

*Chinesische Dichtung: Geschichte, Struktur, Theorie*, by Günther Debon. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1989. Pp. xvi +289. Gld. 112.

Günther Debon is well known for his translation into German of Yen Yü's *Ts'ang-lang shih-hua*, as well as for his other studies of Chinese literary and art theory. This new work, part of the *Handbuch der Orientalistik* series (the volume serves as Abschnitt I to Band II: Literatur in Abteilung IV: China), is made up of three sections: a 17-page historical overview of Chinese poetry, a 190-page section of generally short essays or entries explicating topics related to Chinese poetry that are arranged alphabetically, and a 63-page section of poem translations that are intended to illustrate points brought up in the second section.

Although the first section is too short to serve as a literary history in any real sense, it does alert the reader—especially the uninitiated—to many of the topics that are treated in the second section, as each is marked by a crossreferencing arrow as it appears.

It is the second section, the alphabetically arranged series of approximately 370 entries, that forms the heart of the volume. A host of topics are treated. For example, the first fifteen (of the thirty-six entries under "P" are as follows: Paarigkeit, Paarreim, Päonie, *p'ai-lü*, Palaststil (*kung-t'i*), Palindrom (*hui-wen*), Panegyrikos, Paradigmatische Dichtung, Parallelismus membrorum, Parataxe, Paronomasie (Figura etymologica), Pars pro toto, Patriotische Dichtung, *P'ei-wen yün-fu*, and *P'eng-Kraut*. Most are comparatively short, one-half page or less, "Parallelismus mem-

brorum" being the exception with two and one-half pages. There is much of real interest and potential use here, even in the shorter treatments. Many entries about poetic style reflect the author's longtime interest in the Chinese critical tradition.

The final section of poem translations is problematic. Although any fresh renderings of the one hundred poems that are translated by Professor Debon are to be welcomed (I estimate that one-fifth have never been translated before, mostly those by Sung and later poets), they are not extensive enough a sample to serve effectively as an anthology (admittedly, not their main purpose), nor are they adequately integrated with the second section of the volume, which they are intended to illustrate. Much effort has been made to tie the translations to the series of entries through numerous crossreferencing arrows. But the author can be faulted for having both too many and too few arrows. There are too many under an entry like *Wen-hsin tiao-lung* (thirty-three, including *Paranomasie*, *Poetische Beschreibung*, *Regelgedicht*, *Reim*, *Schmacklosigkeit*, *Schönheit*, *shih*, *Skrupel an der Dichtung*, *Taoismus und Dichtung*, *Transzendenz*, *Tugend und Dichtung*, *Verewigung*, and *Wohlgeschmack/Aroma*, to name the last thirteen). And although the entry "Wandernder Standpunkt" points to Poem #30 (by Tso Ssu) as an example, there is no reference there back to "Wandernder Standpunkt." Moreover, supplying the Chinese texts would have helped considerably, as tropes and structural features are best illustrated by being given both in the original and in translation.

The eight-page bibliography is quite good. There is also an index that merely gives the Chinese characters for names, works, and other items cited.

The great shame about this work is that it lacks a real index, or series of indexes, that would give the page numbers on which to find A) names, B) terms, and C) works that are cited. It is truly maddening to see a name or term in the character index and to have no idea where in the body of the work it might be referred to; or more often, not to know if one has tracked down *all* references to the name in the body of the work. The large number of notes to the one hundred poems translated, which include many references to poetic style, explications of allusions, and the like, necessarily enrich the treatment of the poems; they also contribute to the sense of there being no way to get a handle on the worthwhile material in the volume.

Almost no one will read the work from cover to cover; it literally invites jumping from one entry to another, from one illustrative example to another. And who, six months later, can remember where something was referred to? Most sinologists (and notwithstanding the wish that others use the volume, sinologists will be its only real audience) will wonder if the volume has something useful to say about a specific topic and will find that, without indexes, it takes a lot of flipping back and forth to get only a modest payoff. (As Su Shih said of Meng Chiao's poetry: "My first impression is of eating tiny fishes—/What you get's not worth the trouble"; tr. B. Watson, *Su Tung-p'o* [New York, 1965], p. 59.) The problem is compounded by the use of latinate terms for some of the entry titles in the second section; in searching for many terms, one has to think, not of what the Chinese would be and not of what the German would be, but of what the Latin rhetorical term would be for these figures. A fourth component (D) is also necessary in the index, one that gives Chinese equivalents for all entry titles, notably for those that appear only in German or Latin.

The potential usefulness of the volume would be tripled if it had an index that included the components noted. Might I suggest that the author prepare one and publish it in a few pages of a future CLEAR issue? Tiny fishes, if readily digestible in large numbers, can make for substantial fare.

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