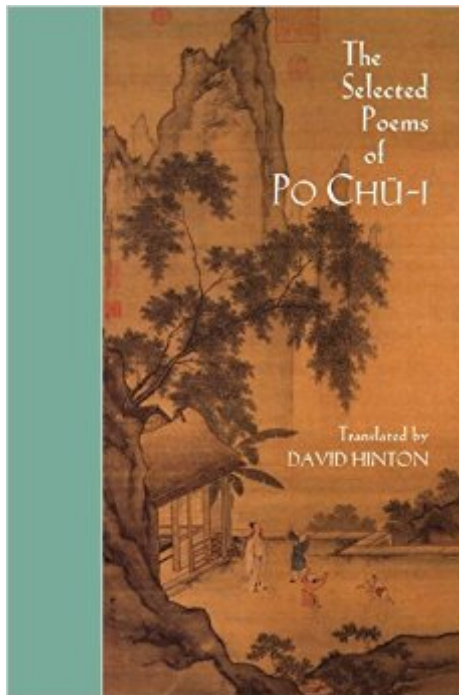


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# The Selected Poems Of Po Chŭ-i (New Directions Paperbook)



## Synopsis

The quintessential Chinese poet, translated by David Hinton, recipient of the Harold Morton Landon Translation Award. Generally acclaimed as one of China's greatest poets, Po Ch'ang-i (772-846 C.E.) practiced a poetry of everyday human concerns and clear plain-spoken language. In spite of his preeminent stature, this is the first edition of Po Ch'ang-i's poetry to appear in the West. It encompasses the full range of his work, from the early poems of social protest to the later recluse poems, whose spiritual depths reflect both his life-long devotion to Taoist and Ch'an (Zen) Buddhist practice. David Hinton's translations of ancient Chinese poetry have earned wide acclaim for creating compelling English texts that have altered our conception of Chinese poetry. Among his books published by New Directions are *The Selected Poems of Tu Fu*, and *The Selected Poems of Li Po*. His work has been supported by fellowships from The National Endowment for the Arts and The National Endowment for the Humanities.

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## Customer Reviews

A Servant Girl Is Missing  
From the low walls of our small courtyard to the notice-board outside our district gate, I've searched and searched, ashamed our love proved meager, wishing I could do it all over. But a caged bird can't bear a master for long, and the branch means nothing to a blossom freed on the wind. Where can she be tonight? Only the moon's understanding light knows. This was written in the 9th century C.E. by the famous Chinese Tang dynasty poet Po Chu-i. Po's beautiful

lines are Taoist and Ch'an (Zen) Buddhist in influence, but something about them sings transcendent and is not easily categorized. Consider how much is contained in this poem: worry, a confession of wrongdoing, an admission of love, something about nature and the need for human freedom, and a tiny fragment of intuitive (mystic) insight when he adds: "Only the moon's understanding light knows." Whew! How did he do it, all carefully wrapped in deceptively simple rhyming couplets in the Chinese? I'm awed by this work, as I am by Po's modern English translator, David Hinton. This book is recently available in trade paperback by New Directions Publishing. Any of these Chinese poets (Hinton translates Meng Chiao and my favorite, T'ao Ch'ien, too, as well as others) will radically change your view of life, for theirs was a powerful and elegant civilization when Rome was still fighting off its hordes. These are beautiful, poignant, often sad, but very wise reflections about existence, metaphysics, and how to live a rich life.

I have to commend David Hinton's ability to change translation styles to match the style of the poets he translates. Po Chu-i's poetry is very simple and straightforward, and in response, Hinton sticks very close to the original Chinese in his translation. This works very well most of the time, but at times it is taken too far, and the grammar can seem awkward taken in English. Nevertheless, the essentially beauty of the poetry shines through, and the selection is well chosen. I would have preferred that the original Chinese be included, but this omission is unlikely to bother most readers. All in all, the collection is a credit both to poet and translator. I highly recommend it.

This is the very finest translation of Chinese poems I have seen. I have over one hundred books of translations of Chinese poets. Hinton is able to catch the feel of a Zen religious life by a famous civil servant of the late Tang Dynasty. He captures the bitter sweet character of the life many Chinese poets chose where they were two totally different people -- mystics and civil servants. We can find few people in world history on which to model our lives with more real depth than Po Chi I, Su Tung Po, and Wang Wei.

David Hinton's translations are superb. I have gotten to the point where I want to read all of his translations of the ancient Chinese poets. His translations certainly have a distinct masculine/modern voice, but at the same time, the voice of the poet shines through. It also seems evident that he knows what he's doing because the poetry is a little slow in the beginning, but by the middle, (they are chronological I believe) each poem has the capacity to stun. The very best of Chinese poetry comes through in this translation. I feel like I am transported to another place and

time, and at the same time, I feel something shift inside of me. Po Chu-I was a sage. He often released himself from his thoughts and fully immersed himself in the present moment. The present moment is continually captured in this text. It's one of the best that I have read. The poems are timeless, beautiful and spiritually relevant. I feel calmer and more aware after each read...

I read him just about every day. He's so seemingly simple, but at times there's another layer of meaning that's just visible beneath his words. Most of his verses create such vivid moments and scenery from his life. They look back through the long years at a time and place that's gone forever. There's a certain sadness that prevails through his pieces - Information the publisher includes on Po Chu-I's life really helps give it form, make it understandable.

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