

PREFACE

My long-held desire to complete a general, comprehensive introduction to Yuan Haowen's poetry was given fresh impetus when asked to prepare a revised version of my earlier, more specialized study of Yuan Haowen's literary criticism.

The treatment of 150 of his poems in this volume is the result.

Every effort has been made to make the book's presentation as straightforward as possible, so that readers with little or no knowledge of Chinese language or culture might be able to follow and understand the text without undue difficulty. At the same time, the volume should be of interest to specialists in Chinese poetry. And since romanization is supplied for the Yuan Haowen poems that are treated, along with the original text, readers at any level of competence in Chinese are given direct access to the original.

Those with an interest in Chinese literature, especially traditional poetry, or in Chinese history, particularly that of the Song–Jin–Yuan-period (960–1368), are likely to find the work rewarding. For readers whose focus is on the theory and practice of literary translation, or on comparative literature, there is also much of interest.

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A special debt is owed to William Hung 洪業 (Hong Ye), with whom I had numerous conversations about Yuan Haowen's poems on poetry, as well as fruitful discussion regarding many of the poems in this volume. My earlier more specialized book about the poet was dedicated to him. I also learned much from Burton Watson, my M.A. adviser, and have tried to emulate his simple clarity when writing about literature, and his unadorned, gracefully apt English when translating it.¹

There are many others I wish to thank. Especially appreciated is the contribution of my decades-long editors, John Bowden and Ana Clelia Vincenti. Their encouragement has been crucial, along with that of others: James T.C. Liu 劉子健 (Liu Zijian),² Glen W. Baxter, Donald A. Gibbs, David R. Knechtges, Sandra Ann Wixted, Tanaka Kenji 田中謙二, Tanaka Issei 田仲一成, Richard J. Lynn, Francis Cleaves,

¹ My reminiscences of three of above—Hung, Yoshikawa, and Watson—are referenced in the “Introduction”: n. 2, 8, 20. For more on the background to the present volume, see Wixted 2009: 85–89, 106–9.

² At a conference we both attended in December 1983, Professor Liu wrote the following poem, inscribing it “For Tim, in commemorating your book (on Yuan Haowen's poems on poetry)”:

William F. Sibley, Susan Lundstrom, and Indra Levy. I am also ever grateful to Julia L. Wixted, John F. Wixted, and Robert L. Wixted.

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朗誦中州如有神
 遺山海外得傳人
 閣書館內觀摩盡
 千古風流自接真

Reciting poems of the Central Land, as if heaven-inspired—

Overseas, Yishan (Yuan Haowen) has found one to transmit his legacy (i.e. you):

Exhaustively perusing material in great collections,

Touching on what is true in the poet's timeless spirit.

The book is dedicated, with thanks, to my wife, Ana Clelia Vincenti.

Special gratitude is also owed to my teachers in the Mishawaka, Indiana, public school system for their efforts to instill respect for study, discipline in writing, and love of learning.

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