fault planes
Mine
Oh frozen, muddy, parched land
Mine
Oh wrathful, magnanimous, relentless land
Land that gives me my complexion and my tongue
Land that gives me my wisdom and my strength

I love this land, like
I love my gentle solicitous mother

Oh plentiful land covered with the sun's kisses
Oh generous land wasting her flow of milk
Taking in layer upon layer of fallen leaves
Sprouting crop after crop of green shoots
Discarded over and over
But never unfaithful
Creating sounds, colours, patterns
Though everyone calls you dirt and mud
Mine
Oh pitch black, blood drenched, glimmering white land
Mine
Oh luxuriant, lonely, frustrated land
Land that gives me my love and my hatred
Land that gives me my pain and my joy

My father endowed me with a boundless dream
My mother a heart sensitive and true
My poems are
 the ever yearning necklace trees
Pouring out day and night
 my ever constant love for this land

土地情詩

我愛土地，就像
愛我沉默寡言的父親

血運旺盛的熱呼呼的土地啊
汗水發酵的油浸浸的土地啊
在有力的犁刃和赤腳下
 微微喘息着
被內心巨大的熱能推動
 上升與下沉着
背負着銅像、紀念碑、博物館
卻把最後審判寫在斷層裏
我的
冰封的、泥濘的、龜裂的土地啊
我的
憂憤的、寬厚的、嚴厲的土地啊
給我膚色和語言的土地
給我智慧和力量的土地

我愛土地，就像
愛我溫柔多情的母親

佈滿太陽之吻的豐滿的土地啊
揮霍着乳汁的慷慨的土地啊
收容層層落葉
又拱起茬茬新芽
一再被人遺棄
而從不對人負心
產生一切音響、色彩、綫條
本身卻被叫做卑賤的泥巴
我的
黑沉沉的、血汪汪的、白花花的土地啊
我的
蕨蕪的、寂寞的、坎坷的土地啊
給我愛情和仇恨的土地
給我痛苦與歡樂的土地

父親給我無涯無際的夢
母親給我敏感誠摯的心
我的詩行是
 沙沙作響的相思樹林
日夜向土地傾訴着
 永不變質的愛情

1980年10月

Brother, I'm Here

The night is cool like the evening tide
 Rising up each uneven step of the stairs
 Invading your heart
 You sit on the threshold
 The small, dark house, mouth gaping
 Squats behind you
 The scholartree shakes, leaves flutter down like birds in flight
 On waves pale as moonlight
 Tiny gold coins float

You pertain to the sun
 To prairies, embankments, eyes of black jade
 You pertain to snowstorms
 To roads, torches, hands extended to help
 You are a warrior
 Your life resounds
 Like a bell
 Shattering the shadows in man's heart

The wind absconds in unfamiliar footsteps
 Won't believe
 You're still grieving

But, brother
 I'm here
 Coming to you from your thoughts
 A newstand, a bench, apple seeds
 Resurrected in the warmth of your memory
 Leaving behind smiles and lights
 Leaving behind a light-hearted rhythm
 Leaving

Along the squares of a piece of manuscript paper

As long as there is wind at night
 Wind changes the direction of our thoughts
 As long as your trumpet suddenly falls silent
 Seeking harmony
 I will be back
 By your side calmly saying
 Brother, I'm here

兄弟，我在這兒

夜涼如晚潮
漫上一級級歪歪斜斜的台階
侵入你的心頭
你坐在門檻上
黑洞洞的小屋張着口
蹲在你背後
槐樹搖下飛鳥似的落葉
月白的波浪上
小小的金幣漂浮

你原屬於太陽
屬於草原、堤岸、黑寶石的眼眸
你屬於暴風雪
屬於道路、火把、相扶持的手
你是戰士
你的生命鏗鏘有聲
鐘一樣
將陰影從人心震落

風正踏着陌生的步子躲開
它們不願相信
你還在憂愁

可是，兄弟
我在這兒
我從思念中走來
報亭、長椅、蘋果核
在你記憶中溫暖地復活
留下微笑和燈盞
留下輕快的節奏
離去

沿着稿紙的一個個方格

只要夜裏有風
風改變思緒的方向
只要你那支圓號突然沉寂
要求着和聲
我就回來
在你肩旁平靜地說
兄弟，我在這兒

1981年5月