

長簾鳳窠斜。
種柳營中暗，
題書賜館娃。

3.33 牡丹種曲

蓮枝未長秦蘅老，
走馬馱金斷春草。
水灌香泥却月盆，
一夜綠房迎白曉。

5 美人醉語園中烟，
晚花已散蝶又闌。
梁王老去羅衣在，
拂袖風吹蜀國絃。

歸霞帔拖蜀帳昏，
10 嫣紅落粉罷承恩。

檀郎謝女眠何處，
樓臺月明燕夜語。

1 Tao Kan 陶侃 (259–354), when serving as governor at Wuchang, commanded that all the garrisons plant willow trees.

2 “Lovelies of the lodge (*guanwa* 館娃)”: *wa* 娃 is said to be a Wu dialect term for a beautiful woman; there are references in early literary works to a Wu palace for “lodging lovelies” (*guanwa*), but in the Tang the term refers to the beauties themselves.

across your bed mat phoenix blazons slant.
 From shade of willows planted, within your camp is dark;¹
 you inscribe calligraphy to bestow on the lovelies of the lodge.²

3.33 Tune: Peony Bulbs

Before the lotuses have emerged, after rue and asarum have grown old;
 horses gallop bearing gold to dig up this plant of spring.
 Water is sprinkled on fragrant soil in a half-moon basin;
 green buds wait through the night to greet the pale dawn.

- 5 Beauties converse drunkenly in the mists of the garden;
 the late flowers have scattered, the butterflies nearly gone.
 The Prince of Liang has aged away, but his silk-gauze robe remains,³
 stirring its sleeves, the wind blows “Strings of Shu.”⁴

- Rosy clouds float off in tatters, and within the Shu canopy is dark;
 10 winsome reds have lost their rouge, their favor at an end.

Sandalwood Lad and the Xie lass – where are they sleeping?⁵
 amid lofts and terraces the moonlight gleams, swallows converse by night.

3 Referring to the splendor of the person, entourage, and outings of Liu Wu, Prince Xiao of Liang (on whom, see also **1.12.1**, **4.17**). Here his robe “remains” in the lavish colors of the peonies.

4 “Strings of Shu”: see **1.18**.

5 “Sandalwood Lad” was a nickname of Pan Yue (on whom, see also **3.14**), here used along with “Xie lass” as a generic designation of a stylish and beautiful young couple.

3.34 後園鑿井歌

井上轆轤牀上轉。
水聲繁，
絃聲淺。
情若何，
5 荀奉倩。

城頭日，
長向城頭住。
一日作千年，
不須流下去。

3.35 開愁歌

秋風吹地百草乾，
華容碧影生晚寒。
我當二十不得意，
一心愁謝如枯蘭。
5 衣如飛鶉馬如狗，
臨岐擊劍生銅吼。
旗亭下馬解秋衣，
請貰宜陽一壺酒。

3.34 Song: “I Bored a Well in the Rear Garden ...”

The windlass above the well spins in its frame;
 water's splashing fills the ears;
 the rope's hum is faint.
 What figure for these feelings? –

5 Xun Fengqian.¹

Sun above the city wall –
 forever remain there atop that wall, and stay.
 Make this one day be a thousand years,
 with no flowing down.

3.35 Song: Giving Vent to Sadness

The autumn wind blows the earth and the hundred plants wither;
 amidst the flowers' aspect and their emerald reflection arises an evening
 chill.

I've reached twenty and not found what I want,
 my heart withered from sorrow like a dried-out orchid.

5 My robes tattered like a flying quail, on a horse more like a dog,
 I strike my sword at the crossroads and it gives a bronze roar.
 At the tavern I dismount and loosen my autumn robes
 and ask to take on credit one jug of Yiyang wine.²

1 Fengqian is the courtesy name of the third-century figure Xun Can 荀粲, who as a young man swore never to succumb to love, but who upon his marriage became renowned for selfless devotion to his wife; he died of grief soon after her passing.

2 Yiyang is the ancient designation of Li He's home county, Fuchang.

- 壺中喚天雲不開，
 10 白晝萬里閒淒迷。
 主人勸我養心骨，
 莫受俗物相嗔談。

3.36 秦宮詩并序

漢秦宮，將軍梁冀之嬖奴也。秦宮得寵內舍，故以驕名大譟于人。予撫舊而作長辭，辭以馮子都之事相為對望，又云昔有之詩。

- 越羅衫袂迎春風，
 玉刻麒麟腰帶紅。
 樓頭曲宴仙人語，
 帳底吹笙香霧濃。
 5 雲閑酒暖春茫茫，
 花枝入簾白日長。
 飛窗複道傳籌飲，
 午夜銅盤膩燭黃。

1 Echoing the story of “Master Jug” (Hu Gong 壺公), an adept of techniques of immortality who would retire at night into a jug, which was to him like its own universe when he was inside.

- I shout to heaven in the jug, but the clouds won't part;¹
 10 into the bright sunlight of ten thousand *li* I stare in dazed idleness.
 The owner urges me to nourish heart and bone,
 and not submit to vulgarians' hectoring mockery.

3.36 Poem: Qin Gong (with preface)

Qin Gong of the Han was a doted-on slave of the general Liang Ji. Qin Gong found favor in the inner quarters, and thus has become a byword for self-indulgence among the folk.² I pondered on these past things and composed a lyric in long lines, to form a counterpart to that affair of Feng Zidu.³ An alternate account says, this is a poem that existed in the past.

His blouse and sleeves of Yue silk are ruffled in spring breeze;
 at his waist, a *qilin* carved from jade hangs by a sash of red.
 Atop the lofts at private banquets, immortals converse;
 beneath bed canopies, amid panpipes' playing, scented fogs lie heavy.⁴

- 5 The clouds are languid and wine is warm, as springtime drifts along;
 a branch of flowers bending enters the curtain during the long bright
 day.
 By upper windows in the tiered galleries they drink by the tallies' count;
 at midnight the bronze platters glisten in yellow candlelight.

2 Qin Gong parlayed the favor he found with Liang Ji (?–159) into a position of power and influence throughout the Han court, all while carrying on an affair with Liang Ji's wife Sun Shou 孫壽.

3 Feng Zidu 馮子都 was a favored household slave of the eminent minister Huo Guang 霍光 (?–68 BCE), who after Huo Guang's death formed a sexual liason with his master's widow.

4 Scenes frequented by Qin Gong, who is admitted to the most exclusive banquet gatherings, as well as to the bed of his master's wife.

- 禿襟小袖調鸚鵡，
 10 紫繡麻韞踏哮虎。
 斫桂燒金待曉筵，
 白鹿清酥夜半煮。
 桐陰永巷騎新馬，
 內屋深屏生色畫。
 15 開門爛用水衡錢，
 卷起黃河向身瀉。
 皇天厄運猶曾裂，
 秦宮一生花底活。
 鸞篋奪得不還人，
 20 醉卧鸞毼滿堂月。

3.37 古鄴城童子謠效王粲刺曹操

鄴城中，
 暮塵起。
 探黑丸，
 斫文吏。

1 “Lakes and Gardens mint”: a source of coinage designated specifically for the emperor’s personal use.

2 Alluding to the story of Nü Wa patching the sky (cf. 1.1, ll. 9–10).

3 The poet Wang Can (177–217) served in the government of the warlord Cao Cao (posthumously recognized as the founding emperor of the Wei dynasty)

In collarless short smock he trains a parrot;
 10 in his purple embroidered hempen shoes he treads on roaring tigers.
 They chop osmanthus to heat golden vessels in preparation for dawn's
 banquet;
 pure cream of white deer-milk they boil through the middle of night.

Down *wutong*-shaded palace lanes he rides a new horse;
 across inner chambers' deep-recessed screens are stirring painted scenes.
 15 When going out he spends lavishly the coin of the Lakes and Gardens
 mint;¹
 rolling up the Yellow River to drain onto himself alone.

August heaven itself in adverse fate once ripped;²
 yet Qin Gong lived out his life beneath the flowers.
 Once he snatched that simurgh comb away he would not give it back,
 20 sprawled drunk on felt cushions in moonlight that filled the hall.

3.37 A Children's Rhyme from the Ancient City of Ye: In imitation of Wang Can critiquing Cao Cao³

In Ye city
 evening dust.
 Draw the black pellet
 and you cut an officer.⁴

after 208, and participated in the Cao family's literary gatherings in the city of Ye.

4 An account of declining public security in Chang'an during the latter years of the Western Han describes how gangs of men would take assignments by drawing crossbow-pellets of different colors: drawing a red pellet meant killing a military official, drawing black meant killing a civil official, and drawing white meant taking charge of funerals for those killed on their missions.

- 5 棘為鞭，
 虎為馬。
 團團走，
 鄴城下。
 切玉劍，
 10 射日弓。
 獻何人，
 奉相公。
 扶轂來，
 關右兒。
 15 香掃塗，
 相公歸。

3.38 楊生青花紫石硯歌

- 端州石工巧如神，
 踏天磨刀割紫雲。
 傭刊抱水含滿唇，
 暗洒萇弘冷血痕。
 5 紗帷晝暖墨花春，
 輕漚漂沫松麝薰。
 乾膩薄重立脚勻，

- 5 Thorn-branch for his whip
 tiger for his horse.
 Rushing pell-mell
 beneath Ye's walls.
- Jade-cutting sword
- 10 sun-shooting bow –
 To whom do we present them?
 To the Minister Duke.
- Flanking the carriage wheels there come
 lads from west of the passes.
- 15 Spread incense and sweep the road –
 the Minister Duke returns.

3.38 Song: Scholar Yang's Green-flecked Purple Inkstone

Duanzhou's stone carvers are skilled as gods:
 treading the sky, whetting their knives, they carve blocks of purple
 cloud.

Evenly gouged to enfold the water that fills its lips;
 in faint spatters it shows traces of Chang Hong's cold blood.¹

- 5 In the curtained nook in the warmth of day, ink blossoms with spring;
 from fine frothy lather comes the scent of pine and musk.²
 Dry or glossy, light or dark, it leaves its traces evenly:

1 Chang Hong was a virtuous man, unjustly killed, whose blood turned to jade after his death (cf. 1.26).

2 Pine-soot was the main traditional source for the black pigment in ink; sticks of ink were often infused with fragrance.

- 數寸光秋無日昏。
圓毫促點聲靜新，
10 孔硯寬頑何足云。

3.39 房中思

- 新桂如蛾眉，
秋風吹小綠。
行輪出門去，
玉鑾聲斷續。
5 月軒下風露，
曉庭自幽澀。
誰能事貞素，
臥聽莎雞泣。

3.40 石城曉

- 月落大堤上，
女垣栖鳥起。
細露濕團紅，
寒香解夜醉。

several inches of autumn light that never will know dusk.

When rounded brush-tip dabs it, the sound is soft and tender;¹

10 Confucius's broad and clumsy stone is not worth mentioning.²

3.39 Boudoir Yearning

Tender osmanthus leaves are like her moth eyebrows:

an autumn wind blows through that fine green.

The traveler's carriage wheels depart through the gate,
the jangle of jade halter-bells now intermittent.

- 5 By the moonlit gazebo, breeze and dewfall;
the dawn courtyard as before is quiet and dreary.
Who can endure this life of pure austerity,
listening in bed to the katydids' weeping?

3.40 Dawn at Stone Citadel

The moon sets over the Grand Dike;

along crenellated walls the crows take flight.

Fine dew wets spheres of red

whose cold fragrance dispels last night's drunkenness.

1 Wang Qi suggests this sound is an indication this stone will not wear out brush-tips.

2 An ancient inkstone said to have belonged to Confucius was kept at his ancestral temple at Qufu.

- 5 女牛渡天河，
 柳烟滿城曲。
 上客留斷纓，
 殘蛾鬪雙綠。
 春帳依微蟬翼羅，
 10 橫茵突金隱體花。
 帳前輕絮鵝毛起，
 欲說春心無所似。

3.41 苦晝短

- 飛光飛光，
 勸爾一杯酒。
 吾不識青天高，
 黃地厚。
 5 惟見月寒日暖，
 來煎人壽。
 食熊則肥，

1 On the Weaver Maiden and Oxherd, see 1.9. Here the implication is that the lovers' meeting is over, and a long period of separation now looms.

- 5 Weaving Maid and Oxherd have crossed sky's river;¹
 mist-shrouded willows fill the city's lanes.
 The honored guest left behind a broken cap-string;²
 the paired green of faded eyebrows draws together.

- Diaphanous, the spring canopy drapes its cicada-wing silk;
 10 on the bed mat, bright gold stands out against hidden flower-pattern
 weave.

Before the canopy floats a light puff of willow-floss like goosedown:
 she wants to explain this springtime mood, but there's nothing it
 resembles.

3.41 **Plaint at Day's Shortness**

- Flying light, flying light –
 I offer you this cup of wine.
 I do not know the height of the blue sky,
 nor the depth of the yellow earth.
 5 All I see is how the moon with its cold and the sun with its heat
 come to fry away human lives.
 Those who eat bear grow fat;

2 A story of the King Zhuang of Chu 楚莊王 (r. 613–591 BCE) tells of a banquet he held for his ministers, at which one of his palace women was assaulted in the dark by a drunken guest; the assailant's cap-string broke off. The King commanded all the guests to break off their cap-strings, to avoid exposing the offender.

- 食蛙則瘦。
 神君何在，
 10 太一安有。
- 天東有若木，
 下置啣燭龍。
 吾將斬龍足，
 嚼龍肉，
 15 使之朝不得迴，
 夜不得伏。
 自然老者不死，
 少者不哭。
 何為服黃金，
 20 吞白玉。
- 誰是任公子，
 雲中騎白驢。
 劉徹茂陵多滯骨，
 嬴政梓棺費鮑魚。

1 The “Divine Mistress” was said to be the deified form of a woman who had died of grief over the death of a young son. At the chapel where she was worshipped, “one could hear her voice, but could not see her person.” “Great Unity,” a supreme god worshipped in the “Nine Songs” of the *Chuci*, was also adopted into Han imperial liturgy. The apocryphal fourth-century compilation *Han Wu gushi* 漢武故事 (*Notable Events from the Reign of Emperor Wu of the Han*) recounts that the “Divine Mistress” once attempted to replenish the vital force of the short-lived Han general Huo Qubing 霍去病 (140–117 BCE) with the “essence of Great Unity” via sexual union, but met with the latter’s stern refusal.

those who eat frogs grow thin.
Where is the Divine Mistress?

10 What “Great Unity”?¹

At the east of the sky is the Ruo Tree
and beneath is placed a dragon with a candle in its mouth.²
I’m going to chop off that dragon’s feet
and eat that dragon’s meat,

15 so it can’t return by morning
or hide at night.
Then naturally the old ones won’t die
and the young ones won’t cry.
Then why would anyone eat yellow gold
20 or gulp white jade?³

Who is Master Ren,
riding a white donkey among the clouds?⁴
Liu Che at Maoling is a lot of stranded bones;
Ying Zheng’s catalpa coffin occasioned great expense of saltfish.⁵

2 The Ruo tree is at the world’s western limit; Li He’s skewing of orientation here is perhaps deliberate. A “candle dragon” is mentioned in the *Chuci* “Heavenly Questions” (“Tian wen” 天問) as carrying its candle to illuminate far-off regions unreachable by the sun; here used for the sun itself.

3 Ll. 11–20: for the underlying conception here, cf. the close of 4.6.

4 We can infer that this Master Ren is a transcendent, but nothing further is known about him.

5 Liu Che and Ying Zheng are the given names of Emperor Wu of the Han and the First Emperor of Qin, the two early emperors who took the most spectacular measures to escape mortality. Maoling was the site of Emperor Wu’s tomb (cf. 2.1). The First Emperor of Qin died while touring away from the capital; the prime minister Li Si kept the death a secret, and after a few days of hot weather, commanded that saltfish be loaded on the imperial carriage, to mask the stench of the decaying corpse.

3.42 章和二年中

雲蕭索，
 田風拂拂，
 麥芒如彗黍如粟。

關中父老百領襦，
 5 關東吏人乏詬租。

健犢春耕土膏黑，
 菖蒲叢叢沿水脈。
 殷勤為我下田租，
 百錢攜償絲桐客。

10 遊春漫光塢花白，
 野林散香神降席。

拜神得壽獻天子，
 七星貫斷姮娥死。

1 “Xiaosuo” 蕭索, here rendered “faint whorls,” is a phrase drawn from an ancient description of the “auspicious clouds” (*qing yun* 慶雲 or *jing yun* 景雲) that heralded a sagely reign.

3.42 In the Second Year of Zhanghe

The clouds are faint whorls,¹
 wind rustles through the fields;
 wheat-spikes are as broad as brooms, rice-tassels dense as millet.²

The elders within the passes have a hundred winter coats;
 5 officers east of the passes are not busy dunning for rents.

A robust calf can do spring plowing – the soil so fat and black;
 the rushes densely teem along the waterways.
 Let us earnestly pay off the balance on our rent,
 and take another hundred coins to hire a silk and *wutong*-wood
 man.³

10 On our spring outing in the welling light the flowery bank is white;
 through field and wood the fragrance floats – the god descends to our
 offering.

If our entreaties to the gods win us lifespan, let us offer it to the Son
 of Heaven:
 may he endure till the Seven Stars' thread wears through, till Heng'e
 dies.⁴

2 "Rice-tassels dense as millet": Lit., "the *shu* 黍 is like *su* 粟." The actual botanical image resists translation: *shu* is glutinous millet, which has larger and thus fewer grains; while *su* is ordinary millet. The point seems to be that the heads of glutinous millet are so dense and teeming that they visually resemble larger versions of the heads of ordinary millet.

3 I.e. a musician.

4 The moon goddess Heng'e is better known as Chang'e, the version instituted during the Han to avoid a taboo on the name of Emperor Wen of the Han, Liu Heng 劉恆 (r. 180–157 BCE).

3.43 春歸昌谷

- 束髮方讀書，
 謀身苦不早。
 終軍未乘傳，
 顏子鬢先老。
- 5 天網信崇大，
 矯士常慄慄。
 逸目駢甘華，
 羈心如荼蓼。
 早雲二三月，
- 10 岑岫相顛倒。
 誰揭頰玉盤，
 東方發紅照。
 春熱張鶴蓋，
 兔目官槐小。
- 15 思焦面如病，
 嘗膽腸似絞。
 京國心爛漫，
 夜夢歸家少。
 發軔東門外，
- 20 天地皆浩浩。
 青樹驪山頭，

3.43 Returning to Changgu in Spring

- Only when my hair was tied up did I begin reading books – ¹
 no early start, alas, to finding my way in the world.
 Before Zhong Jun has ridden the imperial stage-carriage,
 Master Yan's temple-locks are already old and grey.²
- 5 Heaven's net is indeed lofty and vast;
 yet earnest scholars toil unrelieved.
 To my roving gaze unfolds an array of sweet and lovely things;
 but my wanderer's heart is bitter as marshpepper.
 Drought clouds of the second or third month:
- 10 peaks and hills, jumbled topsy-turvy.
 Who lifted this platter of ruddy jade
 that from the east casts its red beams?
 In springtime heat are spread crane-feather canopies,
 the rabbit-eye buds on the official sophoras still small.
- 15 My thoughts scorch within, and my face is like an invalid's
 as I taste gall, my guts form knots within me.³
 With affairs of the capital my heart has long run rampant;
 by nights my dreams of return home have grown few.
 As I remove my wheelchocks outside the eastern gate;
- 20 both sky and earth at once seem vast and open.
 Green trees cover the tops of Mt. Li's peaks;

1 *Shu fa* 束髮 (“tying up the hair”) refers to the stage of the “full-grown child” (*cheng tong* 成童) at fifteen.

2 Zhong Jun 終軍 (133–112 BCE) was a youth who gained the appreciation of Emperor Wu of the Han, and was sent as imperial emissary on several occasions; “Master Yan” here is Confucius’s most favored disciple Yan Hui 顏回, who grew white hair while still a young man, and died prematurely (see also 4.18).

3 “Tasting gall”: The Yue king Goujian 勾踐 (?–464 BCE) tasted gall and slept on a brushwood mat, to keep present to mind his vow to take revenge on the king of Wu.

- 花風滿秦道。
宮臺光錯落，
裝畫徧峯嶠。
25 細綠及團紅，
當路雜啼笑。
香氣下高廣，
鞍馬正華耀。
獨乘雞棲車，
30 自覺少風調。
心曲語形影，
祇身焉足樂。
豈能脫負擔，
刻鵠曾無兆。
35 幽幽太華側，
老柏如建纛。
龍皮相排戛，
翠羽更蕩掉。
驅趨委憔悴，
40 眺覽強笑貌。
花蔓閼行軒，
穀烟暝深徼。
少健無所就，

- a flowery breeze fills the roads of Qin.
 Light glinting from palaces and terraces is scattered all about;
 arranged as in a painting filled with peaks and buttes.
- 25 Fine greenery and discs of red –
 they face the road with a mix of weeping and smiles.
 A fragrant wind descends across this high plain
 where horses and rigging put on a dazzling display.
 Riding alone in this chickenroost of a carriage¹
- 30 I can't help feeling the lack of style.
 Thus speaks my inner heart to form and shadow:
 "This self of ours – what delight is in it?
 What hope have we of shedding the burdens we bear? –
 and as for 'carving a swan,' there is nary a sign."²
- 35 Along the shady slopes of Mt. Taihua
 old cypresses rise up like battle standards.
 Dragon-skinned, they bump and knock together;
 their emerald plumage also sways and bobs.
 From my harried rushing, I'm indeed taxed and wearied,
- 40 but gazing into distant vistas, I put on a cheerful mien.
 Tendrils of flowers impede my drive-pole's progress;
 gossamer mists grow dark in deep remoteness.
 To be young and able-bodied, and come to nothing

1 A folk ditty about Zhu Zhen 朱震, an upright magistrate of the Han, described him as riding in a carriage like a chickencoop.

2 Echoing an exhortation by Ma Yuan 馬援 (14 BCE–49 CE), a general of the early Eastern Han, to his sons, urging them to strive to be scrupulous and proper gentlemen rather than aiming for heroic or extraordinary achievements. He said that if one fails at carving a swan, it will still resemble a wild duck; if one fails at carving a tiger, however, it will look like a dog.

- 入門媿家老。
 45 聽講依大樹，
 觀書臨曲沼。
 知非出柙虎，
 甘作藏霧豹。
 韓鳥處繒繳，
 50 湘儵在籠罩。
 狹行無廓落，
 壯士徒輕躁。

3.44 昌谷詩

- 昌谷五月稻，
 細青滿平水。
 遙巒相壓疊，
 顏綠愁墮地。
 5 光潔無秋思，
 涼曠吹浮媚。
 竹香滿淒寂，
 粉節塗生翠。
 草髮垂恨鬢，
 10 光露泣幽淚。
 層圍爛洞曲，

makes one abashed before one's elders on returning home.

- 45 Listening to a lecture, I lean on a great tree;
 reading a book, I overlook a winding lakeshore.
 Knowing that I am no tiger escaped from its cage,
 I'm content to be the leopard that hides in fog.¹
 The bird in Han dwells amid the line-arrows;²
 50 the dace of the Xiang river are in the bamboo weir.
 For bold endeavor there is no open country;
 in vain do stalwart heroes lightly spring to action.

3.44 Poem of Changgu

- At Changgu, rice-paddies in midsummer:
 fine strands of blue-green fill the level waters.
 Far-off pinnacles pile and press:
 tottering verdure one fears will crash to earth.
 5 The light is clean with no hint of autumn;
 a cool unhindered breeze sets these charms aflutter.
 Bamboos' scent fills the utter stillness,
 their powdery nodes, pale daubs on fresh emerald.
 In grasses' coiffures drape locks of neglected ladies;
 10 sparkling dewdrops weep tears of loneliness.
 Through layered enclosures gleams a twisting passage;

1 A familiar analogy likens the leopard that hides in the fog to nurture the vivid coloring of his spots and avoid capture, to the gentleman in reclusion who cultivates his virtue and avoids calamity.

2 "Line-arrows": A fowling weapon – a fine line attached to the arrow facilitated the retrieval of the downed bird.

- 芳徑老紅醉。
攢蟲鏤古柳，
蟬子鳴高邃。
15 大帶委黃葛，
紫蒲交狹浹。
石錢差復藉，
厚葉皆蟠膩。
汰沙好平白，
20 立馬印青字。
晚鱗自遨遊，
瘦鵠暝單峙。
嘹嘹濕蛄聲，
咽源驚濺起。
25 紆緩玉真路，
神娥蕙花裏。
苔絮縈澗礫，
山實垂頰紫。
小柏儼重扇，
30 肥松突丹髓。
鳴流走響韻，
壟秋拖光穢。
鶯唱閨女歌，

- by the fragrant path, aging pinks are drunk.
 Massed insects carve an ancient willow;
 a cicada cries from its high retreat.
- 15 A broad sash: the yellow kudzu drapes;
 purple reeds over narrow creek-banks cross.
 Stone coins: lichen-blooms, overlapped and piled;
 thick leaves are strewn in unctuous coils.
 The clean-washed sands delight in level whiteness,
- 20 where a standing horse imprints green characters.
 Evening fins disport themselves at leisure,
 a gaunt crane stands alone at nightfall.
 Keening, the chirr of the damp mole crickets,
 a choking spring, startled, bubbles up.
- 25 Gently winding, the road of the Jade Perfected;¹
 the divine lovely amid blossoming basil.
 Threads of algae tangle amid creek-bed pebbles;
 mountain fruits bend down, ochre and purple.
 Small cypress trees the image of layered fans;
- 30 from fat pine-trunks oozes marrow of cinnabar.
 A singing stream sets flying its sounding echoes,
 autumn on hillocks brings forth shining tassels.
 An oriole warbles: song of a Min girl,²

1 I.e., the road leading to the shrine of the Goddess Lanxiang (see Endnote, along with 4.25). A putatively original note to l. 25 reads, "Near the route of Empress Wu's imperial progress" 近武后巡幸路.

2 "Min girl": Using the graph 閔, *min*/"pity" as a variant form of the geographical/ethnic term Min 閩.

瀑懸楚練帔。

35 風露滿笑眼，

駢巖雜舒墜。

亂篠迸石嶺，

細頸喧島岵。

日脚掃昏翳，

40 新雲啟華閼。

謐謐厭夏光，

商風道清氣。

高眠服玉容，

燒桂祀天几。

45 霧衣夜披拂，

眠壇夢真粹。

待駕棲鸞老，

故宮椒壁圯。

鴻璫數鈴響，

50 羈臣發涼思。

陰藤束朱鍵，

龍帳着魑魅。

碧錦帖花檉，

香衾事殘貴。

55 歌塵蠹木在，

- a waterfall hangs a canopy of Chu silk.
 35 Wind and dew are filled with smiling eyes.
 linked crags alternate, stretched upward and toppled.
 Tangled bamboo bursts forth on stony outcrops,
 thin throats raise tumult about the island eddies.
 A sunbeam sweeps away obscuring darkness,
 40 new clouds open flowery recesses.
 When mild calm grows weary of summer's brightness,
 autumn winds will usher in clear air.
 In high slumber, the countenance of the one who took jade;
 burning cassia offered up at the celestial table.¹
 45 Robes of fog drape and flutter by night,
 a sleeper by the altar encounters her true form in dream.
 Awaiting the carriage, perched simurghs have grown old;
 The former palace's pepper-scented walls, collapsed.
 Several jangling echoes of bells in the eaves
 50 set loose a wandering minister's chilly musings.²
 Dark vines clasp shut the bolted vermilion gate,
 the dragon canopy now infested with hill-sprites.
 Emerald brocade, with appliqué of tamarisk:
 fragrant quilt to serve remnants of majesty.
 55 Dust once stirred by song lingers on rotting timbers;³

1 The suggestion is of an actively maintained shrine, so "countenance" here likely refers to a statue or painted icon.

2 A putatively original note at l. 47 reads "Fuchang Palace is to the east of the valley" 福昌宮在谷東. "Valley" here refers to Changgu ("Chang valley") itself. The simurgh (*luan* 鸞) is a mythical bird of auspicious omen, often appearing in the scenes of celestial cavalcades and in representations of the processions of human emperors – in the latter instance, often in the form of carriage bells (*luan* 鑾). The image here suggests either an icon or painting of simurghs in the palace ruins or an aural association via the bells beneath the eaves.

3 The phrase "dust stirred by song" alludes to the story of a Han dynasty singer known as Master Yu, whose singing was so resonant it stirred up the dust on the hall's roofbeams.

- 舞綵長雲似。
珍壤割繡段，
里俗祖風義。
鄰凶不相杵，
60 疫病無邪祀。
鮐皮識仁惠，
卬角知醜恥。
縣省司刑官，
戶乏詬租吏。
65 竹藪添墮簡，
石磯引鉤餌。
溪灣轉水帶，
芭蕉傾蜀紙。
岑光晃縠襟，
70 孤景拂繁事。
泉樽陶宰酒，
月眉謝郎妓。
丁丁幽鐘遠，
矯矯單飛至。
75 霞巘殷嵯峨，
危溜聲爭次。
淡蛾流平碧，

- of those dancers' streaming ribbons, long clouds are now the likeness.
 Precious soil cut into squares of embroidery:
 local customs here revere traditions of righteousness.
 When a neighbor mourns, they refrain from rice-pounding;¹
 60 during outbreaks of contagion they hold no wicked rites.
 Wrinkled elders know kindly assistance;
 even children in pigtails possess a sense of shame.
 County administration is spared the need for penal officers;
 in the doorways is no clerk shouting to collect tax.
 65 From bamboo forests come replacement slips for books;²
 riverside boulders draw those with hook and bait.
 A bend in the creek trails and twines a watery sash;
 plantain-leaves tilt Shu writing paper.³
 Light from mountain summits shines on crepe silk robe-front;
 70 these lonely beams smooth away teeming cares.
 The flowing spring's bowl bears wine of Magistrate Tao;
 in the moth-eyebrow of the moon one glimpses Master Xie's courtesan.⁴
Dong, dong a bell in the quiet distance;
 soaring aloft, a lone flight reaches its end.
 75 Cloud-rose peaks ruddily tower and loom;
 echoes of a plunging rivulet chase one another in headlong rush.
 A lightly traced eyebrow floats across flat sapphire:

1 An echo of an account in the *Li ji* of virtuous folkways of ancient times.

2 By Tang times, books in the form of bundles of bamboo slips were an artifact of ancient history; thus suggesting a local economy of repair and maintenance of such books expresses hyperbolically the cultural refinement of the locality, and its preservation of ancient traditions.

3 Several types of paper from Shu were luxury items in the Tang; here the landscape itself provides the stationery.

4 "Magistrate Tao" is Tao Qian, the renowned Eastern Jin poet and recluse for whom drinking was a favored poetic topic; Xie An was an eminent statesman of the Eastern Jin also known for the elegant style of his leisure life, including going on excursions in the company of several courtesans (see also 2.23 l. 84, with footnote).

- 薄月眇陰悴。
 涼光入澗岸，
 80 廓盡山中意。
 漁童下宵網，
 霜禽竦烟翅。
 潭鏡滑蛟涎，
 浮珠噉魚戲。
 85 風桐瑤匣瑟，
 螢星錦城使。
 柳綴長縹帶，
 篴掉短笛吹。
 石根緣綠蘚，
 90 蘆筍抽丹漬。
 漂旋弄天影，
 古檜挐雲臂。
 愁月薇帳紅，
 胃雲香蔓刺。
 95 芒麥平百井，

1 The “flat sapphire” may refer either to the surface of a pond where the moon’s reflection appears, or to the sky itself. In view of the date given in the title note (see the Endnote) the reference would be to the last thin arc of the waning moon, rising just before dawn.

- a thin moon, its faint shadow feeble.¹
 A cool light enters the ravines' walls;
 80 clearing away all sense of mountain mystery.
 Fisher-boys lower their predawn nets;
 frost-white birds stretch out their misty wings.
 The mirror pool is slick with dragon spittle;²
 amid floating bubbles, gulping fish at play.
 85 Wind through the *wutong*-trees: a psaltery in jade-inlaid case;
 amid fireflies' constellations, the Brocade City messengers.³
 Willows are decked in long pale-blue silk bands;
 in bamboo-thickets sway orchestras of short flutes.
 Along boulders' roots curves green moss;
 90 reed-sprouts burst forth from ruddy muck.
 A whirling eddy jostles the sky's reflection;
 an ancient locust tree reaches up: cloud-clutching arm.
 In mournful moonlight a canopy of climbing rose shines pink,
 entangling clouds in its fragrant tendrils' thorns.
 95 The spiked wheat spreads flat across boundless farmland;

2 "Dragon spittle" or ambergris was collected along the seashore; tradition held that similar crusty residues appearing on the banks of lakes likewise signaled the presence of dragons (cf. **W.2**).

3 "Brocade City" was a traditional alternate designation of Chengdu. In the story referred to in this line, Emperor He of the Eastern Han 漢和帝 (r. 88–106) sent two emissaries on an undercover fact-finding mission to Chengdu. A young scholar named Li He 李郃, well-versed in astronomical lore, met them dressed in their "plainclothes" undercover attire, and asked if they knew when the imperial emissaries were arriving. When asked how he had learned of such a mission, he replied that he had observed two "messenger stars" entering the astral domain of Yizhou, corresponding to the terrestrial Chengdu.

閒乘列千肆。
刺促成紀人，
好學鴟夷子。

3.45 銅駝悲

落魄三月罷，
尋花去東家。
誰作送春曲，
洛岸悲銅駝。

5 橋南多馬客，
北山饒古人。
客飲杯中酒，
駝悲千萬春。

生世莫徒勞，
10 風吹盤上燭。
厭見桃株笑，
銅駝夜來哭。

1 “Boundless farmland,” literally “a hundred *jing* 井”; “swaths of land,” literally “*sheng* 乘.” Both *jing* and *sheng* were measures of land area appearing in classical descriptions of Zhou dynasty agriculture, but no longer in active use by the Tang: the scale suggested is hyperbolic; more importantly, these archaic units of measure reinforce the idea of Changgu as a place where ancient traditions live on.

throughout the untilled swaths of land are arrayed a thousand markets.¹
 So that this harried scion of Chengji
 wishes to emulate Master Chiyi.²

3.45 Grief of the Bronze Camels

Down on my luck at the third month's close,
 in search of flowers I leave my eastern home.
 Who plays the tune to send off spring? –
 by the banks of the Luo the bronze camels grieve.³

- 5 South of the bridge are many mounted merry-makers
 the northern hills are filled with ancients.⁴
 The wanderer drinks the wine inside his cup;
 the camels grieve for a thousand, ten thousand springs.

- Life in this world – don't trouble yourself for nothing –
 10 is a windblown candle standing on a plate.
 Having seen their fill of blooming peach-trees' smiles,
 the bronze camels, as night falls, weep.

2 Chengji, in Qinzhou in the northwest of the Tang empire, was the ancestral homeland of the Tang imperial lineage. "Master Chiyi" is the Warring States era hero Fan Li 范蠡 (536–448), who after accomplishing his aims in political life, retired to live a carefree life as a recluse.

3 A pair of large bronze statues of camels of Han-dynasty provenance flanked a street in Luoyang, which took its name from them.

4 The Beimang 北邙 mountains north of Luoyang are frequently mentioned as a burial site from Han times onward. The phrase "northern hills" here could be construed as a contracted form of "Bei[mang] mountains" – the reference to the burial grounds in either case is the same.

3.46 自昌谷到洛後問

- 九月大野白，
 蒼岑竦秋門。
 寒涼十月末，
 雪霰濛曉昏。
 5 澹色結晝天，
 心事填空雲。
 道上千里風，
 野竹蛇涎痕。
 石澗凍波聲，
 10 雞叫清寒晨。
 強行到東舍，
 解馬投舊鄰。
 東家名廖者，
 鄉曲傳姓辛。
 15 杖頭非飲酒，
 吾請造其人。
 始欲南去楚，
 又將西適秦。
 襄王與武帝，

1 "Autumn gate": a pair of heavily forested mountains, named for their resemblance to the towers flanking a city or palace gate.

2 "Snakedrool": referring to the shiny tracks of frozen rain striping the surface of the bamboo.

3.46 An Inquiry After Going from Changgu to Luoyang

- In the ninth month, the vast plain is bare and pale;
 the grey-green peaks beyond lift up autumnal gates.¹
 By the blustery chill of the tenth month's end
 snow and sleet enshroud both dawn and dusk.
- 5 A pallid hue congeals the daytime sky
 and my heart's worries are packed tight as the clouds.
 On the road blows wind from a thousand *li*;
 bamboo of the wilds is streaked with snakesdroll traces.²
 Amid the rocks the ripples' sound is frozen;
- 10 a cock crows in the clear cold of dawn.
 I force myself to continue to the eastern lodge;
 unharnessing my horse I seek shelter with old neighbors.
 In the house to the east lives one named Liao,
 whom the locals say is of the surname Xin.³
- 15 The string of coins on my staff is not to buy drink – ⁴
 I wish to pay a visit to this man.
 At first I wanted to go south to Chu,
 but then again was minded to head west to Qin.
 King Xiang and Emperor Wu

3 The *Zuo zhuan* 左傳 (*Zuo Tradition*) mentions a Jin man named Xin Liao said to be skilled in prognostication.

4 The *Shishuo xinyu* records that Ruan Xuanzi 阮宣子 would carry a bundle of coins on the end of his staff, with which to buy wine and get happily drunk by himself whenever he came across a tavern. Li He applies the reference in reverse to say the cash he brings with him is not for drinking but to pay the fortune-teller.

- 20 各自留青春。
 聞道蘭臺上，
 宋玉無歸魂。
 綳縹兩行字，
 蟄蟲蠹秋芸。
 25 為探秦臺意，
 豈命余負薪。

3.47 七月一日曉入太行山

- 一夕繞山秋，
 香露溼蒙萊。
 新橋倚雲阪，
 候蟲嘶露樸。
 5 洛南今已遠，
 越禽誰為熟。
 石氣何淒淒，
 老莎如短鋸。

1 Orchid Terrace was a site at which Song Yu was supposed to have gone on outings with King Xiang of Chu.

2 Rue was used to repel insects from books (cf. 3.48, l. 9).

3 The exact reference is unknown, but this does seem to indicate a decision by Li He to try his fortunes in "Qin," i.e., at Chang'an.

- 20 each in his way has left a legacy of green spring.
 From what I hear, atop Orchid Terrace
 Song Yu has had no returning soul.¹
 Those two lines of writing inside their covers –
 dormant insects have devoured them, rue and all.²
- 25 Inquire for me of the attitude at the Qin terrace – ³
 could my fate really be to carry wood?

3.47 First Day of the Seventh Month, at Dawn: Entering the Taihang Mountains

- In a single night, autumn has arrived throughout the mountains;⁴
 fragrant dew coats dodder and carpetgrass.
 A new bridge leans against the cloudswept slope;
 insects of the season cry among the dewsoaked brush.
- 5 I have now left the south of the Luo far behind,
 for whom do my bird-of-Yue crabapples ripen?
 How chilly and bleak the mists rising from the stones;
 the tough sedgegrass spines are like small arrowheads.

⁴ Suggesting signs of autumn scenery – but this statement is also literally true, since in the traditional Chinese calendar the first day of the seventh month is the first day of autumn.

3.48 秋涼詩寄正字十二兄

- 閉門感秋風，
 幽姿任契闊。
 大野生素空，
 天地曠肅殺。
 5 露光泣殘蕙，
 蟲響連夜發。
 房寒寸輝薄，
 迎風絳紗折。
 披書古芸馥，
 10 恨唱華容歇。
 百日不相知，
 花光變涼節。
 弟兄誰念慮，
 牋翰既通達。
 15 青袍度白馬，
 草簡奏東闕。
 夢中相聚笑，
 覺見半牀月。
 長思劇循環，
 20 亂憂抵覃葛。

3.48 “Autumn Chill” Poem, Sent to the Collator, My Twelfth Elder Brother

- As I shut my gate, I feel the autumn wind,
 a quiet figure long resigned to isolation.
 The broad plain gives way to a pallid sky;
 throughout heaven and earth the stern quelling force holds sway.
- 5 Dew-gleam weeps on the tattered basil;
 insects’ reverberations carry unbroken through the night.
 My room is cold, its inch of glimmering light feeble;
 receiving the wind, my crimson curtain twists.
 As I pore through books the ancient rue is heady;¹
- 10 from resentful singing my florid complexion has faded.
 A hundred days had passed with no news between us,
 as flowers and light changed to this chilly season.
 Who but a brother to think caringly of a brother? –
 a missive from you has reached me with your tidings.
- 15 In blue robes you ride about on a white horse
 and draft reports for submission at the eastern gate.²
 In my dreams we are together, laughing;
 when I wake, moonlight covers half my bed.
 This long yearning is worse than a spinning ring;
- 20 unruly cares, tangled as kudzu vines.

1 Cf. 3.46, l. 24.

2 The blue robes were a prerogative of the ninth-rank office the cousin held; the “east gate” here refers to the fact that his post belongs to the administration of the Crown Prince.

4.1 艾如張

錦襜褕，
繡襦襦。
強飲啄，
哺爾雛。

- 5 隴東臥穉滿風雨，
莫信籠媒隴西去。
齊人織網如素空，
張在野田平碧中。
網絲漠漠無形影，
10 誤爾觸之傷首紅。
艾葉綠花誰剪刻，
中藏禍機不可測。

4.1 Net in the Wormwood

You there in the brocade robe,
in the embroidered vest –
eat and drink well,
and feed your chicks!¹

- 5 East of the hill are tassels of grain toppled by the storm;
don't trust the caged panderer and go west of the hill!²

The Qi folk weave their nets like white sky
and spread them in the level emerald of the wild fields.
The net-strands hazily float, without form or shadow;
10 if by error you strike them your head will be bloodied red.

Those wormwood leaves, those green blossoms, who carved and formed
them? –
concealed within are devices of unfathomable calamity.

1 Ll. 1–4: these lines are addressed to the pheasant who is the intended victim of the bird-net, anthropomorphized by having its colorful plumage impressionistically described in terms of human fashion.

2 “Caged panderer”: 籠媒, lit., “cage(d) matchmaker,” refers to a technique reported in early sources of using a caged bird as a hunting decoy to attract wild birds.

4.2 上雲樂

飛香走紅滿天春，
花龍盤盤上紫雲。
三千宮女列金屋，
五十絃瑟海上聞。

- 5 天江碎碎銀沙路，
羸女機中斷烟素。
縫舞衣，
八月一日君前舞。

4.3 巫山高

- 碧叢叢，高插天，
大江翻瀾神曳烟。
楚魂尋夢風颼然，
曉風飛雨生苔錢。
5 瑤姬一去一千年，
丁香筇竹啼老猿。
古祠近月蟾桂寒，
椒花墜紅濕雲間。

1 “Golden rooms” here is both an evocation of the splendor of the palace as well as an echo of the familiar story of the future emperor Wu of the Han, who, when still a toddler, was asked his opinion about a charming female cousin; the future emperor said if he could marry her, he would keep her in a golden chamber.

4.2 Music for Mounting the Clouds

Floating incense, rushing reds, springtime fills the sky;
the florid dragon twists and twines, mounting the purple clouds.
Three thousand palace women are arrayed in the golden rooms;¹
the fifty-stringed psaltery is heard over the sea.²

- 5 Heaven's river rustles along its bed of silver sand;
in the Ying daughter's loom, a cut-off patch of misty paleness.³
To sew dancing robes,
and on the first of the eighth month, to dance before the Lord.

4.3 Shamanka Mountain is High

- Dense-thicketed green jade, a height jutting into sky;
the Great River tosses its waves; the goddess trails mists.
A Chu soul followed in dream as the wind shrilly whined;
flying squalls on the dawn wind spread coin-strings of moss.
5 Since Jasper Consort departed it has been a thousand years;⁴
amid clove-blossom and walking-stick bamboo weep old gibbons.
Her ancient shrine is near the moon, where toad-osmanthus is cold;
pepper trees shed their pink blossoms among wet clouds.

2 The "fifty-stringed psaltery" recalls the story of White Maiden and Fu Xi (see 1.1, l. 3).

3 This couplet echoes the story of Nong Yu, daughter of Duke Mu of Qin 秦穆公 (r. 659–621 BCE), who learned to play the panpipes from Xiao Shi, eventually ascending into heaven with him as a transcendent. Ying was the surname of the Qin ducal (later royal, and finally imperial) lineage. The image of weaving involves a further echo of the legend of the Weaver Maiden (see 1.9).

4 "Jasper Consort," Yao Ji 瑤姬, a daughter of the Red God who died before marriage, was said to have transformed into the goddess whom Song Yu described to King Xiang in the "*Fu* on the Gaotang Shrine."

4.4 摩多樓子

玉塞去金人，
二萬四千里。
風吹沙作雲，
一時渡遼水。

5 天白水如練，
甲絲雙串斷。
行行莫苦辛，
城月猶殘半。

曉氣朔烟上，
10 趑趑胡馬蹄。
行人臨水別，
隴水長東西。

1 The tune title “Madalouzi” ultimately derives from a transliteration of the name of Buddha’s disciple Maudgalyāyana, but these lyrics to the tune by Li He – like Li Bai’s, which likely inspired them – are cast in the mode of the frontier poem, and do not reveal any specifically Buddhist connection (see Endnote).

2 The “Jade Pass” is Yumenguan 玉門關, the transit node near Dunhuang referred to in the Tang as the “gateway to the western regions.” The “Golden Man” alludes

4.4 Madalouzi¹

From the Jade Pass to the Golden Man²
 it's twenty-four thousand *li*.
 Where winds blow the sands into banks of cloud
 that in a moment cross over the Liao River.³

- 5 The sky is white and the water is like pure silk;
 the double-threading of the mail coat snaps.
 “March on, march on, and don't gripe at the hardship;
 there's still a good half left of that moonlight over the citadel.”

- Amid dawn airs the boreal mists rise;
 10 in prancing flight the nomad horse-hooves clatter.
 Travelers part beside the waters;
 water from the Long highlands flows away, forever east, forever west.⁴

to the story that the Han general Huo Qubing 霍去病 (140–117 BCE), on a successful campaign against several Xiongnu potentates, once captured and brought back a golden statue that a Xiongnu king had used in sacrifices to heaven.

3 The Liao River is in the far northeast; Li He's use of frontier geographical terms is shaped more by *yuefu* associations than by real geography (see Endnote).

4 “Long highlands”: Proverbial as the watershed at which spilled water would divide, flowing partly to the east and partly to the west.

4.5 猛虎行

- 長戈莫春，
 強弩莫抨。
 乳孫哺子，
 教得生獍。
 5 舉頭為城，
 掉尾為旌。
 東海黃公，
 愁見夜行。
 道逢騶虞，
 10 牛哀不平。
 何用尺刀，
 壁上雷鳴。
 泰山之下，
 婦人哭聲。
 15 官家有程，
 吏不敢聽。

1 A Master Huang of Donghai had magical powers to quell tigers; later in life his power dwindled, and he began drinking to excess. On a final mission to quell a tiger his powers failed, and the tiger killed him.

2 The Zouyu was a mythical beast, an emblem of kindness. The *Huainanzi* 淮南子 recounts that a Gongniu Ai 公牛哀, after a seven-day illness, turned into a tiger. When his elder brother came to visit, Gongniu Ai ate him.

4.5 Ballad: The Fierce Tiger

- None dares thrust the long halberd;
 none dares bend the stout crossbow.
 Suckling grandchildren and nourishing children,
 it breeds them for ferocity.
- 5 Its lifted head for its fortress;
 a swishing tail for its banner.
 Master Huang of the Eastern Seaboard
 dreads seeing it on his night travels.¹
 On meeting a Zouyu on the road,
- 10 Niu Ai became indignant.²
 What use is the foot-long sword
 that cries like thunder there on the wall?
 Beneath Mount Tai
 is the sound of a woman's weeping.
- 15 Official orders are clearly laid out;
 the officers dare not listen.³

3 An oft-cited story from the "Tangong" 檀弓 chapter of the *Li ji* tells how Confucius and Zilu 子路 encountered a woman near Mt. Tai weeping bitterly at a tomb. She explained that her father-in-law had been killed by a tiger, followed by her husband, and that she was now burying her son, who had also been killed by a tiger. When asked why she did not leave the place, she replied, "There is no harsh government here." Interpretation of the closing lines is divided: either the orders compel the officers to carry out official policies without daring to heed the complaints of the populace, or they are under orders to attack the tiger, but are too afraid of it to comply.

4.6 日出行

白日下崑崙，
發光如舒絲。
徒照葵藿心，
不照遊子悲。

5 折折黃河曲，
日從中央轉。
暘谷耳曾聞，
若木眼不見。

奈爾鑠石，
10 胡為銷人。
羿彎弓屬矢，
那不中足，
令久不得奔。
詎教晨光夕昏。

4.6 Ballad: “The Sun rises ...”

The pale sun sinks beneath the Kunlun mountains,
 sending out its light like spread strands of silk.
 It shines only on sunflower and betony¹
 it shines not on the wanderer's grief.

- 5 Turning and twisting are the bends of the Yellow River,
 yet the sun wheels straight down the middle.
 Of Warm Valley my ears have heard the tale,
 but the Ruo Tree my eyes have never seen.²

- Why do you melt stones,
 10 for what do you dissipate humans?
 Yi bent his bow and nocked arrows –
 why didn't he hit your foot,
 to stop you from rushing off?
 Then how could you make it light at dawn, dark at dusk?³

1 Sunflower and betony were proverbial for their steadfastness in always turning to face the sun.

2 “Warm Valley”: Yanggu (also written 湯谷) is the mythic valley in the far east from which the sun emerges; the Ruo tree at the far western edge of the earth marks where it descends (cf. 3.41).

3 Yi was the mythic archer who, when all ten suns were in the sky at the same time, shot nine of them down. The reference to the sun's “foot” at l. 12 perhaps summons an image of the sun in its traditional animal form as a crow (which does make an explicit appearance at this point in alternate versions of the song; see Endnote).

4.7 苦篁調笑引

請說軒轅在時事，
伶倫採竹二十四。
伶倫採之自崑邱，
軒轅詔遣中分作十二。

- 5 伶倫以之正音律，
軒轅以之調元氣。

當時黃帝上天時，
二十三管咸相隨，
唯留一管人間吹。

- 10 無德不能得此管，
此管沉埋虞舜祠。

4.8 拂舞歌辭

吳娥聲絕天，
空雲閒徘徊。
門外滿車馬，
亦須生綠苔。

1 Ling Lun was said to be music master to Xuanyuan, i.e., the legendary Yellow Emperor.

2 Shun is a legendary sage-king of notionally later era than Xuanyuan; the *Shang shu* describes Shun's founding of the institution of musical pitches and modes along with his minister Kui 夔; Kui's role as music master to Shun is mirrored

4.7 Teasing Rhapsody on the Bitter Bamboo

Let me tell of events from when Xuanyuan was on earth:

Ling Lun gathered bamboo, twenty-four stalks.¹

Ling Lun gathered them from Kunlun's hills.

By Xuanyuan's edict was ordained their equal division into twelves.

5 Ling Lun used them to set right the tones and scales.

Xuanyuan used them to attune the primal breath.

At that time when the Yellow Emperor ascended to heaven,

twenty-three of the pipes he took along with him,

leaving only one pipe to be blown in the human world.

10 Those lacking virtue cannot obtain this pipe.

This pipe lies buried at the shrine of Shun.²

4.8 Lyrics to the Whisk Dance

The Wu maiden's voice pierces the sky;

clouds in the void languidly hover.³

Outside the gate are thronged carriages and horses –

there too will sprout green moss.

in that of Ling Lun vis-à-vis the Yellow Emperor. Traditions relating to Shun's travel to, and death and burial in, the south play a key role in the cultural and religious geography of the *Chuci* (cf. 1.32).

3 Echoing the story of Qin Qing whose singing stopped the floating clouds (cf. 1.1, l. 2).

5 樽有烏程酒，
勸君千萬壽。

全勝漢武錦樓上，
曉望晴寒飲花露。
東方日不破，

10 天光無老時，
丹成作蛇乘白霧，
千年重化玉井土。

從蛇作土二千載，
吳堤綠草年年在。

15 背有八卦稱神仙，
邪鱗頑甲滑腥涎。

4.9 夜坐吟

踏踏馬蹄誰見過，
眼看北斗直天河。
西風羅幕生翠波，
鉛華笑妾顰青娥。

- 5 In the jug is Wucheng wine;
I wish you ten million years of life.

Completely outdoing Emperor Wu of the Han, who, from his ornate tower,
gazed out at dawn hoping for clear cold weather, to drink his floriate dew.¹

- The sun in the east will not shatter;
10 the sky's light will not grow old;
your elixir achieved, you'll become a snake riding off on a white fog,
and in a thousand years transform again, to mud beneath the jade-rimmed well.

From following the snake, to becoming mud, through those
two millennia,
green grass beside the Wu dike will be here every year.

- 15 On its back, the eight trigrams – it's reputedly immortal –
wicked scales and stubborn shell, slimed in rank drool.²

4.9 Chant: Sitting at Night

A clattering of horses' hooves – who sees them pass?
as I've sat watching, the northern Dipper has drawn upright by heaven's
River.³

In the west wind, emerald waves shimmer across the silken canopy;
my face-powder mocks me for my furrowed dark moth-brows.

1 On Emperor Wu's collecting of dew as an elixir, see 2.1, with note.

2 Echoing accounts of a divine tortoise bearing the diagrams that served as the basis for the *Zhou Changes* (*Zhou yi* 周易) on its back.

3 The Big Dipper would be standing vertically on its handle around midnight in midwinter.

- 5 為君起唱長相思，
 簾外嚴霜皆倒飛。
 明星爛爛東方陸，
 紅霞稍出東南涯，
 陸郎去矣乘班騅。

4.10 箜篌引

- 公乎公乎，
 提壺將焉如。
 屈平沉湘不足慕，
 徐衍入海誠為愚。
- 5 公乎公乎，
 牀有菅席盤有魚。
 北里有賢兄，
 東鄰有小姑。
 隴畝油油黍與葫，
- 10 瓦甌濁醪蟻浮浮。
 黍可食，醪可飲，
 公乎公乎其奈居。
 被髮奔流竟何如，
 賢兄小姑哭鳴鳴。

- 5 For you I rise and sing “I Always Long for You” – ¹
 outside the curtain, the bitter frost reverses in its flight.
 Bright stars shimmer in the eastern reaches of the sky;
 rosy clouds by degrees emerge from its southeast edge.
 Master Lu has gone, astride his piebald steed.²

4.10 Harp Rhapsody

- Sir! Sir!
 Bearing your jug, where do you mean to go?
 Qu Ping who sank into the Xiang is not worth emulating;
 Xu Yan who walked into the sea was truly stupid.³
- 5 Sir! Sir!
 On your couch is a white rush mat, and on your plate is fish.
 In the north village is your worthy brother,
 with the neighbors to the east is your little sister.
 The fields are lush with millet and garlic;
 10 on the earthenware jug’s cloudy brew the ant-flecks teem.⁴
 The millet you can eat; the brew you can drink –
 Sir! Sir! What shall we do?
 With hair flying wild you rush into the stream – what will become of
 you?
 Worthy brother and little sister weep “*woo woo!*”

1 The face-powder, applied in anticipation of a tryst, now “mocks” her as she broods alone with furrowed brows. “I Always Long for You” was both a favorite old ballad title as well as a ubiquitous stock phrase in old song lyrics.

2 “Master Lu”: a stock reference for the “absent lover” in boudoir lament song; cf. the close of 1.29.

3 Qu Ping, better known as Qu Yuan 屈原, is generally said to have drowned himself in the Miluo 汨羅 river, but the Xiang river is also occasionally mentioned as the site of his suicide. Xu Yan is said to have lived in the waning days of the Zhou dynasty, but little more is retained of his story than what is implied here: he clasped a stone to drown himself in the sea.

4 “Ant-flecks”: an attractive feature in new wine (see also 3.2, l. 27 with note).

4.11 平城下

飢寒平城下，
夜夜守明月。
別劍無玉花，
海風斷鬢髮。

5 塞長連白空，
遙見漢旗紅。
青帳吹短笛，
烟霧濕畫龍。

日晚在城上，
10 依希望城下。
風吹枯蓬起，
城中嘶瘦馬。

借問筑城吏，
去關幾千里。
15 惟愁裹屍歸，
不惜倒戈死。

4.11 Beneath Pingcheng

Hungry and cold beneath Pingcheng walls,
 night after night, I keep watch with the bright moon.
 The sword given at parting has lost its jewel luster;
 wind off the steppes has snapped the hairs of my temples and brow.

- 5 The mountains of the pass stretch into the pale sky;
 far away one can see the red of Han banners,
 where in dark green tents they blow the short fife –
 mists and fog dampen the painted dragon.¹

- Day draws to an end along the walls;
 10 in the dimness we gaze beneath the walls.
 A wind blows, and withered fleabane tumbles;
 inside the fort a gaunt horse whinnies.

I ask the overseer of rampart works:
 “From here to the pass, how many thousand *li*?”

- 15 I only fear going home in a horsehide bag;
 I wouldn't mind to raise a rebel spear and die.²

1 The watchman imagines the scenes of revelry in the camp in the distance, where conditions are seemingly far better. “Painted dragon”: an image on a battle standard.

2 The Eastern Han general Ma Yuan (see note to 3.43, l. 34) praised a manly martial ethos that would embrace the idea of one's body going home in a horsehide bag. The watchman of this poem has clearly grown disenchanted with such ideals; later commentators went to great lengths to avoid the clear meaning of this final couplet.

4.12 江南弄

江中綠霧起涼波，
天上疊巘紅嵯峨。

水風浦雲生老竹，
渚暝蒲帆如一幅。

- 5 鱸魚千頭酒百斛，
酒中倒臥南山綠。
吳歛越吟未終曲，
江上團團貼寒玉。

4.13 榮華樂

鳶肩公子二十余，
齒編貝，唇激朱。

氣如虹霓，
飲如建瓴，

- 5 走馬夜歸叫嚴更。

1 *Fu* 幅 was a standard width measurement for bolts of cloth – roughly two feet.

2 The possible doubled sense of this line eludes translation: it could also be construed, “As we collapse in drunkenness, the southern hills are green”; read this way, one could also detect an echo of the description of the drunken Xi Kang as being like a “jade mountain about to topple” (cf. 3.23). “Southern hills” is a

4.12 Jiangnan Caprice

Out in the river, dark mists rise from amid the chilly waves;
layered pinnacles of the sky are towering masses of red.

Wind on the water and clouds over the ford issue from the ancient
bamboo;

by the darkened shoals a rush-mat sail seems the width of a bolt of
cloth.¹

- 5 A thousand river-perch, a hundred kegs of ale:
in the wine-jar lies the inverted green of southern hills.²
Airs of Wu and chants of Yue – before their tunes are done,
on the river's surface appears a perfect disc, appliqué of cold jade.

4.13 Music of Flourishing Splendor

Crow-shouldered young master, just past twenty:³
his teeth rows of cowries, his lips a blazing red.

An aura like a rainbow,
he drinks like a gutterspout,

- 5 returning at night from a ride, he calls to wake the night watch.

scenic image, but also recalls the language of revellers' songs and vows, wishing one another lifespans like the southern hills (cf. 1.12.2).

3 The term "crow-shouldered" echoes historical descriptions of Liang Ji 梁冀 (?–159), and along with other references in this work identifies him as its central subject. Liang Ji dominated court politics of the Eastern Han for nearly two decades (see Endnote).

- 徑穿複道遊椒房，
 彪裘金玦雜花光。
 玉堂調笑金樓子，
 臺下戲學邯鄲倡。
 10 口吟舌話稱女郎，
 錦袂繡面漢帝旁。
 得明珠十斛，
 白璧一雙。
 新詔垂金曳紫光煌煌。
- 15 馬如飛，人如水，
 九卿六官皆望履。
 將迴日月先反掌，
 欲作江河惟畫地。
- 20 峩峩虎冠上切雲，
 竦劍晨趨凌紫氛。
 繡段千尋貽皂隸，
 黃金百鎰貺家臣。

1 “Tiered avenue”: upper and lower levels featured along sections of the private imperial routes around the capitals of both the Han and the Tang (cf. the “double-walled avenue” in 1.23.3, l. 8).

2 “Master of Golden Loft”: Xiao Yi 蕭繹 (508–555), Emperor Yuan of the Liang, here a figure for a cuckold (see Endnotes); Liang Ji’s wife Sun Shou had an affair with the slave Qin Gong (cf. 3.36). The “teasing” here is generally taken

Taking a shortcut through the tiered avenue, he dallies in pepper chambers;¹

his dappled coat and golden pendants interspersed with flowers' luster. In the jade hall there is teasing of the "Master of the Golden Loft";² japing beneath the stage he mimics Handan entertainers.

- 10 A mumbling mouth and lisping tongue befitting of a girl; in his brocade sleeves, with embroidered front, he sits by the emperor of Han.

He's awarded a hundred measures of bright pearls, and a pair of white jade rings.

By new decree he's bangled with gold, trailing purple, in dazzling splendor.³

- 15 Horses as though in flight, crowds like flowing water; the nine Chamberlains and Six Ministers all gaze on his heels. To turn back sun and moon, he first flips his palm; when he wants to make a river, a mere tracing of the ground suffices.

A towering tiger-cap that cuts through clouds;

- 20 standing tall and armed with sword he speeds at dawn, trampling purple vapors.⁴

A thousand fathoms of embroidered cloth he gifts to black-smocked slaves;

a hundred ounces of yellow gold he presents to his chamberlain.

to allude to this affair, but in context could also be a matter of Liang Ji himself mocking the husband of a woman he dallies with.

3 Referring to newly bestowed gold seals of office, with purple silk bands.

4 The tiger cap is an emblem of military command; "trampling purple vapors" conveys the idea that he moves about like a god, but also suggests encroachment on imperial prerogatives.

- 十二門前張大宅，
晴春烟起連天碧。
25 金鋪綴日雜紅光，
銅龍齧環似爭力。
瑤姬凝醉臥芳席，
海素籠窗空下隔。
丹穴取鳳充行庖，
30 玃玃如拳那足食。

金蟾呀呀蘭燭香，
軍裝武妓聲琅璫。
誰知花雨夜來過，
但見池臺春草長。

35 嘈嘈絃吹匝天開，
洪崖簫聲遶天來。
天長一矢貫雙虎，
雲弭絕騁聒旱雷。

- Before the twelve gates there spread his splendid mansions;¹
 mists of a clear spring day mount to blend with the turquoise of sky.
- 25 The metal knocker-plate is adorned with a sun, mingled with red light;
 bronze dragons bite the knocker-rings as if contesting strength.
 Jasper Consort is deeply drunk, and slumbers on a fragrant mat;²
 mermaid-silk encases the windows – transparent drapery.
 From Cinnabar Cavern they hunt the phoenix to stock their mobile
 kitchen;
- 30 finding *jiajue* apes a mere fist-sized thing, not worth the trouble to
 eat.

Golden moon-toad censers gape amid the scented candles;
 Martial troops of armored women players emit metallic clanking.
 Who noticed the flowering rain that passed last night?
 one only sees by pool and terrace how the spring grasses grow long.

- 35 Swelling thrum of strings and pipes bursts forth, all about the sky;
 The tones of Hong Ya's panpipe come swirling through the sky.³
 Across heaven's length a single arrow pierces two tigers:
 from the cloud-bowgrip is unleashed a force that roars like clear-
 weather thunder.

1 "Twelve gates": a traditional attribute of the imperial capital, as in **1.1**, l. 7, referring to Luoyang.

2 "Jasper Consort": cf. **4.3** (along with **4.25**, l. 15). Here a figure for a "divine" beauty.

3 Hong Ya is an immortal musician (cf. **4.34**, with **4.7** Endnote), here a figure for "divinely" skillful musical performance.

- 亂袖交竿管兒舞，
 40 吳音綠鳥學言語。
 能教刻石平紫金，
 解送刻毛寄新兔。
 三皇后，七貴人，
 五十校尉二將軍。
 45 當時飛去逐彩雲，
 化作今日京華春。

4.14 相勸酒

- 義和騁六轡，
 晝夕不曾閑。
 彈烏崦嵎竹，
 扶馬蟠桃鞭。
 5 蓐收既斷翠柳，
 青帝又造紅蘭。

1 The likening of dancers' sleeves to crisscrossing bamboo stalks comes from the *Chuci* "Summons to the Soul"; the term *guan'er* 管兒 ("pole-lads"?), here rendered "tumbler," suggests acrobats who work with actual poles. In other contexts *guan'er* refers to flutes and flute music, so a reference to wind instruments and musicians also seems possible.

2 "Green birds": i.e., parrots. Here, as very often in the Tang, bird speech and song serve as a figure for women's voices, especially when speaking or singing in an exotic language or dialect.

3 The reference is apparently either to stone inscriptions inlaid with gold, or to a private subterranean treasury.

- Twirling sleeves cross bamboo stalks, and tumblers join the dance;¹
 40 Wu region songs: green birds that mimic human speech.²
 He could cause stones to be carved, and filled level with purple gold;³
 he knew how to cut the fur to mark the newly delivered rabbits.⁴

- Empresses to three emperors, and seven Queen Consorts,
 fifty Commandants, two Generalissimos –
 45 All from those days has flown away to chase the colored clouds;
 transformed into today's springtime at the capital.

4.14 Urging to Drink

- Xihe lets fly her six carriage-traces;⁵
 day or night she's never been at rest.
 Striking the crow with bamboo of Mt. Yanzi;⁶
 whipping her steeds with a crop of twisting peach.
 5 And when Rushou has broken the emerald willow
 the Green God forms the red orchid once again.⁷

4 Rabbits placed in Liang Ji's hunting park were marked with a distinctive cut in their fur; persons found to have killed one of these rabbits were subject to severe punishment, even death.

5 Xihe is the charioteer of the sun; cf. **1.23.13**, **1.24**, **1.28**.

6 The crow in the sun is the opposite number to the rabbit (or toad) in the moon. Mt. Yanzi is identified in early cosmography as the mountain into which the sun enters when it sets.

7 Rushou is the name of the god of the west, associated with white, a tiger, and with autumn (sometimes called simply the White God); the Green God is the god of the east, associated with green, a dragon, and spring (and also known as Goumang 句芒). Thus the two lines convey, in mythological terms, the idea "when autumn has passed, spring comes again."

堯舜至今萬萬歲，
數子將為傾蓋間。
青錢白璧買無端，
10 丈夫快意方為歡。
臞螭臃熊何足云。
會須鍾飲北海，
箕踞南山。

歌淫淫，管悻悻，
15 橫波好送雕題金。
人生得意且如此，
何用強知元化心。

相勸酒，終無輟。
伏願陛下鴻名終不歇，
20 子孫綿如石上葛。

來長安，車駢駢。
中有梁冀舊宅，石崇故園。

From Yao and Shun to now, ten thousand ten thousands of years,
to these are but the space of a short chat beside the road.¹

- With green coins or white jade there's no buying your way out –
10 for a real man it's finding satisfaction that cheers the heart.
Stewed giant tortoise and braised bear – what good are such things?
What we need to do is drink a Northern Sea of cups,
sit spraddle-legged on the Southern Mountains.

- The song swells, the pipes play soft;
15 for one floating glance, send all the gold of the tattoo-headed tribes!
Let's just say satisfaction in life is nothing more than this –
what's the point of straining to know Creation's mind?

- I urge you, drink, don't ever stop!
I humbly pray that our ruler's fine name may never fade,
20 may his descendants thrive and spread like kudzu over the stones!

Coming to Chang'an, the carriages are packed wheel to wheel –
out there are Liang Ji's old mansions, Shi Chong's former garden.²

1 "These" i.e., Xihe, Rushou, and Goumang.

2 On Liang Ji, see the previous poem (4.13). Shi Chong 石崇 (249–300) was a proverbially wealthy and pleasure-loving aristocrat of the Western Jin, whose garden retreat at "Golden Valley" 金谷 was legendary.

4.15 瑤華樂

穆天子，走龍媒。
 八轡冬瓏逐天迴，
 五精掃地凝雲開。

高門左右日月環，
 5 四方錯鏤稜層殷。
 舞霞垂尾長盤跚，
 江澄海淨神母顏。
 施紅點翠照虞泉，
 曳雲拖玉下崑山。

10 列旆如松，
 張蓋如輪。
 金風殿秋，
 清明發春。
 八鑾十乘，
 15 轟如雲屯。

1 King Mu of Zhou was said (for example in the *Liezi* 列子 chapter named after him) to have visited the palace of the Queen Mother of the West, divine resident of the far west Kunlun mountains, where she entertained him at a banquet (see 2.4.3). The appearance of a “heavenly horse” 天馬 during the reign of Emperor Wu of the Han was the occasion of significant imperial ritual commemoration. A hymn to the horse included the lines, “The Heavenly Horse comes, / go-between of the dragon” 天馬來 / 龍之媒.

4.15 Music of Alabaster Splendor

Mu the Son of Heaven sets his “dragon go-betweens” galloping;¹
 their eight bridles jangling as they wheel around the sky.
 The Five Essences sweep the way before them, congealed clouds swing
 open.²

- To the left and right of the high gate the sun and moon wheel around;
 5 all four sides are carved and worked, in jutting layers of purple.
 Dancing rose-clouds dangle their tails, ever twirling and tottering.
 Cleared river-waters, pure ocean swell: the Goddess Mother’s
 countenance.
 Her rouged face and emerald bangles reflect in the Yu Abyss waters,³
 as trailing clouds and dragging jade she descends from Mount Kun.
- 10 Her ranked pennants stand like a pine-forest;
 her spreading canopy like a wheel.
 Metal wind brings up the rear with autumn;
 in pure light, spring goes out as vanguard.
 Eight simurgh-bells on ten chariots
 15 towering tall like massed clouds.

2 The “Five essences” here are five stars of the cardinal directions (as well as the “Five Phases” of traditional science); here personified as helper divinities in service of the celestial traveler.

3 The Yu Abyss 虞淵 was a body of water in the far west into which the sun was said to set. The *Liezi* account of King Mu’s visit mentions an excursion to this site. Li He follows Tang taboo on the given name of the founding emperor Li Yuan 淵 by substituting 泉.

瓊鍾瑤席甘露文，
 玄霜絳雪何足云，
 薰梅染柳將贈君。

鉛華之水洗君骨，
 20 與君相對作真質。

4.16 北中寒

一方黑照三方紫，
 黃河冰合魚龍死。
 三尺木皮斷文理，
 百石強車上河水。

5 霜花草上大如錢，
 揮刀不入迷濛天。
 爭潛海水飛凌喧，
 山瀑無聲玉虹懸。

1 "Dark Frost... Crimson Snow": These two phrases appear as the names of elixirs of immortality in the "Secret Biography of Emperor Wu of the Han", a Daoist classic centered on esoteric revelations given to (and later taken away from) Emperor Wu of the Han by the Queen Mother of the West, along with another divinity known as Lady Shangyuan 上元. The elixir names of the following line are otherwise unattested, but the implication is that they must be of still greater potency.

white jade winecups, glimmering mats, tracteries of sweet dew ...

*“Dark Frost or Crimson Snow – why mention those?”*¹

Scented Plum and Dyed Willow I’ll bestow on you,

“In water of floriate lead I’ll rinse your bones;

20 And we’ll sit face to face, two realized entities.”

4.16 Cold in the North

The gleam of the one black quarter blasts the other three purple:²

ice joins across the Yellow River, fish and dragons die.

Within bark three feet thick, tree’s grain snaps;

strong half-ton wagons roll across the Yellow River.

Frost-blooms on the grasses are as big as coins;

5 a lifted knife cannot pierce the densely covering sky.

In vying surges the ocean’s waters send aloft a clattering din;

the mountain cataract is soundless: a jade rainbow dangling down.

2 North, south, east, and west are associated with the seasons winter, summer, spring, and autumn, and also with the colors black, red, green, and white. Here the other directions have all been sapped of their own colors under the influence of the extreme cold of north’s black.

4.17 梁臺古意

梁王臺沼空中立，
 天河之水夜飛入。
 臺前鬪玉作蛟龍，
 綠粉掃天愁露濕。

5 撞鐘飲酒行射天，
 金虎蹙裘噴血斑。
 朝朝暮暮愁海翻，
 長繩繫日樂當年。

芙蓉凝紅得秋色，
 10 蘭臉別春啼脈脈。
 蘆洲客雁報春來，
 寥落野淠秋漫白。

1 “Prince of Liang”: i.e., Liu Wu (see the Endnote for this poem, along with 3.33).

2 “Green powder” here refers to bamboo. Such substitution of attribute for noun is not uncommon in Tang poetry, but Li He is particularly fond of the device (cf. “blue vastness” in 1.29, l. 1, or “round-grey” in 4.36, l. 16).

4.17 In the Antique Style: Liang Terrace

The Prince of Liang's terrace and pond took form in the midst of
 nothing – ¹
 water of the Celestial River flew in and entered by night.
 Before the terrace they fitted jade blocks to make a flood-dragon;
 green powder brushed the sky, so high one feared the dew might
 dampen it.²

- 5 To the clang of a bell the banquet starts, and they play at Shooting
 Heaven:³
 on his toadies' embroidered coats the gold tigers are splotted with
 blood.⁴
 Day after day, night after night, they worried the oceans would
 overturn,⁵
 wanting to tie the sun down with a string to enjoy those days of their
 prime.

- The lotus's concentrated pink acquires the hue of autumn,
 10 orchid takes leave of spring as it weeps and gazes fondly.
 By reed-covered islets the wayfaring goose announces spring's arrival;
 dreary and dismal, over the wild swale, autumn spreads its white.

3 "Shooting heaven" (or perhaps "shooting Tian," since in Shang times Tian was the proper name of a sky-god) is the name Shang kings and their heirs were said to have given to a ritual or entertainment in which a leather bag was filled with blood, suspended in the air, and shot with arrows.

4 The gold-embroidered tigers would be emblems on the robes of the prince's officials; since this emblem is associated in the *Li ji* with the king, commentators have seen here a suggestion of the prince's overweening ambition. Another Han tradition links the phrase "gold (metal) tigers" to flattering and unprincipled ministers, whose acquisitiveness was as hard as metal, and whose sycophantic and slanderous speech was as evil as a tiger.

5 "Worrying the oceans would overturn" indicates the sorts of banquet wishes and oaths the revelers might have exchanged ("till the oceans drain dry ..." etc.), and in the historical retrospective of this poem become ironic – they worried about nothing else.

4.18 公無出門

天迷迷，
地密密。
熊虺食人魂，
雪霜斷人骨。

5 嗾犬狺狺相索索，
舐掌偏宜佩蘭客。
帝遣乘軒災自息，
玉星點劍黃金軛。

我雖跨馬不得還，
10 歷陽湖波大如山。
毒虬相視振金環，
狡獍猋猊吐饞涎。
鮑焦一世披草眠，
顏回廿九鬢毛斑。

15 顏回非血衰，
鮑焦不違天；
天畏遭啣嚙，
所以致之然。
分明猶懼公不信，
20 公看呵壁書問天。

4.18 Sir, Do Not Go Out the Gate!

Heaven is indistinct,
 earth dense and dark.
 Bears and titan-vipers eat human souls;
 snow and frost snap human bones.

- 5 Whistled out to hunt, hounds yap and yelp, pacing fretfully;
 Paw-licker is especially partial to orchid-dangling wayfarers.¹
 When God sends a carriage for them to ride, calamities at once cease:
 jade stars dot their swords then, yellow gold adorns the yoke.

- Though I sit astride a horse I cannot get home;
 10 on the lake at Liyang the waves are tall as hills.²
 A poison dragon glares at me, shaking his metal rings;
 the Lion and the Ravener drip greedy drool.
 Bao Jiao slept his whole life through in a smock of woven grass;
 Yan Hui at twenty-nine had temples dappled white.³
 15 It's not that Yan Hui lacked vigor
 or that Bao Jiao deviated from nature:
 Heaven feared lest they be snatched and gobbled,
 and thus brought these things to pass.
 It's clear as day but still I fear you won't believe me:
 20 look at that one who berated a wall, and wrote demands of heaven.⁴

1 "Paw-licker" is the bear, so called because bears were said to survive their winter hibernation by feeding on their own paws. The wearing of fragrant plants was an attribute of the virtuous man and poet, particularly as established in the tradition of Qu Yuan and the *Li sao*.

2 Anomaly accounts describe how the town of Liyang sank into the ground and became a lake overnight.

3 Renowned virtuous but short-lived men: Bao Jiao was a scrupulously upright man who refused to compromise with a world he thought unjust, and accordingly starved to death. Yan Hui was Confucius's most favored disciple, but his hair was said to have gone all white by the age of twenty-nine, and he died young (cf. 3.43, l. 4).

4 I.e., Qu Yuan – the reference is to the story related in Wang Yi's 王逸 (ca. 89–158) *Chuci* commentary that Qu Yuan wrote his "Heavenly Questions" when, wandering in exile, he came across a mural depicting the creation of the cosmos.

4.19 神絃別曲

巫山小女隔雲別，
春風松花山上發。
綠蓋獨穿香徑歸，
白馬花竿前子子。

蜀江風澹水如羅，
墮蘭誰泛相經過。
南山桂樹為君死，
雲衫淺污紅脂花。

4.20 淶水辭

今宵好風月，
阿侯在何處。
為有傾人色，
翻成足愁苦。

- 5 東湖採蓮葉，
南湖拔蒲根。
未持寄小姑，
且持感愁魂。

4.19 Parting Tune for the “Divine Strings”

The young daughter of Shamanka Mountain has departed beyond the clouds;

spring winds and pine flower burst forth on the mountain.

Her green carriage canopy has returned along the fragrant path alone,
white horses and florid pennants on staves proudly leading the way.

On the Shu river the winds calm, and the water is like gauze –
but amidst the fallen orchid-flowers, who now rows hither to pay a
call?

The osmanthus trees of the southern mountains perish for you –
your cloud-blouse faintly stained with the pink rouge of their blossoms.

4.20 Lyrics for Clear Water

This evening, fine breeze and moonlight.

Where is Ah Hou?¹

All because you had man-toppling looks
that turned out to bring plenty of sadness and suffering ...

- 5 In the east lake, gather lotus leaves;
in the south lake, pull up rushes by the roots.
Before taking them to give your little maid;
take them to bring comfort to this unhappy soul.

1 The name “Ah Hou” is used in a *yuefu* lyric by Xiao Yan, Emperor Wu of the Liang, for the child of the beauty and singer Grieve-not (Mochou) (cf. **W.5**, **W.7**); here a stock name for a female beauty who seems to be the recipient of sacrifice in the implied scenario here.

4.21 沙路曲

柳臉半眠丞相樹，
 珮馬釘鈴踏沙路。
 斷燼遺香裊翠烟，
 燭騎蹄鳴上天去。

- 5 帝家玉龍開九關，
 帝前動笏移南山。
 獨垂重印押千官，
 金窠篆字紅屈盤。
 沙路歸來聞好語，
 10 旱火不光天下雨。

4.22 上之回

上之回，
 大旗喜。
 懸紅雲，
 撻鳳尾。

- 5 劍匣破，
 舞蛟龍。

4.21 Tune for the Sanded Road

The willows' eyes are still half-aslumber – they're now prime minister's trees:
 horses' bangled bridles clink as they tread the sanded road.
 Fragments of ash and lingering incense trail wisps of emerald smoke,
 the clamor of hooves from torch-bearing riders ascending off to
 heaven.¹

- 5 By the jade dragons at the Thearch's home, the nine-fold gates open;
 Before the Thearch, one gesture of his tablet can shift the southern
 mountains.²
 Alone bearing the heaviest seal, compelling the thousand officers;
 the sealscript in the gold's recesses shows twisting webs of red.

- Returning along the sanded road one hears the happy reports:
 10 the drought-fires no longer blaze, and rain falls beneath heaven.

4.22 His Majesty's Return

On His Majesty's Return;
 great flags for joy.
 Red clouds trail;
 phoenix-tails slap.

- 5 The scabbard bursts:
 flood-dragons dance.

1 This poem relates to the celebratory rites for a newly appointed prime minister; a mounted escort arrives at his home to convey him to a dawn audience with the emperor.

2 The tablet (*hu* 笏) held vertically in front of the body was part of the minister's court regalia; here the implication is that the new minister is able to "move mountains" in his new role.

蚩尤死，
鼓逢逢。

天高慶雷齊墮地。
10 地無驚烟海千里。

4.23 高軒過

華裾織翠青如蔥，
金環壓轡搖玲瓏。
馬蹄隱耳聲隆隆，
入門下馬氣如虹。
5 云是
東京才子，
文章鉅公。
二十八宿羅心胸，
元精耿耿貫當中；
10 殿前作賦聲摩空，
筆補造化天無功。
龐眉書客感秋蓬，
誰知死草生華風；
我今垂翅附冥鴻，
15 他日不羞蛇作龍。

Chiyu dies:
drums boom and boom.¹

Heaven is high: auspicious thunders together crash to earth;
10 on earth no smoke of alarm, nor over the seas' thousand leagues.

4.23 A Lofty Carriage Calls²

Splendid tunics embroidered with kingfisher, green as scallion;
bridles weighed down with golden rings sway and jangle.
Their horses' hooves stupefy the ears with a thunderous boom;
they enter the gate and dismount, amid rainbow-like aura.
5 It's said they're
Talents of the Eastern Capital,³
grand masters of writing:
The twenty-eight lunar lodges arrayed within their breasts,⁴
primal essence effulgent, piercing through the midst.
10 Composing *fu* before the palace, their voices scrape the sky;
pens that patch creation's work, leave Nature with no claim.
This wide-browed bookish wanderer is moved by the autumn
tumbleweed;
who knew dead grass could flower again in a reviving wind?
Now with drooping wings I join sky-soaring swans;
15 some day I will make bold to be a snake that becomes dragon.

1 The ancient sage-king Zhuanxu 顓頊 was said to have a sword that, when violence was underfoot in any quarter of his kingdom, would leap from its scabbard and point in the relevant direction, assuring a successful punitive campaign. Chiyu was a titan-like figure who resisted the rule of the Yellow Emperor and was subdued and killed by the latter in the battle of the Zhuolu 涿鹿 plain.

2 Composed in honor of Han Yu and Huangfu Shi. On these patrons of Li He's and the various accounts of the occasion of this poem, see the Introduction and the Endnote.

3 "Eastern capital": i.e., Luoyang.

4 "Twenty-eight lunar lodges": a chain of asterisms and their associated regions of the sky along the ecliptic, a central component of astronomical and calendrical lore.

4.24 貝宮夫人

- 丁丁海女弄金環，
 崔釵翹揭雙翅關。
 六宮不語一生閑，
 高懸銀榜照青山。
 5 長眉凝綠幾千年，
 清涼堪老鏡中鸞。
 秋肌稍覺玉衣寒，
 空光帖妥水如天。

4.25 蘭香神女廟

- 古春年年在，
 閑綠搖暖雲。
 松香飛晚華，
 柳渚含日昏。
 5 沙砌落紅滿，
 石泉生水芹。
 幽篁畫新粉，
 蛾綠橫曉門。
 弱蕙不勝露，
 10 山秀愁空春。
 舞珮翦鸞翼，

4.24 Lady of the Cowrie Palace

- Clink, clink!* – sea maidens toy with golden rings;
 the sparrow atop her hairpin stands erect, its wings tucked close.
 No speech throughout the six halls – lifelong quiet;
 suspended on high, a silver gate-placard reflects the green hills.
- 5 Long eyebrows of congealed green (through how many thousand
 years?) –
 a pure chill that could age the bronze mirror's simurgh.¹
 Autumn flesh feels a hint of cold beneath the jade coverlet;
 light filters through the emptiness – just so – under waters like the sky.

4.25 Shrine of the Goddess Lanxiang

- Antiquity's spring is with us every year;
 languid green sways beneath warm clouds.
 A scent of pine wafts among evening flowers;
 willow-lined shoals are imbued with the hue of dusk.
- 5 Fallen petals strew pebbly sands with red;
 from a stony spring sprouts water dropwort.
 The secluded bamboo copse is freshly powdered;
 green of moth-eyebrows extends before the gate at dawn.²
 Feeble basil cannot support the dew;
- 10 mountain blossoms fear the empty spring.
 On her dancer's pendants are carved simurgh-wings;

1 On the simurgh in the mirror, cf. 3.5.2, l. 1. Here the point is that even the bronze simurgh image cast in a mirror-back will age before the Goddess does.

2 The powdering of light green on bamboo stalks often features in poetic descriptions of the plant, but also evokes the powdering of a woman's face. Green hills are a stock metaphor in boudoir poetry for a woman's eyebrows; here Li He reverses this commonplace to describe the hills around the goddess's temple.

- 帳帶塗輕銀。
蘭桂吹濃香，
菱藕長芊芊。
15 看雨逢瑤姬，
乘船值江君。
吹簫飲酒醉，
結綬金絲裙。
走天呵白鹿，
20 遊水鞭錦鱗。
密髮虛鬟飛，
膩頰凝花勻。
團鬢分珠窠，
濃眉籠小唇。
25 弄蝶和輕妍，
風光怯腰身。
深幃金鴨冷，
奩鏡幽鳳塵。
踏霧乘風歸，
30 撼玉山上聞。

- the cord of her canopy is lightly daubed with silver.¹
 Orchid and osmanthus breathe out heady fragrance;
 caltrops and lotuses are ever burgeoning there.²
- 15 While watching rainstorms she meets Jasper Consort;³
 out boating, she happens upon the River Lord.
 As panpipes play she grows drunk with wine;
 she ties a tassel on her golden threaded skirt.
 Rushing through the sky, she urges forward white deer;
- 20 wandering by water, she whips brocade scales to motion.
 From her thick hair fly looping braids;
 to her unctuous cheeks flower-cutouts evenly adhere.
 By her curving temple-locks are divided globes of pearl;
 lustrous eyebrows set off her dainty lips.⁴
- 25 She sports with butterflies, sharing in their light grace;
 spring daylight deals tenderly with her dainty figure.
 Within the altar curtain, the golden duck grows cold;⁵
 on the mirror in her trousseau the phoenix is cloistered in dust.
 Treading fog, she rides off on the wind;
- 30 her clinking jades are heard upon the hills.

1 ll. 11–12: with these lines we seem to transition to the interior of the shrine itself, and the altar and icon of the goddess.

2 The “lotus and caltrop” could be read as scenic description here, but water caltrop is attested as a sacrificial offering in ritual texts, so the idea of “burgeoning” here likely includes the constant stream of offerings made by devotees at the goddess’s altar.

3 “Jasper Consort”: A daughter of the Red God who became Goddess of Shamanka Mountain (cf. 4.3, l. 5; 4.13, l. 27).

4 Open loops of hair are part of the visual “signature” of the goddess in the painting tradition reflected in Gu Kaizhi’s 顧愷之 (ca. 349–410) scroll painting of the “Fu on the Luo River Goddess” (“Luo shen fu” 洛神賦); Tang elite women’s fashion included various flower, bird, or insect cutouts applied to the face.

5 “Golden duck”: i.e., a censer in that form. The censer’s cooling marks the close of the ecstatic vision as well as the return of the goddess to her celestial abode (cf. 2.3 where a censer’s growing heat signals a divinity’s advent).

4.26 送韋仁實兄弟入關

- 送客飲別酒，
千觴無赭顏。
何物最傷心，
馬首鳴金環。
5 野色浩無主，
秋明空曠間。
坐來壯膽破，
斷目不能看。
行槐引西道，
10 青梢長攢攢。
韋郎好兄弟，
疊玉生文翰。
我在山上舍，
一畝蒿磽田。
15 夜雨叫租吏，
舂聲暗交關。
誰解念勞勞，
蒼突唯南山。

4.26 Sending off my Brother Wei Renshi to Enter the Passes

Sending off a traveler we drink the wine of parting,
a thousand cups bring our faces no ruddy hue.

What thing is most sorrowful of all? –

from the horse's bridle, that jangle of metal rings.

- 5 The look of wilderness spreads vast and masterless;
autumn shows bright in that boundless empty space.

Such things could always break a hero's courage;
to the end of this prospect one cannot bear to look.

The travelers' sophoras conduct you on your way west,¹

- 10 their green tips ever thickly bristling.

Master Wei, my good brother –

piled jades sprout from your writing brush.

I stay in a cabin up in the hills

amid one acre of weed-choked barren field.

- 15 On rainy nights I hear officers dunning for rents;
from some unseen place comes the thud of rice-pounding.

Who is able to have care of these hardships?

Only the southern hills, jutting pale and green.

1 "Travelers' sophoras": the species known in English alternatively as the Japanese pagoda tree or the Chinese scholar tree, planted along main transit routes under imperial auspices, and thus commonly referred to as "official sophoras"; cf. 2.18.2.

4.27 洛陽城外別皇甫湜

- 洛陽吹別風，
 龍門起斷烟。
 冬樹束生澀，
 晚紫凝華天。
 5 單身野霜上，
 疲馬飛蓬間。
 凭軒一雙淚，
 奉墮綠衣前。

4.28 谿晚涼

- 白狐向月號山風，
 秋寒掃雲留碧空。
 玉煙青溼白如幢，
 銀灣曉轉流天東。
 5 溪汀眠鷺夢征鴻，
 輕漣不語細游溶。
 層岫迴岑複疊龍，
 苦篁對客吟歌筒。

1 "Dragon-gate": this is the name of a pair of mountains flanking the Yi 伊 river south of Luoyang, said to resemble gate-towers, or alternatively the name of one of the peaks of that pair.

4.27 Taking Leave of Huangfu Shi Outside the Luoyang Walls

At Luoyang blows a wind of separation;
over Dragon-gate rise tatters of mist.¹

The winter trees are constricted in puckered roughness;
evening's purple congeals across the florid sky.

- 5 A single figure passes into the frosty wilderness;
an exhausted horse amid windblown tumbleweeds.
This pair of tears shed leaning back over the carriage-rail
I let fall in offering before your green robes.²

4.28 Evening Cool by the Creek

A white fox howls at the moon amid the mountain wind;
autumn cold has swept the clouds away, leaving the sky's cobalt blue.
Jade mists amid the green damp show white as pennants;
the silver bay wheels round toward dawn, to flow toward sky's east
quadrant.³

- 5 By the stream's bank a sleeping egret dreams of the wandering goose;
light ripples wordlessly float by, fine liquid meandering.
Layered peaks and wheeling crests form dragon-coils;
a thicket of bitter bamboo plays its singing pipes for the wayfarer.

2 In verse of social exchange such references to robe color were usually an elegant way of alluding to someone's official status. Green was the prerogative of officials of sixth and seventh grade, however, and Huangfu Shi – whose only known post from near this time is his magistracy at Luhun, at rank nine (cf. 2.15) – is not known to have held such a position until well after Li He's death.

3 "Silver bay": the Milky Way. This appears to be Li He's coinage.

4.29 官不來題皇甫湜先輩廳

- 官不來，官庭秋，
 老桐錯幹青龍愁。
 書司曹佐走如牛，
 疊聲問佐官來否。
 5 官不來，門幽幽。

4.30 長平箭頭歌

- 漆灰骨末丹水砂，
 淒淒古血生銅花。
 白翎金鏑雨中盡，
 直餘三脊殘狼牙。
 5 我尋平原乘兩馬，
 驛東石田蒿塢下。
 風長日短星蕭蕭，
 黑旗雲溼懸空夜。
 左魂右魄啼肌瘦，
 10 酪瓶倒盡將羊炙。
 蟲棲雁病蘆筍紅，
 迴風送客吹陰火。

4.29 His Excellency Does Not Come: Inscribed in the Audience Hall of Senior Licentiate Huangfu Shi

His excellency does not come: it's autumn in the official courtyard.
 Ancient *wutong*-trees twine their trunks, sad green dragons.
 Clerical staff and office assistants rush about like oxen.
 Again and again I ask the assistants, "Has his Excellency arrived?"

- 5 His Excellency does not come. His gate is deep and quiet.

4.30 Song of an Arrowhead at Changping¹

Laquer ash, bone powder, cinnabar grain:
 in chilly gloom, ancient blood has flowered in the bronze.
 White plumes and metal shaft have vanished in the rain,
 leaving just this three-spined broken-off wolf-fang.

- 5 I traversed the level plain driving my pair of horses;
 came down a weedy bank, to a rocky field east of the post-station.
 The wind blew long, the day was short, and stars faintly gleamed;
 black flags of damp cloud hung in the void of night.

- Spirits to my left, souls to my right, all wailed their emaciation;
 10 I poured out my kumis bottle to the dregs, and took mutton to roast.
 Insects clustered, geese were sick, and the reed-shoots shone red;
 eddying gusts sent off the guests, blowing spectral flame.²

1 Changping, north of Gaoping in Shanxi, was the site, in 260 BCE, of one of the most notorious battles of the late Warring States period.

2 Lines 9–12 echo, in an abbreviated and telegraphic way, the sequence of ritual hymns: welcoming the spirits; presenting them a feast with music, food, and drink; and sending off the spirits.

- 訪古沅瀾收斷鏃，
折鋒赤墜曾割肉。
15 南陌東城馬上兒，
勸我將金換蔡竹。

4.31 江樓曲

- 樓前流水江陵道，
鯉魚風起芙蓉老。
曉釵催鬢語南風，
抽帆歸來一日功。
5 鼉吟浦口飛梅雨，
竿頭酒旗換青苧。
蕭騷浪白雲差池，
黃粉油衫寄郎主。
新槽酒聲苦無力，
10 南湖一頃菱花白。
眼前便有千里思，
小玉開屏見山色。

My call paid on antiquity, streaming with tears I kept this snapped-off barb:

broken edges and red fissures that once clove flesh.

- 15 On the southern lane in the eastern city a youngster on horseback urged me to take gold to buy bamboo for a shaft.¹

4.31 Tune for the River Loft

The flowing water before the loft is the Jiangling road;
the carp wind rises and the lotus blossoms grow old.²

Dawn hairpin urges temple-tresses to tell the south wind:
to blow a sail back home from there would be the work of a single day.

- 5 An alligator bellows by the creek mouth, and the plum rains fall;
on the pole's end the tavern flag is changed for a new green ramie cloth.
Stirring and rolling, the waves flash white, clouds fly in scattered ranks;
take a yellow powdered oilcloth smock to send off to the master.

- The trickling of new wine from the press is vexingly faint;
10 across the south lake for acres on end spreads caltrop blossoms' white.
Before my eyes unfold a thousand *li* of sorrow ...
“Little Jade – unfold the screen, to show the hue of mountains.”³

1 For problems regarding this final line, see the Endnote.

2 “Carp wind” is wind of the ninth month, i.e. the last month of autumn.

3 “Little Jade” would appear to be the name of a maidservant of the poem's protagonist.

4.32 塞下曲

胡角引北風，
薊門白于水。
天含青海道，
城頭月千里。

5 露下旗濛濛，
寒金鳴夜刻。
蕃甲鑠蛇鱗，
馬嘶青塚白。

秋靜見旄頭，
10 沙遠席箕愁。
帳北天應盡，
河聲出塞流。

4.32 Tune: Beneath the Passes

A nomad bugle draws forth the northern wind;
 the hills at Jimen are paler than water.
 The sky enfolds the road to Qinghai;
 the moon above the ramparts is a thousand *li* away.

- 5 Dew falls, and the flags are heavy with damp;
 cold metal clangs the hours of the night.
 Across the outlanders' chainmail spread snake-scale links;
 where horses whinny, Greenmound turns white.¹

- 10 In autumn's stillness the yaktail-banner stars appear;²
 over distant sands the mat-grass is gloomy.
 North of the camp must be where the sky runs out;
 the sound of the Yellow River flows beyond the pass.³

1 "Greenmound" was the site where the Han palace lady Wang Zhaojun was buried (see 3.2).

2 The Yak-tail banner (corresponding to the Pleiades) was called the "nomad stars"; for this group to be particularly distinct portended an invasion from the steppes.

3 The final couplet hyperbolically expresses the idea of being at the end of the earth. That the Yellow River is heard flowing "beyond the pass" must suggest the idea of a sound of flowing water that can be aurally traced out into the far west – where ultimately it is deemed to descend from Heaven's River, i.e. the Milky Way (on whose sound see, e.g., 1.24).

4.33 染絲上春機

玉甃汲水桐花井，
蒨絲沉水如雲影。

美人嬾態燕脂愁，
春梭拋擲鳴高樓。

5 綵線結茸背複疊，
白袷玉郎寄桃葉。

為君挑鸞作腰綬，
願君處處宜春酒。

4.34 五粒小松歌并序

前謝秀才杜雲卿命予作五粒小松歌。予以
選書多事，不治曲辭。經十日，聊道八句
以當命意。

蛇子蛇孫鱗蜿蜿，
新香幾粒洪崖飯。
綠波浸葉滿濃光，
細束龍髯鉸刀翦。

1 These lines describe a love token the woman has received; something along the lines of an embroidered lovers' knot (cf. 1.19, l. 4 and the close of 1.23.3). Line 6 involves a pair of allusions to the elegant and aristocratic Wang family of the Eastern Jin: the young men of this family were all fond of robes with round white

4.33 Dyed Silk Goes on the Springtime Loom

A jade pitcher draws water from the well among *wutong* blossoms;
madder-dyed silk strands sink in the water like reflected clouds.

The beauty poses languidly, sad beneath her rouge;
a springtime shuttle, cast and returned, resounds through the high loft.

- 5 Colored threads and knotted floss form a layered pattern on the reverse:
from the white-collared jade lad, a gift sent to his Peachleaf.¹

For you I'll prick out a simurgh pattern to adorn a sash-band;
I hope that you will find it suits, wherever you drink spring wine.

4.34 Song of the Little Five-needle Pine (with preface)

Earlier, Licentiate Xie and Du Yunqing commanded me to compose a “Song on the Little Five-needle Pine,” but because I was occupied at the time with the complexities of compiling an anthology, I was not writing any lyrics. After ten days, I happened to blurt out these eight lines as some kind of response to what they'd requested:

Son and scion of the snake, its scales coiled and twisting;²
a fresh fragrance: several grains from it would make a meal for Hong
Ya.³

Green waves wash over its needles, imbuing them with rich luster;
tightly bound dragon whiskers, trimmed with a seamstress's snips.

collars; and Peachleaf was the name of a favorite concubine of Wang Xianzhi 王獻之 (344–386). The closing couplet describes the gift she will send in return.

2 Pine trees are often said to be kin to dragons, so the idea of descent from a snake is a witty invention in relation to a miniature pine.

3 Hong Ya is an immortal, of the sort who might be expected to have a diet both elegant and fastidious (cf. 4.13, l. 36, and 4.7 Endnote).

- 5 主人壁上鋪州圖，
主人堂前多俗儒。
月明白露秋淚滴，
石筍溪雲肯寄書。

4.35 塘上行

藕花涼露濕，
花缺藕根澀。
飛下雌鴛鴦，
塘水聲湔湔。

4.36 呂將軍歌

- 呂將軍，騎赤兔。
獨攜大膽出秦門，
金粟堆邊哭陵樹。
北方逆氣汙青天，
5 劍龍夜叫將軍閒。

1 Stalactites were collected and treated as precious curiosities (and attributed medicinal powers); as “scholar’s stones,” they would have been viewed as miniature mountains. The point of the closing lines seems to be that the pine, wrenched from its original elegant setting, yearns for tidings from its former friends – the stalactite, as a miniature mountain, comports with the tree’s own miniature size.

- 5 On the owner's wall is spread a map of the province;
 in the owner's forecourt are crowds of vulgar pedants.
 Under moonlight in the white dew, when autumn's tears drip down,
 might those stalactites and clouds over the creek be willing to send a
 letter?¹

4.35 Ballad: By the Pond

Lotus-petals are damp in chilly dew;
 the blossoms tattered, lotus-root now rough.²
 A female mandarin duck flies down,
 pool waters faintly slap.

4.36 Song: General Lǔ

General Lǔ, astride Red Hare – ³
 armed with nothing but his courage, he goes out the Qin gate;⁴
 by Golden Millet hill he weeps beneath the tomb's trees.⁵

- In the northern quarter, rebellious vapors pollute the blue sky;
 5 his dragon-sword cried out by night, but the General was idle.

2 The images of the lotus blossom and lotus root here evoke the traditional punning possibilities of *lian* 蓮 “lotus; lotus blossom” / *lian* 憐 “love” and *ou* 藕 “lotus root” / *ou* 偶 “couple” (cf. 2.23, ll. 75–76).

3 Red Hare was the renowned steed of the Eastern Han general Lü Bu (see 2.4.8). Here seemingly a figure for a heroic Tang commander (see Endnote).

4 Qin gate: here, the city gate of Chang'an.

5 Gold Millet Hill was a name for Tailing 泰陵, the burial tumulus of Tang emperor Xuanzong.

將軍振袖拂劍鐔，
玉闕朱城有門閣。

榼榼銀龜搖白馬，
傅粉女郎火旗下。

10 恒山鐵騎請金槍，
遙聞箛中花箭香。

西郊寒蓬葉如刺，
皇天親栽養神驥。
厩中高桁排蹇蹄，

15 飽食青芻飲白水。
圓蒼低迷蓋張地，
九州人事皆如此。
赤山秀鋌禦時英，
綠眼將軍會天意。

The General shook out his sleeves and stroked his swordblade;
but jade watchtowers and the vermilion city were hemmed in with
storied gates.

Thumping and clunking the silver tortoise dangles from a rider on
white steed:
a powder-daubed damsel beneath the fiery standards.

- 10 The iron cavalry of Mt. Heng request a trial of metal spears;
from afar there wafts the scent of flowery arrows in his quiver.¹

Cold fleabane of the capital's west outskirts bears leaves like thorns,
planted specially by august heaven for foddering divine steeds.
In the imperial stud, by the high hitching posts are ranked stumble-
hooves;

- 15 these eat their fill of fresh green hay, and drink the purest water.
Round-grey is low and obscuring, hanging like a canopy over earth;²
and throughout the nine regions, so things now go in the human world.
World-warding blossom from the ores of Mt. Chijin –
this green-eyed General comprehends the intentions of heaven.³

1 Ll. 8–11: A contrastive depiction of an ineffectual commander, generally understood as referring to Tutu Chengcui 吐突承璀 (?–820). In 809 Tutu Chengcui was sent on an (unsuccessful) expedition against Wang Chengzong 王承宗 (?–820), who, on the death of his father Wang Shizhen 王士真 (759–809), had declared himself successor as Military Commissioner at Chengde (in modern-day Hebei) and rebelled against imperial control. The gendered language here likely also points mockingly to the fact Tutu Chengcui was a eunuch. The silver tortoise is a seal of high office (cf. 4.50, l. 26). The “fiery standard” is a type of military banner with a flame-shaped border. Mt. Heng is the sacred mountain of the north, in the region of Wang Chengzong’s control.

2 “Round-grey”: Li He’s coinage, a kenning for heaven.

3 Mt. Chijin 赤堇 is a legendary source of the ores used in making famous swords. “Green-eyed”: referring to the tradition that Lü Bu was of northern steppe extraction, with possible application as well to his Tang counterpart.

4.37 休洗紅

- 休洗紅，
 洗多紅色淺。
 卿卿騁少年，
 昨日殷橋見。
 5 封侯早歸來，
 莫作弦上箭。

4.38 神絃曲

- 西山日沒東山昏，
 旋風吹馬馬踏雲。
 畫絃素管聲淺繁，
 花裙綵縵步秋塵。
 5 桂葉刷風桂墜子，
 青狸哭血寒狐死。
 古壁彩虬金帖尾，
 雨工騎入秋潭水。
 百年老鴉成木魅，
 10 笑聲碧火巢中起。

4.37 Don't Wash the Red

- Don't wash the red;
 washed too much, the red grows faint.
 My Dear exults in youthful joys;¹
 it was only yesterday we met beside Yin Bridge.
- 5 Once you have won your fiefdom, hurry home –
 don't be an arrow flying from the string.

4.38 Tune for "Divine Strings"

- Behind the western hills the sun sinks; the eastern hills grow dark;
 the whirlwind sweeps up the horse; the horse treads on the clouds.
 Painted strings and pale pipes, sounds faint, tumultuous;
 flowered skirts swish in time to steps in autumn dust.
- 5 Osmanthus leaves comb the wind; the osmanthus sheds its drupes;
 a blue civet weeps blood, the cold fox dies.
 On an ancient wall, a multicolored dragon with a tail of gold leaf:
 Rainmaster rides it away into the waters of an autumn pool.²
 After a hundred years, the old owl achieved tree-sprite form:
- 10 laughter and jade-green flame spring up within its nest.

1 "My Dear": evoking the *Shishuo xinyu* anecdote of Wang Anfeng and his wife (cf. 3.8).

2 "Rainmaster" is one of the meteorological divinities engaged as helpers in the celestial cavalcades of *Chuci* and later traditions.

4.39 野歌

- 鷗翎羽箭山桑弓，
 仰天射落銜蘆鴻。
 麻衣黑肥衝北風，
 帶酒日晚歌田中。
 5 男兒屈窮心不窮，
 枯榮不等嗔天公。
 寒風又變為春柳，
 條條看即烟濛濛。

4.40 神絃

- 女巫澆酒雲滿空，
 玉爐炭火香氤氳。
 海神山鬼來座中，
 紙錢窸窣鳴颼風。
 5 相思木帖金舞鸞，
 攢蛾一嚏重一彈。
 呼星召鬼歆杯盤，
 山魅食時人森寒。

1 Tradition held that whereas geese on their southward migration were lean enough to fly high out of range, when returning north with heavier bodies, they would carry reeds in their mouths to ward off hunters' arrows.

4.39 Song of the Wilds

Arrow feathered with plumes of crow, a bow of mountain mulberry:
turning toward the sky, I shoot down a reed-carrying wild goose.¹

In soiled and greasy hempen robe I brave the north wind;
tipsy with wine in the eventide I sing in the fields.

- 5 A man may yield to need but not be needy in his heart;
there's no equity in withering and flourishing – grow angry with old
heaven.

Cold winds turn once again into springtime willows,
bare branches that while you watch will spread their misty green.

4.40 Divine Strings

The shamanka pours a libation, clouds fill the sky;
in her jade brazier, charcoal-flame sends fragrance and resonant pops.²
Sea gods and mountain spirits attend a banquet here;
burning paper coins crick and crack as the whirlwind moans.

- 5 On acacia wood, a dancing simurgh inlaid in gold:³
a knitting of brows – a flurry of speech – and another strum of the
strings.

She calls stars and summons ghosts to partake from cups and platters;
when mountain sprites are feeding, humans feel a chill of dread.

2 The onomatopoeic term *dongdong* 槌槌 used here usually describes drumbeats, and Li He may have had drums in mind here.

3 Describing the shamanka's *pipa*. Cf. 2.23, l. 90, alluding to prognostication via *pipa*-playing spirit mediums.

- 終南日色低平灣，
 10 神兮長在有無間。
 神嗔神喜師更顏，
 送神萬騎還青山。

4.41 將進酒

- 琉璃鍾，琥珀濃，
 小槽酒滴真珠紅。
 烹龍炮鳳玉脂泣，
 羅幃繡幕圍香風。
 5 吹龍笛，擊鼉鼓；
 皓齒歌，細腰舞。
 況是青春日將暮，
 桃花亂落如紅雨。
 勸君終日酩酊醉，
 10 酒不到劉伶墳上土。

- Over the Zhongnan mountains the sun's hue settles into its level bay;
 10 the gods! – forever between being there and not being there.
 As gods are angered or gods are pleased, the Master's countenance
 shifts;
 she sends off the gods in a cavalcade of ten thousand, back to the
 green hills.

4.41 Bring in the Wine

- In cups of colored glaze, amber flows thick;
 from the little spout wine drips, the Pearl Red.
 Boil dragons and roast phoenixes, let their jade fat seethe;
 around gauze drapes and embroidered canopies fragrant breezes whirl.
- 5 Blow the dragon flutes; strike the alligator drums;
 flashing teeth sing; slender waists dance.
 Even more so in green spring as the day draws toward evening
 and peach blossoms flutter down like pink rain.
 I urge you to stay blind drunk all day long:
- 10 this wine will not reach the soil atop Liu Ling's tomb.¹

¹ Liu Ling (ca. 221–300), one of the “Seven Worthies of the Bamboo Grove,” was renowned as a drinker.

4.42 美人梳頭歌

西施曉夢綃帳寒，
香鬟墮髻半沉檀。

轆轤咿啞轉鳴玉，
驚起芙蓉睡新足。

5 雙鸞開鏡秋水光，
解鬟臨鏡立象牀。

一編香絲雲撒地，
玉釵落處無聲膩。

纖手却盤老鴉色，
10 翠滑寶釵簪不得。
春風爛熳惱嬌慵，
十八鬟多無氣力。

粧成鬢髻欹不斜，
雲裾數步踏雁沙。

15 背人不語向何處，
下堦自折櫻桃花。

4.42 Song of the Beauty Combing her Hair

Xi Shi's dawn dream – the mermaid-silk canopy is cold;
 fragrant braids and sloping hairbun, half-engulfing the sandalwood
 headrest.¹

The well-windlass creaked like a ring of spinning jade,
 startling awake our Lotus, just then sated with sleep.

- 5 Opening the mirror's double-simurgh cover, she unfurls light like
 autumn floods;
 undoing her braids she surveys the mirror, standing on the ivory bed.

One braid of fragrant silk strewn across the floor like a cloud:
 a hairpin falls without sound in that unctuous softness.

- With delicate hands she coils back the color of old crows;
 10 emerald slickness in which the jeweled hairpin cannot hold.
 Spring breeze's gentle teasing provokes her tender languor;
 the eighteen loops prove beyond her endurance to complete.

When her coiffure is done the bun is skewed just so;
 in cloud skirts she takes several paces, goose-tracks across the sand.

- 15 Her face turned away in silence, what is she looking at?
 She's gone down the stair to gather sprays of cherry-blossom.

1 The sloping hairbun, or "fallen from a horse" hairbun, was a popular style among Tang women, which was traced back to Sun Shou, wife of the Eastern Han potentate Liang Ji (cf. 3.36, 4.13).

4.43 月漣漣篇

月漣漣，
波烟玉。
莎青桂花繁，
芙蓉別江木。

5 粉態裊羅寒，
雁羽鋪煙溼。
誰能看石帆，
乘船鏡中入。

秋白鮮紅死，
10 水香蓮子齊。
挽菱隔歌袖，
綠刺冒銀泥。

4.44 京城

驅馬出門意，
牢落長安心。
兩事向誰道，
自作秋風吟。

1 I.e., in this autumn scene, the lotuses have gone, but the trees remain (also see Endnote).

4.43 Stanza: The Moonlight Glistens

Moonlight glistens,
white jade bobs amid waves and mist.
Sedge is green, and osmanthus blossoms cluster;
lotus blossoms have taken leave of the river trees.¹

- 5 Powdered loveliness – now chilly in an unpadded jacket;
goose feathers outstretched in the mist grow damp.
Who can bear to look at Stone Sail?
Riding a boat, one enters into a mirror.²

- 10 In autumn's pallor the lively pink has died:
the water is fragrant and the lotus pods stand level.
She tugs at water caltrop vines, arms clad in singer's sleeves:
green spines snag amid the silver appliqué.

4.44 The Capital City

That feeling when I first drove my horses out the gate;
this mood of despondency at Chang'an.
To whom should I speak of these two things?
I'll make my own "Chant of Autumn Wind."³

2 "Stone Sail" is the name of a sheetlike rock formation beside Mirror Lake – both were renowned scenic spots at Shanyin (modern-day Shaoxing), which had been the site of excursions by the Eastern Jin Wangs (cf. 4.33, l. 6) and others.

3 Echoing the story of Emperor Wu of the Han's "Lyrics of Autumn Wind" 秋風辭, lamenting the transience of human pleasures (cf. 2.1, l. 1).

4.45 官街鼓

曉聲隆隆催轉日，
 暮聲隆隆呼月出。
 漢城黃柳映新簾，
 柏陵飛燕埋香骨。

- 5 碓發千年日長白，
 孝武秦皇聽不得。
 從君翠髮蘆花色，
 獨共南山守中國。
 幾回天上葬神仙，
 10 漏聲相將無斷絕。

4.46 許公子鄭姬歌

許史世家外親貴，
 宮錦千端買沉醉。
 銅駝酒熟烘明膠，
 古堤大柳烟中翠。

1 Ll. 3-4: contrasting the scenes of spring splendor in the capital with the tumuli outside the city where emperors and consorts were buried. The use of Han historical references for Tang affairs was a widespread convention, but here also serves to emphasize the vast historical time scale (as with Zhao Feiyan, on whom cf. 3.29).

4.45 Drums of the Imperial Avenues

The dawn sound *longlong* ... urges forth the wheeling sun;
 the dusk sound *longlong* ... calls the moon to come out.
 In the city of Han, the yellow willows are framed in new-hung curtains;
 in the cypress-covered hills are buried Flying Swallow's fragrant bones.¹

- 5 Hammering forth a thousand years, while the sun stays pale and bright;
 Wu of Han, the Qin emperor – they cannot hear it.²
 Go on, as your emerald-black hair turns the hue of rush-blossom –
 they alone with the southern mountains will keep watch over the
 City.
 How many times in heaven have gods and immortals been buried;
 10 to the accompaniment of this clepsydra-drip that continues without
 break?³

4.46 Song for Master Xu's Courtesan Zheng

Of an ancestral line of Xus and Shis, of imperial in-law rank,⁴
 with a thousand bolts of palace brocade he purchases deep
 drunkenness.
 The wine at Bronze Camel Lane is mature – bright and clear as
 melted glue;⁵
 by the ancient dike the large willows show emerald through the mists.

2 Emperor Wu and the First Qin Emperor were both obsessive seekers of immortality (cf. 3.41, ll. 23–24).

3 “Clepsydra-drip”: conflating the sound of the drums with a water-clock's dripping; perhaps this is how the drumming is perceived by heaven's inhabitants.

4 Xu and Shi were names of imperial in-laws during the reign of Emperor Xuan of the Han 漢宣帝 (r. 74–48 BCE); Zheng's new client seemingly has similar connections.

5 On Bronze Camel Lane in Luoyang, cf. 3.45.

- 5 桂開客花名鄭袖，
入洛聞香鼎門口。
先將芍藥獻粧臺，
後解黃金大如斗。
莫愁簾中許合歡，
10 清絃五十為君彈。
彈聲咽春弄君骨，
骨興牽人馬上鞍。
兩馬八蹄踏蘭苑，
情如合竹誰能見。
15 夜光玉枕棲鳳凰，
袷羅當門刺純綫。
長翻蜀紙卷明君，
轉角含商破碧雲。
自從小厖來東道，
20 曲裏長眉少見人。

- 5 From the osmanthus has bloomed a guest flower whose name is
Zheng Xiu;¹
when she entered Luoyang her fragrance wafted all about Tripod
Gate.²
First he took a peony as an offering to her dressing table,
and later unfastened a golden ingot large as a bushel measure.
- From within Grieve-not's canopy came assent to a joyous tryst;³
10 all fifty pure strings she played for her lord.⁴
Her playing choked out a springtime yearning that stirred the lord's
bones;
which being stirred drew him along, and horses were duly saddled.
- Two horses' eight hooves trod through the orchid garden;
their feelings were like joined bamboo tallies – what outsider could
see?
- 15 On the night-illuminating jade headrest ride male and female
phoenix;
the two-ply gauze of the door-curtain is embroidered in pure white
silk.
- Through a long roll of Shu paper was unfurled the Bright Consort;
turning *jue* and intoning *shang* she shattered the jade-green clouds.⁵
Since this dimpled dainty came along the eastern road;
20 the long-eyebrows of the quarter entertain few guests.

1 The link with osmanthus perhaps suggests Zheng is an immortal descended from the moon; cf. the singer Pearl's descent from heaven in 1.29, l. 1. Zheng Xiu was the name of a beloved consort of King Huai of Chu; here the name is borrowed for "Courtesan Zheng."

2 Tripod Gate was in the east of Luoyang; Zheng is a newcomer from the east.

3 "Grieve-not": a stock name for a female singer, here referring to Zheng (cf. 3.40, W.4).

4 On the legend of White Maiden and the fifty-string psalter, see note to 1.1, l. 3. Here the reference is to both the musical and sexual expertise of that goddess.

5 The "Bright Consort" is Wang Zhaojun (see 3.2 and 4.32); certain modes of Tang narrative performance (sometimes termed *bianwen*) incorporated a long scroll of sequenced illustrations, advanced between two rollers, in step with the stages of the story being related (stories of Wang Zhaojun were indeed popular in such contexts).

相如塚上生秋柏，
 三秦誰是言情客。
 蛾鬟醉眼拜諸宗，
 為謁皇孫請曹植。

4.47 新夏歌

曉木千籠真蠟綵，
 落蒂枯香數分在。
 陰枝拳芽卷縹茸，
 長風迴氣扶蔥龍。
 5 野家麥畦上新墾，
 長畛徘徊桑柘重。
 刺香滿地菖蒲草，
 雨梁燕語悲身老。
 三月搖揚入河道，
 10 天濃地濃柳梳掃。

On Xiangru's tomb there grow autumn cypresses;
 throughout the Qin domains which wanderer can truly speak of
 passion?
 The moth-browed beauty with bleary eyes entrusts a descendant of
 princes:
 "Call for me that imperial scion – invite Cao Zhi."¹

4.47 Song of New Summer

Amid trees at dawn, a thousand baskets of true encaustic colors;
 about the bare pedicels there persists a fraction of dessicated scent.

Along shaded branches, whorled new buds are sheathed in pale-green
 down;

swirling breath of long summer winds lifts up massed verdure.

- 5 Around farmers' huts, wheat-stalks engulf the new field-ridges;
 by the long pathways sway layer upon layer of mulberry branches.

Fragrant spikes: all about are shoots of rush;
 among rainy roofbeams the swallows converse, grieving at advancing
 age.

- 10 Swaying and wavering, the third month has gone by the river road;
 the sky is lush, earth is lush; the willow-branches comb and sweep.

1 Ll. 21–24: Since Sima Xiangru (cf. 1.12.1, 1.34.7) is dead, Zheng calls on an imperial scion to commemorate her attainments; the Wei dynasty poet-prince Cao Zhi 曹植 (192–232) is used here to refer to Li He, descendant of the Tang imperial clan.

4.48 題歸夢

- 長安風雨夜，
 書客夢昌谷。
 怡怡中堂笑，
 小弟裁澗菰。
 5 家門厚重意，
 望我飽飢腹。
 勞勞一寸心，
 燈花照魚目。

4.49 經沙苑

- 野水汎長瀾，
 宮牙開小蒨。
 無人柳自春，
 草渚鴛鴦暖。
 5 晴嘶臥沙馬，
 老去悲啼展。
 今春還不歸，
 塞嚶折翅雁。

4.48 On a Return Home in Dream

- In Chang'an, on a night of wind and rain,
 a bookish wanderer dreamt of Changgu.
 Placid and benign, the smile in the main hall;
 little brother has plucked carpet-grass from the creekside.
- 5 Such earnest affection from my family,
 who look to me to fill our hungry bellies.
 The toilsome weariness of this one inch of heart:
 lamp-sparks gleam in my eyes' fishlike stare.¹

4.49 Passing by Shayuan

- Over the wild expanse of water sweep long ripples;
 in the former official quarters, the small madder blooms.
 With no one to see, the willows hold springtime on their own;
 on grassy shoals, mandarin ducks warm themselves in the sun.
- 5 In the light of day a whinny is heard from a horse wallowing in sand;
 declining into old age, it sends forth mournful cries.
 This spring I yet again cannot go home:
 at the pass there keens a broken-winged goose.

1 "Fishlike": i.e., unsleeping (see Endnote).

4.50 出城別張又新酬李漢

- 李子別上國，
 南山崆峒春。
 不聞今夕鼓，
 差慰煎情人。
 5 趙壹賦命薄，
 馬卿家業貧。
 鄉書何所報，
 紫蕨生石雲。
 長安玉桂國，
 10 戟帶披侯門。
 慘陰地自光，
 寶馬踏曉昏。
 臘春戲草苑，
 玉輓鳴轆轤。
 15 綠網縋金鈴，
 霞卷清池漣。
 開貫瀉蚌母，

1 Following Wu Qiming, taking “south mountains” as referring to the Zhongnan mountains south of Chang’an, and Mt. Kongtong as a reference to Luoyang, as in 2.15.

2 Drums sounded at morning and evening from the ends of avenues; part of the daily rhythm of Chang’an (cf. 4.45).

4.50 Going out of the City: Parting from Zhang Youxin, and Responding to Li Han

Master Li takes leave of the supreme capital;
from the south mountains into Kongtong's spring.¹
I won't hear this night's gate-tower drums – ²
some consolation for one whose feelings scorch within.

- 5 Zhao Yi's allotment of fate was scanty;
Sima Xiangru's inheritance was poverty.³
Letters from home – what do they report?
Purple vetch has sprouted amidst the cloud-draped stones.
Chang'an is a domain of "jade and osmanthus"⁴
10 where halberds and banners bedeck gates of the grand.⁵
Places that in dreary weather emit their own light
from the treasured steeds that prance there dawn to dusk.
From year's end to spring they sport in grassy gardens;
Their jade-bangled conveyances send forth a jingling rumble.
15 Green nets are tied with golden bells;⁶
awnings spread rosy clouds to the clear pool's edge.
Unbinding cash-strings, they pour out their "Mother-moth"⁷

3 Zhao Yi was a literary man of the Eastern Han, who became known for the frustrations of his official career; on the renowned Western Han literatus Sima Xiangru, cf. 1.12.1. Here both are figures for the poet.

4 The Warring States rhetorician Su Qin 蘇秦 said that in Chu food was more expensive than jade, firewood more expensive than osmanthus.

5 Ornamental halberds on the outside of one's gates, in numbers determined by specific rank and office, were a perquisite of the highest civil and military officials.

6 Prince Ning, elder brother of emperor Xuanzong, was said to have placed networks of silk threads with bells throughout his flower garden, to startle away birds that might harm the flowers.

7 "Mother-moth": the female of a certain species of moth was said to have an uncanny ability to seek out its young wherever they were hidden; if one smeared a batch of coins with the blood of the female, and another batch with blood from its young, then by retaining one batch, one could spend the coins of the other secure in the knowledge that they would find their way back.

- 買冰防夏蠅。
時宜裂大被，
20 劍客車盤茵。
小人如死灰，
心切生秋榛。
皇圖跨四海，
百姓拖長紳。
25 光明靄不發，
腰龜徒贅銀。
吾將譟禮樂，
聲調摩清新。
欲使十千歲，
30 帝道如飛神。
華實自蒼老，
流采長傾盆。
沒沒暗齧舌，
涕血不敢論。
35 今將下東道，
祭酒而別秦。
六郡無勦兒，
長刀誰拭塵。
地埋陽無正，

- for buying ice to ward off summer flies.
 The customs of these days rend the “great quilt”;¹
- 20 swordsman-retainers ride about in carriages piled with cushions.
 The petty folk are like extinguished ash
 with ungenerous hearts that sprout autumn brambles.
 The Sagacious Domain bestrides the four seas;
 the various officers trail long sashes.²
- 25 Yet sagely light is obscured and not sent forth:
 the tortoise-insignia by their waists, mere silver bricks.³
 I aimed to make a ruckus amidst the rites and music,
 tones and melodies to scrape the sky, to make all clean and new,
 to bring about that through ten thousand years
- 30 the way of our divine sovereign might pass like a flying god.
 Both my style and my substance are of ancient make,
 a flow of splendors unstintingly poured out.
 Yet in obscurity I bite my tongue unnoticed;
 I weep blood but dare not speak of those things.
- 35 Now I prepare to go back down the road east;
 performing the travel libation, I depart from Qin.
 Through the six commanderies there is no stalwart lad;
 who will wipe the dust from the long sword?
 The earth now covers Yang and Wuzheng,

1 “Great quilt”: Emperor Xuanzong was said to have had such warm relations with his brothers that he ordered a great quilt made so they could all sleep together.

2 Following Harada, *bai xing* 百姓 seems best construed here in its archaic sense referring to officials as a class, rather than in its more familiar sense as “commoners.”

3 On the silver tortoises, cf. 4.36. The wearers’ failure to live up to the ideals of their offices renders such insignia mere lumps of metal.

- 40 快馬遂服轅。
 二子美年少，
 講道調清渾。
 譏笑斷冬夜，
 家庭疎篠穿。
 45 曙風起四方，
 秋月當東懸。
 賦詩面投擲，
 悲哉不遇人。
 此別定沾臆，
 50 越布先裁巾。

W.1 南園

- 方領蕙帶折角巾，
 杜若已老蘭苕春。
 南山削秀藍玉合，
 小雨歸去飛涼雲。
 5 熟杏暖香梨葉老，

1 “Yang and Wuzheng”: That is, Sun Yang, the given name of Bole, the famed judge of horses (cf. 2.4 passim), along with You Wuzheng 郵無正 or Sun Wuzheng 孫無政, both names for Wang Liang 王良, the chariot driver of Zhao Jianzi 趙簡子 (?–476 BCE). After his death Wang Liang became the “driver” star in the sky (α Cassiopeiae).

- 40 so that swift coursers toil beneath the yoke.¹
 You two masters are fine youths;
 in your discourse on the way you instruct both pure and turbid.
 Our teasing and laughter lasts through the whole winter's night;
 while in my home courtyard sparse bamboo shoots emerge.
- 45 The dawn breeze stirs from all four quarters;
 the autumn moon hangs in the east.
 The poems you composed you present in person;
 commiserating with a man who's missed his time.
 This parting will surely soak our breasts;
- 50 from the Yue cloth let us first cut kerchiefs.²

W.1 South Garden

- Wanderer in square-collared robe and basil-scented sash, in a
 bent-cornered headcloth;³
 pollia has grown old, while thoroughwort delights in spring.
 The south mountains are carved verdure, commingled indigo and
 jade;
 light showers retreat in floating chilly clouds.
- 5 Ripe apricots give warm scent, as leaves of pear grow tough;

2 "Cut kerchiefs": i.e., in preparation for the tears they will shed.

3 The square collar and bent-cornered headcloth were conventional items in the attire of the scholar in retirement.

草梢竹柵鎖池滑。
 鄭公鄉老開酒樽，
 坐泛楚奏吟招魂。

W.2 假龍吟歌

石軋銅杯，
 吟咏枯瘁。
 蒼鸞擺血，
 白鳳下肺。
 5 桂子自落，
 雲弄車蓋。
 木死沙崩惡谿島，
 阿母得仙今不老。
 窈中跳汰截清涎，
 10 隈壩臥水埋金爪。
 崖蹬蒼蒼弔石髮，
 江君掩帳篴簫折。
 蓮花去國一千年，
 雨後聞腥猶帶鐵。

1 The chancellor Kong Rong 孔融 (153–208), as a mark of esteem for the classicist scholar Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127–200), ordered that Zheng's hometown be renamed "Sire Zheng's Village."

rushes and a bamboo wicket enclose the pond's shore.
 Sire Zheng's village elders tap the wine barrel;¹
 across the assembly washes Chu music as they intone the "Summons
 to the Soul."²

W.2 Song: Imitation Dragon-keening

Stone pressed on a bronze beaker
 keens and chants withered depletion.
 Grey simurgh feels its blood tremble,
 the white phoenix's lungs are struck down.³
 5 Osmanthus drupes spontaneously drop;
 clouds play at forming carriage canopies.⁴

Trees die and sands collapse along Bad Creek's isles;
 the Mother has achieved transcendence, and is now not old.
 The pit's recesses are rinsed and flushed – now absent, the clear spittle;
 10 where banks' hollows recline on the water, there lie buried metal claws.⁵

In the grey-green beside cliff stairs there trails stonehair;
 River Lord strikes his tents, and the timber-bamboo snaps.
 Lotus Flower has left his domain for now a thousand years –
 after rainfall, one still detects the rank tang of iron.⁶

2 It is perhaps suggested that the soul of Zheng Xuan himself is the object of this ritual song.

3 The "Secret Biography of Emperor Wu of the Han" (see 4.15) mentions "grey simurgh blood" and "white phoenix lung" as drugs of immortality.

4 Ll. 5–6: these lines suggest uncanny mystery; but the image of gathering clouds also specifically recalls the idea that the dragon's call could summon rainstorms.

5 Ll. 9–10: these lines evoke a locale from which an ancient dragon has now long since departed. "Clear spittle": "dragon spittle" was the name for ambergris, and was held to be left on the shores of any body of water where a dragon was resident (cf. 3.44, l. 83).

6 Ll. 11–14: River Lord (cf. 4.25, l. 16) and Lotus Flower appear to be used here as names for dragons.

W.3 感諷六首

1.

人閒春蕩蕩，
 帳暖香揚揚。
 飛光染幽紅，
 誇嬌來洞房。
 5 舞席泥金蛇，
 桐竹羅花牀。
 眼逐春暝醉，
 粉隨淚色黃。
 王子下馬來，
 10 曲沼鳴鴛鴦。
 焉知腸車轉，
 一夕巡九方。

2.

苦風吹朔寒，
 沙驚秦木折。
 舞影逐空天，
 畫鼓餘清節。
 5 蜀書秋信斷，

W.3 Oblique Reactions (Six Poems)

1.

Folk are idle, and spring rolls like a wave;
 the canopy is warm, and fragrance wafts and rises.
 Flying light tinges secluded red;
 a renowned beauty enters the bridal chamber.

- 5 On the dancers' mat are gold filigree serpents;
 string and pipe instruments arrayed along the flowery couch.
 Eyes grow bleary with the onset of spring twilight;
 powder yellows along the tracks of tears.
 The princeling dismounts and draws near;
 10 along the curving lake call mandarin ducks.
 What can he know of the spinning wagon-wheels of her guts
 that in one night make the rounds of the nine domains?

2.

Bitter wind blows boreal cold;
 sands are stirred up and trees in Qin are snapped.
 Dancers' forms are traced against blank sky;
 the painted drum retains its pure measure.

- 5 Autumn tidings on Shu writing paper are now cut off;

黑水朝波咽。
嬌魂從回風，
死處懸鄉月。

3.

雜雜胡馬塵，
森森邊士戟。
天教胡馬戰，
曉雲皆血色。
5 婦人攜漢卒，
箭箠囊巾幘。
不慚金印重，
踉蹌腰鞬力。
恂恂鄉門老，
10 昨夜試鋒鏑。
走馬遣書勳，
誰能分粉墨。

on Black River, dawn waves are choked.¹
 That tender soul floated off on a zephyr;
 above the place she died hangs her hometown moon.

3.

- Wild welter of dust from nomad horses;
 grouped glint of halberds of the frontier guard.
 Heaven intends the nomad horses to battle;
 the dawn clouds are all the color of blood.
- 5 A woman leads Han troops;
 her quiver encloses kerchief and headscarf.
 Unabashed by the weight of the gold seal,
 she trudges on, waist bearing the bow-case stoutly.
 The rustic simplicity of her home village elders
- 10 last night was tested by blades and weapons of war.
 When the horse gallops off to bear the report of merit
 who will be able to distinguish face-powder from ink?²

1 The woman no longer receives letters from her loved ones. "Black River" here is a generic designation of a site in a distant northern land; its waves are "choked" in ice.

2 This work appears to be an encomium on a woman commander who successfully led a military defense of a border town from barbarian incursion. No specific historical reference has been determined. As with 4.36, some commentators have speculated that the feminine gender of the commander here is intended as satire on the employment of eunuch generals such as Tutu Chengcui, but this work shows no sign of satirical intent.

4.

青門放彈去，

馬色連空郊。

何年帝家物，

玉裝鞍上搖。

5 去去走犬歸，

來來坐烹羔。

千金不了饌，

貉肉稱盤臊。

試問誰家子，

10 乃老能佩刀。

西山白蓋下，

賢雋寒蕭蕭。

5.

曉菊沍寒露，

似悲團扇風。

秋涼經漢殿，

4.

From the Blue Gate they go off to set loose their pellet-slings,¹
 the horses' hue stretches across the plain outside the city.
 What year's make of imperial bangle is this –
 the jade gear now swaying from their saddles?

- 5 They rush off and then return with tramping hounds;
 they come abustle to sit and stew a lamb.
 A thousand in gold is not enough for a meal;
 marten meat is heaped on gamy platters.
 From what family, pray tell, is this lad?
- 10 His dad knew how to wear a sword.
 By the western hills beneath the white thatched roofs
 worthy men tremble in the cold.

5.

Dawn chrysanthemums are soaked in cold dew
 as though lamenting the “round fan” wind.
 Autumn chill passes through the Han palace halls;

1 “Blue Gate”: a designation for the southmost gate in Chang'an's eastern wall in the Han and Tang dynasties. This poem is a depiction of a hunting excursion outside the capital by a party of young aristocrats.

班子泣衰紅。
 5 本無辭輦意，
 豈見入空宮。
 腰褷珮珠斷，
 灰蝶生陰松。

6.

蝶飛紅粉臺，
 柳掃吹笙道。
 十日懸戶庭，
 九秋無衰草。
 5 調歌送風轉，
 杯池白魚小。
 水宴截香腴，
 菱科映青罩。
 芊蒙梨花滿，
 10 春昏弄長嘯。
 惟愁苦花落，
 不悟世衰到。
 撫舊惟銷魂，
 南山坐悲峭。

1 Lady Ban, or “Consort Ban” (Ban Jieyu 班婕妤) (c. 48–2 BCE) was a poet and scholar, consort of Emperor Cheng of the Han 漢成帝 (r. 33–7 BCE). She

where Lady Ban weeps for tattered reds.¹

- 5 She had no mind to take leave of the imperial carriage;²
 how could she have foreseen entering the empty palace?
 The pendant pearl from her waist-sash is broken;
 butterflies of ash swirl amid dark pines.³

6.

Butterflies fly about the red-powdered terrace;
 willows sweep the road where panpipes sound.
 Ten suns hang in the courtyard;⁴
 through the whole autumn there is no withered plant.

- 5 Tuneful song sends off the wind's eddying breaths;
 in the cup-sized pool the white dace are small.
 This waterside banquet carves slabs of fragrance and richness;
 the caltrop thicket frames the green fish-trap.
 In disheveled masses pear blossoms fill the trees;
 10 on spring evening one idly whistles tunes.
 The only worry is that these bitter flowers fall,
 unaware how their turn for decline has come.
 To ponder past things is nothing but expense of the soul;
 facing the south hills I sit saddened by their steepness.

gained and then lost the emperor's favor, and composed a renowned poem lamenting her loss via a metaphor on the "round fan," which is taken up during summer and then cast aside when autumn comes.

2 The carriage here is a conventional metonymic designation of the ruler (cf. 1.3, l. 4 where "bronze carriage" specifies a Crown Prince).

3 The closing lines suggest a graveside offering; perhaps the "empty palace" of l. 6 is in this instance a tomb.

4 Ancient myth held that there had once been ten suns (corresponding to the ten days of the old bronze-age week), but that the archer Yi had shot down nine of them (cf. 4.6, final stanza); a parallel tradition said that the ten suns remained in the Ruo tree, being sent out one after the other in sequence.

W.4 莫愁曲

- 草生龍坡下，
鴉噪城堞頭。
何人此城裏，
城角栽石榴。
5 青絲繫五馬，
黃金絡雙牛。
白魚駕蓮船，
夜作十里遊。
歸來無人識，
10 暗上沉香樓。
羅牀倚瑤瑟，
殘月傾簾鉤。
今日槿花落，
明朝桐樹秋。
15 若負平生意，
何名作莫愁。

W.5 夜來樂

紅羅複帳金流蘇，
華燈九枝懸鯉魚。
麗人映月開銅鋪，

W.4 Tune: Grieve-not

- Grass grows below Dragon Lake;
 crows caw above the city battlements.
 What person is that in the city
 who at the corner of the wall grows pomegranates?
- 5 Blue silk ties the five horses' tails;
 yellow gold adorns the pair of oxen.
 White fish draw the lotus boat;
 by night they go on a *ten-li* excursion.
 When she returns no one is aware –
- 10 she quietly ascends to the aloeswood loft.
 On the gauze bed she leans beside the jade-inlaid psaltery;
 the waning moon totters beside her curtain hook.
 Today the hibiscus blossoms fall;
 tomorrow will be the autumn of *wutong* trees.
- 15 If she betrayed her lifetime's yearning
 why would she be called Grieve-not?

W.5 Music for the Coming of Night

Red gauze double canopy with golden fringe;
 a nine-branched florid candelabra hangs, carp-shaped.
 A lovely one framed in moonlight opens the bronze-bossed door;

- 春水滴酒猩猩沽。
 5 價重一篋香十株，
 赤金瓜子兼雜麩。
 五色絲封青玉鳧，
 阿侯此笑千萬餘。
 南軒漢轉簾影疎，
 10 桐林啞啞挾子烏。
 劍崖鞭節青石珠，
 白駒吹湍凝霜鬚。
 漏長送珮承明廬，
 倡樓嵯峨明月孤。
 15 新客下馬故客去，
 綠蟬秀黛重拂梳。

W.6 嘲雪

昨日發蔥嶺，
 今朝下蘭渚。
 喜從千里來，

1 The orangutan here is a figuration on the wine-pitcher.

2 "Ah Hou" is used here as a generic designation for the courtesan (cf. 4.20, l. 2; W.7, l. 7).

3 "The River," i.e., the Milky Way. The "turning" of the Milky Way is a poetic commonplace connoting the end of night (cf. 4.9).

- wine drips like spring waters, doled out by an orangutan.¹
- 5 Of lavish price, a case with ten sticks of incense;
 melon-seed nuggets of ruddy gold mixed in with broken flakes.
 Sealed with five-colored silk cord, a green jade wild duck:
 this smile of Ah Hou will cost thousands, ten thousands or more.²
 By the southern balustrade the River turns and the curtain shadows
 grow sparse;³
- 10 over the *wutong* trees is heard raucous cawing of crows leading their
 young.
 The sword in its scabbard and whip with segmented handle are hung
 with blue stone beads;
 his bay roan blows foam that congeals on frosty whiskers.
 The long night watches send his pendants away to the Lodge for
 Receiving Brilliance;⁴
 the singsong loft looms toweringly alone in the bright moon.
- 15 The new guest dismounts from his horse as the old guest departs;
 the green cicada-wings, the lovely black eyebrows, again she strokes
 and combs.

W.6 Innuendo on Snow

It set out yesterday from Scallion Peak;
 this morning it descends on thoroughwort shoals.⁵
 Delight comes from a thousand *li* away –

⁴ The client is a high court official (cf. 3.17, l. 3).

⁵ “It” (no such pronoun appears or is needed in the original) is the unstated subject of the poem, i.e., snow (on the conventions of “poems on things,” see 1.6 End-note, with 1.6 and 1.7 as typical examples of the subgenre). Scallion Peak is west of Dunhuang; “thoroughwort shoals” would seem to imply a region in the south.

- 亂笑含春語。
 5 龍沙溼漢旗，
 鳳扇迎秦素。
 久別遼城鶴，
 毛衣已應故。

W.7 春懷引

- 芳蹊密影成花洞，
 柳結濃煙花帶重。
 蟾蜍碾玉挂明弓，
 捍撥裝金打仙鳳。
 5 寶枕垂雲選春夢，
 鈿合碧寒龍腦凍。
 阿侯繫錦覓周郎，
 憑仗東風好相送。

1 "Dragon Sands" likely refers to "White Dragon Heaps" 白龍堆, at Lop Nur.

2 "Crane from the city of Liao": alluding to the legend of Ding Lingwei 丁令威, a man from Liao in the northeast during the Western Han who studied the Way, and on achieving immortality was transformed into a crane. The point of the final couplet is rather obscure, since it is unclear whether this immortal's white crane-feathers should be imagined as having suffered any change during the intervening centuries – but now at any rate, with their fresh layer of snow, they are once more as pure white as when that crane-immortal first flew.

- a flurry of smiles, fraught with talk of spring.
 5 By dragon sands it wets the Han banners;¹
 phoenix fans welcome this white silk from Qin.
 That long-departed crane from the city of Liao –
 by now, his coat of feathers must be just as before.²

W.7 Rhapsody: Springtime Yearnings

- Along the fragrant path, dense shadows form a flowery grotto;
 willows exude thick mist, and bands of blossoms hang heavy.
 The Toad grinds jade, there where the bright arc hangs;³
 the plectrum-guard is figured with gold – the immortal phoenix is
 stirred.⁴
 5 Over the precious headrest, cloud tresses drape as she selects a dream
 of spring;
 in the emerald chill of an inlaid box lies frozen dragon-brain.⁵
 Ah Hou ties it up in brocade and seeks Master Zhou,
 relying on the east wind to give her a good start.⁶

3 A depiction of the moon, said to have a toad in it (cf. **1.20**, l. 1).

4 Here the suggestion is of *pipa* playing (the *pipa* being the most common instrument that would use a plectrum guard), which stirs phoenixes into motion, or plays a tune named after, or imitating, the phoenix.

5 “Dragon-brain”: i.e., camphor, a prized ingredient in incense.

6 “Ah Hou”: a designation for the young woman (cf. **W.5**). “Master Zhou” is often used to refer to Zhou Yu 周瑜 (175–210), a renowned young general of the wars among the three kingdoms emerging in the aftermath of the Eastern Han, but here it is a generic designation for an eligible young man.

W.8 白虎行

火烏日暗崩騰雲，
 秦王虎視蒼生羣。
 燒書滅國無暇日，
 鑄劍佩玦呼將軍。

5 玉壇設醮思沖天，
 一世二世當萬年。
 燒丹未得不死藥，
 拏舟海上尋神仙。

10 鯨魚張鬣海波沸，
 耕人半作征人鬼。
 雄豪猛燄烈燒空，
 無人為決天河水。

誰最苦兮誰最苦，
 報人義士深相許。
 15 漸離擊筑荆卿歌，
 荆卿把酒燕丹語。

劍如霜兮膽如鐵，
 出燕城兮望秦月。
 天授秦封祚未終，
 20 袞龍衣點荆卿血。

W.8 Ballad: The White Tiger

The fiery crow dims by day and crashes in surging clouds,
 the Qin emperor glares tigerlike upon humankind's flocks.
 From burning books and extinguishing states he had no idle day;
 he forged swords, and the only ones to wear pendants were generals.

- 5 Upon a jade altar they held a rite, their thoughts surging to the sky;
 first generation, second generation – initiating a ten-thousand year
 regime.

When his smelting of cinnabar did not uncover the elixir of nondeath,
 he took to a boat and on the sea sought for gods and transcendents.

- 10 The leviathan spread its spines, and the ocean's waters boiled;
 of the whole world's plowmen, half became the ghosts of soldiers
 on campaign.

His aggression was a wild flame whose ferocity burned the sky;
 no one was there to break loose the waters of heaven's river.

Who suffered most – *ah!* – who suffered most?
 Avenging heroes deeply pledged faith to one another.

- 15 Jianli strummed the *zhu* and Master Jing sang,
 Master Jing drank wine and Prince Dan of Yan spoke.

A sword like frost – *ah!* – and courage stout as iron;
 he departed from the city of Yan – *ah!* – setting out for the moon
 of Qin.

- Yet Heaven had bestowed its grant on Qin, whose term had not
 run out –
 20 dragon regalia was spattered with Master Jing's blood.

朱旗卓地白虎死，
漢王知是真天子。

w.9 有所思

去年陌上歌離曲，
今日君書遠遊蜀。
簾外花開二月風，
臺前淚滴千行竹。
5 琴心與妾腸，
此夜斷還續。

想君白馬懸雕弓，
世間何處無春風。
君心未肯鎮如石，
10 妾顏不久如花紅。

夜殘高碧橫長河，
河上無梁空白波。
西風未起悲龍梭，
年年織素攢雙蛾。

Scarlet flags rose up from the ground, the white tiger died;
and the Han emperor was known as Heaven's true son.¹

W.9 Someone I'm Thinking of

Last year beside the lane was sung the parting tune;
today your letter says you roam far off in Shu.
Outside the curtain, flowers bloom in breeze of the second month;
before the terrace, tears drop from a thousand rows of bamboo.

- 5 The zither's mind, my feelings:
this night now ceasing, now again continuing.

I imagine how you ride your white horse, dangling your carved horn
bow;

in this world what place does not have spring wind?

You surely won't be willing to have a heart that stays like stone;

- 10 my face will not long remain pink as a flower.

At night's end, the high jade vault is crossed by the long river,
on the river there is no bridge, only white waves.²

The west wind has not risen as I sadly face my dragon-shuttle;³
year after year I weave white silk, knitting my moth eyebrows.

1 The colors allude to the tradition that Liu Bang, the Han founder, was a scion of the Red Emperor who killed and replaced the White Emperor (cf. 1.14).

2 A reference to the legend of the Oxherd and Weaver Maiden (cf. 1.9).

3 "Dragon shuttle": an anomaly account relates that Tao Kan, a general and regional governor of the Jin (cf. 3.32, l. 7), was fishing and caught a shuttle. The shuttle later turned into a dragon when a storm broke out.

- 15 江山迢遞無休絕，
 淚眼看燈乍明滅。
 自從孤館深鎖窗，
 桂花幾度圓還缺。
 鴉鴉向曉鳴森木，
 20 風過池塘響叢玉。
 白日蕭條夢不成，
 橋南更問仙人卜。

W.10 嘲少年

- 青驄馬肥金鞍光，
 龍腦入縷羅衫香。
 美人狹坐飛瓊觴，
 貧人喚云天上郎。
 5 別起高樓臨碧篠，
 絲曳紅鱗出深沼。
 有時半醉百花前，
 背把金丸落飛鳥。

- 15 Rivers and hills extend on and on with no rest or end;
 through tear-filled eyes I watch the lamplight flicker, light and dark.
 Since the time I locked myself deep within the windows of this lonely
 lodge,
 how many times have those osmanthus blossoms alternated, round
 and broken?¹

- The crows towards dawn cry among the forest trees;
 20 wind crosses the pool tinkling the thicket of jades.
 In the light of day all is dreary, and my dreams cannot take form;
 I'll go south of the bridge to ask that Immortal for a reading.

W.10 Mocking a Lad

His blue-grey horse is fat, and the gold-spangled saddle gleams;
 dragon-brain permeates the threads: his silk gauze smock is fragrant.²
 Beauties sit clustered close by him as the white jade winecups fly;
 the poor folk call him a "heaven-dwelling lad."

- 5 A separate high loft is built overlooking thickets of bamboo;
 with a silken line he drags red scales from the deep lake.
 At times, half-drunk, he lies before the hundred flowers;
 pulling golden pellet in a sling behind his back, shoots down a flying
 bird.

1 A compressed image combining the blossoming and falling of blooms on the moon's osmanthus tree and the alternating roundness and "breaking" of the moon itself through the lunar cycle.

2 "Dragon-brain": i.e., camphor (see also W.7, l. 6).

- 自說生來未為客，
10 一生美妾過三百。
豈知斲地種田家，
官稅頻催沒人織。
長金積玉誇豪毅，
每揖閑人多意氣。
15 生來不讀半行書，
只把黃金買身貴。
少年安得長少年，
海波尚變為桑田。
榮枯遞轉急如箭，
20 天公豈肯于公偏。
莫道韶華鎮長在，
髮白面皺專相待。

W.11 高平縣東私路

- 侵侵槲葉香，
木花滯寒雨。
今夕山上秋，
永謝無人處。
5 石谿遠荒澀，

He says of himself that never in his life has he spent a night away
from home – ¹

- 10 In his lifetime he has kept beautiful concubines numbering over
three hundred.

What would he know of those families who chop earth and plant
the fields,

always harried to pay their tax, and none to ply the loom?

Growing his gold and accumulating jade he boasts of his grand
boldness;

greeting idle fellows, he is full of haughty self-regard.

- 15 In his lifetime he has not read a half-line of a book,
just taking yellow gold to buy himself high station.

Lad, can you always remain a lad?

Even the ocean's waves will change to mulberry fields.

Flourishing and withering follow one after another as quickly as
an arrow,

- 20 how will the lord of heaven be willing to make an exception for you?

Don't think that youth's glory will stay forever –

white hair and a wrinkled face are waiting, just for you.

W.11 East of the Gaoping County Seat: a Private Road

Thickly massed, the scrub-oak leaves are fragrant;

blooms on trees are stuck in the cold rain.

This evening's autumn in the hills:

a place forever left with no inhabitant.

- 5 The stony creek and distant wilds are astringent;

1 In context, the point must be, not that this "lad" never travels, but rather that wherever he goes he is accompanied with all the attendants and comforts anyone could desire, and thus equally "at home" wherever the place may be.

棠實懸辛苦。
古者定幽尋，
呼君作私路。

W.12 神仙曲

碧峯海面藏靈書，
上帝揀作仙人居。
清明笑語聞空虛，
鬪乘巨浪騎鯨魚。
5 春羅書字邀王母，
共宴紅樓最深處。
鶴羽衝風過海遲，
不如却使青龍去。
猶疑王母不相許，
10 垂霧妖鬟更轉語。

W.13 龍夜吟

鬟髮胡兒眼睛綠，
高樓夜靜吹橫竹。
一聲似向天上來，
月下美人望鄉哭。

wild pears suspend sharp bitterness.
 Surely some ancient, who'd come here seeking secrets,
 called you his private road.

W.12 Tune: Gods and Transcendents

A jade-green peak on the face of the sea, where magical books are
 stored:
 the god on high chose this for a dwelling of gods and immortals.
 In the pure light laughing speech can be heard in the midst of the
 void;
 they compete in riding huge waves and straddling leviathans.

- 5 On spring gauze they indite characters to invite the Queen Mother
 to banquet together in the red tower's deepest recess.
 The crane's pinions as they fight the wind are slow to cross the sea –
 better instead to send Green Dragon to go.
 Yet still they wonder if the Queen Mother will assent or no;
 10 trailing fogs (their demonic hairbuns) still echo with their chattering.

W.13 A Dragon Keens at Night

A curly-headed nomad boy, with eyes of green;
 in a high loft in the quiet of night he blows the transverse flute.
 At one note, which seems descended from the sky,
 the beauties beneath the moon gaze toward home and weep.

- 5 直排七點星藏指，
 暗合清風調宮徵。
 蜀道秋深雲滿林，
 湘江半夜龍驚起。
 玉堂美人邊塞情，
 10 碧窗皓月愁中聽。
 寒砧能搗百尺練，
 粉淚凝珠滴紅線。
 胡兒莫作隴頭吟，
 隔窗暗結愁人心。

W.14 崑崙使者

崑崙使者無消息，
 茂陵烟樹生愁色。
 金盤玉露自淋漓，
 元氣茫茫收不得。

- 5 A straight row of seven spots, stars hidden under his fingers,
 in tacit concord with the pure wind he matches *gong* and *zhi*.¹
 Along Shu roads, autumn lies deep and clouds fill the forest,
 by the Xiang river in the midpoint of night a dragon is startled
 awake.

- In jade hall sits a beauty with feelings fixed on the frontier;
 10 by emerald-screened window in the moon's brilliant white in sadness
 she listens.

The cold fulling mallet can beat out a hundred feet of pure silk;
 powder and tears in congealed globes leave strands of red.

Nomad lad, don't play "Chant of the Highlands" – ²
 within the window, where no one sees, it entangles a sad one's heart.

W.14 Kunlun Emissary

Of the Kunlun emissary there is no news;³
 mist-shrouded trees at Maoling have an anxious air.
 On the bronze basins the jade dew flows freely as before,⁴
 but his primal breath has scattered, and cannot be collected.

1 *Gong* and *zhi* are notes of the pentatonic scale.

2 "Chant of the Highlands" ("Longtou yin" 隴頭吟) is a title that appears among Han dynasty "transverse wind tunes" (*bengchui qu* 橫吹曲). Although that musical repertoire was not at first associated with the "transverse flute," such an association may have been in Li He's mind.

3 The Kunlun emissary could be either the blue bird described in anecdotal tradition as the go-between of the Queen Mother of the West, or an emissary sent from the Han to make contact with the Queen Mother in the far west.

4 On Maoling and these dew-gathering basins, see 2.1.

- 5 麒麟背上石文裂，
 虯龍鱗下紅肢折。
 何處偏傷萬國心，
 中天夜久高明月。

W.15 白門前

- 白門前，
 大樓喜。
 懸紅雲，
 撻鳳尾。
- 5 劍匣破，
 舞蛟龍。
 蚩尤死，
 鼓龍蓬。
- 天齊慶，
 10 雷墮地。
 無驚飛，
 海千里。

- 5 On the *qilin*'s back the stone inscription has cracked;
 beneath the twining dragon's scales the red limbs lie broken.¹
 Where is it that most pains the mind of ten thousand states? –
 there in the sky through the long night, the high bright moon.

W.15 Before White Gate

Before White Gate,²
 great towers' delight.
 Red clouds trail;
 phoenix-tails slap.

- 5 The scabbard bursts:
 flood-dragons dance.
 Chiyu dies:
 drums boom and boom.

- Heaven unites in celebration;
 10 thunder crashes to earth.
 No startled flight
 within the thousand miles of sea.

1 Xu Wei takes this dragon as a pine tree, reading 枝 for 肢 (cf. 4.34).

2 Wu Qiming infers a reference to the White Gate Tower where the Three Kingdoms era warlord Lü Bu (see 2.4.8) made his last stand in his resistance against Cao Cao and forces acting in the name of the Han emperor; he was killed soon after his capture (see the account in *San guo zhi* 三國志 (*Record of the Three Kingdoms*), 1: 7.226–227). Given that the alternate version in 4.22 seems to take its historical frame from the reign of Emperor Wu of the Han, this seems quite a leap, though perhaps the general theme of violent subdual of formidable enemies connects them. See also the notes to 4.22.

W.16 漢唐姬飲酒歌

- 御服沾霜露，
天衢長綦棘。
金隱秋塵姿，
無人為帶飾。
5 玉堂歌聲寢，
芳林煙樹隔。
雲陽臺上歌，
鬼哭復何益。
仗劍明秋水，
10 兇威屢脅逼。
強梟噬母心，
犇厲索人魄。
相看兩相泣，
淚下如波激。
15 寧用清酒為，
欲作黃泉客。
不說玉山頽，
且無飲中色。
勉從天帝訴，
20 天上寡沉厄。
無處張總帷，

W.16 Drinking Song of Consort Tang of the Han

- The imperial robes are stained with frost and dew;
 along heaven's avenues grow brambles and thorns.¹
 Gold is hidden in autumnal dusty aspect;
 There is no one to dress and adorn me.
- 5 In the jade hall, ceased the sound of singing,
 from the fragrant wood's mist-decked trees we are cut off.
 That song upon the Yunyang terrace –
 even if ghosts weep, what good can it do?²
 You bore a sword as bright as autumn's floods,
- 10 but evil violence relentlessly compels and bullies.
 The violent owl gnaws its mother's heart,
 roving demons hunt human body-souls.
 Gazing at one another we both weep;
 our tears streaming down like turbulent waves.
- 15 To what purpose do we trifle with this wine? –
 as one of us prepares to become a wanderer at the Yellow Springs.
 Speak not of that jade mountain about to crumble – ³
 there is not the least flush of wine in our cheeks.
 Take courage and lay your plaint before heaven,
- 20 for in heaven there are few unredressed grievances.
 Lacking a place to spread your sheer spirit-canopy,

1 Referring to the reversal of fate that led to the death of Liu Bian 劉辯 (176–190), the ill-fated Emperor Shao of the Eastern Han. Consort Tang was his favorite. For more on this background, see the Endnote.

2 Here referring to a Terrace said to have been constructed by Emperor Wu of the Han (see Endnote).

3 A well-known metaphor describing the demeanor of the elegant and gifted Xi Kang when drunk (cf. 3.23, l. 6; 4.12, l. 6). Here the image brings to mind a still more common metaphor – the verb *beng* 崩, reserved in formal contexts to express the idea “die” specifically in the case of emperors, indicates in its ordinary usage precisely the “collapse” of a mountain.

如何望松柏。

妾身晝團團，

君魂夜寂寂。

25 蛾眉自覺長，

頸粉誰憐白。

矜持昭陽意，

不肯看南陌。

W.17 聽穎師彈琴歌

別浦雲歸桂花渚，

蜀國絃中雙鳳語。

芙蓉葉落秋鸞離，

越王夜起遊天姥。

5 暗佩清臣敲水玉，

渡海蛾眉牽白鹿。

誰看挾劍赴長橋，

誰看浸髮題春竹。

1 An indirect allusion to the tradition of the posthumous entertainments directed toward the departed Cao Cao at Bronze Sparrow Terrace (cf. 3.1)

2 “Zhaoyang palace”: a palace name of the Han dynasty, where Chengdi’s favorite consort Zhao Hede lived, here as often a general term for a consort’ palace.

- how will I be able to gaze at the pines and cypresses?¹
 My form through the day will remain distracted and stumbling,
 while your soul through the night will be quiet and wan.
- 25 I will feel how my own moth eyebrows grow long;
 as for the powdered nape of my neck, who will delight in its whiteness?
 With haughty stalwartness I will uphold my standing as inhabitant of
 Zhaoyang palace;²
 not deigning to regard the splendor of the southern lanes.³

W.17 Song: Listening to Master Ying's Zither

- By shores of parting, the clouds have returned to the osmanthus
 flower shoals;
 through strings of Shu a pair of phoenixes converse.⁴
 Lotus leaves have fallen and the autumn simurgh has departed;
 the King of Yue rises at night to climb Heaven's Crone.⁵
- 5 On unseen pendant an incorruptible minister raps on crystal;
 moth-eyebrows crossing the sea lead a white deer.
 Who now has eyes for the sword-bearer off to Long Bridge;
 who now has eyes for the one who dipped hair in ink to inscribe
 spring bamboo?⁶

3 This final couplet declares Consort Tang's unwillingness to remarry.

4 Shu *wutong* wood was of proverbially good quality for use in stringed musical instruments (cf. 1.1); here there is a further play on "Strings of Shu" as a *yuefu* tune title (cf. 1.18).

5 The sadness and loftiness of the zither's sounds. "Heaven's Crone": a mountain in the southern region of Yue, from atop whose peak it was said one could hear the songs of the eponymous Heaven's Crone.

6 "Long Bridge": Where a ferocious dragon lived in the legend about Zhou Chu (see also the references, with notes, in 1.14 and 3.2). "Dipping hair in ink": Legend has it that the eighth-century calligrapher Zhang Xu 張旭, while drunk, dipped his hair in ink to write cursive calligraphy.

- 竺僧前立當吾門，
 10 梵宮真相眉稜尊。
 古琴大軫長八尺，
 嶧陽老樹非桐孫。
 涼館聞絃驚病客，
 藥囊暫別龍鬚席。
 15 請歌當請卿相歌，
 奉禮官卑復何益。

W.18 謠俗

- 上林胡蝶小，
 試伴漢家春。
 飛向南城去，
 誤落石榴裙。
 5 脈脈花滿樹，
 翩翩燕遶雲。
 出門不識路，
 羞問陌頭人。

- An Indus monk stands erect just before my gate;
 10 now appears Buddhist palaces' true form, in lineaments of majesty.
 This ancient zither with its large pegs is eight feet long –
 that ancient tree at Yiyang was no grandchild *wutong* tree.¹
- In a chilly lodge on hearing these strings an infirm traveler is stirred
 to rise;
 his medicine satchel for a time takes leave of the dragon-whisker mat.
 15 If you want a song then go ask a lord or chamberlain –
 Director of Ceremonials is a lowly post – what good can my efforts
 do?²

W.18 Ditty on Customs

- This butterfly from Shanglin park, so tiny –
 it tagged along in the house of Han's springtime.
 It flew toward the south of the city,
 and by error alit on a pomegranate skirt.
 5 It gazed with yearning as the flowers filled the trees;
 and fluttered feebly as swallows wheeled through clouds.
 It went out, but did not know the way
 and is shamed to ask the folk along the path.

1 Yiyang (meaning "the south slopes of Mt Yi"), in modern-day Shandong province, was mentioned in *Shang shu* traditions as a source for *wutong* wood for zither-making. Traditionally the new growth on old *wutong* trees (the so-called "grandchild *wutong*") was favored for this use because it was reputed to be especially dense-grained. Here Li He uses the term in an inverted sense, as a witty comment on the sheer size of Master Ying's zither.

2 On Li He's appointment as "Vice-Director of Ceremonials" and his dissatisfaction with the post, see the Introduction.

W.19 靜女春曙曲

- 嫩蜨憐芳抱新蘂，
 泣露枝枝滴天淚。
 粉窗香咽頽曉雲，
 錦堆花密藏春睡。
 5 戀屏孔雀搖金尾，
 鶯舌分明呼婢子。
 冰洞寒龍半匣水，
 一隻商鸞逐煙起。

W.20 少年樂

- 芳草落花如錦地，
 二十長遊醉鄉裏。
 紅纓不動白馬驕，
 垂柳金絲香拂水。
 5 吳娥未笑花不開，
 綠鬢聳墮蘭雲起。
 陸郎倚醉牽羅袂，
 奪得寶釵金翡翠。

1 A play on “screen” as the splendid tail the vain peacock “loves” and an actual screen in the woman’s boudoir. Peacocks were indeed a favorite subject in the decoration of screens.

W.19 Tune: Spring Daybreak of the Quiet Maiden

The tender butterfly, lover of fragrance, clasps the new buds;
 weeping dew: each branch is spattered with heaven's tears.
 By face-powder spotted casement, stifling incense, as clouds of dawn
 totter;
 amid the piled brocades in flowery seclusion is hidden a spring
 sleeper.

- 5 Besotted with his own plume-screen a peacock swings his golden
 tail;¹
 the orioles' tongues clearly call out for her maid.
 In the cold dragon's icy cellar lies half a case of water;
 a single time-marked simurgh rises in the mists.²

W.20 Delights of Youth

On the fragrant grass, fallen blossoms are like brocaded earth;
 at twenty he ever wanders in the land of drunkenness.
 In unstirring red caparison, his white horse is proud,
 from trailing willows golden fronds stroke the water with their
 fragrance.

- 5 Before the Wu lovely has smiled, when the flowers have not opened
 from her dark tresses and towering hairbun, orchid-scented clouds rise.

Master Lu, drunk, leans and tugs at her gauze sleeve:³
 and makes away with the jeweled hairpin's gold kingfisher.

2 "Time-marked simurgh" (*shang luan* 商鸞): *Shang* here is the name for the marks on a clepsydra rod providing reference points for time readings. In line with Liu Yan's suggestion that the "cold dragon" is the cistern from which the clepsydra water drips (whose spouts are often shaped like dragon-heads), it seems best to take this "simurgh" as an ornamented finial atop the floating indicator rod, which rises as the water drips from the cistern. None of this rules out, however, secondary associations via the musical note *shang* with autumn and loneliness, or via the image of the "lone simurgh," with the circumstances and frame of mind of the maiden herself (cf. 1.30, l. 6).

3 For "Master Lu," cf. the closing lines of 1.29, 4.9.

