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The Art of War by Sun Tzu, The New Republic,  
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for example, about El Greco is only pretentious bourgeois intellectualism, a kind of exotic banality. On the other hand capital passages are included from Paul Valéry, Santayana, De Sanctis, Hazlitt, Vasari, Baudelaire and others; and to accompany the Van Goghs with excerpts from his letters to his brother is nothing short of inspiration. STARK YOUNG

## War Without End

*The Art of War*, by Sun Tzu. Translated by Lionel Giles, with introduction and notes by Brigadier General T. R. Phillips. Harrisburg, Pa.: The Military Service Publishing Company. 99 pages. \$1.

*Winter Cherry*, by Keith West. New York: The Macmillan Company. 217 pages. \$2.

*The Phoenix and the Dwarfs: A Play*, by George E. Taylor and George M. Savage. New York: The Macmillan Company. 119 pages. \$2.50.

AMERICANS who entertain the pleasant fiction that China has always been a pacifist country might revise their ideas by dipping into these three small books. One deals directly with the art of war, one with the conditions inside an ancient court that led to war, and one with modern China at war.

In the introduction to his play, George Taylor states that America regards China as a pacifist nation because we have learned of our Far Eastern ally only through officials and scholars who have always had contempt for the Chinese soldier. We have learned something of the works of Confucius, of poets and painters, but not of Sun Tzu, the great writer on military strategy.

Though Sun Tzu lived and wrote his highly compressed thesis on the principles of war some five hundred years B. C., General Phillips declares that the "ancient master still holds his own" today, and the military student able to adapt his principles to modern warfare will find it a valuable guide. "Chariots have gone and weapons have changed," yet since Sun Tzu deals with fundamentals, with the influence of politics and human nature on military operations, he shows "how unchanging these principles are."

Apart from other military authorities, American army officers now also study Sun Tzu. The Japanese army studied him for decades, while most modern Chinese officers perhaps know him by heart. Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek is said to have been deeply influenced by him. Perhaps there is nothing really new about the "art" of killing our fellow man and only the weapons change. Like the Homeric Greeks, the early Chinese seem to have used the war chariot much as the modern tank is used today. Sun Tzu's compressed principles on strategy, tactics, maneuvering, communication and supplies, the use of terrain, of fire, the seasons of the year; the classification and use of spies; the treatment of soldiers, including captives, all have a modern ring. The ancient master even gave rules for the blitzkrieg, prefacing them with the words "rapidity is the essence of war."

Aside from the military aspects of this treatise, Sun Tzu's prose is often a literary delight. When starting fires in an enemy's camp, he writes, troops should be to windward

and should remember that "a wind that rises in the daytime lasts long, but a night breeze soon fails." Interpreting signs from the enemy's camp, he says:

The rising of birds in their flight is the sign of an ambuscade. . . . If birds gather on one spot, it is unoccupied. . . . Startled beasts indicate that a sudden attack is coming. . . . When there is dust rising in a high column, it is the sign of chariots advancing; when the dust is low, but spread over a wide area, it betokens the approach of infantry. When it branches out in different directions, it shows that parties have been sent out to collect firewood. A few clouds of dust moving to and fro signify that the army is camping.

The heroine of "Winter Cherry" is one of the young concubines of the Bright Emperor, Hsuan Tsung, of the Tang Dynasty in the eighth century. The hero, who struggles to come alive but fails in part at least, is Ah Lai, mildly rebellious nephew of the immortal poet, Li Po. Though the fate of these two young people runs through the book like a frail thread, the real characters are the Bright Emperor and his favorite concubine, Lady Yang Kuei-fei, who used her influence over the Emperor to put all her relatives in power. This part of the story is based on history, as is Lady Yang's death at the hands of rebellious troops who had had enough of court degeneracy.

Mr. West seems to have done a great amount of research into the customs, history, literature and philosophy of the period. It is difficult, however, to understand how a culture could degenerate to the extent of turning all the people into formal, stilted conversationalists. One rebellious soldier, a farmer and his wife, and Ham Im, the palace eunuch, are a rather welcome relief from the court personalities, as is An Lu-shan, the rough rebel leader who overthrew the Bright Emperor and expressed contempt for the Chinese. Speaking to Winter Cherry, whom he has carried off, the rebel exclaims:

And now I have lacked dignity enough to step down from my Northern Throne and become, like you, a Chinese speaking with three neatly balanced platitudes. You are an insidious race, with no clear edges to your shadows.

George Taylor, the young American scholar, carries forward the Chinese tradition of struggle against decay and the conservatism of the older generation in his new play, "The Phoenix and the Dwarfs." The Japanese dwarfs come knocking with their tanks on the doors of a complacent village in the hands of tax collectors and the landed gentry, who prepare to bribe them. The Japanese wipe out the village and kill most of the old people, and rape the heroine, Mei-lan, who had not yet broken with the past. Eventually the village is rebuilt on its ashes and the young people, including Mei-lan, turn it into a center of guerrilla warfare.

The play, as a play, is not good, though it is filled with potent material. The long introduction, however, is excellent, for it gives a graphic description of modern Chinese society, particularly of village life in which the landed gentry are lords, while the peasants are serfs in all but name. The guerrilla leaders hardly speak like guerrillas as this reviewer knows them, but the book is worth reading for the introduction alone.

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