

## **The Poetry of Li He**

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Christopher M. B. Nugent, Williams College

Stephen Owen, Harvard University

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Xiaofei Tian, Harvard University

Ding Xiang Warner, Cornell University

# The Poetry of Li He

Translated by Robert Ashmore

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Christopher M. B. Nugent, and Xiaofei Tian

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# Introduction

From his own lifetime to the present, Li He 李賀 (790–816) has persistently struck readers as an anomalous figure: preternaturally gifted, yet thwarted in his dearest ambitions, he created an inimitable and magnetic brand of poetic writing that won the devotion of generations of readers, but that has also seemed bizarre or even perverse to many. His works' compelling intensity often seems in direct proportion to an obscurity verging on the hermetic. Later readers' sense, moreover, of his style, manner, and career became inextricably intertwined with an awareness of his eventual fate: an early reputation as a precocious talent, and ensuing patronage by some of the most influential figures of the era, led in Li He's case only to a frustrating few years in a dead-end low-level posting at the capital, followed by several further years of futile wandering in pursuit of an alternate career path in the provinces. In the end he returned home, in failing health, and died at twenty-seven, a forlorn figure, leaving behind his mother and one or more siblings.<sup>1</sup> We appear to have been exceedingly lucky in that we possess roughly the same number of Li He's poems as were in circulation shortly after his death. Yet from the earliest times, his works have seemed haunting, orphaned fragments of an incomparable yet incomplete talent.

The earliest reference to Li He's collected poetry appears in a preface written by Du Mu 杜牧 (803–852) in 831, fifteen years after the poet's death.<sup>2</sup> There Li He's collected works are designated as *geshi* 歌詩, or "song-poems." Early editions of Li He's poetry appear under a wide range of titles, but this term recurs frequently.<sup>3</sup> The persistence of this

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1 For simplicity in this dual-language volume, references to age will follow the Chinese convention whereby one's age is defined as the total number of lunisolar calendar years during all or part of which one has been alive. This typically produces a tally greater by one than in the Western reckoning.

2 For the full text of Du Mu's preface, see the Appendix.

3 In light of the central importance of Du Mu's preface in grounding the provenance of the collection, of course, such use of the term "song-poems" in these titles likely also reflects a desire to mirror its language. We will return to the publication history of Li He's works in the concluding section of this Introduction.

term in referring to Li He's poetry calls attention to the centrality of song traditions, as well as ideas about the power of song, and more generally of music, in his work.

Both Li He and his contemporaries often suggest that it is specifically in song writing, as opposed to classical poetry (*shi* 詩) in general, that he was most distinctively skilled (see e.g., 4.34). The most common way in which Li He marks works as “song” of some kind is by using titles drawn from the old *yuefu* 樂府 (“Music Bureau”) repertoires of the Han (206 BCE–220 CE) through the Southern Dynasties (420–589). A number of other works evoke the commonplaces, imagery, and diction of one style of old *yuefu* or another without directly taking their title from any particular old song. Alternatively, he frequently appends terms such as “song,” “ditty,” “tune,” and so forth to often fanciful titles of his own invention. Finally, although he does not typically draw his song titles from otherwise attested repertoires of Tang music (2.17 and 4.4 being rare exceptions), two works (2.5 and 3.28) bear prefaces specifically describing circumstances in which he composed a lyric to order which was then immediately set to instrumental accompaniment and sung by trained musicians.

It is up to later readers to ponder whether such descriptions of specific instances of musical adaptation might reflect a normal practice that Li He simply omits to comment on elsewhere, or whether these were exceptions to normal practice that merited special comment. Sources from the early reception history of Li He at any rate, reflect an intriguing trend: although evidence from close to Li He's lifetime suggests that his most renowned works were “unperformable,” or at any rate not typically set to music, accounts from the latter half of the ninth century into the Northern Song (960–1127) reflect a developing mythology of Li He as an imperial music-master, either serving as a court-appointed music expert, or having his songs adopted in the repertoires of court musicians, or both. Li He's friend and contemporary Shen Yazhi (781–832; see e.g. 1.11), writing some years after Li He's death, says,

余故友李賀善擇南北朝樂府故詞，其所賦亦多怨鬱悽艷之功，誠以蓋古排今，使為詞者莫得偶矣。惜乎其終亦不備聲絃唱。

My old friend Li He was good at selecting former lyrics from the “Music Bureau” repertoires of the Northern and Southern Dynasties,

and what he composed was likewise rich in effects of pent-up resentments and wistful loveliness. Indeed, in this he surpassed the ancients and pushed the moderns aside, so that among those writers of lyrics there was none who could match him. How sad, then, that his works as well were never set to music and sung with string accompaniments!<sup>4</sup>

By the mid-tenth century, however, a biography of Li He reports that,

其樂府詞數十篇，至於雲韶樂工，無不諷誦。補太常寺協律郎。

As for the several dozen lyrics to “Music Bureau” tunes he composed, there was no one, all the way up to the Yunshao music masters, who didn’t intone and recite them. He was appointed to the vacant post of Harmonizer of the Pitchpipes [*xielü lang* 協律郎] in the Court for Imperial Sacrifices.<sup>5</sup>

“Harmonizer of the Pitchpipes” was an actual court post with origins in early imperial times, held by specialists in ritual music and in traditional musical and acoustical lore. The office’s striking designation stems from traditions holding that the perfect rule of sage kings of the distant past had been facilitated by their possession of jade pipes of precisely the correct proportions, allowing them to activate relations of resonance connecting the human, natural, and divine realms. The mastery of seasonal and climatic rhythms was also held to be tied up with efforts to recapture the lost “attunement” of those ancient sages; the intimate

4 Shen Yazhi, “An Account of Poetry, to Send of Licentiate Li Jiao” (“Xu shi song Li Jiao xiucai” 序詩送李膠秀才). In saying Li He’s work is “likewise rich in effects...” Shen intends a comparison with the ancient models discussed in the opening of the account; further down when he says, “his works as well were never set...” he means “as with latter-day works.” For Shen’s complete text with translation, see the Appendix.

5 From Li He’s biography in the *Jiu Tang shu* 舊唐書 (*Old Tang History*). For the complete text with translation, see the Appendix. Names of governmental agencies and of official posts in this volume generally follow the functional renderings in Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*, except where the connotations of specific names seem more important than their functional paraphrase.

connection of calendrical calculation with acoustics is reflected in the common term *lǜlì* 律曆, literally “pitchpipe and calendar,” designating the field of calendrical science. At a more mundane level, each of the six “yang” *lǜ* 律 pipes and “yin” *lǚ* 呂 pipes was associated with a month in the lunar calendar, so that the names of the twelve pitches in the system each corresponded with a particular month and season (see the references in 1.11, 1.23). Holders of this “Harmonizer of the Pitchpipes” post and its pre-Tang analogues were viewed as having privileged insights into ancient repertoires of sagely music, and of ways in which the efficacy of those musics might be realized in the latter-day world.<sup>6</sup> As we will see, these layers of association are indeed relevant to Li He’s poetics (see, e.g., 4.7). Notwithstanding all the gaps in the historical record, however, it is clear that he cannot have actually held this post. The posthumous bestowal of this title on Li He was indeed an important dimension of how he was remembered in later ages – but it was a promotion that took place only in the imaginations of early readers.

The above description of how court musicians “intoned and recited” Li He’s works is noteworthy – the implication being that they found his lyrics in some way intrinsically musical – but this account stops short of claiming that these works were actually incorporated into court repertoires. The evolving myth, however, followed its own inexorable logic: the poet’s biography in the *Xin Tang shu* 新唐書 (*New Tang History*), from roughly a century later, drawing on a wider range of anecdotal traditions, does take this further step, providing further narrative detail:

樂府數十篇，雲韶諸工皆合之絃管。為協律郎。

His several dozen “Music Bureau” pieces were all set to string and wind accompaniment by the various masters of the Yunshao Academy. He served as “Harmonizer of the Pitchpipes.”<sup>7</sup>

Traditions regarding the circulation of Li He’s works into Tang court music repertoires are no more credible as historical fact than his ap-

6 See for example, Li He’s treatment of the “Great Peace pipe” and its transformative effects in 2.5, ll. 5–8, along with the Endnote to that work.

7 From Li He’s biography in the *Xin Tang shu*. For the complete text and translation, see the Appendix.

pointment as “Harmonizer of the Pitchpipes.” Although such aspects of the developing posthumous myth of Li He diverge from historical fact, however, they do respond to problems posed, and contexts evoked, within the poems themselves. Such stories shed light not only on how early readers imagined Li He, but also on how Li He’s work itself asks to be read.

All the above accounts agree that Li He’s selection and adaptation of traditional *yuefu*, or “Music Bureau,” titles was a core part of what made him distinctive. The term *yuefu* ultimately derives from the name of an imperial agency of the Western Han dynasty (206 BCE–8 CE), charged with collecting and maintaining repertoire, instruments, and musicians for use in court ritual and entertainment. Its founding is typically associated with the era of Emperor Wu of the Han 漢武帝 (r. 141–87 BCE), though the designation, and some version of the institution, had existed earlier. Han *yuefu* repertoires include ritual hymns used in imperial sacrifices, as well as songs and other performance “numbers” for banquets and imperial entertainments, with various voicings and instrumentations, some including dance or pantomime elements. The imperial banquet and entertainment repertoire incorporated a wide range of popular song forms and types, and it is to this latter dimension of the musical legacy of the Han “Music Bureau” that later writers primarily looked when they composed *yuefu* lyrics.

These traditions of Han court performance underwent continuing consolidation and reshaping (as well as fragmentation and loss) under the Wei (220–265) and Western Jin (265–316) dynasties, and through the period of division between northern and southern regimes from the fall of the Western Jin to the Sui unification in 589. By the end of this period, the actual musical settings and performance techniques of the Han through Western Jin court repertoires had either fallen from active use or been lost entirely. The court music of the southern courts of the Song (420–479), Qi (479–502), Liang (502–557), and Chen (557–589) – which Tang people viewed, under the rubric of “pure *shang*-mode music” (*qing shang yue* 清商樂), as the closest surviving approximation to the old *yuefu* musical institution – was adapted into Sui (581–618) and Tang court music only in partial and fragmentary ways, and these are generally believed to have died out as active and continuous performance traditions early in the Tang.

The Tang had its own rich and diverse living musical culture, but for Tang poets, the legacy of the ancient Han *yuefu*, or Music Bureau (or the repertoire of musical numbers curated by that bureau, which themselves came to be designated *yuefu*), was thus not primarily a matter of continuing traditions of actual musical performance.<sup>8</sup> What the *yuefu* tradition did provide to Tang writers were repertoire lists (tune titles, sometimes accompanied by information about their origins, occasions, and early performance practices), along with a variety of song lyrics from earlier eras, including both original court performance versions as well as later imitations and adaptations – this latter form of composition having become a particularly favored literary exercise among Southern Dynasties writers, including many of Li He's most favored models.

This Han and early medieval *yuefu* legacy provided Tang poets with a rich palette of scenarios, linguistic registers, and stock figures – soldiers on campaign and lonely wives at home, farmers beset by rapacious officials and transcendents wandering in sacred mountains, teasing and flirtatious songs of lotus-pickers and caltrop-gatherers, along with lyrical evocations of local or folk customs from various quaint and colorful locales, as well as a roster of yearly festivals and religious rites. Along with these stock figures and stock scenarios came a range of stock “places” that were immediately recognizable, even if unconnected to any specific location on a map: the vast otherworldly desert expanses of the western frontier, the vertiginous fog-swept mountains of Shu in the southwest, the rivers and lakes of Jiangnan, and the urban panoramas of the great medieval capitals, their roads choked with travelers and splendid carriages, and the ancient burial grounds outside their gates. *Yuefu* traditions also offered a range of typical venues, real and imagined, for song performance – from the rustic wine-loft by the riverside to the splendid palace banquet hall – along with a stock of iconic

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8 This was a complex problem for Tang writers themselves. It is for this reason, and because the issues are central to understanding Li He, that the entirety of Shen Yazhi's “Account” is presented in the Appendix, even though only a portion of the essay relates directly to Li He. It is worth noting that the term *yuefu* itself could also be used loosely to refer to “song compositions” in general; such general use continued into the Song and later eras when it might refer to musical and prosodic forms of what modern generic categories would term *ci* 詞 or *qu* 曲.

performers, from the heroic Luo Fu, whose boldness and rhetorical resourcefulness warded off an attempted seduction by a governor in what would have been broadly imagined as an Eastern Han (25–220) past, to more recent bewitching and tragic songstresses of the Southern Dynasties such as “Little Su” or Mochou, “Grieve-not.” In short, *yuefu* repertoires of titles, traditional lyrics, and stock images and characters provided a diverse and fertile space in which Tang poets practiced a sort of “genre poetry” analogous to what art historians call “genre painting.”

Another dimension of the *yuefu* tradition as received by Tang writers was the notion that the governmental function of curating song repertoires for court entertainment had in its original intent been a continuation of the canonical function of “song-gathering” (*cai shi* 採詩) associated with the sagely institutions of the Zhou dynasty and the *Shijing* 詩經 (*Classic of Poetry*). Though itself likely more part of the mythology of early imperial *Shijing* exegesis than of actual Zhou institutional history, the tradition of “song-gathering” held that the Zhou collection of “folk” material for court performance – particularly the repertoire reflected in the “Airs of the States” portion of the *Shijing* – had in an original sagely dispensation served the function not only of court entertainment but also of bringing the good and bad of regional mores and local governance throughout the realm to the attention of sagely rulers. Deriving inspiration from such traditions, eighth-century poets such as Yuan Jie 元結 (723–772) and Du Fu 杜甫 (712–770) had created examples of latter-day *yuefu* works in which the poet performed a sort of class ventriloquism whereby the notionally popular origin of their newly composed *yuefu* verse, cast in the voices of common folk, became a thin veil for social critique.<sup>9</sup> Li He wrote many works that reveal Du Fu’s influence in particular, and there are several examples of this sort of work in his collection, including some of the most vehement and topical protest poetry of any Tang poet (e.g., 2.6, 2.9).

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9 In the preface to his fifty “New *Yuefu*” (*Xin yuefu* 新樂府) poems, dated to 809, Bai Juyi 白居易 (772–846) explicitly claims a connection both to the political legacy of the ancient “Music Bureau” as well as to the tradition of the so-called “poetry-collecting officer” (*cai shi guan* 採詩官) of the Zhou. Works in a similar vein were produced as well by members of Bai Juyi’s circle including Yuan Zhen 元稹 (779–831) and Li Shen 李紳 (772–846).

Li He often refers to his own composition of song lyrics as a special activity that is somehow fundamentally distinctive from writing in other forms (e.g., 2.21, 4.34). If we reflect on the specific compositional task confronting a writer of lyrics to a traditional *yuefu* title, we can indeed see a number of things that make this process distinctive, many of which are useful to bear in mind when reading Li He. Whether it was a matter of writing lyrics to extant tunes in a living tradition of song performance, or, as in later eras, of writing lyrics to notional “tunes” defined by a set of prior lyrics to a particular tune title, the basic premise of composing to a song title is that one produces a new version of an existing song, or of a lost and ancient song, rather than simply writing a poem from scratch – in short, one writes under the assumption that one’s audience is already somehow familiar with “how the tune goes.”

This aspect of *yuefu* composition was of central importance for Li He. He wrote prefaces to some of his larger *yuefu* or *yuefu*-style compositions that reflect a high degree of consciousness of the versions already in circulation, as well as awareness of the structure of the extant repertoire, either to say that he is composing a new version because none of the extant versions is particularly good (as in the preface to 2.21), or to reflect on how his new work aims to fill in a gap, or form a companion piece to other extant works (as in the preface to 3.36). While Li He’s strategy vis-à-vis previous versions sometimes seems to be to outdo them in fecundity and daring of invention (as with the two works just cited), another strategy perhaps still more crucial to Li He’s style and compositional method might be called “subtractive,” where the sets of associations relating to a given tune-title already present in readers’ minds enabled Li He to compose versions that were fragmented, elliptical, and suggestive to a degree that would risk mere incoherence without the referential frame provided by the title. Li He’s spare twenty-character version of the ballad “By the Pond” (4.35), for example, is a miniature stylistic *tour de force* whose power derives in part from the tune-title’s prior association with the tragic story of Empress Zhen 甄 (183–221), even though no specific connection with that story is signaled in the work itself. We might say the work’s poignancy stems from how it conveys Empress Zhen’s sadness not as an empress but as a woman. Alternatively, we might say it comes from the way it poses Empress Zhen’s case as an emblem for the sadness of untold numbers of women, or of a particular “flavor” of human sadness in general.

Either way, these possibilities are enabled by what the preexisting frame of the tune-title allowed Li He to leave unsaid.

We can see it was no accident that when Ezra Pound wanted to illustrate his theory of Chinese and Japanese poetry as “imagistic,” the poem he chose to make the point was a *yuefu* composition, Li Bai’s 李白 (701–762) lyric to the tune-title “Jeweled Stairs’ Grievance” (“Yu jie yuan” 玉階怨). In fact many of the points just made about the structure provided by a tune-title apply to the most common thematic subtypes in *yuefu* traditions as well as in song traditions more generally – particularly the “boudoir lament” and “palace lament” genres that occupied a central place not only in the old Southern dynasties *yuefu* traditions but also in the living Tang traditions of banquet song that would eventually become the “song lyric” or *ci* 詞 of the Song (960–1279) and later eras. Our sense in these forms of being able to infer depths of mood and unspoken thoughts from a fragmentary series of images is enabled by the fact that nothing much ever happens, and that the little that does happen is tightly yoked to a basic implicit scenario, with limited variations. The absent lover may be on the frontier in the army, or away in the pleasure district cavorting with courtesans, or he may be the emperor, banqueting with a new favorite – but absent lover there will be. Shifts in perspective between the woman’s surroundings and the imagined site of this absent lover, for example, can thus be made with an economical abruptness that would risk incoherence without the immanent structure provided by the song-type. The closing passages of 1.29 or 4.9, for example, if read in isolation, might seem baffling; but read within the framework of the recurrent “absent playboy” motif in this song type, those same passages become not incoherent, but rather richly atmospheric, as the discontinuities and gaps in the presentation create a sense of interiority, a dimly surmised texture of experiences and thoughts left unspoken.<sup>10</sup>

At the same time, flux and fragmentation in the tradition underlying a given *yuefu* title also offered possibilities for new composition. As in many song traditions, recurrent or striking lines circulating in a *yuefu* lyric are often recycled as the titles or as the thematic focus of new

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10 See also the still more extreme example of 3.14, with further discussion of interpretive issues in the Endnote to that work.

songs, as with the sprawling cluster of topoi, alternate titles, formulaic sequences, and lyrical tags connected with the “Song of Chance Meeting” (“Xiang feng xing” 相逢行) tradition (see, e.g., 2.23, 3.24, with notes), including the catchy lines, “Your place is easy to spot; / easy to spot, and also hard to forget” 君家誠易知 / 易知復難忘,<sup>11</sup> which serve as Li He’s point of departure for his lyrics to the title “Hard to Forget” (see 3.13, with notes). Lyric texts from the early stages of *yuefu* performance, in which the musical settings (often including dance or pantomime elements) were intact, became cryptic as those musical traditions were lost, either because the texts intermingled sung words with performance directions, or because the coherence of the piece had been conceived in terms of the totality of a multimodal performance rather than in terms of the “script” for the sung parts. But for later readers coming to these texts after the loss of the musical setting, the impression was formed that certain kinds of opacity and abruptness were themselves markers of an antique *yuefu* style.

Li He took full advantage of the compositional opportunities presented by all these aspects of *yuefu* traditions. Several of his songs whose titles are not otherwise attested as *yuefu* are borrowed from striking lines from other songs (e.g., 3.34, or 4.9, whose title derives from a line in a Bao Zhao 鮑照 (ca. 414–466) poem that is itself an imitation of an ancient song). Often a snatch of an old lyric or a tune-title is incorporated into a new lyric somewhat in the manner of the architectural use of spolia, whereby a fragment from an ancient ruin, on being incorporated into a new structure, alludes to the former building as well as to its fragmentation. Compare for example the abrupt appearance of an enigmatic line from an old lyric at the middle of 3.30, which leads to a short flurry of historical fantasy, framed between opening and closing passages of scenic description grounded in the lyric present.

Understanding Li He’s relation to *yuefu* traditions allows us to see him not as doing something radically different from anyone before him, but rather as pushing the boundaries of compositional possibilities that the tradition made available. When we recall that the predominant modes of classical *shi* in the Tang were social and occasional verse, generally read as expressions of the thoughts and feelings of their author at a particular

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11 YSJ 2:34.508.

time and in particular circumstances, it makes sense that the economy of poetic kinds of the period should provide this outlet for writing in voices other than one's own; it makes intuitive sense as well that poets of a certain bent of imagination might be especially inclined to explore the possibilities offered by this type of lyric writing.

A second major strand in the reception of Li He has been to emphasize the close affinities of his poetic practice with the *Chuci* 楚辭 (*Songs of Chu*).<sup>12</sup> References from the cosmic geography of the celestial wandering episodes in that early anthology appear regularly in Li He's works, as in such recurrent images as the "Hanging Garden," sited amid the tiered levels of the mythical Mt. Kunlun at the world's western limit (see 1.1, 4.6, W.14), the mountain peak Yanzi over which the sun passes beneath earth at its setting (see 4.14), or Xihe the goddess sun-charioteer (see 1.24, 1.28, 4.14), who drives the sun each day from beside the Fusang tree, to the Ruo Tree in the far west where it sets (see 3.41, 4.6). As in the *Chuci* and in later traditions of celestial wandering, Li He's works demonstrate that from the perspective of the celestial wanderer, what ordinary mortals know only as mythic or metaphorical designations of celestial phenomena prove to be ordinary tangible places and objects: thus the *Li Sao* 離騷 protagonist snaps branches from the Ruo Tree, and waters his horses at "Xian pool," which is both the place where Xihe bathes the sun in advance of each day's journey, as well as the name of a three-star asterism in the central zone of what modern astronomy maps as Auriga. The uncanny concreteness of Li He's visions of the celestial realm (as in works such as 1.20, 1.24, 3.41, 4.2, 4.6, or 4.15) reflects a particularly bold handling of these conventions; nonetheless, his filiation to the older tradition is palpable. Similarly, the contrastive scenes of orgiastic pleasure-seeking and terrifying soul-devouring monsters appearing in the *Chuci* "Summons to the Soul" ("Zhao hun" 招魂) are highly distinctive in the pre-imperial poetic canon, and in works such as 1.28, 3.36, 4.13, and 4.18, we can clearly detect Li He's attentiveness to these precedents.

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12 The canonical statement of this affinity appears in Du Mu's preface to the collection, although Du Mu clearly has fundamental reservations about what Li He is doing within the *Chuci* tradition. For Du Mu's text, see the Appendix.

The “Nine Songs” (“Jiu ge” 九歌), a suite of liturgical vignettes in the *Chuci* directed to a roster of gods and spirits from Chu religious tradition, has perhaps a still more pervasive relevance for Li He’s style, as suggested by this opening passage from “Mountain Spirit” from that group:

- It is as if there were someone there on the slope of the hill:  
 draped in climbing-fig, with sash of trailing moss.  
 A visage of darting glances and lovely smiles;  
 “You yearn for me, who am so comely.”
- 5 She yokes a team of red leopards, striped lynxes for her escort;  
 with carriage of magnolia, a banner plaited of osmanthus.  
 Robed in stone-orchid, with sash of asarum,  
 she plucks penetrating fragrances to give to the one she yearns for.  
 She dwells in a shady bamboo-copse where one never sees sky,
- 10 the paths are steep and hard, and thus she is late to come.  
 She stands out alone atop the hill’s heights;  
 with the billowing clouds surging beneath.  
 This remote place grows dim – lo, by day it is dark;  
 an east wind swirls up and the goddess showers down rain.
- 15 Lingering with the holy beauty in my rapture I forget return.  
 Now that the year is late who will deck me in flowers?  
 I will gather the thrice-blossoming herb amid the hills,  
 where boulders lie scattered and piled and kudzu-vines tangle.  
 I reproach my Lady, in despondency forgetting to go back:
- 20 she must yearn for me but does not have the time.  
 That person amid the hills, fragrant as polia,  
 drinks from stony springs and shelters beneath pine and cypress.  
 Do you yearn for me? – certainty, and then doubt, arise in turn.  
 Thunder rumbles; rain comes down in darkness.
- 25 Apes chatter, and gibbons wail by night;  
 a whistling wind rustles through the trees.  
 Yearning for my Lady I am beset by fruitless cares.<sup>13</sup>

The devotional relation of worshipper to goddess is depicted here in terms of a romance or courtship between a human spirit-medium and a divinity who is at the same time both maddeningly elusive and every-

13 *Chuci buzhu* 楚辭補注, 78–82.

where latent in the landscape and the weather. The mood shifts rapidly: anxious anticipation and rapt attentiveness for signs of divine presence are suddenly punctuated with moments of ecstatic communion – as signaled in ll. 14–15, where the word meaning “shower down” in one line needs in context to be rendered as something like “holy” as an attribute of the goddess in the very next line. But such moments are always fleeting, and followed by melancholy, resentment, and resignation. Many of Li He’s works invoke a version of this divine courtship scenario (e.g., **1.19**, **1.27**, **1.32**, **2.3**, **3.44**, **4.3**, or **4.25**), and a similar conception often seems to underlie his treatment of landscape and ruins as well, as reflected for example in passages in **3.44** relating to the shrine of the goddess Lanxiang (ll. 25–46; see also **4.25**) or to the ruins of Wu Zetian’s 武則天 (r. 684–705) transit palace (ll. 47–56).

For Li He, however, the legacy of the *Chuci* cannot be contained within the bounds of purely literary influences. We might, for example, view “Lady Li” (**1.30**) as another example of a lyric broadly along the lines of the after-writings of “Nine Songs” hymns we see in **1.27** or **1.32**. But Li He’s “Lady Li” takes as its immediate point of departure, not the “Nine Songs” (or similar medieval liturgical songs) per se, but rather a lament composed in *Chuci* style by Emperor Wu of the Han, on behalf of a beloved consort who had died young. In fact, we owe the compilation and transmission of the *Chuci* itself to the Han imperial family’s interest in the tradition. Strictly speaking, the “Nine Songs” can only be called liturgical texts in a loose way, since between our texts for these works and the antecedent Chu religious forms they reflect lies an intervening process of court performance and adaptation during the early decades of the Han dynasty, both at the imperial court at Chang’an and, particularly, at the court of the southerly principate of Shouchun 壽春 where the cultural legacy of the old Chu state was most directly preserved.

It is an open question to what degree such works would have retained a religious character in Han court performance – but adaptations of Chu culture in the Han were not a one-way matter of appropriating liturgical traditions for court entertainment. A series of ritual reforms during the reign of Emperor Wu of the Han resulted in the establishment of a new calendar of imperial sacrifices, including the so-called “suburban sacrifices” (*jiao si* 郊祀) – sacrifices performed by the emperor to celestial and chthonic deities, which had begun during the Qin as part of new imperial protocols intended to recover long-lost traditions

from high antiquity, and to render real and tangible the emperor's claim to a cosmologically sanctioned sovereignty. The following is the opening hymn, "We Choose this Timely Day," from a sequence of sacrificial songs for these rites:

- At this choice day and hour, harboring great expectation,  
 burning fat and artemisia, we invite those from the four quadrants.  
 Heaven's Nine Gates open, and the transit of the spirits  
 trails benefits and grace, mighty protection and blessing.  
 5 The spirits' carriages are entwined with dark clouds;  
 they drive flying dragons: their feather-pennants flutter!  
 The spirits descend: like wind, like fast steeds;  
 with the green dragon to their left, the white tiger on their right.  
 The spirits' approach: swift and flooding, the gods!  
 10 With rains as their vanguard, spreading across sky.  
 The spirits' arrival: an auspicious covering shade;  
 their semblances almost recognizable, stirring and cleansing our  
 hearts.  
 The spirits have taken their seats, as the Five Tones adorn the  
 moment.  
 This delight lasts to dawn, as we receive the peace of the gods.  
 15 Victims quake and tremble, the offerings are fragrant;  
 We pour flagons of osmanthus wine, as we host the [spirits of]  
 eight directions.  
 The gods linger delighted, as we intone the songs of the seasons;  
 they gaze on all of this, beholding our marble halls.  
 The beauties stand ranked, delicate in wondrous loveliness;  
 20 faces pale and tender as sedge-flower, a bewildering sight.  
 Draped in floriate patterns, mingled with twining silks;  
 trailing fine sashes, dangling pendants of jewel and jade.  
 Bearing sachets of "fine evening" fragrance, redolent of orchid  
 and angelica.  
 Delight and ease in this moment as we offer the fine cup.<sup>14</sup>

14 See *History of the Han* (*Han shu* 漢書), 4:22.1052, along with *Yuefu shiji* [YSJ], 1:1.3. "We Choose this Timely Day" in fact happens to be the very first work included in this latter source, the most comprehensive compilation of pre-Song *yuefu* lyrics.

Here the fleeting and momentary alternations of presence and absence we see in the “Nine Songs” are replaced by a stable ritual framework of divine advent, arrival, and banquet (to be followed up in subsequent hymns with sending off of the divine guests), but the diction, the imagery, and the underlying dramatic conception reveal a common ancestry.

The generally popular origin of much of the *yuefu* tradition as it was engaged in the work of Tang and later poets explains why the term itself is often rendered as “ballad” in English-language discussions. To simply equate *yuefu* and “ballad,” and thereby emphasize the notionally “folk” origins of many *yuefu* song traditions at the expense of the Music Bureau’s primary functions in specifically imperial entertainments and religious observances, however, would risk skewing our understanding of how medieval writers themselves conceived of the tradition and its significance. Such a risk is perhaps greater in Li He’s case, moreover, than with any other Tang poet. With Li He in particular, we must bear in mind that Emperor Wu’s “We Choose this Timely Day,” too, is “*yuefu*.” The grand scenes of celestial cavalcade in which figures such as the protagonists of the *Li Sao* or “Far Roaming” in the *Chuci* traversed the cosmos, in dragon-yoked carriages trailing pennants of cloud, accompanied by vast retinues of divine birds and beasts and helper gods of sky and weather, were not a merely literary phenomenon, but also underlay the conception, design, and staging – as well as subsequent literary depictions – of the grand processions of human emperors.

Li He’s work displays a rapt fascination with spectacles of imperial ritual and banqueting alike, whether of his own or of past dynasties. He composed lyric evocations of the splendor and mystery of imperial pantomimes of celestial wandering (see 4.2), as well as traditions of epiphanic encounters between rulers of the past and divinities (see 4.15). Too pervasive to enumerate, moreover, are his reimaginings of the songs of the entertainment and banqueting repertoires of the early imperial and medieval courts. For Li He’s early readers, these layers of association between *yuefu* songs and the transcendent claims of imperial ritual and music were still a matter of commonplace, and it is in the context of these connections that we should seek to understand their critically astute, albeit fictitious, creation of traditions regarding Li He’s works being adopted by the imperial music academy, or his posthumous virtual promotion to “Harmonizer of the Pitchpipes.”

Looking back in disappointment as he departed from Chang'an for likely the last time, Li He wrote of his early ambitions,

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  
the way of our divine sovereign might pass like a flying god. (4.50)

A characteristic vividness and exuberance of imagination marks these lines as particularly Li He's. At the same time, the implicit associations on which this striking statement is based – composing lyrics for ancient imperial musical repertoires; stirring up a sound long absent from the world, that thereupon orders and transforms it; celebrating and perpetuating the claim to divine status of a sovereign and a dynasty – all derive from a shared medieval understanding of the ultimate purpose and significance of music.

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Up to this point this Introduction has focused, in keeping with the predominant trends in the poet's reception since the earliest times, on Li He's work in recasting ancient song traditions of one sort or another. The benefit of reading Li He in a complete edition rather than via anthology selections, however, is that it allows us to see beyond Li He's exuberant transports of imagination and lyrical projection into alternate personae, and to appreciate the varied and entirely different attractions of his works in various classical *shi* forms.<sup>15</sup> Considering the relatively small size of the collection, the formal and stylistic range on display in these works is striking. Li He has a distinctive and little-appreciated style in pentasyllabic regulated, or *jinti* 今體 (“modern style”), verse.<sup>16</sup>

15 To be clear, this distinction between fictive “songs” and social/occasional *shi* poetry is, particularly in Li He's case, only a loose one – he also composed numerous “songs” with topical or occasional reference.

16 *Jinti* 今體, or “Modern style,” refers to the tonally regulated *shi* forms, most commonly in four or eight lines, though a twelve-line form was common in examinations, and much longer extended regulated verses running to dozens or even up to a hundred and more lines were also well known. Notes on form and prosody in Li He's works are provided in the Endnotes.

To judge from the available evidence, it seems that in verse exchanges with fellow members of the Han Yu 韓愈 (768–824) circle such as Huangfu Shi 皇甫湜 (777–835), Zhang Che 張徹 (?–821), Chen Shang 陳商 (814 *jinshi*), or Li Han 李漢 (812 *jinshi*), Li He adopts unregulated *gushi* 古詩 (“ancient poetry”) forms, much as members of that group might write letters to one another in *guwen* 古文 (“ancient prose”) styles.<sup>17</sup> In one long epistolary poem (3.2), however, Li He demonstrates command of the kind of extended regulated verse (*pailü* 排律) in the elevated, orotund, and thoroughly “modern” register that served in the Tang as a poetic equivalent for the formal letter (known as *qi* 啓) that would conventionally have been composed in *pianwen* 駢文 (“parallel prose”).<sup>18</sup>

The vivid and even odd particularity of Li He’s depictions of his own daily existence in many of his *shi* works (e.g., 1.8, 1.34, 2.15, 3.12, 3.18, 3.20, or 4.50) is striking within the norms of Tang *shi* poetry, and again suggests the influence of Du Fu. Gaps in our contextual information leave several passages in Li He’s social and occasional works tantalizingly obscure. But taken together, along with the few available external sources, these works allow us to construct what should be considered, given the brevity and obscurity of his official career, a surprisingly three-dimensional picture of the major events in the brief adult life of a young scholar, poet, and aspiring imperial official at the turn of the ninth century. These occasional poems allow us, if not to better understand what happened in those years, to better understand what it was like to be there, for a young member of the class whose fate was tied up with that of the Tang empire.

Li He’s generally accepted birth year of 790 is derived by reverse reckoning from dates given in Du Mu’s preface. As he often reminds his readers, he was descended from a branch of the Tang imperial clan. Such a pedigree was prestigious, and was frequently taken into consideration in allocating official posts, but Li He’s claim was too distant to give him more than something like a club membership and a source of pride. His father, Li Jinsu 晉素, a county-level official – to whom Du

17 See, e.g., 3.20, along with the note to that work in the Endnotes.

18 Just as tonally regulated verse forms were known as “modern style,” *pianwen* is referred to in the Tang as “modern prose” (*jinwen* 今文).

Fu had once addressed an occasional poem<sup>19</sup> – appears to have died before Li He reached adulthood. It was Li Jinsu's official rank that would prove instrumental in allowing Li He to assume an official post without an examination credential, via a bureaucratic protocol known as legacy (*yin* 蔭) privilege.

Li He's hometown, Changgu 昌谷, was a small town in Fuchang 福昌 county, just to the west of the empire's secondary (eastern) capital of Luoyang. The county drew its name from Fuchang Palace, one of the "transit palaces" (*xing gong* 行宮) that had formed part of a system linking Luoyang with the Tang's primary, (western) capital, Chang'an, to facilitate emperors' periodic relocations between these capitals – something that occurred with particular frequency during the reigns of Wu Zetian and Xuanzong 玄宗 (r. 712–756). This system had fallen into disrepair since the cataclysmic An Lushan 安祿山 (703–757) rebellion and subsequent protracted civil wars that had shaken the empire from winter 755–756 and raged for more than a decade afterwards. The area around Changgu, including the ruins of this old transit palace, figures prominently in Li He's works (e.g. **1.33**, or **3.44**, with the passage at ll. 47–56 focusing on the transit palace ruins); more generally, the sense of wandering amidst the crumbling infrastructure of former imperial splendor imbues many of his other works, as for example in his treatments of the Huaqing Palace at Mt. Li in **1.10** and **2.17**. On a more mundane level, his depiction in **4.49** of the imperial facilities at Shayuan, which had served to provide the court with horses and agricultural products, suggests a formerly thriving site now suffering from neglect.

Whether Li He married has been disputed, but **3.8** weighs strongly in the affirmative. It is worth noting that claims he never married are largely based on arguments *ex silentio*, since none of the early sources explicitly mention a marriage, and on the fact that Shen Shushi 沈述師 (n.d.)<sup>20</sup>, writing in 831, says that by that time there were no living

19 "At Gong'an Seeing off Cousin Li Jinsu (29) Going to Shu; I will Go Downstream to Mianzhou and Ezhou." See Owen, *The Poetry of Du Fu* in this series (6:22.18).

20 Shushi was a son of the Shen Jiji 沈既濟 (fl. late eighth century) now best remembered as the author of the Tang tales "Ren's Story" (*Ren shi zhuan* 任氏傳) and "Record of a Life in a Pillow" (*Zhenzhong ji* 枕中記). Xu Song,

members of Li He's family to whom he could offer assistance. But the early death or remarriage of Li He's wife would equally accord with the scanty evidence in this regard.

It is from the last years of the ninth century's first decade, when Li He was still in his late teens, to his death in 816, that specific events come into better focus. The key early events are his acquaintance with Han Yu and Huangfu Shi, and his success in the Henan prefectural examinations (to which Li He explicitly links the poem series included here as **1.23**). Han Yu was posted in Luoyang beginning in 807, and Huangfu Shi was made Defender at Luhun, about sixty kilometers to the southwest of Luoyang, in the aftermath of his inflammatory essay in the 808 "Worthy and Upright" examination – a posting in which his career was to stagnate through the remaining years of Li He's life. Proposed dates for Li He's participation in the Henan examination range from as early as 808 to as late as 810, but the broad sequence of events in Li He's career subsequent to that moment is clear.<sup>21</sup> Later anecdotal tradition had Li He composing **4.23** as a child of seven, and though this tradition is clearly spurious, the authenticity of the poem itself has not been challenged, and it clearly signals and celebrates a newly established connection with Han Yu and Huangfu Shi. A somewhat more plausible tradition has it that Han Yu's initial impression of Li He was formed when he first read the opening lines of **1.16** – again, regardless of the veracity of the anecdote as it took form in the developing body of stories about this anomalous poet, general indications that Li He had gained a widespread reputation as a writer of *yuefu* lyrics from a strikingly early age likely have some basis in fact.

Han Yu's appreciation and patronage was to prove the single most decisive factor in Li He's development as a writer, as well as in his social

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*Deng ke ji kao* (3:27.1049), notes that Shushi's elder brother Chuanshi 傳師 passed the *jinshi* examination during the Zhenyuan reign period (785–806), and reasons that Shushi – of whom the fact he passed the exam is known, but not the date – likely would likewise have done so during this (quite long) reign period. But Du Mu's preface weighs in favor of a later estimate for Shushi's life and career, since the picture given there of Li He and Shen Shushi's friendship gives no hint of any large gap in age.

21 For simplicity the following narrative will adopt the proposed dating of Wu Qiming, "Li He nianpu xinbian," which places Li He's participation in the Henan examination in 808.

circle. Han Yu was the most brash and eloquent adherent of the idea that the euphuistic and antithetical style of writing known in the Tang as “modern prose” (*jinwen* 今文), which predominated in imperial edicts and formal governmental documents as well as in literary education and the examination system, was a symptom, and indeed a contributing cause, of a general cultural decline. He advocated a renewed direct contact with the legacy of ancient sages through rupture with the modern style and modern tastes in favor of a thoroughgoing immersion in *guwen* (“ancient prose”). There was a strand of paranoia in *guwen* theory as Han Yu formulated it, as he pointed to the hatred and scorn of minds tainted with modern tastes as an index of his success in pursuit of the ancient style. We cannot know to what degree Li He’s prior disposition might already have inclined him toward the sense, reflected throughout his work, of the power and pathos of disused ancient traditions. But at any rate Han Yu’s *guwen* discourse provided a conceptual structure and cultural sanction for such proclivities in his work, as well as a ready-made social circle in the like-minded group of mostly younger men whom Han Yu had brought into his orbit.

Having been successful in the prefectural examinations in 808, Li He travelled to Chang’an later in the same year, to prepare for the *jinshi* examination in the following spring. During those months in Chang’an, however, a whisper campaign was set in motion promulgating the idea that since Li He’s father had been named Jinsu, Li He’s ritual obligation to treat this name as taboo ought to disqualify him from taking the *jinshi* examination, because the latter was a near homophone to that name, or because of the exact correspondence in pronunciation between the syllable “*jin*” in both. Han Yu composed a renowned essay titled “Clarification Regarding Taboo-names” (“Hui bian” 諱辯) in Li He’s defense, pointing out various absurd implications of such a position. It was long believed that Li He was in the end prevented from sitting for the *jinshi* examination despite Han Yu’s efforts, although there are also indications that he took the examination but failed.<sup>22</sup> That the controversy did occur, and that Li He felt persecuted

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22 The latter position is argued by both Qian Zhonglian and Wu Qiming. See Wu’s notes to the Li He biography in Fu Xuancong, ed., *Tang caizi zhuan jiao jian* (2:5.287), along with his comments on 4.29, as well as the relevant sections

by the way events unfolded in and around the examinations, at any rate, is beyond question (see 2.15).

After a subsequent period divided between occupying lodgings in Luoyang (perhaps made available through his status as an imperial clan member) and dwelling at home in Changgu, Li He returned to Chang'an later in 809 to resume his efforts at making his way in officialdom. After an initial period of frustration, he did eventually receive an appointment on the basis of his father's service record, near the lowest rung of the bureaucracy (rank 9b1) as "Vice-Director for Ceremonials" (*feng li lang* 奉禮郎) in the Court for Imperial Sacrifices, apparently one of a class of posts specifically reserved for legacy appointments. The *Tang liu dian* 唐六典 (Six canons of the Tang), an eighth-century compilation enumerating the various functions of imperial agencies and offices, lays out the duties of the two "Vice-Directors" as follows:

奉禮郎掌設君臣之版位，以奉朝會、祭祀之禮。凡祭祀、朝會，設庶官之位。凡尊彝之制十有四，祭祀則陳之。凡祭器之位，簠、簋為前，登、鉶次之，籩、豆為後。凡大祭祀及朝會，在位者拜跪之節皆贊導之，贊者承傳焉。又設牲牷之位，以成省牲之儀。凡春、秋二仲，公卿巡行諸陵，則主其威儀、鼓吹之節，而相其禮焉。

The Vice-Directors for Ceremonials are in charge of setting up the assigned positions for ruler and ministers, to serve in the rites of the grand assembly and imperial sacrifices. 1) In all imperial sacrifices or grand assemblies, they are to lay out the name-plates marking the positions for the many officers. 2) The specifications regarding the various types of wine-goblets or wine-pots are fourteen in number: when sacrifices are performed, they are to lay these out. 3) As for the positions of the sacrificial implements, the square and round grain-hampers are placed in front, followed by the stew tureens and cauldrons, with the footed dishes and stemmed cups at the back. 4) In all instances of major sacrifices or grand assemblies, they are to facilitate and lead in all the observances of bowing and kneeling of the participants in their assigned positions, acting in concert

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of his "Li He nianpu xinbian" (883–884). The seasonal imagery of 3.8, on the other hand, seems potentially troublesome for this theory.

with the Facilitators; also, they are to lay out the positions of the placards for sacrificial animals, so as to complete the protocol for “Inspection of Sacrificial Victims.” 5) In all circuits of the imperial tombs carried out by the court ministers in the second months of spring and autumn, they are to be in charge of the protocols for deportment as well as the timing and sequencing of the drum and fife music, and to serve as guides in those rites.<sup>23</sup>

Given Li He’s fascination with music, with the realm of spirits, and with the religious strivings of ancient rulers, it is difficult not to feel that such an appointment to the very agency charged with maintaining the musical and ritual traditions of the imperial lineage was something of an uncanny coincidence. But at the same time, it is easy to see how the duties of Vice-Director as enumerated above might feel demeaning, and it is very clear (e.g., in works such as **3.18** or **3.20**, or the close of **W.17**) that Li He felt the post to be a mockery of his abilities. He nonetheless remained in Chang’an, and in this post, until the spring of 813, when he resigned on grounds of illness, and returned once more to Changgu.

In autumn of 813, Li He traveled north to Luzhou 潞州, where Zhang Che 張徹 (?–821), a friend and fellow protégé of Han Yu, had newly entered into the service of Chi Shimei 郗士美 (756–819), Military Commissioner (*jiedushi* 節度使) for the Zhaoyi 昭義 region, whose administrative seat was at Luzhou. **2.13**, **3.12**, and **3.17** are datable to this period, while **3.47** and **4.30** would appear to stem from one of the journeys, in one direction or the other, between Luoyang and Luzhou that Li He undertook in these final years.

This last chapter in Li He’s doomed quest to find his way in imperial service is of general significance for the period as a whole. The Tang empire had emerged from the aftermath of the An Lushan rebellion in the mid-eighth century in a badly weakened position in relation to many of its nominal territories. Regional control fell increasingly under the sway of Military Commissioners, several of which posts had been granted to rebel warlords from a position of weakness, as a condition of merely notional submission to imperial authority. Since the reign of

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<sup>23</sup> *Tang liu dian*, 14.397–398.

Dezong 德宗 (r. 779–805), and throughout Li He's adult life during the reign of emperor Xianzong 憲宗 (r. 805–820), it had been a central concern of the court to assert its control over appointments to these posts, around which succession struggles ceaselessly erupted, in the form either of garrison revolts or of attempts by Commissioners to take control of the appointment of their own successors, often with a view to converting those appointments into *de facto* hereditary fiefdoms. Large swaths of former Tang territory were taken up by what were in effect independent statelets through most of the remainder of the dynasty, particularly the territories of the Youzhou 幽州, Chengde 成德, and Wei-Bo 魏博 Commissioners – the so-called “Three Bases North of the River” (*Heshuo san zhen* 河朔三鎮) that Li He had in mind when fantasizing about becoming a military man and recovering the “fifty prefectures” in 1.34.5.

The territory under the control of the Zhaoyi Military Commissioner had itself long been in the thick of conflicts between imperial forces and resistance in Wei-Bo to the east and Chengde to the north, as well as within Zhaoyi itself – one of Chi Shimei's recent predecessors had been kidnapped in order to dislodge him from the post when he showed signs of divided loyalties in the court's conflict with the Chengde Military Commissioner Wang Chengzong 王承宗 (?–820; see 4.36, with notes), the court's main rival in that region. Xianzong pursued an aggressive policy of military action against rebelling territories, and Han Yu's own circle of connections at court were of the warrish faction as far as relations with these unstable territories were concerned. Chi Shimei himself would prove one of Xianzong's ablest assistants in the project of reasserting central control during these years: having begun his career on the secretarial staff of the Zhaoyi Military Commissioner Li Baozhen 李抱真 (733–794), in 811 Chi became the first civil official ever appointed to that post, and later, in 816, showed himself the superior of his military commanders in leading a successful though inconclusive counteroffensive against Wang Chengzong.

The vastly increased power and significance of the Military Commissioners in this period meant that for aspiring literary men – which is to say, aspiring civil officials – career paths leading through the secretarial staffs of these regional powers became an increasingly common alternative or supplement to the centralized pathway of the imperial exami-

nation and appointment systems.<sup>24</sup> Service of this type, however, could be risky, whether due to the wavering allegiances or unyoked ambitions of one's patron, or to the endemic succession struggles. In 821, while serving as an Administrative Assistant to Zhang Hongjing 張弘靖 (760–824) as the latter attempted to take up an imperial appointment as Military Commissioner at Youzhou 幽州, Zhang Che himself was to die a martyr to the imperial cause, in the aftermath of a garrison rebellion that had deposed his patron.

When Li He made his way to Zhang Che at Luzhou, it was clearly in hopes of gaining an entrée into Chi Shimei's secretarial staff, but nothing tangible appears to have come of it. After a sojourn lasting through parts of three years, he left Luzhou in 815. Various conjectures have been proposed for Li He's travels and whereabouts subsequent to his departure from Luzhou; what can be said with some certainty is that he died at home in Changgu in the following year.

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It became commonplace from very early on to refer to the extant texts of Li He's poetry as scanty fragments from a far larger total poetic output. It is as though the blighted fate that led him to career frustration and premature death had extended to infect his textual legacy as well. Li Shangyin recounts that Li He's all-consuming absorption in the process of composition went hand in hand with a marked insouciance about what became of the poems once they were completed; he pointedly notes, moreover, that Li He's friends would often carry off what are implied to have been unique manuscripts, in order to make their own copies.<sup>25</sup> A well-known story first recorded by Zhang Gu 張固 (fl. mid- to second half of ninth century) takes this theme of the scattering of Li He's works still further:

李潘侍郎嘗綴李賀歌詩，為之集序未成。知賀有表兄與賀筆硯之舊者，召之見，託以搜訪所遺。其人敬謝且請曰：「某盡記其所為，亦

24 Qian Zhonglian suggests that we understand the gist of the question about which Li He prognosticates in 3.46 in terms of such a choice between the pathways of examination system or service in a regional governor's staff ("Li He nianpu huijian," 31–32).

25 See Li Shangyin's "Short Biography of Li He" in the Appendix.

見其多點竄者，請得所葺者視之，當為改正。」李公喜，併付之，彌年絕迹。李公怒，復召詰之。其人曰：「某與賀中外，自小同處，恨其傲忽，常思報之。所得兼舊有者，一時投於澗中矣。」李公大怒，叱出之，嗟恨良久。故賀篇什流傳者少。

Vice-Director Li Pan<sup>26</sup> once put together a collection of Li He's poetry; he was composing a preface for it which he had not yet completed. He knew that among Li He's cousins on his mother's side was one who had carried on literary correspondence with the poet. Summoning this person to a meeting, Li entrusted him with the task of tracking down any of the poet's works that might have been left out. The person in question respectfully responded, and made a request, saying, "I can recall everything he wrote, and I've also seen copies that he'd heavily marked up with revisions – if I might take what you've collected to look it over, then I will make all the needed corrections for you." His Excellency Li, most pleased with this, handed all of his manuscripts over to him. But a year and more went by with no trace of news from this cousin. His Excellency Li, growing angry, summoned the man once more to interrogate him on the matter. This person said, "As a cousin related by marriage, I was together with Li He since childhood. But I resented how arrogant and disdainful he was toward me, and I've always longed to pay him back for it. So now I've taken what I got from you, along with everything I had from before, and thrown it all together down a latrine." His Excellency Li, enraged, shouted to have the man thrown out. For long thereafter, he sighed and thought ruefully about this affair. This is why the poems of Li He still in circulation are so few.<sup>27</sup>

Modern scholars generally treat this anecdote as apocryphal – the name Li Pan appears in all extant versions of the story as Li Fan 李藩, and if one takes this as referring to the eminent prime minister of that name whose career reached its apogee in Dezong's reign (780–805) then the

26 The original text reads Fan 藩. On the emendation, see the discussion below.

27 See Zhang Gu, *Youxian guchui* 幽閑鼓吹, 1450.

story is rendered absurd on its face, since that Li Fan died in 811.<sup>28</sup> But a Li Pan 潘 who was a close contemporary of Zhang Gu (i.e., fl. mid-ninth century) did serve at one time or another as Vice-Director of the Ministries of both Rites and Revenue during the reign of emperor Xuanzong 宣宗 (r. 847–859);<sup>29</sup> his name, moreover, is frequently mis-transcribed as Fan 藩 (along with other variations) in early anecdotal sources.<sup>30</sup> This Li Pan was a younger brother of Li Han, son-in-law and literary executor of Han Yu, and a member of Li He's social circle (see 4.50). Thus, regardless of the veracity of the "latrine incident," the idea that this Li Pan might have taken up the task of compiling a collection of Li He's works is not in itself far-fetched.

It is worth noting in this context that the persistence of this topos of scattered or destroyed manuscripts in the lore surrounding Li He may also be in part understood as a dimension of the early reception of his poetry. The forlorn fragment of lost splendor, debased and neglected, yet still perhaps harboring awe-inspiring power, is a persistent motif in Li He's works, as well as a central topos in the rhetoric of *gu wen* as promulgated by Han Yu. We might think for example of the sword at the close of 3.20, the arrowhead of 4.30, the pathetic single pitchpipe left on earth in 4.7, or the bronze immortal of 2.1. Perhaps still more directly relevant, we may recall the pairing of the image of worm-eaten text and the poet's personal frustration at the close of 3.46, or the violent juxtaposition of disintegrating text and uncannily persisting song in 1.26. In short, whatever the basis in fact of the account of Li Pan's abortive collection of Li He's works, the idea of reading the surviving poems as fragments of this sort might readily strike readers as natural and dramatically appealing, in view of those preoccupations that can be felt so palpably in the poetry itself.

28 This is the reasoning put forward by Zhu Ziqing in his "Li He nianpu," 73, and endorsed by Wu Qiming in his "Li He nianpu xin bian," as well as in his comments on Li He's biography in *Tang caizi zhuan jiao jian*, 2:5.291.

29 To be carefully distinguished from the far more renowned mid-eighth century emperor Xuanzong 玄宗. To be clear, this is the only place in this volume that refers to this ninth-century Xuanzong 宣宗.

30 See Fang Jiliu and Wu Dongxiu, eds., *Tang Wudai wushi'er zhong biji xiaoshuo renming suoyin*, 271, with references.

Despite the ubiquity of these motifs of loss and fragmentation both in and around Li He's collection, however, we do have a remarkable early document that gives us an exceptional amount of circumstantial detail about the formation of the texts through which later readers have been able to read Li He: Du Mu's "Preface to the Collected Works of Li He."<sup>31</sup> The story this preface unfolds is not one of fragmentation, but of serendipitous survival against the odds. Li He's friend Shen Shushi, in a letter to Du Mu, relates that Li He, when near death, had entrusted him with a collection of works compiled by the poet himself into four sheaves (*bian* 編), totaling two hundred and twenty-three poems. Shen Shushi had subsequently forgotten he had these manuscripts, and assumed he'd lost them, until suddenly, fifteen years later,<sup>32</sup> he chanced across them again late one night while sleeplessly rummaging through old documents. The "four sheaves" and the number two hundred and twenty-three mentioned in Shen Shushi's letter to Du Mu (as transcribed in Du Mu's preface) have served ever since as foundational reference points in tracing the history of Li He's texts.<sup>33</sup>

Early bibliographical notices of Li He's collected works vary in the reported scope and structure of the collection. The bibliographical monograph of the *Xin Tang shu* notes a *Collected Works of Li He* (*Li He ji* 李賀集) in five *juan* 卷.<sup>34</sup> The *Junzhai dushu zhi* 郡齋讀書志, a private catalogue from the Southern Song compiled by Chao Gongwu 晁公武 (1105–1180), notes a *Collected Works of Li He* in four *juan*, along with

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31 For the full text with translation, see the Appendix.

32 Fifteen years is the interval specified in Du Mu's preface between Li He's death and the preface's composition.

33 The number given in most modern editions is two hundred and thirty-three, but there is strong external evidence, supported by early editions, that two hundred twenty-three is more likely correct. See the following discussion.

34 *Xin Tang shu*, 5:60.1611. The term *juan* 卷 or "scrolls" largely retained its literal meaning of a single long rolled sheet of paper during the Tang, although other formats were well-known. With the rise of large-scale imperial and commercial printing in the Song, the *juan* gradually became a looser measure for the scale of a text, initially based on the number of actual manuscript scrolls in a printed edition's base text. In general, in whatever format a text was produced in later eras, the implication of *juan* divisions is that they are part of the structure of the base text, and as such are treated as part of the original author or compiler's intentions regarding that structure.

an “outer collection” (*wai ji* 外集) in one *juan*, which Chao Gongwu reports having obtained from a certain Liang Zimei 梁子美.<sup>35</sup> The *Zhizhai shulu jieti* 直齋書錄解題 of Chen Zhensun 陳振孫 (1179–1262) notes a *Collected Works of Li Changji* (*Li Changji ji* 李長吉集) in one *juan* – Chen rather impatiently notes that Li He was not particularly important, but is a popular topic of conversation, and that he has nothing further to say on the matter.<sup>36</sup> Writing in the Yuan dynasty (1279–1368), Ma Duanlin 馬端臨 (1254–1323) records in his *Wenxian tongkao* 文獻通考 a *Collected Works of Li Changji* in four *juan*, and repeats (without bothering to change the first-person pronoun) Chao Gongwu’s report of having received an “outer collection” from Liang Zimei. Somewhat later in the fourteenth century, the bibliographical monograph in the *Song shi* 宋史 (*History of the Song*) notes a *Collected Works of Li He* in one *juan*, along with an “outer collection” (*wai ji* 外集) in one *juan*.<sup>37</sup> Another important early document for the early circulation history of Li He’s works appears in the *Dongguan yulun* 東觀餘論 of the late Northern Song scholar Huang Bosi 黃伯思 (1079–1118), in a colophon to a text titled *Lost Poems of Li He* (*Li He yi shi* 李賀逸詩), said to total fifty-two poems. Huang, after citing the “latrine incident” from Zhang Gu more or less verbatim, goes on to speculate:

今世行杜牧所叙賀歌詩篇纔四卷耳。此集所載，豈非李藩所藏之一二乎？

Those poems recounted in Du Mu’s preface in circulation today amount to merely four *juan*. Could the works assembled in this collection be anything other than some small fraction of what Li Fan [sic] had in his possession?<sup>38</sup>

These early records may give a disparate impression, but taking them together with the evidence of available editions themselves, a broadly consistent picture emerges of a collection in four *juan* – generally held to correspond closely with the “four sheaves” mentioned in Du Mu’s

35 *Junzhai dushu zhi*, 18.905 (item #1243).

36 *Zhizhai shulu jieti*, 19.565.

37 *Song shi*, 16:161.5339.

38 *Dong guan yu lun*, 2.19A–B.

preface – along with a somewhat more fluid body of works attributed to Li He circulating either independently or as a supplement to that four-*juan* base. The notation in the *Xin Tang shu* bibliographical monograph of a five-*juan* version is generally understood as shorthand for this structure of a four-*juan* primary collection plus one *juan* supplement; if this conjecture is indeed correct, then it would indicate that this basic state of affairs was established quite early on in the transmission of Li He's works.

The earliest extant commentated edition of Li He's collection is by Wu Zhengzi 吳正子 (ca. 1184–ca. 1271).<sup>39</sup> Wu's commentary came to be best known through the edition titled *Jianzhu pingdian Li Changji geshi* 箋註評點李長吉歌詩 ("Song-Poems of Li Changji, with explanatory notes and critical commentary"), in four *juan*, along with a one-*juan* "outer collection" (*wai ji* 外集). This version combines Wu Zhengzi's commentary with evaluative comments by Liu Chenweng 劉辰翁 (1232–1297). A comment by Wu Zhengzi at the beginning of this "outer collection" is of crucial importance for our understanding of both early editions from the Song as well as the relation between the four-*juan* structure seen in these editions and Du Mu's "four sheaves":

京師本無後卷。有後卷者，鮑本也。嘗聞薛常州士龍言：「長吉詩，蜀本、會稽姚氏本皆二百一十九篇，宣城本二百四十二篇。蜀本不知所從來，姚氏本出秘閣，而宣城本則自賀鑄、方回也。宣城多羨詩十九，蜀與姚少亡詩四，而姚本善之尤。」以余校之，薛之言諒矣。今余用京、鮑二本訓註，而二本四卷終皆二百一十九篇，與姚、蜀本同。薛謂宣城本二百四十有二首，蓋多余本二十有三耳。今鮑本二卷共二十有三篇，適與宣本所多之數合。是鮑本即宣本也，第內一篇白門前者，即與第四卷上之回重文。如此則實有二百四十有二矣。然觀此卷，所作多是後人模倣之為，詞意往往俚淺；真長吉筆者無幾。余不敢盡削，姑去其重出者一篇云。

The Capital edition does not have this latter *juan*; the one that has the latter *juan* is the Bao edition. I have heard that Xue Shilong of Changzhou<sup>40</sup> said, "Among texts for Changji's poetry, the Shu edi-

39 These are the dates proposed by Wu Qiming in Fu Xuancong, ed., *Zhongguo gudai shiwen tiyao: Han Tang Wudai juan*, 369.

40 Shilong is the courtesy name (*zi* 字) of Xue Jixuan 薛季宣 (1134–1173). In their colophon to this work, the editors of the *Siku quanshu* base their estimate

tion and the Yao edition from Guiji all comprise two hundred and nineteen pieces; the Xuancheng edition has two hundred and forty-two. As for the Shu edition, I do not know where it came from; the Yao edition came from the imperial archives, whereas the Xuancheng edition derives from He Zhu (1052–1125) and Fang Hui (1227–1305).<sup>41</sup> The Xuancheng edition has an extra nineteen poems, whereas the Shu and Yao editions are lacking by four. The Yao edition, however, is the most outstanding of the good editions.” Based on my own comparisons, what Xue said is true. In the present volume I have used the Capital and Bao editions in making my annotations, and these two editions, through the end of the fourth *juan*, both number two hundred and nineteen poems, just like the Yao and Shu editions. Xue says that the Xuancheng edition has two hundred and forty-two poems – this is more than my editions by twenty-three. Now, this second *juan* from the Bao edition<sup>42</sup> comprises twenty-three works, which accords exactly with the number of extra poems in the Xuancheng edition. What this shows is that the Bao edition and the Xuancheng edition are one and the same. But one of the works included, “Before White Gate,” duplicates the text of “His Majesty’s Return” in the fourth *juan*. Given all this, there are in fact two hundred and forty-two poems. When we look at the things written in this [“outer”] *juan*, however, it is clear that they are for the most part imitations done by later people, often facile and shallow in both diction and in conception. Very few of the pieces here could really be from Changji’s brush. I

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for Wu Zhengzi’s lifetime on the assumption that this comment refers to something he actually heard Xue Jixuan say in person (SKZM, 2:150.1191B–C), but Wu Zhengzi was in fact a figure of roughly a century later. As Yu Jiaxi has shown (see his *Siku tiyao bianzheng* 4:21.1296), what Wu Zhengzi says he has “heard” from Xue Jixuan is in fact drawn from Xue’s preface to his own edition (now lost) of Li He’s poetry. For this preface, see “Li Changji shiji xu” 李長古詩集序, in Xue’s *Langyu ji* 浪語集, 30.56A–58A.

41 A further issue with dating arises from this apparent mention of Fang Hui in Xue Jilong’s preface, since Fang was born over half a century after Xue’s death. But this lies beyond the scope of the present discussion.

42 In context it is clear that by “this second *juan*” Wu Zhengzi is referring here to a “further *juan*,” i.e., to the “outer *juan*” following the main four-*juan* collection.

dare not excise them all, but for now merely remove the one duplicate poem.<sup>43</sup>

This note has served as crucial testimony for all subsequent efforts to map the early transmission of Li He's collection; to trace any early imprint to its origins has meant in effect to specify its relations with one or more of these five editions that Wu Zhengzi, citing Xue Jixuan, names as being in circulation during the Southern Song:

1. *Jingshi ben* 京師本, "Capital edition." Four *juan*, totaling 219 poems, without "outer collection"/"outer *juan*."
2. *Baoshi ben* 鮑氏本, "Bao edition." Held on later evidence to refer to an edition compiled by Bao Qinzhi 鮑欽止 (fl. early twelfth c.). Four *juan*, totaling 219 poems, and including an "outer collection" in one *juan* (comprising 23 poems).<sup>44</sup>
3. *Shu ben* 蜀本, "Shu edition." Four *juan*, totaling 219 poems, without "outer collection" or "outer *juan*."
4. *Yao shi ben* 姚氏本, "Yao edition" or *Guiji Yao shi ben* 會稽姚氏本, "Guiji Yao edition." Four *juan*, totaling 219 poems, without "outer collection"/"outer *juan*."
5. *Xuancheng ben* 宣城本, "Xuancheng edition." From Wu Zhengzi's report he has not seen this edition, and thus does not know the structure, but has heard its total number of works is 242.

Along with providing this fundamental data about the earliest known editions of Li He's works, the comment cited here from Xue Jixuan sends another signal in relation to the account in Du Mu's preface: when Xue says that the Xuancheng edition (containing two hundred and forty-two poems) has nineteen "extra" poems, whereas the Shu and Yao editions (containing two hundred and nineteen poems) are "missing" four poems, the implication is that Xue believes the "correct" number of works in the core four-*juan* collection – which in this context can only mean, the number specified in his version of Du Mu's preface – is two hundred and twenty-three, rather than the total of two hundred thirty-three appearing in many later editions of Du Mu's preface. Two

<sup>43</sup> WZZ, *wai juan* 1A–B.

<sup>44</sup> On this identification, see the discussion in Wan Man, *Tang ji xu lu*, 227.

early editions of Li He's works, along with the *Wenyuan yinghua* [WYYH], do include texts for Du Mu's preface giving two hundred twenty-three as the total number of poems;<sup>45</sup> it is at any rate clear that Xue Jixuan (and, following him, Wu Zhengzi as well) believed that this was the correct number.<sup>46</sup>

In the end, regardless of whether the number Shen Shushi first wrote in his letter to Du Mu was two hundred thirty-three or two hundred twenty-three, the overall coherence in these earliest known Song editions in regard to their basic four-part structure as well as to the total number of works – both among themselves and in relation to the account given in Du Mu's preface – should give us considerable confidence that despite the recurrent themes in Li He lore of scattering and loss, what our extant editions present to us is likely to be remarkably close to an authorially-approved collection. As for the “outer *juan*,” it stands to reason that some authentic works not included in an original four “sheaves” entrusted to Shen Shushi would have circulated in other ways, and equally that later imitations or forgeries would be swept up in later efforts to gather the notoriously fragmented and scattered remnants of the poet's work. Possibly one or more of the one-*juan* editions of Li He's works in early bibliographical notices were compilations of this nature, analogous to the compilation of “lost” poems noted by Huang Bosi. But from the time of Wu Zhengzi's edition onward, the twenty-three poem total (or twenty-two, after Wu Zhengzi's excision of “Before White Gate”) for the “outer *juan*” has itself also remained stable.

As noted above, Wu Zhengzi's commentary, accompanied with evaluative comments by Liu Chenweng, is our earliest extant annotated edition of Li He, and was frequently reprinted from the Yuan on, under

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45 I.e., the so-called “Mongol” [MG] and “Xuancheng” [XC] editions. Names for early editions can become complicated; this volume follows the current consensus as reflected in the critical editions by Wu Qiming and Nohara Yasuhiro listed in the Works Cited.

46 For all the above points, see the illuminating discussion by Yu Jiaxi in his critique of the Siku editors' comments on Li He's collection, in his *Siku tiyao bianzheng* 4:21.1295–1297.

various titles. Below are some of the more important later commentaries to Li He's collection:<sup>47</sup>

1. *Tang Li Changji shi ji* 唐李長吉詩集 (Collected Poetry of Li Changji of the Tang). With (mostly brief) evaluative comments by Xu Wei 徐渭 (1521–1593) and Dong Maoce 董懋策 (?–1613).
2. *Li He shi jie* 李賀詩解 (Explication of Li He's poetry). Zeng Yi 曾益 (1642 *jinshi*), who also produced an important commentary on the works of Wen Tingyun 溫庭筠 (812–ca. 870), was said to have found the Xu Wei and Dong Maoce commentary overly cursory; he produced this far more systematic and intensive work, with which he hoped to bring the work of Wu Zhengzi and Liu Chenweng to its culmination.
3. *Li Changji ji* 李長吉集 (Collected works of Li Changji). Several editions of Li He's collected works with evaluative comments by the late-Ming writer Huang Chunyao 黃淳耀 (1605–1645) appear under this title during the Qing, often in combination with comments from later authors. Among the more influential of these is one incorporating comments by the Qianlong-era poet, painter, and calligrapher Li Jian 黎簡 (1747–1799).
4. *Li Changji Changgu ji jujie dingben* 李長吉昌谷集句解定本 (Li Changji's Changgu collection: line-by-line explication, definitive edition), by Yao Quan 姚全 (ca. 1602–ca. 1659). In the earliest extant versions Yao's commentary is accompanied by further evaluative comments by a dozen or so other critics.
5. *Changgu ji zhu* 昌谷集注 (Changgu collection: with commentary). Yao Wenxie 姚文燮 (1623–1692). This commentary systematically traces supposed political and allegorical intent behind Li He's poems by mining external evidence from histories of the period.

47 For further reference, see Wan Man, *Tang ji xu lu*, 232–234, along with Fu Xuancong, ed., *Zhongguo gudai shiwen mingzhu tiyao*, and Chen Bohai and Zhu Yi'an, eds., *Tang shi shumu zonglu*, 659–673. The comments by the editors of the *Siku quanshu* on three editions of Li He (*Changgu ji* 昌谷集, an early uncommentated edition, the Wu Zhengzi/Liu Chenweng edition discussed above [SKZM 150.1193A–C], and the Wang Qi variorum commentary listed below [SKZM 174.1535A–B]) are also particularly valuable in providing a general orientation in regard to these issues (best read in conjunction with Yu Jiaxi's insightful critique, cited above).

6. *Li Changji geshi huijie* 李長吉歌詩匯解 (Li Changji's song-poems: a variorum compilation of explications), by Wang Qi 王琦 (1696–1774). This compilation draws on all the major commentaries available at Wang's time, starting from the Wu Zhengzi and Liu Chenweng edition, and incorporating further commentary from works (1), (2), (4), and (5) above, along with extensive further original comments by Wang Qi. This commentary is now commonly published in one volume under the title *San jia ping zhu Li Changji geshi* 三家評注李長吉歌詩 (Comments and annotations to the song-poems of Li Changji by three masters), with the full text of Wang Qi's variorum commentary followed by that of Yao Wenxie (see above) and then the *Fang Funan piben Li Changji shi ji* 方扶南批本李長吉詩集 (Collected poems of Li Changji, with annotations by Fang Funan) of Fang Shiju 方世舉 (1675–1759). Fang's comments are particularly revealing in regard to Li He's formal and stylistic innovations in the pentasyllabic regulated *shi* forms. These latter two commentaries are presented alone, without the base text. Wang Qi's commentary, particularly in this "Three Masters" compilation, has been a central point of reference in the modern study of Li He's works.
7. *Tang Li He xielü gouyuan* 唐李賀協律鉤元 (Probing the abstruse [玄] in Li He, "Harmonizer of the Pitchpipes" of the Tang), by Chen Benli 陳本禮 (1739–1818).<sup>48</sup> Chen's commentary devotes more attention to matters of style and rhetoric than does that of Yao Wenxie, but on the whole is directed toward a similar aim – namely, the effort to detect topical references and political critiques in Li He's works.
8. *Li Changji shi ping zhu* 李長吉詩評註 (The poetry of Li Changji: critical assessments and commentary), by Wu Rulun 吳汝綸 (1840–1903). A small-scale work; Wu's comments, though, are judicious and thought-provoking.

48 Chen Benli's preface makes clear that his title refers to the phrase "probing the abstruse" (*gou xuan* 鉤玄), but as printed it (and his discussion in the preface) reflects the standard Qing taboo substitution of the character *yuan* 元 for 玄 (cf. the analogous Qing "variant" *yuan* 元 for *xuan* 玄 in 4.15, l. 17).

The present work takes the Sibubei edition of Wang Qi's *Li Changji geshi* 李長吉歌詩 as its base text. Works in the four-juan base collection are numbered with *juan* number followed by their sequential order within their respective *juan*; the "outer collection" (*wai ji* 外集) works are similarly listed in sequence with the prefix "W." Wang Qi, along with other later editions, reflects a few slight deviations from the order of works as they appear in the earliest editions; this volume restores the prevalent earlier sequencing.<sup>49</sup>

Li He was known from his own age onwards as a writer who pressed language to, and at times beyond, its conventional limits. It is therefore not surprising that over a thousand and more years of transmission, his collected works have generated a particularly wide range of variant readings. The Endnotes include textual notes providing a sampling of variants, drawing on the critical editions of Chen Hongzhi, Wu Qiming, and Nohara Yasuhiro listed in the Works Cited, supplemented and corrected where relevant based on the primary sources. A finding list for the abbreviations used in these textual notes, as well as elsewhere in the footnotes and Endnotes, appears at the beginning of the Works Cited list. Readers interested in exploring the complex world of variant readings in early Li He editions are particularly encouraged to consult Nohara's work, which provides a complete concordance to Li He's collection incorporating all of the important variants from sources up to the early Ming.

It is hard to dispute Wu Zhengzi's assessment that many or most of the works in the "outside *juan*" (*wai juan*) appear to be later imitations or forgeries, but this portion of the text is retained *in toto* in this volume, both because (as Wu Zhengzi also noted) there is no way to know for sure which works might be authentic, and also because even forgeries or clumsy pastiches of Li He's style are of interest as part of the early reception history of his works. Wang Qi appended two poems (W.19 and W.20), absent in editions of Li He's works, that appear in the *Yuefu shi ji* 樂府詩集 attributed to him. These are also both retained in this volume. The poem "Before White Gate" (W.15) that was excised by Wu Zhengzi due to its close resemblance to 4.22 is also restored to its original position in the "outer collection."

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49 As reflected, e.g., in the "Mongol" [MG] and "Song Shu" [SS] editions. On these naming conventions, and for further information on the relevant issues, see nn. 44 and 45 above.

The translation has been carried out with the facing-page format in mind – that is, with the aim of giving English renderings that remain sufficiently close to the actual wording of the original to be useful as crib texts for readers learning to read classical Chinese poetry, while remaining as idiomatic and comprehensible as possible for readers primarily or only reading the English. In many cases this means giving an awkwardly literal translation and a footnote, rather than a simpler or more idiomatic paraphrastic rendering. Every effort has been made to keep the footnotes to the minimum needed to follow the basic sense of the text, although in Li He's more densely allusive works it can be hard to draw this line. Further comments on context or occasion of composition, form and prosody, interpretive problems and the like are provided, along with the text-critical notes, in the Endnotes. One distinctive aspect of Li He's poetic forms, his use of rhyme and of rhyme-schemes, is incorporated into the texts themselves as presented in these pages: in all cases, line-spaces within a poem indicate a change in rhyme.

The word *lan* 蘭, ubiquitous in a writer as deeply engaged in the *Chuci* tradition as Li He, poses problems that warrant specific comment. The word refers to *Eupatorium perfoliatum*, an herbaceous plant in the family of bonesets or thoroughworts; it was often used in sachets and as an aromatic, something along the lines of similar uses of lavender. It also carries abstract connotations of moral purity, and associations with the poetic vocation, owing to its prominence in the *Chuci* tradition. In many contexts where *lan* blends seamlessly into a poem, however, “eupatorium” or “thoroughwort” are clumsy and obtrusive. The unhappy compromise adopted here is to use “thoroughwort” for *lan* where a degree of botanical specificity seems called for; in instances where the plant's more abstract or personified associations are foremost, the translation reverts to the botanically incorrect but widespread convention of rendering *lan* as “orchid.” In a few instances, a similar approach is taken here with *peng* 蓬: in works and contexts where a folk or ballad-like tone renders the (analogous but botanically unrelated) “tumbleweed” a viable choice, that is adopted; but where a more concretely descriptive effect seems intended, the translation opts for the more botanically accurate “fleabane.”

## **The Poems**

## 1.1 李憑箏篴引

吳絲蜀桐張高秋，  
空山凝雲顏不流。  
江娥啼竹素女愁，  
李憑中國彈箏篴。

5 崑山玉碎鳳凰叫，  
芙蓉泣露香蘭笑。

十二門前融冷光，  
二十三絲動紫皇。

女媧煉石補天處，  
10 石破天驚逗秋雨。  
夢入神山教神嫗，  
老魚跳波瘦蛟舞。  
吳質不眠倚桂樹，  
露腳斜飛濕寒兔。

1 Li Ping was a renowned harp (*konghou*) player mentioned at the turn of the ninth century.

2 “Clouds congeal”: a favorite image for Li He, drawn from the *Liezi* story of the master singer Qin Qing 秦青, who caused clouds to stop moving with his song.

3 “River Beauties”: the Xiang river goddesses E Huang 娥皇 and Nü Ying 女英, whose tears shed in sorrow for the death of their husband the sage king Shun 舜 caused the mottled patterning of a variety of bamboo. “White Maiden”: a goddess said to have instructed the Yellow Emperor in esoteric sexual practices, she was also expert in music. The god-king Fu Xi 伏羲 played a fifty-stringed *se* (psaltery)

### 1.1 Rhapsody: Li Ping's Harp<sup>1</sup>

Wu silk on Shu *wutong*-wood, taut-strung to high autumn's pitch:  
 over empty hills the clouds congeal, immobile ruins.<sup>2</sup>  
 The River Beauties' tears spatter bamboo, White Maiden is gloomy:<sup>3</sup>  
 in the City, Li Ping plays his harp.

- 5 Jade of Kunlun mountains shatters, phoenixes cry out;  
 lotus-blossoms weep dew, fragrant orchid laughs.

All within the twelve gates is suffused in frigid light –<sup>4</sup>  
 twenty-three strands of silk stir the Purple Sovereign.<sup>5</sup>

- Where Nü Wa once smelted stone to patch the sky  
 10 stone cracks and sky shudders, inciting autumn rain.<sup>6</sup>  
 In dream I enter a holy mountain to instruct the holy crone there;<sup>7</sup>  
 an old fish leaps among the waves; a gaunt dragon dances.  
 Wu Zhi unsleeping leans on his osmanthus tree;  
 streams of dew fly slanting, and wet the cold hare.<sup>8</sup>

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for her, and she found the sound unbearably sorrowful, whereupon Fu Xi split the *se* in half, resulting in the twenty-five stringed version known to latter-day humans.

4 “Twelve gates”: a traditional attribute of the imperial capital, dating to Han times.

5 “Purple Sovereign”: one of three gods presiding in heaven in Daoist lore; here as elsewhere in Li He (cf. 1.30), with doubled reference to the human emperor.

6 An ancient creation myth relates how a titanic struggle broke one of the pillars holding up the sky; the goddess Nü Wa smelted multi-colored stone to patch the rent in heaven.

7 The *Soushen ji* 搜神記, a fourth-century collection of anomaly accounts, preserves a story of a Lady Cheng 成夫人, a divine old woman skilled in playing the harp. The “I” of this final section – perhaps Li Ping, or a listener under the power of Li Ping’s playing – feels able to serve as Lady Cheng’s harp master.

8 “Wu Zhi”: understood as referring to Wu Gang 吳剛, sentenced, in punishment for an unspecified religious offense, to perpetually chop the enormous osmanthus tree on the moon, which continuously regrows as he chops it. The dark “seas” on the moon’s surface as viewed from earth were imagined either as a rabbit or a toad.

## 1.2 殘絲曲

垂楊葉老鶯哺兒，  
殘絲欲斷黃蜂歸。

綠鬢年少金釵客，  
縹粉壺中沉琥珀。

- 5 花臺欲暮春辭去，  
落花起作迴風舞。  
榆莢相催不知數，  
沈郎青錢夾城路。

## 1.3 還自會稽歌并序

庾肩吾於梁時嘗作宮體謠引以應和皇子。  
及國勢淪敗，肩吾先潛難會稽，後始還家。  
僕意其必有遺文，今無得焉，故作還自會稽歌以補其悲。

## 1.2 Tune: The Last of the Willow-floss

The weeping willow's leaves grow tough, as orioles feed their broods;  
the last of the willow-floss nearly gone, the yellow bees go home.

A dark-tressed youth and a gold-hairpinned wanderer:  
in their jug of cerulean glass sink depths of liquid amber.

- 5 At the flowery terrace, dusk draws near as springtime takes its leave;  
fallen petals rise and dance in the eddying wind.<sup>1</sup>  
The elm-pods urge us on, in numbers beyond counting:  
Master Shen's green coins lie strewn along the road to town.<sup>2</sup>

## 1.3 Song: Returning from Guiji (with preface)

During the Liang, Yu Jianwu often composed ditties and rhapsodies in the Palace Style in response to commands from the Crown Prince.<sup>3</sup> When the fortunes of the state foundered in ruin, Jianwu first took refuge from the chaos in Guiji, and only later returned home. I infer that he must have left some work from this time, but now there is nothing to be found. Therefore I composed the "Returning from Guiji" song as a supplement to his grief.

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1 "Eddying wind" is also the title of a dance performance.

2 Elms' thin papery seed-pods are commonly referred to as "green coins" due to their resemblance to round coins with a hole in the center, along with their appearance in clusters or strings. The fourth-century figure Shen Chong 沈充 was renowned for minting his own coins.

3 Yu Jianwu (ca. 487–ca. 551) was a prominent literary figure in the coterie of the Liang dynasty prince Xiao Gang 蕭綱 (503–551). Xiao Gang reigned briefly as Emperor Jianwen of the Liang 梁簡文帝, but as a figurehead under de facto control of the rebel Hou Jing 侯景 (503–552); he was eventually murdered at Hou Jing's command.

野粉椒壁黃，  
 濕螢滿梁殿。  
 臺城應教人，  
 秋衾夢銅輦。  
 5 吳霜點歸鬢，  
 身與塘蒲晚。  
 脈脈辭金魚，  
 羈臣守迤賤。

#### 1.4 出城寄權璩楊敬之

草暖雲昏萬里春，  
 宮花拂面送行人。  
 自言漢劍當飛去，  
 何事還車載病身。

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1 A tradition dating to Han times tells of interior palace walls being painted with a whitewash mixed with crushed pods of the variety of prickly ash now commonly known as “Sichuan pepper”, for its scent and warmth.

2 “Damp” because tradition held that fireflies were generated from rotting grass.

3 “Responder-to-Command”: by referring to himself in this way, Yu Jianwu recalls his participation in the literary salon of Xiao Gang before the latter’s brief unhappy reign as emperor, since the phrase “responding to command” was used specifically in titling poems written at the behest of a prince. “Terraced City”: a term specific to the Southern Dynasties to designate the imperial palace complex near Jinling.

4 “Bronze carriage”: traditionally part of the trappings of a crown prince, here as elsewhere used metonymically to refer to the (former) crown prince.

- Wilderness mold is yellow on the pepper walls;<sup>1</sup>  
 damp fireflies fill the Liang palace.<sup>2</sup>  
 A Responder-to-Command from the Terraced City<sup>3</sup>  
 under autumn quilts dreams of the bronze carriage.<sup>4</sup>  
 5 Wu frosts grizzle these homebound temples  
 that share with the pond's rushes in the season's lateness.  
 With longing gaze I take leave of the metal fish,<sup>5</sup>  
 an exiled minister abiding amid fate's reversals.

#### 1.4 On Departing from the City: Sent to Quan Qu and Yang Jingzhi<sup>6</sup>

The grass is warm and the clouds are dark – ten thousand *li* of  
 springtime;  
 palace flowers caress the face, sending off the traveler.<sup>7</sup>  
 I called myself a Han sword destined to take flight;<sup>8</sup>  
 why then does a returning carriage bear home this infirm body?

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5 “Metal fish”: palace locks were fish-shaped – the fish, which never closes its eyes, being deemed a suitable figure for watchfulness. Oversight of the palace locks had been one of Yu Jianwu’s duties when he served as a Palace Cadet (*zhong shuzi* 中庶子) under Xiao Gang.

6 Close friends of Li He’s.

7 The epithet “palace” could be applied loosely, as here, to mean in effect “of the capital.”

8 An anomaly account records a fire at the Jin imperial palace in 284 that consumed a repository containing a) the sword that the Han founder Liu Bang 劉邦 (247–195 BCE) had used to kill the white snake (for the story, see note to 1.14, ll. 11–12), b) a shoe or shoes belonging to Confucius, and c) the head of Han usurper Wang Mang 王莽 (45 BCE–23 CE). In the midst of the commotion as the fire raged, the sword is reported to have burst through the repository walls and flown off into the sky (cf. the similar image, via a slightly different anomaly account, at the close of 3.20).

### 1.5 示弟

別弟三年後，  
還家一日餘。  
醪醕今夕酒，  
緇帙去時書。  
5 病骨猶能在，  
人間底事無。  
何須問牛馬，  
拋擲任臯盧。

### 1.6 竹

入水文光動，  
抽空綠影春。  
露華生筍徑，  
苔色拂霜根。  
5 織可承香汗，

## 1.5 To Show to my Younger Brother

My parting from you, brother, is now three years ago;  
since my return it's a bit more than a day.

Green brew of Ling: the wine we share tonight;<sup>1</sup>  
pale yellow wrappers: the books from when I left.

- 5 These sick bones somehow continue living –  
what possibility does this world not contain?  
Don't bother to ask whether it's an ox or a horse –  
make your toss and let "owl" or "black" fall as they will.<sup>2</sup>

## 1.6 Bamboo

Entering water, your dappled gleam shimmers;  
jutting into sky, you cast green shadows of spring.  
Dew-sheen appears by a path among young shoots,  
the tint of moss caresses frosty culms.

- 5 When woven, you're fit to receive fragrant sweat;

---

1 "Green brew of Ling": *luling* 醽醁 is a name for fine wine mentioned in medieval texts. The translation reflects Li He's intention to create a punning parallelism between the first syllable (pronounced in medieval Chinese, roughly, \**lwok*), homophone with "green" (綠, also \**lwok*) and the color word *xiang* 緗 "pale yellow" in the following line.

2 These lines involve doubled word play. First, cattle and horses are different things that may look similar from a great enough distance (as in the famous passage at the beginning of the "Autumn Floods" ["Qiu shui" 秋水] chapter of the *Zhuangzi* 莊子). Second, the "bull" (*niu* 牛) was one of the possible values of an individual slip in the gambling game *chupu* 樗蒲, in which both "owl" and "black" designate possible results for a throw of five slips, "black" having the highest point value and "owl" the lowest.

裁堪釣錦鱗。  
三梁曾入用，  
一節奉王孫。

### 1.7 同沈駙馬賦得御溝水

入苑白泱泱，  
宮人正靨黃。  
遶隄龍骨冷，  
拂岸鴨頭香。  
5 別館驚殘夢，  
停杯泛小觴。  
幸因流浪處，  
暫得見何郎。

1 Ll. 5–6: I.e., a woven mat; a fishing-pole.

2 The “cap for advancing worthies” (*jin xian guan* 進賢冠) was an item of court regalia that had a varying number of ribs arching over the wearer’s head from front to back; Li He here invokes a tradition regarding the use of bamboo for constructing such a cap. A story relating to the early career of Lord Xiang of Zhao 趙襄子 (d. 425 BCE) tells how he received an oracle foretelling his high destiny in two sealed segments of bamboo. “Scion of princes”: by referring to himself in this way, Li He recalls his descent from a branch of the Tang imperial family.

3 “Dimple-yellow”: dimples were deemed attractive in women, and by the Tang the application of various forms and types of ornament to the cheeks was an elegant fashion.

if cut, suited to angle for brocade scales.<sup>1</sup>  
 To form the three-ribbed cap you once entered service;  
 reserve one segment now, to bestow on this scion of princes!<sup>2</sup>

### 1.7 In Response to Imperial Son-in-Law Shen's "On the Set Topic 'Waters of the Imperial Canal'"

- It enters the park, in bright welling depths,  
 as palace women are applying their dimple-yellow.<sup>3</sup>  
 It wheels past the dike where dragon bones are chilled<sup>4</sup>  
 and strokes the bank where duckhead-green is fragrant.<sup>5</sup>  
 5 In the separated lodge, it startles remnants of dream;  
 where cups come to rest, it floats the little flagons.<sup>6</sup>  
 Perhaps, by grace of where its ripples flow,  
 it may catch a glimpse of our Young Master He!<sup>7</sup>

---

4 "Dragon bones": dragon bones were said to have been unearthed in the course of a Han dynasty irrigation project, whereupon the new waterway was named "dragon-head canal."

5 "Duckhead green" is a common color term, drawn from the iridescent green of the heads of species like the mandarin or mallard – here the phrase seems to be used metonymically for plant growth, in this context, most likely willows.

6 Banquet arrangements, particularly those relating to the lustration festival on the third of the third month, involved floating cups around curving channels, which the revelers could pluck out and drink from as they passed (cf. 1.23.3, l. 9).

7 He Yan 何晏 (ca. 195–249) was an eminent scholar and statesman at the Wei court, renowned for his elegant beauty, and an imperial son-in-law. Here his name is borrowed as a reference to Shen. Thus the closing lines are a complimentary reminder of Shen's status as imperial in-law, which allowed him access to parts of the inner palace where the imperial canal flowed, but that outsiders would never see.

### 1.8 始為奉禮憶昌谷山居

掃斷馬蹄痕，

衙回自閉門。

長鎗江米熟，

小樹棗花春。

5 向壁懸如意，

當簾閱角巾。

犬書曾去洛，

鶴病悔遊秦。

土甌封茶葉，

10 山杯鎖竹根。

不知船上月，

誰棹滿溪雲。

## 1.8 Having Just Taken up Duty as Vice-Director for Ceremonials, Recalling my Changgu Mountain Dwelling

- All trace of horses' hooves swept clear,  
 returned from duty I close the gate myself.  
 My long spearheads of river-rice are done;<sup>1</sup>  
 the little shrub jujube blooms with spring.
- 5 Against the wall hangs my scepter;  
 beside the curtain I sort my cornered headcloths.<sup>2</sup>  
 My dog-delivered letters have departed Luo;<sup>3</sup>  
 this crane is sick, and regrets wandering to Qin.  
 An earthenware jar seals in my tea leaves;
- 10 my rustic cup – locked away is my bamboo-root.<sup>4</sup>  
 I wonder, in that moonlight above the boat –  
 who paddles now through those clouds that fill the creek?

---

1 The term rendered “long spearheads” here is disputed: it refers either to the form of the grains of this type of rice (as reflected here) or to the vessel used to cook it; “river rice” was a term for glutinous rice.

2 The *ruyi* scepter and the square-cornered headcloth were emblems of the retired gentleman; the doting attitude towards these objects here suggests ambivalence about the new post.

3 An anomaly account tells how the southerner Lu Ji 陸機 (261–303), when serving in office at Luoyang, asked his dog to return home to Wu with a letter, a task the dog duly performed.

4 Items of rustic leisure, now left unused at Changgu.

## 1.9 七夕

- 別浦今朝暗，  
羅帷午夜愁。  
鵲辭穿線月，  
花入曝衣樓。  
5 天上分金鏡，  
人間望玉鉤。  
錢塘蘇小小，  
更值一年秋。

## 1.10 過華清宮

- 春月夜啼鴉，  
宮簾隔御花。  
雲生朱絡暗，  
石斷紫錢斜。  
5 玉腕盛殘露，

---

1 A major festival, and favored composition topic: it was said that on the seventh of the seventh lunar month, the Oxherd and Weaver Maiden stars (the Chinese designations for Altair and Vega, i.e.  $\alpha$  Aquilae and  $\alpha$  Lyrae), lovers condemned to be separated by Heaven's River throughout the year, were allowed to meet.

2 Ll. 1-4: The River was said to grow dark on this night, as the magpie was called to build a bridge for the lovers to cross. Folk customs surrounding the festival included airing out books and clothing, and women "praying for nimbleness" by threading multi-eyed needles.

### 1.9 Seventh Night<sup>1</sup>

The shore of parting on this day is dark;  
 within the gauze curtain, midnight sorrow.  
 The magpie takes leave of this moonlight for needle-threading;  
 flowers enter the loft for airing robes.<sup>2</sup>

- 5 In heaven is divided a metal mirror;<sup>3</sup>  
 the human realm gazes up at the jade hook.  
 Little Su of Qiantang  
 once more faces a year's autumn.<sup>4</sup>

### 1.10 Passing by Huaqing Palace<sup>5</sup>

In spring moonlight, crows caw at night;  
 palace curtains enfold imperial flowers.  
 As clouds thicken, vermilion window-grilles grow dark;  
 across fractured stones, purple coins of lichen slant.

- 5 Jade bowls still hold remnant dew-drops;<sup>6</sup>

---

3 Along with the moon's phase on this night (first quarter), the division of the mirror suggests the exchange of a love token and/or the impossibility of completeness.

4 Little Su was a singer of the Southern dynasties whose name was passed down in *yuefu* repertoire (see 1.19).

5 Huaqing was the name bestowed by Emperor Xuanzong 玄宗 (r. 712–756) on an imperial hot springs retreat at the base of Mount Li, roughly twenty-five kilometers from Chang'an (see also 2.17). The spot became renowned, and to a degree notorious, as the site of Xuanzong's first infatuation, and many subsequent dalliances, with his "Prized Consort" Lady Yang.

6 An indirect reference to the dew-gathering basins of Emperor Wu of the Han 漢武帝 (r. 141–87 BCE), on which see also 2.1.

銀燈點舊紗。  
蜀王無近信，  
泉上有芹芽。

### 1.11 送沈亞之歌并序

文人沈亞之，元和七年以書不中第，返歸於吳江。吾悲其行，無錢酒以勞，又感沈之勤請，乃歌一解以送之。

吳興才人怨春風，  
桃花滿陌千里紅。  
紫絲竹斷驄馬小，  
家住錢塘東復東。

5 白藤交穿織書笈，  
短策齊裁如梵夾。  
雄光寶礦獻春卿，  
烟底驀波乘一葉。

春卿拾才白日下，  
10 擲置黃金解龍馬。  
攜笈歸江重入門，  
勞勞誰是憐君者。

---

1 Referring to Xuanzong, who fled to Shu and abdicated in 756, in the wake of the fall of Chang'an to rebel forces led by An Lushan 安祿山 (703–757).

silver sconces glimmer on old silk netting.  
 Of that Prince of Shu there is no recent news;<sup>1</sup>  
 beside the spring appear shoots of water-celery.

### 1.11 Song: Sending off Shen Yazhi (with preface)

The man of letters Shen Yazhi, in Yuanhe 7 [812], failed the *jinshi* examination because of calligraphy and returned home to Wujiang. I was sorrowed at his journey. Lacking money for a banquet to ease his feelings, and stirred as well by his earnest requests, I sang this stanza to send him off.

The talent from Wuxing resents the springtime breeze  
 as peach blossoms fill the lanes, a thousand *li* of pink.  
 With halter of purple silk and bamboo crop, on a little dapple grey,  
 you're off for home at Qiantang, to the east and then east some more.

- 5 White rattan is intertwined to weave your writing case;  
 within, written sheets are trimmed neatly, in sheaves like Sanskrit  
 scriptures.  
 From this gleaming treasure mine you drew offerings for the Spring  
 Chamberlain;<sup>2</sup>  
 now tumbling over the waves through river mists, you ride away on a  
 lone skiff.

- The Spring Chamberlain selected his material beneath the shining sun,  
 10 but cast aside yellow gold, set loose a dragon-steed.  
 Bearing your case you return to your riverside, reenter your home gate –  
 as you undergo such troubles, which one truly cares for you?

---

2 The stitched codex form (antecedent to the typical format for what we call a “book”) was viewed as somewhat exotic in the Tang, the default format being the scroll, and was primarily associated with Buddhist sūtras in Sanscrit or Pali. Exam candidates would often circulate their writings in advance of the exams to build reputation; formal pre-submission of sample works to the Examination Office, represented here by the “Spring Chamberlain,” was also mandatory.

- 吾聞壯夫重心骨，  
 古人三走無摧挫。  
 15 請君待旦事長鞭，  
 他日還轅及秋律。

### 1.12 詠懷二首

#### 1.

- 長卿懷茂陵，  
 綠草垂石井。  
 彈琴看文君，  
 春風吹鬢影。  
 5 梁王與武帝，  
 棄之如斷梗。  
 惟留一簡書，  
 金泥泰山頂。

1 “That ancient man”: Guan Zhong 管仲 (725–645 BCE), the eminent statesman of the Spring and Autumn period, who was said to have served thrice and been banished thrice before at last entering the service of Duke Huan of Qi 齊桓公 (r. 685–643 BCE), with whom he would bring about an era of Qi hegemony.

2 Pitchpipes were conventionally associated with months of the year; candidates would typically begin preparations in autumn for the following spring’s exams.

I have heard a stalwart hero sets store in heart and bone;  
that ancient man served and fled three times, and never bent or  
broke.<sup>1</sup>

- 15 I entreat you to await your day, and attend to your long whip once  
more,  
turning your harness back another time, in tune with autumn's  
pitchpipe.<sup>2</sup>

## 1.12 Singing my Feelings (Two Poems)

### 1.

Zhangqing yearned for Maoling,<sup>3</sup>  
where green grass trailed beside the stone-curbed well.  
Strumming his zither, he'd gaze at Wenjun  
as spring wind stirred the shadow of her hair.

- 5 The Prince of Liang, Emperor Wu –  
he cast them off like a tumbleweed snapping from its stalk.  
He left behind but that one slip of writing  
inlaid in gold on Mount Tai's peak.<sup>4</sup>

---

3 Zhangqing: *zi* of Sima Xiangru 司馬相如 (ca. 179–117 BCE). The salient points of his biography for this poem are that he gained the attention first of Liu Wu 劉武, Prince Xiao of Liang 梁孝王 (ca. 184–144 BCE), and subsequently of Emperor Wu of the Han, for his dazzling *fu* compositions. While still in obscurity, he had gained the affection of Zhuo Wenjun 卓文君 when she heard him playing the zither; she eloped with him, and their marriage became an icon of independence and connubial content. Sima Xiangru eventually left court in favor of a quiet retirement at Maoling.

4 When Sima Xiangru died, Emperor Wu sent an envoy to gather any writings he might have left behind, but all they found was a ritual treatise on the *fengshan* ceremony – a seldom-performed sacrifice to Heaven that a sufficiently sagely ruler might make at Mount Tai. Five years later, Emperor Wu did in fact carry out this rite, which included the interment of stone tablets inscribed with gold-inlaid text on the mountain's summit. Li He deliberately conflates Sima Xiangru's treatise, as the cause and perhaps the script for the ritual, with these buried inscriptions that were its end result.

## 2. 其二

- 日夕著書罷，  
驚霜落素絲。  
鏡中聊自笑，  
詎是南山期。  
5 頭上無幅巾，  
苦蘗已染衣。  
不見清溪魚，  
飲水得相宜。

### 1.13 追和柳惲

- 汀洲白蘋草，  
柳惲乘馬歸。  
江頭楳樹香，  
岸上蜉蝣飛。  
5 酒杯箬葉露，  
玉軫蜀桐虛。  
朱樓通水陌，  
沙暖一雙魚。

## 2.

As evening falls I cease composing texts;  
 a sudden frost has left white strands of silk.  
 Looking in the mirror I pause to mock myself –  
 this is no way to attain a “south mountain” span.<sup>1</sup>

- 5 On my head is no square-cornered headcloth,  
 but already my robes are dyed with bitter phellodendron.<sup>2</sup>  
 Don’t you see those fish in the clear creek  
 who, drinking water, find the place that suits them?

1.13 Posthumously Responding to Liu Yun<sup>3</sup>

By Tingzhou’s white-blossoming water-clover,  
 Liu Yun comes home on horseback.  
 On the riverbank the hawthorn trees are fragrant;  
 along the shore the butterflies flutter.

- 5 Wine-cups filled with broad-leafed bamboo dew;<sup>4</sup>  
 jade tuning-pegs, a hollow body of Shu *wutong*-wood.  
 The vermilion loft is reached by water-lanes;  
 there in the sandy shallows’ warmth: a pair of fish.

---

1 To “live long as south mountain” was a common turn of phrase to describe blessed longevity; Li He’s white hairs tell him this is not his lot.

2 The square-cornered headcloth was a sartorial emblem of the hermit or scholar in retirement; the phellodendron or cork-tree produces a proverbially bitter flavor as well as yellow dye of a sort that would be typical for use in a commoner’s robes.

3 Liu Yun (465–517) was a poet and renowned zither (*qin* 琴) player of the Liang dynasty (hence the reference to a *qin* at l. 6).

4 “Broad-leafed bamboo dew” was the designation of a fine wine said to be brewed from such water.

### 1.14 春坊正字劍子歌

先輩匣中三尺水，

曾入吳潭斬龍子。

隙月斜明刮露寒，

練帶平鋪吹不起。

5 蛟胎皮老蒺藜刺，

鸛鶒淬花白鸛尾。

直是荆軻一片心，

莫教照見春坊字。

接絲團金懸麗鞞，

10 神光欲截藍田玉。

提出西方白帝驚，

嗷嗷鬼母秋郊哭。

### 1.14 Song: The Spring Compound Collator's Sword

These three feet of water from my elder's scabbard<sup>1</sup>  
 once entered a pool in Wu, to behead dragon-spawn.<sup>2</sup>  
 A moonbeam gleaming through a crack: it shaves the dewy chill;  
 a belt of pure silk taut and flat, that no wind can stir.  
 5 Some shark's humped back grew its scabbard's hide, tough with caltrop-  
 spines;  
 in its grebefat-smear'd quenchflower unfurls a white pheasant tail.<sup>3</sup>  
 No more nor less than Jing Ke's single mind – <sup>4</sup>  
 don't let its gleam fall on those words "Spring Compound!"<sup>5</sup>

Braided silk and beads of gold trail in its tassels;  
 10 its divine gleam ready to carve through jade of Indigo Fields.  
 When it is drawn, the west quadrant's White God is startled,  
 "Ao ao" wails the ghost-mother on the autumn plain.<sup>6</sup>

---

1 "Elder" (*xianbei* 先輩) was a term used by exam candidates for *jinshi* graduates in earlier years.

2 Alluding to the story of the third-century figure Zhou Chu 周處, a violent hooligan turned hero, who redeemed his early crimes by diving into a river to kill a dragon that had been plaguing his locality.

3 Sharkskin was a common material for sword hilts and scabbards; grebe fat was traditionally applied to sword blades to prevent corrosion; the invented term "quenchflower" here renders a term for the floriate patterning that master swordsmiths produced along the sides of a blade.

4 Jing Ke (d. 227 BCE) was the renowned swordsman almost successful in carrying out Prince Dan of Yan's 燕丹 (d. 226 BCE) commission to assassinate the Qin king who was to survive the attempt and become the "First Emperor" of the Qin (Qin Shihuang 秦始皇, 259–210 BCE).

5 Some commentators have read satirical intent here, but this seems best read as a courtly compliment: the sword, fit analogue to its owner, would be appalled at the disparity between its owner's intrinsic worth and current relatively lowly rank.

6 Alluding to the legend of Liu Bang's killing of the son of White Emperor, in snake form; the snake-god's mother bewailed her son at night, and in explaining her grief, revealed that Liu Bang himself was the son of the Red Emperor. On this sword see also 1.4.

### 1.15 貴公子夜闌曲

裊裊沉水烟，  
烏啼夜闌景。  
曲沼芙蓉波，  
腰圍白玉冷。

### 1.16 雁門太守行

黑雲壓城城欲摧，  
甲光向日金鱗開。  
  
角聲滿天秋色裏，  
塞上燕脂凝夜紫。  
5 半捲紅旗臨易水，  
霜重鼓寒聲不起。  
報君黃金臺上意，  
提攜玉龍為君死。

### 1.15 The Young Aristocrat's "Song of Night's Close"

Sinuous wisps of aloeswood smoke;  
 crows cry in the pale light of night's end.  
 Along the twisting pool, ripples among the lotuses;  
 the waist-encircling white jade grows cold.

### 1.16 Ballad: The Governor of Yanmen

Black clouds press down on the city walls, the walls are near collapse;  
 armor gleams towards the sun, an unfurling of metal scales.

- A horn-call fills a sky enclosed in autumn's hue;  
 rouge-tinted mountains along the pass congeal into night's purple.  
 5 Half-furled red flags bear down on waters of the Yi;  
 the frost is heavy and the drums are cold, their sound cannot rise.  
 To requite my lord's consideration in heaping gold upon the terrace<sup>1</sup>  
 lifting up my jade dragon sword, for my lord I will die.

---

1 Alluding to the legend of the "Yellow Gold Terrace" of King Zhao of Yan 燕昭王 (r. 313–279 BCE), which he established as a way to advertise his earnest desire for talented men to assist him in ruling the state (on King Zhao of Yan see also 2.4.13).

## 1.17 大堤曲

妾家住橫塘，  
 紅紗滿桂香。  
 青雲教綰頭上髻，  
 明月與作耳邊璫。

- 5 蓮風起，  
 江畔春；  
 大堤上，  
 留北人。  
 郎食鯉魚尾，  
 10 妾食猩猩唇。  
 莫指襄陽道，  
 綠浦歸帆少。  
 今日菖蒲花，  
 明朝楓樹老。

### 1.17 Tune: The Grand Dike

My home is at Hengtang,<sup>1</sup>  
 where red window screens are filled with osmanthus scent.  
 The blue clouds taught me how to tie the hairbun on my head;  
 the bright moon made me the pearl earrings in my ears.

- 5 The lotus breeze stirs;  
 it's spring beside the river.  
 Here on the Grand Dike,  
 a northerner is led to linger.  
 My man will eat tails of carp,  
 10 and I'll eat orangutan lips.

Don't point toward the road to Xiangyang –  
 by that green shore returning boats are few.  
 Today the rushes blossom;  
 tomorrow sweetgum leaves will wither.

---

1 Hengtang is a locality on the outskirts of Xiangyang (along the Han river in what is now Hubei), which appears at the poem's close as the "big city" against whose charms the local singer aims to detain her listener.

### 1.18 蜀國絃

楓香晚花靜，  
錦水南山影。  
驚石墜猿哀，  
竹雲愁半嶺。

- 5 涼月生秋浦，  
玉沙粼粼光。  
誰家紅淚客，  
不忍過瞿塘。

### 1.19 蘇小小墓

幽蘭露，  
如啼眼。  
無物結同心，  
煙花不堪剪。

- 5 草如茵，  
松如蓋。  
風為裳，

### 1.18 Strings of Shu

Amid scent of sweetgum trees, the evening flowers are still;  
 Brocade-rinsing River reflects the southern mountains.<sup>1</sup>  
 By tottering crags, dangling gibbons sadly call,  
 clouds among the bamboo hang gloomy at mid-slope.

- 5 A chilly moon appears by the autumn riverbank.  
 Jade sands give off sparkling light.  
 What red-teared traveler is this,  
 who cannot bear to pass Qutang?<sup>2</sup>

### 1.19 Little Su's Tomb<sup>3</sup>

Dewdrops on secluded orchid  
 like tearstained eyes.  
 Nothing to tie a lover's knot:  
 blossoms of mist cannot be cut.<sup>4</sup>

- 5 Grass like a mat,  
 a pine like a carriage canopy.  
 Wind is her skirt;

---

1 "Brocade-rinsing River," or simply Brocade River, flows through Chengdu in Shu.

2 Alluding to the story of Xue Lingyun 薛靈芸, a beautiful young woman from a poor family coerced into leaving her home to enter the harem of Cao Pi 曹丕 (187–226), Emperor Wen of the Wei 魏文帝; along the way she shed red tears; when collected in a jar, the tears coagulated like blood. To go downstream past the Qutang rapids in the Yangzi River meant leaving Shu behind.

3 Little Su was said to have been a renowned singer from Qiantang during the Southern Dynasties; in later ages she became a stock figure for singers or forlorn women (see 1.9, l. 7).

4 "Lover's knot": that is, a token such as the so-called "hearts-united knot" (tongxin jie 同心結) that lovers might exchange. Cf. 1.23.1 and 4.33.

- 水為珮。  
油壁車，  
10 夕相待。  
冷翠燭，  
勞光彩。  
  
西陵下，  
風吹雨。

### 1.20 夢天

- 老兔寒蟾泣天色，  
雲樓半開壁斜白。  
玉輪軋露溼團光，  
鸞珮相逢桂香陌。  
  
5 黃塵清水三山下，  
更變千年如走馬。  
遙望齊州九點烟，  
一泓海水杯中瀉。

water her pendant.  
 In an oilcloth-sided carriage,  
 10 at nightfall she awaits.  
 Cold emerald candles  
 exhaust their brilliance.

Beneath the western mound  
 wind blows the rain.

## 1.20 Dream of Heaven

Old Hare and cold Toad weep the sheen of sky;<sup>1</sup>  
 cloud towers half-open, walls of slanting white.  
 A jade wheel presses dew, wetting a disc of light;  
 Simurgh pendants meet on an osmanthus-scented path.  
 5 Yellow dust and clear water beneath the three mountains,<sup>2</sup>  
 a thousand years transposed to the swiftness of a horse's gallop.  
 Gazing from afar at the Qi domains – nine spots of smoke;<sup>3</sup>  
 one trickle of ocean water poured out into a cup.

---

1 The pattern in the moon as seen from earth was thought of alternatively as rabbit or toad (for the lunar associations of both rabbit and osmanthus tree, see 1.1).

2 The “Three Mountains” here refer to the mountain-islands of the immortals.

3 “Qi domains” is a traditional collective designation of the nine island-provinces of the human realm (in this sense not related to the old pre-Qin state of Qi, on the Shandong peninsula).

### 1.21 唐兒歌

- 頭玉硤硤眉刷翠，  
 杜郎生得真男子。  
 骨重神寒天廟器，  
 一雙瞳人剪秋水。  
 5 竹馬梢梢搖綠尾，  
 銀鸞睨光踏半臂。  
 東家嬌娘求對值，  
 濃笑書空作唐字。  
 眼大心雄知所以，  
 10 莫忘作歌人姓李。

### 1.22 綠章封事

青霓扣額呼宮神，  
 鴻龍玉狗開天門。  
 石榴花發滿溪津，  
 溪女洗花染白雲。

1 These physiognomic features, particularly the jutting forehead, suggest the boy's imperial bloodline.

2 The *banbi*, or "half-arm," was a fashionable kind of short close-fitting jacket, with sleeves reaching midway down the upper arm, worn over a long-sleeved underlayer. Here the "silver simurghs" are envisioned as an embroidered or appliqué figure on the *banbi* jacket. The sleeve-cuffs of *banbi* were often specially ornamented; so if we take the simurgh figuration as part of such an ornamented border, we might infer a word play on *banbi*, such that the simurghs tramp "about his mid-arms."

### 1.21 Song: Tang Lad

Jade forehead proudly jutting, the eyebrows brushes of emerald:  
 Master Du has sired a real son of men.  
 With weighty bones and spirits cool, a true vessel for heaven's temple,  
 a pair of pupils cut from autumn floods.<sup>1</sup>

- 5 The trailing end of his bamboo horse swishes its green tail,  
 a blinding flash of silver simurghs tramps across his jacket.<sup>2</sup>  
 The eastern neighbor's tender lass inquires about a match,  
 with knowing smiles, she writes in air to form the character "Tang."<sup>3</sup>  
 With eyes open wide, and stalwart hearts, you know what you're  
 about –
- 10 don't forget the one who made this song is also surnamed Li.<sup>4</sup>

### 1.22 Green-text Sealed Petition<sup>5</sup>

The green-rainbow robed one kowtows and calls on the palace gods:  
 let huge dragon and jade dog open the gates of heaven!  
 Pomegranate blossoms bloom all about the creek ford;  
 maidens of the creek rinse the blossoms, which dye the white clouds.

---

3 The "eastern neighbors' daughter" is a proverbial expression for a beautiful girl, from the story of the lovely neighbor of Song Yu 宋玉 (fl. 290–223 BCE), in a *fu* attributed to Song entitled "Master Dengtu is a Lecher" (Dengtuzi hao se 登徒子好色; see also 2.23, l. 1 and l. 52n). Yao Wenxie suggests "Tang Lad" was the nickname Du Cong 杜悰 gave this son.

4 Another reminder by Li He of his own distant connection with the imperial family, and thus with the boy's mother.

5 Petitions to Daoist gods, written in red characters on green paper, were offered on the bureaucratic model of sealed petitions to the emperor.

- 5 綠章封事諮元父，  
 六街馬蹄浩無主。  
 虛空風氣不清冷，  
 短衣小冠作塵土。  
 金家香街千輪鳴，  
 10 揚雄秋室無俗聲。  
 願攜漢戟招書鬼，  
 休令恨骨填蒿里。

## 1.23 河南府試十二月樂詞并閏月

### 1. 正月

- 上樓迎春新春歸，  
 暗黃著柳宮漏遲。  
 薄薄淡靄弄野姿，  
 寒綠幽風生短絲。  
 5 錦牀曉臥玉肌冷，  
 露臉未開對朝暝。

1 "Six avenues": a common metonymic designation of Chang'an.

2 "Short jerkins and small caps": clothing indicative of low social status.

3 The eminent Han general and statesman Jin Midi 金日磾 (134–86 BCE) and the author and esoteric scholar Yang Xiong 揚雄 (53 BCE–18) are contrasting

- 5 In sealed green-text petition we inquire of the Primal Father:  
 along the six avenues horses ply their hooves wildly without master.<sup>1</sup>  
 In the void the winds and airs are not pure and cool  
 so that those in short jerkins and small caps are turned to dust.<sup>2</sup>

In the fragrant lane of Jin Midi's home a thousand horses neigh;

- 10 In the autumnal chamber of Yang Xiong there is no vulgar tone.<sup>3</sup>

We entreat you to bear a Han halberd to summon this bookish ghost,  
 and not cause his resentful bones to fill a hole in the artemisia precinct.<sup>4</sup>

### 1.23 For the Henan Provincial Examination: Musical Lyrics for the Twelve Months, Including an Intercalary Month

#### 1. First Month

I climb the tower to welcome spring – the new spring is returning;  
 the willows suffused with latent yellow, the palace clepsydra drips  
 slowly.

Diaphanous films of mist sport across the meadows;  
 cold green in cloistered breeze sprouts fine tendril growth.

- 5 On brocade bed a reclining figure – jade flesh chilled;  
 dewy eyelids not yet opened, dozing through the dawn.

---

emblems of worldly success and unworldly pursuits. Jin Midi was a Xiongnu prince who defected to the Han. Commentators have speculated about possible reference to foreign generals who held high positions in the mid-Tang.

4 Soul-summoning rites relied on an object known to the departed soul in its former life; the halberd would have been part of Yang Xiong's regalia as Court Gentleman. "Artemisia precinct" is a designation for a common burial ground, from funeral songs dating back to the Han.

官街柳帶不堪折，  
早晚菖蒲勝綰結。

## 2. 二月

飲酒採桑津，  
宜男草生蘭笑人。  
蒲如交劍風如薰，  
勞勞胡鶯怨酣春。  
5 薇帳逗煙生綠塵，  
金翹峨髻愁暮雲，  
沓颯起舞真珠裙。  
津頭送別唱流水，  
酒客背寒南山死。

## 3. 三月

東方風來滿眼春，  
花城柳暗愁殺人。

Along the official roads, the willows' sashes are not yet fit to pluck;  
when will the rushes be long enough to form into braided knots?<sup>1</sup>

## 2. Second Month

A banquet by the mulberry-gathering ford,  
where the "son-promoting" flower grows and orchids smile;<sup>2</sup>  
the rushes like crossed swords, the wind infused with fragrance.  
Untiringly the martins make plaintive cries at the spring's full flush;  
5 under a wisteria canopy mist swirls, all is powdered in fine green.  
Gold-winged hairpin and looming hairbun are sorrowed by evening  
clouds;  
in a dizzy swirl, the dancer sets moving her pearl-embroidered skirt.

Parting by the ford, she sings "Flowing Waters";  
a chill grips the revelers' backs as the south mountains die.<sup>3</sup>

## 3. Third Month

The east wind comes: it's spring as far as the eye can see;  
by the flower-filled city willows grow dark, sadder than one can bear.

---

1 "Braided knots": i.e., as lovers' tokens along the lines of the "hearts-united knot" or *tongxin jie*; see note to 1.19, l. 3.

2 "Son-promoting" is one of several alternate names for the orange daylily, or *xuancao* 萱草, associated with fecundity and maternal love (cf. 2.23, l. 51).

3 "South mountains": often a figure for longevity or immortality.

- 複宮深殿竹風起，  
 新翠舞衿淨如水。  
 5 光風轉蕙百餘里，  
 暖霧驅雲撲天地。  
 軍裝宮妓掃蛾淺，  
 搖搖錦旗夾城暖。  
 曲水飄香去不歸，  
 10 梨花落盡成秋苑。

#### 4. 四月

- 曉涼暮涼樹如蓋，  
 千山濃綠生雲外。  
 依微香雨青氛氲，  
 膩葉蟠花照曲門。  
 5 金塘閒水搖碧漪，  
 老景沉重無驚飛，  
 墮紅殘萼暗參差。

Through the tiered palace's deep halls stirs wind from the bamboo  
grove;

the dancers' tunics of fresh halcyon are clear as water.

- 5 Light and wind spread basil scent beyond a hundred *li*;  
warm fogs harry the clouds, dabbing sky and earth.

Palace entertainers in martial costume, eyebrows lightly traced,  
wave and sway their brocade banners, warming the double-walled  
avenue.<sup>1</sup>

Along winding waters the scent flows off, never to return,<sup>2</sup>

- 10 as pear flowers fall completely away to leave an autumnal garden.

#### 4. Fourth Month

Dawns are cool, evenings cool, the trees like carriage-canopies;  
lush green of a thousand peaks appears beyond the clouds.

Amid faint fragrant rains, a shimmer of blue-green;  
unctuous leaves and coiling flowers blaze bright by the lane's gate.

- 5 In the languid waters of the golden pond sway emerald ripples;  
the sun's maturer rays now ponderous, no more sudden flights.  
Unseen, tattered pink and wasted calyx are now estranged.<sup>3</sup>

---

1 The "doubled wall" was a term used to refer to the pathway along the eastern edge of the Chang'an city wall proper, which provided a private route connecting the Daming 大明 and Xingqing 興慶 palace compounds on the northeast and east sides of the city and Winding Stream park at the southeast corner. Thus these lines would seem to relate to an imperial excursion making its way to Winding Stream park.

2 "Winding waters": evoking the third-month Lustration Festival, at which revelers would float winecups in a twisting waterway to pluck from the water and drink (cf. 1.7, l.6); also a nod to the name of "Winding Stream" (Qujiang 曲江) park at the Chang'an's southwest corner.

3 "Dark" 暗 is often used in poetry to mean "unseen/invisibly." An alternative here would be to take "dark" as describing the greenery now bare of flowers (which are often described as "bright").

## 5. 五月

雕玉押簾額，  
輕縠籠虛門。  
井汲鉛華水，  
扇織鴛鴦紋。

- 5 回雪舞涼殿，  
甘露洗空綠。  
羅袖從徊翔，  
香汗沾寶粟。

## 6. 六月

裁生羅，伐湘竹，  
帔拂疎霜簟秋玉。

- 炎炎紅鏡東方開，  
暈如車輪上徘徊，  
5 啾啾赤帝騎龍來。

---

1 “Floriate lead,” i.e., powdered lead carbonate, was used as white pigment in facial powder. Cf. 3.11.3. With the images of interior décor here, establishing a boudoir setting.

## 5. Fifth Month

Carved jades weight the curtain valance;  
light crepe enfurls the empty door.  
From the well is drawn water for rinsing floriate lead;<sup>1</sup>  
into the fan is woven a mandarin duck design.

- 5 “Eddying snow” dances through the cool hall;<sup>2</sup>  
sweet dew drops rinse leaves now uniformly green.  
Gauze sleeves trail in twirling flutter;  
her fragrant sweat: a precious jade’s spots of millet-stipple.<sup>3</sup>

## 6. Sixth Month

Cut raw silk gauze to measure, and chop Xiang river bamboo;  
to drape ourselves in sparse-laid frost, and sit cushioned on autumn  
jade.<sup>4</sup>

- A burning red mirror is opened in the east;  
a corona like a wagon wheel hovers up on high;  
5 amid chirping shrieks comes the Scarlet God astride a dragon.<sup>5</sup>

---

2 Punning on the phrase’s use in dance musical repertoire; the suggestion is that the expert performance of this dance might bring relief from the summer heat.

3 “Millet-stipple”: *su* 粟, or *su wen* 粟文, is the term of art for the densely arrayed patterns of tiny raised dots on the surfaces of many jade ornaments (cf. 2.23, l. 65); here borrowed to describe the dancer’s jade-like flesh covered in tiny drops of sweat.

4 The silk is for sheer summer clothes; the bamboo for weaving into mats that help keep cool when sitting or lying on them (cf. 1.6, l. 5).

5 The “Scarlet God” is Zhurong 祝融, presiding over fire, the direction south, the southern marchmount Hengshan 衡山, and the season summer. The totem animal of the south is a bird, and Zhurong is often depicted accompanied by dragons.

## 7. 七月

- 星依雲渚冷，  
露滴盤中圓。  
好花生木末，  
衰蕙愁空園。  
5 夜天如玉砌，  
池葉極青錢。  
僅厭舞衫薄，  
稍知花簾寒。  
曉風何拂拂，  
10 北斗光闌干。

## 8. 八月

- 嬾妾怨長夜，  
獨客夢歸家。  
傍簷蟲緝絲，  
向壁燈垂花。  
5 簾外月光吐，  
簾中樹影斜。  
悠悠飛露姿，  
點綴池中荷。

## 7. Seventh Month

- Stars along the cloudy shoals are cold;<sup>1</sup>  
 dewdrops dripping into the basin are round.  
 Fine blossoms grow on the hibiscus branches;  
 while tattered basil makes sad the empty garden.
- 5 The night sky is like a jade staircase;  
 the pond's leaves spread their green coins to the fullest.  
 One just begins to weary of the dancing robe's sheerness;  
 by stages, one finds the splendid mat is cold.  
 How gently insistent is the breeze at dawn;
- 10 as the Northern Ladle's lights sprawl askew.<sup>2</sup>

## 8. Eighth Month

- The widowed concubine resents night's length;  
 the lone wayfarer returns home in a dream.  
 Along the eaves, small creatures spin silk threads;  
 against the wall, the lamp trails sparks.
- 5 Outside the curtain, moonlight spills forth;  
 within the curtain, trees' shadows slant.  
 Remote and lovely, dewsheen hangs in the air,  
 lending its accent to the pond's lotus leaves.

---

1 "Cloudy shoals" refers to the Milky Way. There may be an indirect reference here to the Oxherd and Weaver Maiden stars, whose festival occurs in this month (cf. 1.9).

2 In the predawn hours of early autumn, the rising Big Dipper is still low in the sky.

## 9. 九月

離宮散螢天似水，  
竹黃池冷芙蓉死。

月綴金鋪光脈脈，  
涼苑虛庭空澹白。

5 露花飛飛風草草，  
翠錦爛斑滿層道。

雞人罷唱曉瓏璵，  
鴉啼金井下疎桐。

## 10. 十月

玉壺銀箭稍難傾，  
缸花夜笑凝幽明。

碎霜斜舞上羅幕，  
燭籠兩行照飛閣。

5 珠帷怨臥不成眠，  
金鳳刺衣著體寒，  
長眉對月鬬彎環。

## 9. Ninth Month

By the palace lodge, above scattered fireflies the sky is like water;  
the bamboo is yellowed, the pond is cold, and the lotuses have died.

Moonlight adorns the gate-ring's metal boss, casting a yearning gleam;  
through chilly garden and deserted courtyard, a pallid emptiness.

- 5 Dew's luster flies through the air as the wind glumly blows;  
bright spangling of emerald and brocade surrounds the graded path.

The Roosterman ends his song as the dawn light grows distinct;<sup>1</sup>  
a crow cries by the golden well; a leaf falls from a sparse *wutong* tree.

## 10. Tenth Month

The jade pot with its silver arrow grows gradually slow to empty;<sup>2</sup>  
the lamp's flower smiles by night, a concentrated flicker.

Shards of frost swirl slantingly, mounting the gauze curtain;  
lanterned candles in paired rows illuminate the upper-story gallery.

- 5 Within the pearl-decked canopy, resentful reclining that yields no sleep;  
the robe's gold-embroidered phoenix where it touches skin is cold;  
long eyebrows face the moon: a tracery of wheeling curves.

---

1 Since poultry were not raised in the palace compound, an officer bearing this title was tasked with announcing the coming of dawn (cf. 1.30).

2 A reference to the clepsydra, a favorite image in depictions of palace life. Its slowness in the first poem of this series (l. 2) evokes the languor of spring days; here the implication is that its water is freezing.

## 11. 十一月

官城團圍凜嚴光，  
白天碎碎墮瓊芳。

撾鐘高飲千日酒，  
戰卻凝寒作君壽。

- 5 御溝泉合如環素，  
火井溫泉在何處。

## 12. 十二月

日腳淡光紅灑灑，  
薄霜不銷桂枝下。  
依稀和氣排冬嚴，  
已就長日辭長夜。

## 13. 閏月

帝重光，年重時，  
七十二候迴環推。  
天官玉琯灰剩飛，

1 Traditional accounts told of a wine potent enough to induce a thousand-day stupor.

2 The final poem turns from depictions of specific times of year to a general tone of congratulation generally directed to the emperor, who was the notional addressee of examination compositions.

### 11. Eleventh Month

The imperial city is sealed all around in chill and austere light;  
from the white sky, in tinkling fragments, fall fragrant flakes of jade.

To the drum's booming, in high banquet we drink thousand-day wine;<sup>1</sup>  
we battle back the gelid cold to wish our lord long life.

- 5 The palace moats' channels twine like skeins of white silk;  
where now are the fire-wells or the warm springs?

### 12. Twelfth Month

In the sunbeam's feeble glow a little red is sprinkled;  
light frost persists beneath osmanthus branches.  
Indiscernibly, a gentler air dispels winter's rigor;  
already we're bound for longer days, and part from the long night.

### 13. Intercalary Month<sup>2</sup>

As divine rulers have doubled splendor, the year has doubled seasons;  
the seventy-two nodes succeed in their unbroken round.  
The heavenly officer's jade pipes have ash that's yet to fly;<sup>3</sup>

---

3 The calendar year was composed of seventy-two seasonal nodes (*jieqi* 節氣). Ritual tradition ordained that a set of jade pitchpipes should be maintained in a circular array in a specially prepared sealed chamber by astronomical officers of the emperor, their inner ends being closed with a film of ash formed from membrane of a rush plant. When the seasonal breath corresponding to a given pitch arrived, it was believed that the ash in that pitchpipe would disintegrate.

今歲何長來歲遲。

- 5 王母移桃獻天子，  
羲氏和氏迂龍轡。

### 1.24 天上謠

天河夜轉漂迴星，  
銀浦流雲學水聲。  
玉宮桂樹花未落，  
仙妾採香垂珮纓。

- 5 秦妃卷簾北窗曉，  
窗前植桐青鳳小。  
王子吹笙鵝管長，  
呼龍耕煙種瑤草。

- 粉霞紅綬藕絲裙，  
10 青洲步拾蘭苕春。

1 The Queen Mother of the West (Xi Wangmu 西王母) shared peaches from her immortal realm with Emperor Wu of the Han in the Daoist classic “Secret Biography of Emperor Wu of the Han” (“Han Wudi neizhuan” 漢武帝內傳).

2 Xi and He are mentioned in the *Shang shu* 尚書 (*Book of Documents*) as ministers of Shun, charged with calendrical matters. Here Li He conflates these two figures with the single Xihe, goddess charioteer of the sun.

how long this year, as the coming year delays!

- 5 The Queen Mother distributes peaches, offerings to the Son of Heaven;<sup>1</sup>  
Xi and He wheel round their dragon-teams.<sup>2</sup>

### 1.24 A Ditty from Heaven

Heaven's river shifts through the night, rinsing the wheeling stars;  
by its silver banks the flowing clouds mimic the sound of water.  
At the Jade Palace the blossoms have not fallen from the osmanthus trees;  
immortal concubines collect their fragrance to hang in sachet pendants.

- 5 The Qin consort rolls up the curtain as dawn breaks in the north window;<sup>3</sup>  
before the window in rows of *wutong* trees nest blue phoenix fledglings.<sup>4</sup>  
Prince Qiao blows the panpipe, whose goose-quill tubes stretch long;<sup>5</sup>  
dragons are called to plow the mists, to plant the gleaming herb.
- Faces powdered with rosy mists, in red-bangled skirts of lotus-root silk,  
10 on Green Isle they walk gathering thoroughwort flower in spring.

3 The "Qin consort" may evoke the story of Nong Yu 弄玉, daughter of Duke Mu of Qin (r. 659–621 BCE), who ascended into heaven on a phoenix with her panpipe-playing lover Xiao Shi 萧史.

4 "Blue phoenix" (*qingfeng* 青凤) is the terrestrial name of a brilliantly colored sunbird, of roughly hummingbird size (*aithopyga gouldiae*, or Mrs. Gould's Sunbird), that feeds on the nectar of *wutong* blossoms. Here the suggestion would appear to be that the similar tiny birds clustering about celestial *wutong* trees are actual baby phoenixes.

5 Prince Qiao: the heir of a sixth-century BCE Zhou king, said to have imitated the call of phoenixes on his panpipe, and to have become an immortal.

東指羲和能走馬，  
海塵新生石山下。

### 1.25 浩歌

南風吹山作平地，  
帝遣天吳移海水。  
王母桃花千徧紅，  
彭祖巫咸幾回死。

5 青毛驄馬參差錢，  
嬌春楊柳含細煙。

箏人勸我金屈卮，  
神血未凝身問誰。

不須浪飲丁都護，  
10 世上英雄本無主。  
買絲繡作平原君，  
有酒唯澆趙州土。

---

1 The sun-charioteer Xihe rushes east to begin a new terrestrial day; her speed is such that one already sees the first signs of yet another epochal transformation whereby land will become sea, and sea land.

2 “Tianwu”: an ocean monster with eight human-faced heads, eight legs, and eight tails.

3 The Queen Mother's peaches, said to confer immortality, took three thousand years to grow (see 1.23.13).

Aiming eastward, Xihe has a knack for urging on her horses:  
already new dust arises in the ocean, beneath the stony mountains.<sup>1</sup>

## 1.25 Flooding Song

The south wind blows mountains into level land;  
God commands Tianwu to shift the ocean's waters.<sup>2</sup>  
Queen Mother's peach blossoms have turned pink a thousand times;<sup>3</sup>  
how many times must Ancestor Peng and Wu Xian have died?<sup>4</sup>

- 5 A dark-maned grey, with a sprinkling of coinstring dapple;  
in coy spring the willows enfold fine mists.

The *zheng* player urges me to drink from a curved-handled goblet;  
spirit and blood uncoalesced – of whom will you inquire about this  
“self”?<sup>5</sup>

- Don't bother quaffing wine to the strains of “Protector Ding”;<sup>6</sup>  
10 the heroes in this world have never had a master.  
Buy silk to embroider an icon of Lord Pingyuan,  
when you have wine, sprinkle it only on soil of Zhao.<sup>7</sup>

4 Ancestor Peng was proverbially long-lived; Wu Xian appears in the *Chuci* 楚辭 (*Songs of Chu*) as an immortal shaman master.

5 Echoing *Zhuangzi*, e.g., Chapter 22, “Zhi bei you” 知北遊, where the sage-king Shun asks his teacher Cheng 丞, “If my self/body (*shen* 身) is not my possession, who possesses it?” Cheng replies, “That is a sloughed-off form of heaven and earth; life is not your possession – it is a sloughed-off harmony of heaven and earth ...”

6 “Protector Ding”: a proverbially mournful song dating from the Southern dynasties.

7 Zhao Sheng 趙勝, or Lord Pingyuan of Zhao 趙平原君 (?–251 BCE), was a proverbially generous and appreciative patron of heroic retainers (see also 3.17). The gist here is that one ought simply to render posthumous and symbolic allegiance to Lord Pingyuan, given that no such person exists in the latter-day world.

漏催水咽玉蟾蜍，  
衛娘髮薄不勝梳。

- 15 看見秋眉換新綠，  
二十男兒那刺促。

### 1.26 秋來

桐風驚心壯士苦，  
衰燈絡緯啼寒素。  
誰看青簡一編書，  
不遣花蟲粉空蠹。

- 5 思牽今夜腸應直，  
雨冷香魂弔書客。  
秋墳鬼唱鮑家詩，  
恨血千年土中碧。

---

1 The portion of the clepsydra for catching the dripping water was often designed in the form of a gaping toad; thus this line evokes time accelerated. Wei Zifu 衛子夫 was a favorite empress of Emperor Wu of the Han, who doted on her for her luxuriant hair.

2 Spring hills were a stock metaphor for a woman's eyebrows in boudoir poetry, but Li He often, as here, uses this convention "backwards," calling the hills "eyebrows."

The clepsydra rushes, its water chokes the jade toad;  
 Lady Wei's hair is now grown thin, no longer fit to comb.<sup>1</sup>

- 15 Look how autumn's eyebrows transform to new green;<sup>2</sup>  
 why should a young lad of twenty fawn and fret?

### 1.26 Autumn Comes

Wind through *wutong*-trees shocks the heart, stalwart men are grieved;  
 by the guttering lamp, crickets weep in the chill pallor.<sup>3</sup>  
 Who ever saw a single roll of writing on green slips  
 not rendered up to the florid bugs and gnawed to powdery nothing?<sup>4</sup>

- 5 “Tug at the thoughts”? – on such a night one's guts should be pulled  
 straight;  
 in rain's chill, a fragrant soul pays respects to the bookish wayfarer.  
 In the autumn graveyard, ghosts sing poems of Master Bao<sup>5</sup>  
 whose aggrieved blood endures a thousand years, green jade in the dirt.<sup>6</sup>

---

3 *Su* 素, here “pallor,” can mean “pure, austere, simple” or simply “white”; also the color of autumn.

4 “Florid bugs”: i.e., bookworms.

5 Bao Zhao 鲍照 (ca. 414–466), a poet especially known for his *yuefu* compositions.

6 Chang Hong 嵇弘 was an unjustly killed minister whose blood turned to jade after his death.

### 1.27 帝子歌

洞庭明月一千里，  
涼風雁啼天在水。  
九節菖蒲石上死，  
湘神彈琴迎帝子。

- 5 山頭老桂吹古香，  
雌龍怨吟寒水光。  
沙浦走魚白石郎，  
閑取真珠擲龍堂。

### 1.28 秦王飲酒

秦王騎虎遊八極，  
劍光照空天自碧。

羲和敲日玻璃聲，  
劫灰飛盡古今平。

- 5 龍頭瀉酒邀酒星，

1 The *Shanhai jing* 山海經 (*Classic of Mountains and Seas*) records the tradition that two daughters of the sky-god Di resided in a mountain at Dongting.

2 The nine-segmented rush appears in medieval anomaly accounts as an herb bestowing immortality. Li He's line harshly undercuts a medieval song mentioning this herb, which goes, "Upon the stones there *grows/lives* the rush ..." (石上生菖蒲).

3 See 1.32 and the accompanying Endnote.

### 1.27 Song: God's Daughters<sup>1</sup>

At Dongting the bright moonlight extends a thousand *li*  
 where cool winds blow, geese cry, and the sky lies on the water.  
 The nine-segmented rushes die upon the rocks;<sup>2</sup>  
 the Xiang goddesses strum zithers to welcome God's daughters.<sup>3</sup>

- 5 The old osmanthus on the mountaintop blows forth an ancient scent;  
 a female dragon chants her resentment in the cold water's light.  
 Along the sandy shore, driving his fish-team, the White Stone Lad<sup>4</sup>  
 idly picks up a pearl to toss into the dragon's hall.

### 1.28 The King of Qin Drinks<sup>5</sup>

Astride a tiger, the King of Qin roams the universe's eight bounds;  
 his swordgleam flashes in the void: the sky turns turquoise.

Xihe goads on the sun, which emits a glassy clang;  
 ash of kalpa-fires all blown utterly away, past and present leveled.<sup>6</sup>

- 5 From dragon-head pours wine – invite the wine-star to drink!

---

4 White Stone Lad is a figure from the “Songs for the Divine Strings” in *yuefu* repertoire (cf. 4.19, 4.38, 4.40), an intimate of river gods. Casting an offering into a river is a recurrent closing lyric and ritual gesture in the “Nine Songs.”

5 This poem takes its departure from traditions surrounding the First Emperor of the Qin dynasty, specifically his claims of and aspirations to the status of a god.

6 “Ash of kalpa fires”: in Buddhist traditions, a kalpa is the incalculably vast period over which the cosmos is repeatedly destroyed and remade again. An anecdote about Emperor Wu of the Han tells that excavations for that emperor's vast artificial lake Kunming uncovered an unidentified layer of black soil; a Buddhist monk from India explained to him that this was ash remaining from the last kalpa fire.

- 金槽琵琶夜張張。  
 洞庭雨脚來吹笙，  
 酒酣喝月使倒行。  
 銀雲櫛櫛瑤殿明，  
 10 宮門掌事報一更。  
 花樓玉鳳聲嬌寧，  
 海綃紅文香淺清，  
 黃娥跌舞千年觥。  
 仙人燭樹蠅煙輕，  
 15 青琴醉眼淚泓泓。

### 1.29 洛姝真珠

- 真珠小娘下青廓，  
 洛苑香風飛綽綽。  
 寒鬢斜釵玉燕光，  
 高樓唱月敲懸璫。  
 5 蘭風桂露灑幽翠，  
 紅絃裊雲咽深思。  
 花袍白馬不歸來，  
 濃蛾疊柳香唇醉。

- the gold-nutted *pipa* twangs in the night;  
 rain-sheets off Dongting lake come to blow the panpipes.  
 Made wanton with wine, he rebukes the moon, makes it reverse its  
     course;  
 beneath serried ranks of silver clouds, the marble hall grows light;  
 10 the majordomo of the palace gate announces the first watch.  
 In the flowery loft the jade phoenix's voice is coy, ferocious;  
 pink patterning of mermaid gauze bears fragrance, mild and pure;  
 yellow-robed beauties stumble in dance, offer a horn of thousand-year  
     wine.  
 From the immortals' candelabra, the wax-smoke is faint;  
 15 the goddess Greenlute's eyes are bleary with flooding tears.

### 1.29 Pearl, the Luoyang Beauty

- Little mistress Pearl descended from the blue vastness;  
 through Luoyang's gardens, a scented breeze floats languidly.  
  
 Pinned aslant beside her chilly locks, a glimmering of jade swallows;  
 in the high loft she sings in moonlight, to the rapping of dangling  
     pendants.  
 5 Thoroughwort breezes and osmanthus dew spatter hidden emerald-green;  
 the red string twines among the clouds, choked with deep yearning.  
 The multicolored robe, the white horse: they do not return;  
 thick moth-eyebrows are piled willow leaves, the fragrant lips grow  
     drunk.

- 金鵝屏風蜀山夢，  
 10 鸞裾鳳帶行烟重。  
 八驄籠晃臉差移，  
 日絲繁散曛羅洞。  
 市南曲陌無秋涼，  
 楚腰衛鬢四時芳。  
 15 玉喉窸窣排空光，  
 牽雲曳雪留陸郎。

### 1.30 李夫人

- 紫皇宮殿重重開，  
 夫人飛入瓊瑤臺。  
 綠香繡帳何時歇，  
 青雲無光宮水咽。  
 5 翩聯桂花墜秋月，  
 孤鸞驚啼商絲發。

1 The “gold goose” (*jin e* 金鵝) must be an image on a screen in the boudoir; an alternate reading would make this image on her screen a “golden beauty” (*jin e* 金娥). The “dream of Shu” references the legend of King Huai 懷 of Chu (r. 328–296 BCE), who had a dream tryst with the goddess of Shamanka Mountain at Gaotang (cf. 4.3).

2 A sixth-century BCE king of Chu was said to be fond of women with narrow waists; on Lady Wei, see 1.25, l. 14 above.

- Within the gold goose screen, a dream of Shu mountains;<sup>1</sup>  
 10 over simurgh lapel, phoenix sash, floating mists lie heavy.  
 Through the eightfold casement, filtered light gradually shifts to reach  
     her face;  
 silken threads of sunbeam, in profusion scattering, cast twilight into  
     the gauze grotto.

- In the twisting lanes south of the marketplace there is no autumn  
     chill:  
 there, waists of Chu and Lady Wei's tresses are fragrant through all  
     seasons.<sup>2</sup>  
 15 A jade throat's demure lilt resounds against sky's light;  
 tugging clouds, dragging snows, to detain our Master Lu.<sup>3</sup>

### 1.30 Lady Li<sup>4</sup>

The Purple Sovereign's palace gates open, layer upon layer:  
 our Lady flies away into the gleaming marble terraces.<sup>5</sup>

- That green incense within the embroidered canopy – when will it fade?  
 the dark-blue clouds are lustreless, palace waters sob.<sup>6</sup>  
 5 Fluttering and floating, osmanthus blossom tumbles through autumn  
     moonlight;  
 the lone simurgh is startled and cries out, *shang*-mode strings  
     commence.<sup>7</sup>

---

3 “Master Lu”: A stock designation for the absent playboy lover; cf. the close of 4.9.

4 Lady Li was a favorite of Emperor Wu of the Han. When she died at a young age, the distraught Emperor, on the advice of a sorcerer, held a séance in which her image seemed to appear, veiled behind a curtain.

5 Zihuang (“Purple Sovereign”): a Daoist celestial ruler, here with doubled reference to the bereaved Emperor Wu (cf. 1.1, l. 8).

6 “Palace waters”: possibly the dripping of the clepsydra.

7 The lonely simurgh or phoenix was a common image for the bereft lover.

紅壁闌珊懸佩璫，  
 歌臺小妓遙相望。  
 玉蟾滴水雞人唱，  
 10 露華蘭葉參差光。

### 1.31 走馬引

我有辭鄉劍，  
 玉鋒堪截雲。  
 襄陽走馬客，  
 意氣自生春。  
 5 朝嫌劍花淨，  
 暮嫌劍光冷。  
 能持劍向人，  
 不解持照身。

### 1.32 湘妃

筠竹千年老不死，  
 長伴秦娥蓋湘水。

- There on the fading red wall hangs her pendant pearl;  
 from the choir terrace little singing-girls gaze toward her from afar.  
 The Jade Toad clepsydra drips, the Roosterman cries out;<sup>1</sup>  
 10 dew-sheen on thoroughwort leaves: irregular flickers of light.

### 1.31 Rhapsody: The Galloping Horse

- I have a wanderer's sword –  
 its jade-white blade is fit for chopping clouds.  
 Those horseback wanderers at Xiangyang –  
 brash arrogance that makes its own springtime.  
 5 By dawn they fault their sword's pattern as too clean;  
 at evening they fault their sword's gleam as too cold.  
  
 Skilled to wield the sword against another,  
 but not to hold it to reflect themselves.

### 1.32 The Xiang Consorts

Bamboo of a thousand years ages but does not die:  
 forever accompanying the Qin beauties, it canopies Xiang's waters.<sup>2</sup>

---

1 "Roosterman": see note to 1.23.9, l. 7.

2 "Qin beauties": daughters of sage-king Yao 堯, wives of sage-king Shun; subsequently, divinities of the Xiang river in Chu. The tears they shed at Shun's death fell on bamboo stalks, permanently mottling their surface (see 1.1, l. 3; 1.27, l. 4).

蠻娘吟弄滿寒空，  
 九山靜綠淚花紅。  
 5 離鸞別鳳煙梧中，  
 巫雲蜀雨遙相通。  
 幽愁秋氣上青楓，  
 涼夜波間吟古龍。

### 1.33 三月過行宮

渠水紅繁擁御牆，  
 風嬌小葉學娥粧。  
 垂簾幾度青春老，  
 堪鎖千年白日長。

### 1.34 南園十三首

1.

花枝草蔓眼中開，  
 小白長紅越女腮。

1 The site of Shun's burial at Cangwu was in the Nine Doubts Mountains (*jiu yi shan* 九疑山), so named because the nine peaks resembled one another.

2 For "lone simurgh" and "wandering phoenix," see note to 1.30, l. 6.

- The keening songs of hill-tribe women fill the cold sky,  
 those nine peaks' quiet green is tear-stained with flowers' pink.<sup>1</sup>
- 5 Lone simurgh and wandering phoenix amid misty *wutong* groves,<sup>2</sup>  
 clouds of Shamanka Mountain and rains of Shu remotely touch.<sup>3</sup>  
 Silent sadness as autumn's breath climbs green sweetgum trees,  
 in the chill of night amid the waves intones an ancient dragon.

### 1.33 Passing by the Transit Palace in the Third Month<sup>4</sup>

Lush pinks of the channel's waters embrace the imperial wall;  
 in a tender breeze, fine foliage mimics coiffure of palace beauties.  
 Behind those hanging curtains, how many times has youthful spring  
     grown old –  
 in this place that locks away the long days of a thousand years?

### 1.34 The South Garden (Thirteen Poems)

#### 1.

Branches of flowers, tendrils of grass unfold before one's eyes;  
 small whites and long reds, a Yue maiden's cheeks.<sup>5</sup>

3 "Clouds of Shamanka mountain": alluding to the legend of King Huai of Chu's encounter with the goddess of this mountain as related in the "*Fu* on the Gaotang Shrine" ("Gaotang *fu*" 高唐賦; cf. 4.3).

4 "Transit palaces" formed a network of lodgings used by emperors on excursions, particularly between the western and eastern capitals (Chang'an and Luoyang). See Introduction, along with 3.44, ll. 47–56.

5 The icon of female beauty Xi Shi 西施 (fl. first half of 5th c. BCE) was said to have been discovered rinsing silk floss in the countryside of the southeastern state of Yue. Thus the phrase "Yue maiden" in effect connotes "a young woman of heaven-endowed beauty."

可憐日暮嫣香落，  
嫁與春風不用媒。

## 2.

宮北田塍曉氣酣，  
黃桑飲露窳宮簾。  
長腰健婦偷攀折，  
將餒吳王八繭蠶。

## 3.

竹裏繰絲挑網車，  
青蟬獨噪日光斜。  
桃膠迎夏香琥珀，  
自課越傭能種瓜。

## 4.

三十未有二十餘，  
白日長飢小甲蔬。  
橋頭長老相哀念，  
因遺戎韜一卷書。

---

1 "Palace": the ruins of Fuchang 福昌 palace (cf. 3.44, ll. 47–56), near Changgu.

What's most touching is at sunset when that lovely fragrance falls:  
petals married off to the spring breeze, with no need of a go-between.

2.

By the field-paths north of the palace, the air of dawn is heady;<sup>1</sup>  
yellow mulberries, drenched in dew, trail against palace curtains.  
A strapping big-framed farmwife furtively plucks them,  
to feed the King of Wu's eightfold-yielding silkworms.<sup>2</sup>

3.

Spooling silk in the bamboo grove, they wend the spinning wheel;  
a black cicada shrieks alone in the declining sunlight.  
Peach-tree sap welcomes summer with its fragrant amber ooze;  
the Yue hired hand I supervise myself is skilled at growing melons.

4.

Not yet thirty, but twenty and change;  
I'm hungry through the long bright day amid my small vegetable  
sprouts.  
An elder by the bridge took pity on me  
and presented me a scroll of martial *Scabbard* texts.<sup>3</sup>

---

2 A passage in a *fu* on the Wu capital by Zuo Si 左思 (ca. 250–305) describes times of agricultural fecundity that allowed eight consecutive harvests of silk cocoons in a single year.

3 Zhang Liang 張良 (?–186 BCE), one of the founding ministers of the Western Han, obtained a secret ancient text on military strategy from a mysterious old man he encountered on a bridge.

## 5.

男兒何不帶吳鉤，  
收取關山五十州。  
請君暫上凌煙閣，  
若箇書生萬戶侯。

## 6.

尋章摘句老雕蟲，  
曉月當簾挂玉弓。  
不見年年遼海上，  
文章何處哭秋風。

## 7.

長卿牢落悲空舍，  
曼倩談諧取自容。  
見買若耶溪水劍，  
明朝歸去事猿公。

---

1 “Fifty prefectures”: the regions that never returned to imperial control after the An Lushan rebellion fifty years earlier (see Introduction).

2 The Lingyan Gallery, commissioned by emperor Taizong to commemorate the achievements of meritorious ministers of the Tang’s founding and early years, featured portraits honoring them.

## 5.

Why would a young lad not strap on a Wu scimitar,  
 capture passes and mountains, win back the fifty prefectures?<sup>1</sup>  
 Sir, if you please, take a look at Lingyan Gallery – <sup>2</sup>  
 what bookish scholar was ever enfeoffed Marquis of ten thousand  
 households?

## 6.

Scouring chapters, picking at verses, I grow old in insect carving;<sup>3</sup>  
 the dawn moon is at my window-curtain, which snags on its jade arc.  
 Do you not see year after year out in the Liao wastes –  
 what use there for turns of phrase to bewail the autumn wind?

## 7.

Zhangqing, disillusioned, grieved in his empty lodge;  
 Manqian with his comical demeanor contrived to make his way.<sup>4</sup>  
 I'll buy a sword quenched in the waters of Ruoye Creek;  
 and tomorrow go off to serve Master Gibbon.<sup>5</sup>

---

3 "Insect carving": a dismissive term for literary composition.

4 Zhangqing 長卿 is the *zi* of Sima Xiangru (cf. 1.12.1), Manqian 曼倩 that of Dongfang Shuo 東方朔 (154–93 BCE), scholars and writers of the court of Emperor Wu of the Han.

5 "Master Gibbon": An anomaly account tells of an encounter between an expert swordswoman and a would-be sword master who turned out to be a gibbon.

## 8.

春水初生乳燕飛，  
黃蜂小尾撲花歸。  
窗含遠色通書幌，  
魚擁香鉤近石磯。

## 9.

泉沙奕臥鴛鴦暖，  
曲岸迴篙舴艋遲。  
瀉酒木蘭椒葉蓋，  
病容扶起種菱絲。

## 10.

邊讓今朝憶蔡邕，  
無心裁曲臥春風。  
舍南有竹堪書字，  
老去溪頭作釣翁。

## 8.

Spring waters have just begun to flow, swallow nestlings take to flight;  
yellow bees with their little tails return from dabbling flowers.  
The window holds a distant prospect, conveyed to my study nook;  
fishes crowd about the fragrant hook along the stone jetty.

## 9.

Softly bedded in the sands of the stream, the mandarin ducks are warm;  
along the bending bank the boat-pole swings, as the grasshopper-skiff  
    moves slowly.  
Wine pours from a magnolia jug through its pepper-leaf strainer;  
I prop up my infirm frame to rise and plant the twining caltrop.

## 10.

This day Bian Rang remembers Cai Yong;<sup>1</sup>  
with no mind to fashion tunes, I lounge in the spring breeze.  
South of my lodging are bamboos that can serve to write on;  
as I grow old, by the creekside I'll be an old fisherman.

---

1 The Eastern Han scholar Bian Rang (d. 193) was appreciated and promoted by the eminent court figure Cai Yong (132–192); an analogy with Li He's own hopes vis-à-vis Han Yu seems likely.

## 11.

長巒谷口倚嵇家，  
 白晝千峰老翠華。  
 自履藤鞋收石蜜，  
 手牽苔絮長純花。

## 12.

松溪黑水新龍卵，  
 桂洞生硝舊馬牙。  
 誰遣虞卿裁道帙，  
 輕綃一疋染朝霞。

## 13.

小樹開朝徑，  
 長茸濕夜煙。  
 柳花驚雪浦，  
 麥雨漲溪田。  
 5 古剎疏鐘度，

1 Some readers have construed this “Xi family” as self-reference by Li He, via comparison with the eminent Wei dynasty scholar and musician Xi Kang 嵇康 (ca. 223–ca. 262), but given the seeming specificity and interest of the rustic pursuits related in the last two lines perhaps the referent was some family in the vicinity of Changgu.

2 Honey gathered from cliff-face beehives was particularly valued and difficult to collect.

## 11.

Amid the long ridges by the valley's mouth is nestled the Xi homestead;<sup>1</sup>  
 through the long bright day across a thousand peaks the emerald sheen  
 grows old.

They put on rattan shoes and collect honey from the cliffs;<sup>2</sup>  
 by hand they tug away algae strands to promote the flowering brasenias.<sup>3</sup>

## 12.

In the black waters of Pine Creek are new-laid "dragon's eggs";<sup>4</sup>  
 the raw saltpetre of Osmanthus Cave is old "horse's teeth."<sup>5</sup>  
 Who caused Yu Qing to tailor himself a Daoist's cape –  
 a bolt of light mermaid silk dyed with dawn's rosy clouds?<sup>6</sup>

## 13.

Among small trees a path opens at dawn;  
 long wisps of tender grass are damp from the night's mists.  
 Willow-floss swirls into snowdrifts by the shore;  
 wheat-harvest rains swell the creeks among the fields.

5 From an ancient temple, a bell's sparse tolling crosses;

---

3 Brasenias: a water plant cultivated as an unusual and elegant delicacy.

4 Following Wang Qi, either local tradition said that this creek was home to dragons, or the eggs in question were those of salamanders.

5 "Horse's teeth" is a variety of saltpetre crystal.

6 There is a Han dynasty figure named Yu Qing, but here it seems the name is applied to some contemporary of Li He's from the area, apparently a Daoist adept with expertise in alchemy.

遙嵐破月懸。  
沙頭敲石火，  
燒竹照漁船。

## 2.1 金銅仙人辭漢歌并序

魏明帝青龍元年八月，詔宮官牽車西取漢孝武捧露盤仙人，欲立置前殿。宮官既拆盤，仙人臨載乃潸然淚下。唐諸王孫李長吉遂作金銅仙人辭漢歌。

茂陵劉郎秋風客，  
夜聞馬嘶曉無跡。  
畫欄桂樹懸秋香，  
三十六宮土花碧。

- 5 魏官牽車指千里，  
東關酸風射眸子。  
空將漢月出宮門，  
憶君清淚如鉛水。

---

1 Maoling is the name of Emperor Wu's burial tumulus; thus "Master Liu of Maoling" is a way of referring to Emperor Wu in his posthumous existence. An "Autumn Wind Song" ("Qiu feng ci" 秋風辭) attributed to him laments,

over distant mountaintops, a shattered moon is suspended.  
 On the sandspit they knock sparks from a stone  
 to burn bamboo for light on fishing boats.

## 2.1 Song of the Bronze Immortal Taking Leave of the Han (with preface)

In the eighth month of year one of the Qinglong era of Emperor Ming of the Wei (233), an imperial decree commanded the palace officers to drive wagons west to take the basin-bearing immortals of Emperor Wu of the Han, with the intention of erecting them by the fore-halls of the palace. When the palace officers had detached the basins, one immortal, on the point of being loaded into the wagons, shed copious tears. Thereupon Li He, scion of Tang imperial princes, composed the “Song of the Bronze Immortal Taking Leave of the Han.”

Master Liu of Maoling, the “Autumn Wind” wayfarer:<sup>1</sup>  
 at night one hears whinnying of horses, at dawn no tracks remain.  
 Osmanthus trees by painted balustrades still suspend their autumn scent,  
 the thirty-six palaces are emerald with lichen rot.<sup>2</sup>

- 5 The Wei officers draw their wagons, the destination a thousand *li* away,  
 from the eastward gates a sour wind shoots the pupils.  
 Bearing only the Han moon, he goes out of the palace gates;  
 recalling his lord, he sheds pure tears like liquid lead.

---

during a happy moment while banqueting with his ministers, the transience of human pleasures (see also 1.34.6, l. 4, and 4.44, l. 4).

2 Thirty-six was the traditional number of renowned palace sites at the Western Han capital.

衰蘭送客咸陽道，  
 10 天若有情天亦老。  
 攜盤獨出月荒涼，  
 渭城已遠波聲小。

## 2.2 古悠悠行

白景歸西山，  
 碧華上迢迢。  
 今古何處盡，  
 千歲隨風飄。  
 5 海沙變成石，  
 魚沫吹秦橋。  
 空光遠流浪，  
 銅柱從年消。

---

1 Xianyang is the name of the former Qin capital in the vicinity of Chang'an; "Xianyang road" leading east from Chang'an to Luoyang. The Wei river runs by the outskirts of Chang'an, the "city by the Wei."

- Withered orchid sees off this traveler along the Xianyang road;  
 10 if heaven had feeling then heaven too would grow old.  
 Carrying his basin, he goes out alone into the moonlit barren wastes;  
 the city by the Wei already far, the sound of waves grown faint.<sup>1</sup>

## 2.2 Ancient “Far Far Away” Ballad

- Pallid beams recede beyond the western mountains,  
 an emerald florescence stretches up into remoteness.  
 Where do past and present end? –  
 millennia swirl away on eddying winds.  
 5 Ocean sands turn into stone;  
 fish bubble spume around the Qin bridge.<sup>2</sup>  
 Light in the void, ripples on a receding stream;  
 those bronze pillars too erode with the years.<sup>3</sup>

---

2 Legend has it that the First Emperor of Qin had a bridge constructed in order to cross the sea in hopes of reaching the spot where the sun rises.

3 Bronze pillars erected by Emperor Wu of the Han to hold basins for gathering dew for an elixir of immortality; cf. 2.1.

### 2.3 黃頭郎

黃頭郎，  
撈攏去不歸。  
南浦芙蓉影，  
愁紅獨自垂。

- 5 水弄湘娥珮，  
竹啼山露月。  
玉瑟調青門，  
石雲溼黃葛。  
沙上蘼蕪花，  
10 秋風已先發。  
好持掃羅薦，  
香出鴛鴦熱。

## 2.3 Yellow-headed Lad<sup>1</sup>

The yellow-headed lad  
has paddled away, never to return.  
By the southern bank, reflection of lotus blossoms:<sup>2</sup>  
sad pink that droops all alone.

- 5 The water toys with the Xiang beauty's pendant;<sup>3</sup>  
bamboos weep in dewy mountain moonlight.  
The jade psaltery is tuned for "Green Gate";<sup>4</sup>  
stone-born clouds wet the yellow kudzu.  
Above the sands the lovage blooms;  
10 autumn wind has already burst forth.  
Carefully brush off the silken offering mat;  
incense-smoke emerges and the mandarin duck grows hot.<sup>5</sup>

---

1 Boatmen were called "yellow-headed" due to a tradition that they wore yellow caps because yellow as the color of earth would quell the power of water.

2 "South bank": a commonplace term for a place of parting.

3 "Xiang Beauty": evoking, though not specifying, the "Xiang Consorts" (cf. 1.32).

4 "Green Gate": apparently here a tune title, but otherwise unknown.

5 "Mandarin duck": here, a duck-shaped incense burner. The heat of the incense burner suggests the ritual is getting into full swing; cf. 4.25, l. 27, where the cooling of a duck-shaped censer suggests, by contrast, that the goddess has departed and the rite is over.

## 2.4 馬詩二十三首

### 1.

龍脊貼連錢，  
銀蹄白踏煙。  
無人織錦韉，  
誰為鑄金鞭。

### 2.

臘月草根甜，  
天街雪似鹽。  
未知口硬軟，  
先擬蒺藜啣。

### 3.

忽憶周天子，  
驅車上玉山。  
鳴騶辭鳳苑，  
赤驥最承恩。

---

1 “Coin-string” was the designation of a sign in horse evaluation, referring to a ridge of swirling hairs along the spine.

2 “Heavenly”: i.e., at the capital.

## 2.4 On Horses (Twenty-three Poems)

### 1.

Dragon spine spangled with strings of coins,<sup>1</sup>  
silver hooves white for tramping mists.  
There is no one to weave its brocade saddle-flaps –  
who will cast its golden crop-handle?

### 2.

In the year's last month the grasses' roots are sweet;  
on heavenly streets the snow is like salt.<sup>2</sup>  
Before the toughness of its mouth is known,  
it is first set to graze on caltrop spines.

### 3.

Sudden recollection of the Zhou Son of Heaven:<sup>3</sup>  
the rushing chariot mounting a jade mountain.  
As the braying colts took leave of phoenix garden,  
it was Scarlet Stallion who most met with favor.

---

3 King Mu of Zhou 周穆王, a tenth-century BCE ruler whom legend describes as driving his divine team of steeds to the corners of the world. The members of his team of horses, like Scarlet Stallion here, had renown in their own right.

## 4.

此馬非凡馬，  
房星本是精。  
向前敲瘦骨，  
猶自帶銅聲。

## 5.

大漠沙如雪，  
燕山月似鉤。  
何當金絡腦，  
快走踏清秋。

## 6.

飢臥骨查牙，  
麤毛刺破花。  
鬣焦朱色落，  
髮斷鋸長麻。

---

1 The quintessential horse was held to be the spirit of the lunar lodge Chamber (a group of stars in what Western astronomy calls Scorpio), one of twenty-eight such stations arranged around the ecliptic in the Chinese version of the zodiac.

## 4.

This horse is no common horse;  
 the Chamber stars were once a sprite.<sup>1</sup>  
 Step up and rap its gaunt bones:  
 they still carry the tone of clanging bronze.

## 5.

On the great desert, drifts of sand like snow;  
 above the Yan mountains the moon hangs like a curtain-hook.<sup>2</sup>  
 When will it, head bridled in gold,  
 bound fleetly treading pure autumn?

## 6.

Lying famished, a tumble of jutting bones,  
 coarse hairs grow through and rend its flower-patterning.  
 Its mane scorched till its vermilion luster is gone,<sup>3</sup>  
 forelocks shorn off by the halter's coarse hemp.

---

2 "Yan mountains": the Yanran 燕然 mountains were a region in the far northwest frontier of the Tang, in present-day Mongolia.

3 The *Shanhai jing* records an extraordinary breed of horse, silk-white, with red mane and golden eyes.

## 7.

西母酒將闌，  
東王飯已乾。  
君王若燕去，  
誰為拽車轅。

## 8.

赤兔無人用，  
當須呂布騎。  
吾聞果下馬，  
羈策任蠻兒。

## 9.

颺叔去匆匆，  
如今不蔡龍。  
夜來霜壓棧，  
駿骨折西風。

---

1 The “West Mother” is Queen Mother of the West; a corresponding “Eastern King,” far less renowned, is mentioned in some sources as a god of the east and of spring.

2 Addressing King Mu of Zhou or a counterpart: if he wishes to reenact his visit to the Queen Mother (or the “East King”) he will need to find a team of steeds like those that carried him in the past.

## 7.

The West Mother's banquet is nearing its end;  
 the East King's provisions are already dried.<sup>1</sup>  
 If the Lord wishes to go to the festivities,<sup>2</sup>  
 who will tug the carriage's drive-beam for you?

## 8.

Red Hare has no one for a rider;  
 such a steed ought to be mounted by Lü Bu.<sup>3</sup>  
 I've heard tell that the horse beneath the fruits<sup>4</sup>  
 is abandoned to the bridling and spurring of a hillfolk boy.

## 9.

The Prince of Liu has departed in a rush;  
 now no one is left to care for dragons.<sup>5</sup>  
 As night comes on, frost bears down on the corral:  
 courser's bones are snapped in the west wind.

---

3 Red Hare was the celebrated steed of Lü Bu 呂布 (?–199), a general and warlord from the last years of the Eastern Han dynasty (cf. 4.36).

4 The “horse beneath the fruits” was a species of small pony, able to carry a rider beneath fruit trees. Such horses are listed among items of tribute from states on the Korean peninsula.

5 Shu An of Liu 麴叔安, said to have lived in the time of the sage ruler Shun, was skilled in raising and caring for dragons.

## 10.

催榜渡烏江，  
神騶泣向風。  
君王今解劍，  
何處逐英雄。

## 11.

內馬賜宮人，  
銀韉刺麒麟。  
午時鹽坂上，  
蹭蹬溘風塵。

## 12.

批竹初攢耳，  
桃花未上身。  
他時須攬陣，  
牽去借將軍。

---

1 Xiang Yu 項羽 (232–202 BCE) was the primary rival of the Western Han founder Liu Bang in the wars to found a successor dynasty to the Qin. He was decisively defeated at Crow River, and left his steed, named the Divine Dapple, to a ward head before killing himself.

## 10.

Hurried oar-strokes as they forded Crow River;  
 divine Dapple weeps facing the wind.<sup>1</sup>  
 Your liege has now laid down his sword –  
 where will you find a hero to follow?

## 11.

Horses of the Imperial Stud are bestowed on palace ladies,  
 on their silver-studded saddle-flaps is embroidered the *qilin*.  
 At midday on the salt pan:  
 stumbling paces amid blasts of wind and dust.<sup>2</sup>

## 12.

Split bamboo – its tight-rolled ears just formed;<sup>3</sup>  
 the “peach flower” hue not yet showing in its coat.<sup>4</sup>  
 Some day, you will surely shake the battle-ranks;  
 I’ll lead you off to lend to a general.

---

2 Legend recounts that Bole 伯樂, a legendary judge of horses, discovered a wondrous steed yoked to a salt cart.

3 “Split bamboo” is a term of art for the tight-curved shape of some horses’ ears.

4 “Peach flower” is an expression for a color pattern in some fine steeds’ coats.

## 13.

寶玦誰家子，  
長聞俠骨香。  
堆金買駿骨，  
將送楚襄王。

## 14.

香襍赭羅新，  
盤龍蹙鎧鱗。  
迴看南陌上，  
誰道不逢春。

## 15.

不從桓公獵，  
何能伏虎威。  
一朝溝隴出，  
看取拂雲飛。

---

1 A minister to King Zhao of Yan (cf. 1.16, l. 7) told him a story of an ancient king, seeking a fine steed, whose servant spent five hundred measures of gold for a steed that was already dead; the king, initially enraged, soon found that he had gained a reputation for treasuring fine horses. King Zhao of Yan, in turn, applied the lesson of this story to earn a reputation as a lover of fine

## 13.

Wearing a precious *jue*-pendant – what family's son is this?  
 it's always said a hero's bones are fragrant.  
 With heaped gold he buys a stallion's bones,  
 to send to King Xiang of Chu.<sup>1</sup>

## 14.

Its fragrant blanket of ochre silk is fresh;  
 a twining dragon, its scales surge against the stirrups.  
 Turn back to look along the southern lane –  
 who will say this is not a fine spring?

## 15.

Lacking this ally in his hunt,  
 how should Duke Huan have quelled the awful tiger?  
 If one fine morning it emerges from gullies and hillocks –  
 observe then its cloud-sweeping flight!<sup>2</sup>

---

steeds and patron of worthy retainers. The protagonist of this poem, however, is seemingly less fortunate: he has offered his dearly-purchased bones to King Xiang of Chu (r. 298–263 BCE), a ruler not known either as a horse lover or as a good judge of human merit.

2 Legend relates that Duke Huan of Qi had a horse that resembled the mythical horse-like animal *jiao* 驕, which eats tigers and leopards.

## 16.

唐劍斬隋公，  
拳毛屬太宗。  
莫嫌金甲重，  
且去捉颼風。

## 17.

白鐵剉青禾，  
碓間落細莎。  
世人憐小頸，  
金埒畏長牙。

## 18.

伯樂向前看，  
旋毛在腹間。  
祇今掄白草，  
何日驀青山。

---

1 Curlyhair is the name of one of the six celebrated horses of the Tang emperor Taizong 唐太宗 (r. 626–649), who was a key general in the Tang conquest of the Sui. This poem suggests Taizong won “Curlyhair” from a defeated Sui nobleman.

## 16.

When the Tang sword clove that Duke of Sui,  
fortune allotted Curlyhair to Taizong.  
Don't fret that its golden mail is too heavy –  
it is off to catch a whirlwind.<sup>1</sup>

## 17.

White iron cleaves green grain-stalks;  
along the chopping-board is sprinkled fine sedge.<sup>2</sup>  
Folk of the world dote on slender necks,  
in the golden pen they fear long teeth.<sup>3</sup>

## 18.

Bole steps forward to look:  
the swirling hairs run across the belly.<sup>4</sup>  
Now its ration of pale hay has been docked –  
when will it rush over the blue mountains?

---

2 These two lines appear to describe the preparation of luxurious fodder for inferior horses in the imperial stable.

3 A slender neck was said to be a marker of one type of fine steed; long teeth were a marker of unruly horses.

4 Swirled hairs on the belly were one marker of a fine horse.

## 19.

蕭寺馱經馬，  
元從竺國來。  
空知有善相，  
不解走章臺。

## 20.

重圍如燕尾，  
寶劍似魚腸。  
欲求千里腳，  
先采眼中光。

## 21.

暫繫騰黃馬，  
仙人上綵樓。  
須鞭玉勒吏，  
何事謫高州。

---

1 There is a pun on *xiang* 相 as the physiognomic “signs” used in judging horses and *xiang* or “image,” as the latter term is used in Buddhism. Zhangtai was a street name in Han Chang’an, which became synonymous with brothel districts.

2 “Fish-gut” was the name of a treasured sword of Helü 閼閼, King of Wu (r. 514–496 BCE); explanations for this name include both figuration on the sword

## 19.

That sutra-bearing horse in the Buddhist temple  
first came from India.

One only knows it has a good image,  
it knows nothing of roaming about Zhangtai.<sup>1</sup>

## 20.

Double sashes that trail like swallow-tails,  
a precious sword with ripples like fish-gut.<sup>2</sup>  
If you wish to seek thousand-*li* hooves,  
seek first the gleam in the eyes.

## 21.

Hitching for a while his Yellow Surger steed,  
the immortal mounts the multicolored tower.  
One ought to whip that groom of the jade halter –  
why has it been demoted to Gaozhou?<sup>3</sup>

---

itself as well as the fact that it was used by an assassin to kill Helü's predecessor by hiding it in the belly of a cooked fish served at a banquet.

3 "Yellow Surger": a legendary horse whose appearance heralded good governance. Gaozhou was a prefecture in the far south to which reprimanded officials were often exiled. The suggestion is that the groom to whose care the horse has been left while its master is away has been negligent and allowed it to be sent away. Demotion to Gaozhou makes it clear a human referent for this horse is implied.

## 22.

汗血到王家，  
隨鸞撼玉珂。  
少君騎海上，  
人見是青驪。

## 23.

武帝愛神仙，  
燒金得紫煙。  
殿中皆肉馬，  
不解上青天。

## 22.

A blood-sweating steed arrives in the royal house;  
 in procession with simurghs it shakes its jade bangles.  
 When Shaojun rides it along the seaboard,  
 onlookers see a “blue-black mule.”<sup>1</sup>

## 23.

Emperor Wu loved gods and transcendents;  
 burning gold, he produced purple mist.  
 In his stables all were flesh-horses  
 that did not know how to climb into the blue sky.

---

1 Sweating blood was a traditional attribute, recorded since Han times, of fine horses from the west. Simurghs (*luan* 鸞) were divine birds such as might accompany a celestial cavalcade; carriage bells called *luan* 鑣, part of the paraphernalia of imperial processions, mimicked the calls of these birds. The story of Shaojun describes how he was seen riding a blue-back mule after he had seemed to die.

## 2.5 申胡子觥箎歌并序

申胡子，朔客之蒼頭也。朔客李氏亦世家子，得祀江夏王廟。當年踐履失序，遂奉官北郡。自稱學長調短調，久未知名。今年四月，吾與對舍于長安崇義里，遂將衣質酒，命予合飲。氣熱杯闌，因謂吾曰：「李長吉，爾徒能長調，不能作五字歌詩。直強回筆端，與陶、謝詩勢相遠幾里！」吾對後，請撰申胡子觥箎歌，以五字斷句。歌成，左右人合譟相唱。朔客大喜，擎觴起立，命花娘出幕，徘徊拜客。吾問所宜，稱善平弄，於是以弊辭配聲，與予為壽。

顏熱感君酒，  
含嚼蘆中聲。  
花娘簪綏妥，  
休睡芙蓉屏。  
5 誰截太平管。  
列點排空星。  
直貫開花風，

1 The *bili* 觥箎 (here, “shawm”) is a double-reed horn comprising a reed mouth-piece and a bamboo tube with nine finger holes, known for its plangent and mournful tone.

## 2.5 Shawm-song for Shen Huzi (with preface)<sup>1</sup>

Shen Huzi is a servant of the Wayfarer of the Northland. The Wayfarer of the Northland, surnamed Li, is also a scion of the imperial family, enrolled as a descendant in the temple of the Prince of Jiangxia. In his prime he made some missteps, and thereupon performed his official duties in a northern commandery.<sup>2</sup> He says of himself that he has studied both long and short tunes, but has long failed to gain renown for them. In the fourth month of this year, I lodged opposite him in the Chongyi Ward in Chang'an. Pawning some clothes and buying wine on credit, he commanded me to share a banquet with him. As our spirits grew animated and the cups were drained, he said to me, "Li Changji, you only know long songs, but cannot compose pentasyllabic lyrics. If only you made an effort to rein in the tip of your brush, how many miles off from Tao and Xie would you be?"<sup>3</sup> After I replied, he asked me to compose a "Fife-song for Shen Huzi," taking five syllables as the measure for the lines. When the song was done, the assembled gathering sang it for one another in raucous chorus. The Wayfarer of the Northland was greatly pleased, and, rising with cup in hand, he commanded Flowermaid to come out from behind the curtain, and she flitted about greeting the guests. I asked her what style she was versed in, and she said she was good at largo songs. And then she set my unworthy effort to a tune and sang it as a token of esteem to me.

Face flushed, I'm grateful for your lordship's wine;  
 I hold in my mouth this tone from among the reeds.  
 Flowermaid, with your hair pinned in drooping chignon,  
 don't slumber there behind the lotus screen!

- 5 Who chopped bamboos to make this Great Peace pipe,  
 whose row of dots displays the stars of space?<sup>4</sup>  
 Channeling through it a flower-blossoming breeze,

<sup>2</sup> I.e., he was exiled.

<sup>3</sup> Tao and Xie: the two renowned poets Tao Qian 陶潛 (365–427) and Xie Lingyun 謝靈運 (385–433).

<sup>4</sup> "Great Peace pipe": an instrument similar in design to the *bili*, is said to have been invented in the eighth century by the musician and craftsman Shi Sheng 史盛 (fl. mid-eighth c.). See Endnote.

- 天上驅雲行。  
 今夕歲華落，  
 10 令人惜平生。  
 心事如波濤，  
 中坐時時驚。  
 朔客騎白馬，  
 劍弢懸蘭纓。  
 15 俊健如生猱，  
 肯拾蓬中螢。

## 2.6 老夫採玉歌

- 採玉採玉須水碧，  
 琢作步搖徒好色。  
 老夫飢寒龍為愁，  
 藍溪水氣無清白。  
 5 夜雨岡頭食蓼子，  
 杜鵑口血老夫淚。  
 藍溪之水厭生人，  
 身死千年恨溪水。  
 斜山柏風雨如嘯，  
 10 泉腳挂繩青裊裊。  
 村寒白屋念嬌嬰，  
 古臺石磴懸腸草。

- and, in heaven, driving flocks of clouds to motion?  
 This night the splendors of the year decline,  
 10 causing regret at how one's life has passed.  
 Thoughts within me surge like waves,  
 so that time and again the banqueters are startled.  
 The Northern Wanderer rides a white horse,  
 from the hilt of his sword there hangs an orchid tassel.  
 15 Bold and restless as a macaque,  
 how could he deign to gather fireflies from the weeds?<sup>1</sup>

## 2.6 Song of the Jade-gathering Old Man

- Gathering jade, gathering jade – it must be the water-green,  
 to polish into swinging pendants, empty loveliness.  
 An old man, so starved and cold the dragons worry for him –  
 the mists over Indigo Creek are neither clear nor white.  
 5 In night rain on the ridge-top, he eats bramble nuts;  
 blood dripping from the cuckoo's beak is the old man's tears.<sup>2</sup>  
 Indigo Creek waters are glutted with human flesh;  
 though they died, for a thousand years they will hate this creek's waters.  
 Wind blows through cedars across the slanting hills, rain like a tiger-roar;  
 10 legs of a stream hang down in strings, delicate sinuous green.  
 In the cold village, a plain thatched hut holds cares for a tender infant;  
 by the stone steps of the ancient terrace trails down worry-gut grass.<sup>3</sup>

---

1 Alluding to the story of the fourth-century figure Che Yin 車胤. In his youth, his family lacked the means to provide lamp oil, and he is said to have filled sheer silken bags with fireflies to provide light for his nighttime studies.

2 Cuckoos were said to shed blood from their beaks when they cry.

3 Wang Qi cites a tradition of a vine or running grass in the south known by this name.

## 2.7 傷心行

- 咽咽學楚吟，  
病骨傷幽素。  
秋姿白髮生，  
木葉啼風雨。  
5 燈青蘭膏歇，  
落照飛蛾舞。  
古壁生凝塵，  
羈魂夢中語。

## 2.8 湖中曲

- 長眉越沙採蘭若，  
桂葉水荇春漠漠。  
橫船醉眠白晝閑，  
渡口梅風歌扇薄。  
5 燕釵玉股照青渠，  
越王嬌郎小字書。  
蜀紙封巾報雲鬢，  
晚漏壺中水淋盡。

## 2.7 Ballad of Heartache

- Choked gasping that mimics chants of Chu;  
 sick bones harmed by secluded bareness.  
 In my autumnal mien the white hair sprouts;  
 the trees' leaves weep in wind and rain.
- 5 Lamp-flame glows blue as its scented oil runs dry;  
 in the declining light fluttering moths dance.  
 On ancient walls grows caked dust;  
 a wandering soul speaks within a dream.

## 2.8 Lake Tune

- The long-browed one strides across the sand, plucking thoroughwort  
 and pollia;  
 osmanthus leaves and waterpepper spread in springtime profusion.  
 In a drifting boat, drunken slumber and day-long leisure;  
 by the ford there blows a plum-blossom breeze: the singer's fan is  
 sheer.<sup>1</sup>
- 5 Jade legs of swallow-hairpins reflect in the channel's green water;  
 from the Prince of Yue's doted-on lad comes a letter in tiny script.<sup>2</sup>
- Take Shu paper to wrap a handkerchief, cloudy tresses' due requital;<sup>3</sup>  
 the hours of evening have drained the clepsydra's cistern dry.

---

1 "Plum-blossom breeze": a seasonal marker of the fifth month (i.e. the second month of summer in the lunar calendar) in the Jiangnan region.

2 "Prince of Yue": a story of a King of Nanyue tells of the charm and beauty of his son; here proverbial for a lovely young man.

3 "Shu paper": the southwest region of Shu (cf. **1.18**) was renowned for its fine paper.

## 2.9 黃家洞

雀步蹙沙聲促促，  
四尺角弓青石鏃。  
黑幡三點銅鼓鳴，  
高作猿啼搖箭箠。

- 5 綵巾纏踣幅半斜，  
溪頭簇隊映葛花。  
山潭晚霧吟白鼉，  
竹蛇飛蠹射金沙。  
閑驅竹馬緩歸家，  
10 官軍自殺容州槎。

## 2.10 屏風曲

- 蜨棲石竹銀交關，  
水凝綠鴨琉璃錢。  
團迴六曲抱膏蘭，  
將鬟鏡上擲金蟬。  
5 沉香火暖茱萸煙，

1 The social importance of bronze drums among southern indigenous groups was a recurrent theme in medieval Chinese ethnography of these regions.

2 The phrase “bamboo horse” often refers to a child’s toy horse (cf. 1.21), but here it evidently refers to an indigenous breed used by the Huang folk.

## 2.9 Caves of the Huang Folk

They mince in sparrow-hops along the sand, their voices pressed and  
 chirping,  
 with four-foot horn-tipped bows, and arrowheads of flint.  
 Beneath black banners with three spots, their bronze drum roars:<sup>1</sup>  
 they raise up gibbon-cries, and rattle their quivers.

- 5 Varicolored cloth puttees wrap in spirals up their calves;  
 beside the creek they form close ranks against the kudzu blossoms.  
 From mountain pools amid evening fogs moans the white crocodile;  
 bamboo vipers and flying wasps shoot the golden sands.  
 Idly driving their bamboo horses, they slowly return home;<sup>2</sup>  
 10 the Emperor's army, per usual, slaughters Rongzhou's Cha.<sup>3</sup>

## 2.10 Tune: the Folding Screen

A butterfly alights on a blooming pink beside its silver hinges;  
 in water held immobile, a green duck amid coins of glaze.  
 An encircling round of six bends enfolds the lamp-oil's orchid scent;  
 undoing her hairbun, she tosses a golden cicada onto the mirror stand.<sup>4</sup>

- 5 Aloeswood fire warms the mist among dogwoods;

---

3 Rongzhou is a place name, corresponding to Rong County in present-day Guangxi. The idea that the word *cha* 槎 here is term for a southern ethnic group, however, derives only from conjectures aimed at deciphering this line.

4 "Golden cicada": i.e., a metal hairpin in the shape of a cicada.

酒觥綰帶新承懽。  
 月風吹露屏外寒，  
 城上烏啼楚女眠。

## 2.11 南山田中行

秋野明，秋風白，  
 塘水漻漻蟲嘖嘖。  
 雲根苔蘚山上石，  
 冷紅泣露嬌啼色。

5 荒畦九月稻叉牙，  
 蟄螢低飛隴徑斜。  
 石脈水流泉滴沙，  
 鬼燈如漆照松花。

## 2.12 貴主征行樂

奚騎黃銅連鎖甲，  
 羅旗香幹金畫葉。

1 Tying the feet of two wine cups together is part of a wedding ritual.

2 Stones are often called “cloud roots” because clouds were said to arise from stone.

wine-cups tied in a band, in the first flush of favor.<sup>1</sup>  
 Moonlit wind blows dew: outside the screen is cold.  
 Atop the ramparts crows cry as the Chu lass sleeps.

## 2.11 Ballad: Fields in South Mountain

The autumn plain is clear, the autumn wind is white.  
 The pool's waters flow limpidly, and insects chitter.  
 Cloud-roots mossy and lichen-covered, hilltop crags;<sup>2</sup>  
 cold reds splattered in dew-tears, hues of tender weeping.

- 5 Across deserted paddies in the ninth month the rice-stalks lie splayed;  
 drowsy fireflies fly low over slanting field-paths.  
 Through veins in stone water flows: a spring drips onto sand;  
 ghost-lanterns like lacquer shine on the pine flowers.<sup>3</sup>

## 2.12 Music for a Princess's Progress

Xi cavalry attendants in chainmail of yellow brass;<sup>4</sup>  
 gauze banners on sandalwood staves, with leaves of painted gold.

---

3 An anomaly account concerning the tomb of Lady Helü (on her husband the King of Wu see 2.4.20) describes it as a vast underground complex, illuminated with lacquer lamps.

4 Xi is a quasi-ethnic designation that by the Tang referred simply to a hereditary menial class. See notes to the "Short Biography of Li He" in the Appendix. We are likely meant to imagine this as a troop of female riders in military garb.

中軍留醉河陽城，  
嬌嘶紫燕踏花行。

- 5 春營騎將如紅玉，  
走馬捎鞭上空綠。

女垣素月角咿咿，  
牙帳未開分錦衣。

## 2.13 酒罷張大徹索贈詩時張初效潞幕

長鬣張郎三十八，  
天遣裁詩花作骨。  
往還誰是龍頭人。  
公主遣乘魚鬚笏。

- 5 太行青草上白衫，  
匣中章奏密如蠶。

---

1 Heyang was a strategic fortified city straddling the Yellow River, and including an island district in the middle, just north of Luoyang (see 3.27).

2 “Purple Swallow” was the name of a fine steed of the Han dynasty, here used to refer to the Commander’s horse, which waits tethered outside as the Commander herself enjoys the revelry inside.

The Commander is detained drunk at a banquet in Heyang Citadel;<sup>1</sup>  
cooly neighing, Purple Swallow treads the flowers.<sup>2</sup>

- 5 In the Spring Garrison the cavalry commanders have complexions like  
pink jade;  
as they gallop their mounts, they crack their whips, climbing into  
the sky's green.

Over the crenellated rampart in pure moonlight a horn-call keens;  
the headquarters tent has not yet opened for the distribution of  
brocade robes.

### **2.13 After Drinking, Zhang the Eldest, Che, Demanded that I Present a Poem: At the time Zhang had just begun his service under the Military Governor of Luzhou**

Long-maned Master Zhang, thirty-eight this year:  
heaven-dispatched to write poetry, with flowers for his bones.  
Of all his companions, who can be the dragon's head?<sup>3</sup>  
A princess made him carry the fish-whisker tablet.<sup>4</sup>

- 5 The indigo blue of Taihang mountains' grasses spread onto his white  
smock;<sup>5</sup>  
the memorials in his writing-case are packed tight as silkworms.

---

3 "Dragon's head": i.e., the one with the most talent and highest status.

4 L. 4: The implication seems to be that Zhang Che gained his office through the recommendation of an imperial in-law. A bamboo tablet ornamented with a fish-whisker pattern was part of the regalia specified in the *Li ji* 禮記 (*Record of Rites*) for Grantees at court.

5 Scholars without office wore white, while blue robes denoted junior-level appointees to offices of grade 8 or 9; as Zhang takes up his first appointment, traversing the Taihang mountains on his journey to Luzhou, his robes thus "turn blue."

金門石閣知卿有，  
豸角雞香早晚含。

隴西長吉摧顏客，  
10 酒闌感覺中區窄。  
葛衣斷碎趙城秋，  
吟詩一夜東方白。

## 2.14 羅浮山人與葛篇

依依宜織江雨空，  
雨中六月蘭臺風。  
博羅老仙時出洞，  
千歲石牀啼鬼工。

5 蛇毒濃凝洞堂濕，  
江魚不食啣沙立。  
欲剪箱中一尺天，  
吳娥莫道吳刀澀。

---

1 “Golden Gate” is short for “Golden Horse Gate” (*Jinma men* 金馬門), where court ministers awaited imperial summons; “Stone Pavilion” was the name of a Han imperial library. The *xiezhi* 獬豸 was a mythical beast like a goat or deer with a single horn in the middle of its head, endowed with the ability to discern right and wrong; a cap with *xiezhi* horn was part of the regalia of high officials of the Censorate. “Rooster-tongue scent,” i.e. clove, was to be held in the mouths of ministers reporting to the emperor, to ensure pleasant breath.

The Golden Gate and the Stone Pavilion: I know these are in your lot;  
in a *xiezhi* cap, rooster-tongue scent you'll sooner or later hold in your mouth.<sup>1</sup>

- Changji of Longxi, bedraggled wanderer,<sup>2</sup>  
10 as the banquet nears its end, feels the space inside him narrow.  
Hemp robes in tatters in the autumn of the Zhao citadel,<sup>3</sup>  
he chants poems all night long until the east grows pale.

## 2.14 A Verse: Hemp Cloth Given by Luofu Mountain Folk

Wavering stillness, a sky fit for weaving, with strands of river rain;  
amid the rain, the sixth-month breeze from Orchid Terrace.  
An aged immortal of Boluo comes in season from his grotto;<sup>4</sup>  
beside the thousand-year stone table, ghost-artisans weep.

- 5 Snake venom thickens and congeals in the grotto hall's damp;  
the river fish no longer feed, but float erect, snouts in the sand.<sup>5</sup>  
I want to cut one foot of the sky that's stored up in that case –  
don't let the Wu maiden say her Wu scissors are dull!<sup>6</sup>

---

2 Longxi was the region to which the imperial clan traced its origin, specifically Chengji 成紀 county (cf. the close of 3.44).

3 Luzhou was in the region of the old Warring States era state of Zhao.

4 Boluo is an alternate designation of Luofu.

5 Describing signs of extreme summer heat, when fabric such as this would be particularly prized.

6 The Wu region was renowned for producing fine clothes; here the poet imagines commissioning a Wu seamstress to make him robes from the hemp cloth.

## 2.15 仁和里雜敘皇甫湜

大人乞馬癯乃寒，  
 宗人貸宅荒厥垣。  
 橫庭鼠徑空土澀，  
 出籬大棗垂珠殘。

- 5 安定美人截黃綬，  
 脫落纓裾暝朝酒。  
 還家白筆未上頭，  
 使我清聲落人後。

- 枉辱稱知犯君眼，  
 10 排引纔陞強絀斷。  
 洛風送馬入長關，  
 闔扇未開逢狹犬。

- 那知堅都相草草，  
 客枕幽單看春老。  
 15 歸來骨薄面無膏，  
 疫氣衝頭鬢莖少。

---

1 Anding was the origin place of Huangfu Shi's (777-835) lineage. The "yellow seal-band" was part of the regalia of a district defender during the Han (though not in the Tang).

## 2.15 In Renhe Ward: an Impromptu Account for Huangfu Shi

From my parent I begged a horse: it's skinny and forlorn;  
the lineage lent me a house: desolate are its walls.  
The courtyard is crossed with paths of rats, all is deserted and dust-  
caked;  
the big date tree stretching over the hedge has had its dangling pearls  
despoiled.

- 5 The beautiful man of Anding trims his yellow seal-band;<sup>1</sup>  
in bedraggled cap-strings and robe, he drinks both night and day.  
As he goes home, the white brush has not yet adorned his head,<sup>2</sup>  
thus causing my pure reputation to fall behind those of others.

For nothing I dishonored you for calling me friend – an offense to your  
sight;

- 10 just as you had begun hoisting me, that strong cable snapped.  
Luo river breeze sent off my horse through the far passes;  
before the palace gates had opened to me, I met with rabid dogs.<sup>3</sup>

Who could know Jian and Du would be slipshod in their judgment?<sup>4</sup>  
On my wayfarer's pillow, secluded and alone, I watch as spring grows  
old.

- 15 On my return I'm bony and gaunt, my face without luster;  
my head beset by contagious vapors, my temple's locks are sparse.

---

2 The "white brush" worn in the hair was a traditional emblem of officials of the Censorate; in the Tang, it was part of the regalia of officials above rank 7; Huangfu Shi's rank as Luhun Defender was 9.

3 Alluding to his frustrated attempt to enter official service through the *jinshi* examination.

4 "Jian and Du": i.e., Dao Jian 刁堅 and Ding Jundu 丁君都, renowned judges of horses, here used as a figure for the examination officials, whose judgment in this instance was faulty.

欲雕小說干天官，  
 宗孫不調為誰憐。  
 明朝下元復西道，  
 20 崆峒敘別長如天。

## 2.16 宮娃歌

蠟光高懸照紗空，  
 花房夜搗紅守宮。  
 象口吹香氎毼暖，  
 七星挂城聞漏板。  
 5 寒入罽毼殿影昏，  
 彩鸞簾額著霜痕。  
 啼蛄弔月鉤闌下，  
 屈膝銅鋪鎖阿甄。  
 夢入家門上沙渚，  
 10 天河落處長洲路。  
 願君光明如太陽，  
 放妾騎魚撇波去。

1 See *Zhuangzi*, ch. 26 "External Things," "dressing up trifling theories to angle for fine repute." The "heavenly office" was a traditional alternate designation of the Personnel Ministry, the arm of the bureaucracy charged with examinations and the assignment of posts.

I wish to craft some trifling theory to submit to the celestial office:<sup>1</sup>  
 an imperial scion unpromoted – who will take pity?  
 Tomorrow is the Latter Tenth, when you will take the westward road;  
 20 this parting at Mt. Kongtong seems as long as heaven is wide.<sup>2</sup>

## 2.16 Song of the Palace Maiden

Candle-light suspended on high shines through transparent mesh;  
 in splendid chambers by night is ground red “palace-guard.”<sup>3</sup>

Incense puffs from the elephant’s mouth, the woolen mat is warm;<sup>4</sup>  
 the Seven Stars snag on the city walls as the nightwatch clacker sounds.

5 Cold seeps under the eave-netting and the hall’s shadows darken;  
 the colored simurgh on the curtain valance bears traces of frost.  
 A weeping mole cricket laments the moon beneath the winding  
 balustrade;  
 bent hinges and brass faceplate lock in Little Zhen.<sup>5</sup>

10 In dream I enter the gates of my home, over the sandy shoals;  
 there where the Milky Way falls to earth is the road to Changzhou.  
 I wish my lord might be as brilliant as that ultimate light, the sun –  
 and set me free to ride away on fish-back, splashing through the waves.

2 “Latter Tenth”: A festival on the fifteenth of the tenth month. “Kongtong” names a mystic mountain at the axis of earth; here used to designate Luoyang in its role as imperial capital (cf. 4.50, l. 2).

3 “Palace guard”: tradition held that salamanders fed exclusively on cinnabar could be ground into a paste that when dabbed on a woman’s body would leave an indelible trace that would only disappear when the woman had sexual intercourse; this preparation was said to have been used to “guard” the chastity of palace women.

4 The “elephant” here refers to an incense burner in that shape. The name of the “woolen mat” mentioned here, *tadeng*, refers to an exotic type imported from Persia.

5 “Little Zhen” refers to Empress Zhen 甄 (183–221), empress of Cao Pi, Emperor Wen of the Wei. After losing favor through the machinations of rivals, she was forced to commit suicide; she thus became a figure for the lonely and abandoned woman (cf. 4.35).

## 2.17 堂堂

- 堂堂復堂堂，  
 紅脫梅灰香。  
 十年粉蠹生畫梁，  
 飢蟲不食堆碎黃。  
 5 蕙花已老桃葉長，  
 禁院懸簾隔御光。  
 華清源中礬石湯，  
 徘徊白鳳隨君王。

## 2.18 勉愛行二首送小季之廬山

## 1.

- 洛郊無俎豆，  
 弊廡慚老馬。  
 小雁過鑪峯，  
 影落楚水下。  
 5 長船倚雲泊，  
 石鏡秋涼夜。  
 豈解有鄉情，  
 弄月聊鳴啞。

## 2.17 The Hall

The hall, and again the hall! –

its reds have peeled away; fragrance lingers of plum-blossom turned to ash.

For ten years woodworms bred inside its painted beams;  
those hungry bugs no longer feed amid the piles of shattered yellow.

- 5 The basil-blossoms have withered, peach leaves grown long;  
in the forbidden compound a curtain hangs, cut off from sovereign glory.

At the Huaqing source, hot water wells up from orpiment stone;<sup>1</sup>  
wheeling and hovering, white phoenixes attend upon the Lord.

## 2.18 Ballad: “Be Strong, Take Care” (Two Poems), Sending off My Little Brother to Mt. Lu

### 1.

Here in Luoyang’s outskirts are no offering-boards or footed cups;<sup>2</sup>  
I’m shamed by the old nag in my rundown stable.

A small goose traverses Censer peak,  
casting its reflection on the Chu waters below.

- 5 Your long boat will moor beside the clouds;  
by Stone-mirror peak, a night of autumn chill.<sup>3</sup>  
Could you then be capable of homesick thoughts? –  
yet as you enjoy the moonlight you’ll sob a while.

---

1 See 1.10.

2 “Offering-boards,” “footed cups”: ritual implements, often used metonymically to refer to classical studies (cf. 3.20, l. 10). On the conception underlying this opening couplet, see Endnote.

3 These lines imagine in advance the brother’s journey into the south; both Censer and Stone Mirror are names of peaks in Mt. Lu.

## 2.

別柳當馬頭，  
官槐如兔目。  
欲將千里別，  
持此易斗粟。

- 5 南雲北雲空脈斷，  
靈臺經絡懸春綫。  
青軒樹轉月滿牀，  
下國飢兒夢中見。

- 維爾之昆二十餘，  
10 年來持鏡頗有鬚。  
辭家三載今如此，  
索米王門一事無。

- 荒溝古水光如刀，  
庭南拱柳生蟭蠋。  
15 江干幼客真可念，  
郊原晚吹悲號號。

## 2.

Willows of parting are beside the wharf;  
 the official sophoras show buds like rabbits' eyes.<sup>1</sup>  
 You want to take this thousand-*li* parting  
 and trade it for a measure of millet.<sup>2</sup>

- 5 Southern clouds, northern clouds: across the sky, yearning gazes will be  
     blocked;  
 but from Spirit Terrace webs will trail a thread of spring gossamer.<sup>3</sup>  
 By the blue window the trees' shadows shift, and moonlight fills the bed;  
 a hungry child in the outlying states appears in a dream.<sup>4</sup>

- Regard this brother of yours, now twenty and more;  
 10 in recent years the mirror shows him growing rather whiskered.  
 Having left home three years, now he's come to this:  
 seeking rice in princely households, he's accomplished not a thing.

In an abandoned ditch, stagnant water gleams like a knife;  
 the armspan-broad willow at the south of the courtyard is growing  
     woodworms.

- 15 This child wanderer by the riverside is truly cause for worry –  
 on the plain outside the city the evening wind sadly howls.

---

1 Sophoras, or scholar trees, were planted along main highways under imperial auspices, and were thus commonly referred to as "official" sophoras.

2 I.e., you are undertaking this long journey for the sake of a salary.

3 "Spirit Terrace": a kenning for the heart/mind.

4 Imagining the anxiety the younger brother's absence will cause to their mother.

## 2.19 致酒行

零落棲遲一杯酒，  
主人奉觴客長壽。  
主父西遊困不歸，  
家人折斷門前柳。

### 5 吾聞

馬周昔作新豐客，  
天荒地老無人識。  
空將牋上兩行書，  
直犯龍顏請恩澤。

10 我有迷魂招不得，  
雄雞一聲天下白。  
少年心事當拏雲，  
誰念幽寒坐鳴呃。

## 2.20 長歌續短歌

長歌破衣襟，  
短歌斷白髮。  
秦王不可見，  
旦夕成內熱。

---

1 Zhufu Yan 主父偃 (?-126 BCE) was a scholar of the Western Han who long wandered the capital Chang'an before at last securing official employment. Breaking willow branches expresses the family's longing for a traveling relation.

## 2.19 Ballad: “Bring the Wine”

Whiling the time away in decrepitude, with a single cup of wine:  
the host presents a flagon: “Long life to you, my guest!”  
Zhufu wandering westward was blocked from coming home;  
his family broke to bits the willow by their gate.<sup>1</sup>

- 5 I’ve heard it said:  
In the past when Ma Zhou was a wanderer at Xinfeng,  
sky turned to wilderness and earth grew old, but no one noticed him.  
With just two lines of writing on a missive,  
he braved the Dragon Countenance to request enlivening grace.<sup>2</sup>
- 10 I have an errant soul no one can summon:  
at one call of the rooster all beneath the sky turns white.  
The thoughts of a youthful mind ought to grab the clouds;  
who cares about this forlorn chill where I sob in vain?

## 2.20 “The Long Song Continues the Short Song”

The long song tears the robe-front;  
the short song breaks off white hairs.  
The King of Qin cannot be seen – <sup>3</sup>  
from morning to evening, an inner fever burns.

---

2 The story of Ma Zhou 馬周 (601–648) is presented here in compressed form: having languished for years without recognition, he drafted a set of policy essays for submission to Tang emperor Taizong, and went on to become one of the latter’s most trusted advisers.

3 I.e., The Qin First Emperor (cf. 1.28, 2.2, 3.41)

- 5 渴飲壺中酒，  
 飢拔隴頭粟。  
 淒涼四月闌，  
 千里一時綠。  
 夜峯何離離，  
 10 明月落石底。  
 徘徊沿石尋，  
 照出高峰外。  
 不得與之遊，  
 歌成鬢先改。

## 2.21 公莫舞歌并序

公莫舞歌者，詠項伯翼蔽劉沛公也。會中壯士，灼灼于人，故無復書；且南北樂府率有歌引。賀陋諸家，今重作公莫舞歌云。

方花古礎排九楹，  
 刺豹淋血盛銀鬕。  
 華筵鼓吹無桐竹，  
 長刀直立割鳴箏。

- 5 When thirsty drink the wine from your jug;  
 when hungry pluck millet from the hilltops.  
 Amid dreary chill the fourth month nears its end;  
 for a thousand *li* all is green for a season.

- Those nighttime peaks, how thickly clustered –  
 10 the bright moon falls beneath their stones.  
 With wavering tread, I seek it along the stones –  
 its shining emerges beyond the high peaks,  
 so that I cannot roam with it –  
 before my song is done my temple-locks are white.

## 2.21 Song: “Sir, Don’t Dance” (with preface)

The song “Sir, Don’t Dance” tells how Xiang Bo covered and protected Liu, the Duke of Pei.<sup>1</sup> The heroes of that banquet are vividly present among the folk; I shall thus write no more of them here. Yet numerous songs and rhapsodies have also been composed on this tale in the ballads of north and south. Finding all those efforts crude, I have now rewritten lyrics to “Sir, Don’t Dance.”

Square florets adorn the ancient plinths, in a row of nine pillars;  
 streaming blood from a stabbed panther fills a silver ewer.  
 In this florid banquet hall is no sound of strings or flutes;  
 a long sword lifts straight up to cleave the keening harp.<sup>2</sup>

---

1 When Xiang Yu and Liu Bang (then Duke of Pei) were contending for power at the collapse of the Qin dynasty, Xiang Yu’s uncle Xiang Bo protected Liu Bang when Xiang Yu’s cousin Xiang Zhuang sought to kill him while performing a sword dance at a banquet (see Endnote).

2 “Harp”: here, the *zheng* 箏, a plucked stringed instrument with strings on individual elevated bridges, laid horizontally in front of the player.

- 5 橫楣粗錦生紅緯，  
日炙錦嫣王未醉。  
腰下三看寶玦光，  
項莊掉箭攔前起。  
材官小臣公莫舞，  
10 座上真人赤龍子。  
芒碭雲瑞抱天迴，  
咸陽王氣清如水。  
鐵樞鐵槌重束關，  
大旗五丈撞雙鑲。  
15 漢王今日須秦印，  
絕臄剗腸臣不論。

- 5 Coarse brocade across the lintel exudes a ruddy gleam;  
 roasting in sun the brocade shines, but the king is not yet drunk.  
 Three glances at the glint of precious jewel beneath the sash –  
 and Xiang Zhuang, flipping his scabbard, rises up before them.<sup>1</sup>  
 “You there, Adjutant, petty officer – Sir, do not dance!
- 10 There in that seat is the True One, Scarlet Dragon’s scion.”<sup>2</sup>  
 Over Mang and Dang, auspicious clouds swirl, encircling the sky;<sup>3</sup>  
 at Xianyang the Pneuma of Kingship is clear as water.<sup>4</sup>
- Iron pivots, iron bolts in layers shut the pass;  
 the great standard five fathoms tall strikes the double gate-rings.
- 15 “The Prince of Han this day demands the royal seal of Qin –  
 of chopping of my knees or ripping out of my guts I make no account.”

---

1 During the banquet, Xiang Yu’s adviser Fan Zeng 范增 (278–204 BCE) urged Xiang Yu to take decisive action by gesturing toward the jade *jue* 块 pendant at his waist – the *jue*, both by its name (homophone with *jue* 决 “resolve, determination”) and its form (a broken ring), was an emblem of decisiveness.

2 These lines must be understood as addressed to Xiang Zhuang in the voice of Xiang Bo (or possibly Liu Bang’s bodyguard Fan Kuai 樊噲 [242–189 BCE]); we may construe lines 11–12 either as reverting to a narrative voice, or as the continuation of this quoted speech, citing “evidence” for the demand that Liu Bang be respected.

3 “Mang and Dang”: mountains among which Liu Bang had hidden to escape when he was pursued by officers of the Qin.

4 Xianyang: the Qin name for its capital, near Chang’an (cf. 2.1, l. 9).

## 2.22 昌谷北園新筍四首

### 1.

籜落長竿削玉開，  
君看母筍是龍材。  
更容一夜抽千尺，  
別却池園數寸泥。

### 2.

斫取青光寫楚辭，  
膩香春粉黑離離。  
無情有恨何人見，  
露壓煙啼千萬枝。

### 3.

家泉石眼兩三莖，  
曉看陰根紫陌生。  
今年水曲春沙上，  
笛管新篁拔玉青。

## 2.22 New Bamboo in the North Garden at Chang'gu (Four Poems)

### 1.

Its sheath sloughed off, a long stalk of peeled jade unfurls;  
look – its mother-shoot was of the stuff of dragons!  
It may yet surge a thousand feet in a single night,  
taking leave of its few inches of mud beside the garden pool.

### 2.

I'll chop this green light to copy out my "Songs of Chu":  
till tender fragrance and springtime powder are covered in dense black.  
Thus what lacks feeling will have resentment – but who will see it?  
Dew-weighted, mist-weeping, ten million stalks.

### 3.

By the stony eye of our household spring are two or three stalks;  
at dawn I see its buried runners have sent shoots along the purple lane.  
This year by the water's bend, over the springtime sands,  
the pipes and flutes of a new thicket will bear aloft jade-green.

## 4.

古竹老梢惹碧雲，  
 茂陵歸臥嘆清貧。  
 風吹千畝迎雨嘯，  
 鳥重一枝入酒樽。

## 2.23 惱公

宋玉愁空斷，  
 嬌嬈粉自紅。  
 歌聲春草露，  
 門掩杏花叢。  
 5 注口櫻桃小，  
 添眉桂葉濃。  
 曉匳粧秀靨，  
 夜帳減香筒。  
 鈿鏡飛孤鵲，  
 10 江圖畫水萍。  
 陂陀梳碧鳳，

---

1 Maoling was the site of Sima Xiangru's retirement (cf. 1.12.1).

2 Song Yu is the protagonist and notional author of several works in the *Chuci* and early *fu* traditions, including the "*Fu* on the Gaotang Shrine" on the dream encounter between king Huai of Chu and the goddess of Shamanka Mountain (cf. 1.32, 4.3), a central reference text in the language of romance; here a place-

## 4.

The aged tips of ancient bamboo stir the emerald clouds;  
 returned to recline at Maoling, sighing over pure poverty.<sup>1</sup>  
 Wind blows across a thousand acres that whistle their greeting to the  
     rain;  
 bird-weighted, a single branch enters the wine-jug.

## 2.23 Tormented

- In vain Song Yu's distraught;  
 Jiaorao's rouge is no less red.<sup>2</sup>  
 A voice sings: dew on spring grasses;  
 her gate is closed amid clusters of apricot flowers.
- 5 Mouth dotted red, small as a cherry;  
 eyebrows darkened, lush as cassia leaves.  
 At dawn toilet, she adorns lovely dimples;  
 in night bed-canopy, censer's fragrance fades.  
 On inlaid mirror flies a lone magpie;
- 10 in river scene is painted water-pepper.<sup>3</sup>  
 Her drooping chignon: combed to form an emerald phoenix;

---

holder for a poetically inclined male lover. "Dong Jiaorao" first appears as the title of a song collected in the sixth-century anthology *Yutai xinyong* 玉臺新詠 (*New Songs from the Jade Terrace*), and subsequently became a poetic designation for a lovely young woman.

3 "Lone magpie": a common design on bronze mirrors. Legend has it a mirror was broken in two and shared between a husband and wife. When the wife was unfaithful, her half of the mirror turned into a magpie and flew to report the news to the husband. The "river scene" would be an image painted on a screen in the boudoir.

- 腰裊帶金蟲。  
 杜若含清露，  
 河蒲聚紫茸。  
 15 月分蛾黛破，  
 花合靨朱融。  
 髮重疑盤霧，  
 腰輕乍倚風。  
 密書題荳蔻，  
 20 隱語笑芙蓉。  
 莫鎖茱萸匣，  
 休開翡翠籠。  
 弄珠驚漢燕，  
 燒蜜引胡蜂。  
 25 醉纈拋紅網，  
 單羅挂綠蒙。  
 數錢教姹女，  
 買藥問巴賁。  
 勻臉安斜雁，  
 30 移燈想夢熊。  
 腸攢非束竹，

- in her swaying hairpin bangles, there trails a golden bug.  
 Pollia leaves suffused with pure dew;  
 river rushes: clustered purple fuzz.
- 15 Moon divided: in kohl of eyebrows, broken;  
 flowers joined: in dimples' crimson, melted.  
 Her hair is dense, resembling rolling fog;  
 her waist light, suddenly set swaying in a breeze.  
 Secret notes on the topic of "galanga";
- 20 coded phrases, a smile at the "lotus."<sup>1</sup>  
 Don't latch the dogwood-patterned case;  
 open not the halcyon-feather cage.  
 Games with beads startle the house martins;  
 burning honey entices wild bees.<sup>2</sup>
- 25 Drunken-eyed tie-dye casts a red web;  
 single-thread silk gauze suspends a green haze.  
 To count coins, she bids the lissome lass;  
 for buying medicines, she asks the Cong servant.<sup>3</sup>  
 Over an evenly powdered face is set a goose in slanting flight;
- 30 in the shifting lantern-light she imagines dreaming of the bear.<sup>4</sup>  
 Bowels cinched – no bundled bamboo this;

---

1 The galanga flower, with its doubled blossoms within each calyx, was a botanical rebus for romantic devotion. The lotus was a favorite topic in the song traditions. Li He draws on here because of its rich potential for flirtatious punning, e.g. plays on *fu* 夫, "man/husband," or *rong* 容, "appearance/face," in the name *furong* 芙蓉 for the lotus itself (see also the note to ll. 75–76 below).

2 "House martins"/"wild bees": literally "Han swallows" and "*hu*-barbarian bees," i.e. wasps.

3 The task imagined here for the "lissome lass" is taken straight from a Han dynasty folk ditty, "the lissome lass is skilled in counting coins" 姮女工數錢. Cong 賁 was the designation of an ethnicity from the southwestern Shu region, often employed as house servants by elite families in the Tang.

4 Tang women's fashion included a wide range of animal or flower designs applied to the face or worn in the hair, such as the goose mentioned here (cf. ll. 11–12 above); the "dream of the bear" alludes to *Shijing* 189 "Si gan" 斯干, where the dream of black bears and brown bears betokens the impending birth of a son.

- 肱急是張弓。  
 晚樹迷新蝶，  
 殘蛺憶斷虹。  
 35 古時填渤海，  
 今日鑿崆峒。  
 繡沓褰長幔，  
 羅裙結短封。  
 心搖如舞鶴，  
 40 骨出似飛龍。  
 井檻淋清漆，  
 門鋪綴白銅。  
 隈花開兔徑，  
 向壁印狐踪。  
 45 玳瑁釘簾薄，  
 琉璃疊扇烘。  
 象牀緣素柏，  
 瑤席卷香葱。  
 細管吟朝幌，

1 Commentators have taken these lines as figurative expressions for a state of nervous anxiety.

2 The wandering butterflies echo Zhuangzi's famous dream in which he forgot whether he was Zhuangzi or a butterfly. "Iridescence": literally *ni*, or "female rainbow." The male rainbow, *hong* 虹, and female rainbow, *ni* 蛺, are dragon-like animals in the traditional Chinese bestiary.

- belly taut – bowstring drawn back to shoot.<sup>1</sup>  
 Amid the evening trees, new butterflies wander lost;  
 remnant iridescence recalls the broken rainbow.<sup>2</sup>
- 35 Of old that arm of the sea was filled in;  
 today Mt. Kongtong will be bored through.<sup>3</sup>  
 An embroidered pull lifts up the long curtain;  
 the silk-gauze dress is tied by its short hem.  
 The mind uneasy as a dancing crane;
- 40 bones protruding like the flying dragon's.<sup>4</sup>  
 The well-rails are drenched in clear lacquer,  
 gate-bosses adorned with white bronze.  
 Close by the flowers opens a rabbit path;  
 towards the wall are printed foxes' tracks.
- 45 Tortoiseshell weights fix the sheer window shades;  
 colored glaze overlays the fan's blowing.  
 The ivory bed is edged in white cedar;  
 the jewelled mat is twisted fragrant sedge.  
 Thin pipes keen in the morning canopy;

---

3 Jing Wei, daughter of the demigod king Yan, drowned in the eastern sea, but was reincarnated as a bird that filled in the sea with sticks and rocks; the second line suggests a statement of similar determination to overcome obstacles to the lovers' union.

4 A close adaptation of riddling Six Dynasties love song: "The flying dragon enters a medicine store – its/my bones come out all because of you" 飛龍落藥店 / 骨出則為汝. The lover who grows gaunt with yearning is like a dragon who, in a medicine store, would appear only in the form of "dragon bones," a traditional medicinal ingredient.

- 50 芳醪落夜楓。  
宜男生楚巷，  
梔子發金墉。  
龜甲開屏澀，  
鵝毛滲墨濃。
- 55 黃庭留衛瓘，  
綠樹養韓馮。  
雞唱星懸柳，  
鴉啼露滴桐。  
黃娥初出座，
- 60 寵妹始相從。  
蠟淚垂蘭燼，  
秋蕪掃綺籠。  
吹笙翻舊引，  
沽酒待新豐。
- 65 短佩愁填粟，  
長絃怨削菰。  
曲池眠乳鴨，  
小閣睡娃僮。  
褥縫蓂雙線，

- 50 fragrant liquor falls amid the evening maples.  
 The “son-promoting” daylilies were grown in a lane in Chu;  
 the gardenias were sent from Golden Citadel.<sup>1</sup>  
 The tortoise-shell patterned screen is stiff to open;  
 “goose feather” silk absorbs the thick-ground ink.
- 55 In the Yellow Court, Wei Guan lingers;<sup>2</sup>  
 in a green tree, Han Ping is kept.<sup>3</sup>  
 As the rooster crows, stars hang in the willow-branches;  
 when the crow caws, dew drips on *wutong*-leaves.  
 The beauty clad in yellow has just joined the banquet;
- 60 her doted-on little sister accompanies her for the first time.  
 Waxed tears trail from the burnt-out wick;  
 dried autumn grasses sweep the latticed window.  
 The panpipe’s blowing revisits an old tune;  
 or the wine-cellar, only Xinfeng’s best will do.
- 65 The short jade pendant: sorrows denser than its millet-grains;  
 on the long strings: resentments plucked by pared cabbage-hearts.<sup>4</sup>  
 By the bending pool there slumbers a duckling;  
 in the small belvedere sleeps a young maidservant.  
 The bedspread is sewn with appliqué of double threads;

---

1 The daylily bore the alternate name “son-promoting plant,” due to its supposed efficacy in promoting the birth of sons (cf. 1.23.2). The gardenia, like the galanga above at l. 19, was a token of faithful love. The phrase “lane in Chu” occurs as a designation of the dwelling of Song Yu’s beautiful next-door neighbor in the “Master Dengtu is a Lecher” *fu* (cf. 1.21, l. 7); the Golden Citadel is a complex on the outskirts of Luoyang constructed by Emperor Ming of the Wei.

2 Wei Guan (220–291) of the Western Jin was famous for his calligraphy; the *Yellow Court Scripture* was a favorite Daoist text often copied by renowned calligraphers.

3 Han Ping’s wife was abducted into the harem of a cruel king. After both lovers killed themselves in despair, the king further decreed their tombs should be kept separate, but two trees grew from the tombs and intertwined. A pair of mandarin ducks roosting in these trees, emitting mournful cries, were said to be the reincarnated lovers.

4 “Millet grains”: i.e., “millet-stipple,” refers to a surface texture of densely massed small bumps often used in jade ornaments (see also 1.23.5). “Pared cabbage-hearts”: a figure for the pale fingers of a zither-player (see Endnote).

- 70 鉤縚辯五總。  
 蜀煙飛重錦，  
 峽雨濺輕容。  
 拂鏡羞溫嶠，  
 熏衣避賈充。
- 75 魚生玉藕下，  
 人在石蓮中。  
 含水彎蛾翠，  
 登樓撲馬鬣。  
 使君居曲陌，
- 80 園令住臨邛。  
 桂火流蘇暖，  
 金爐細炷通。  
 春遲王子態，  
 鶯囀謝娘慵。
- 85 玉漏三星曙，

1 Echoing the commonplace “clouds and rain” for a sexual encounter.

2 The couplet alludes to two anecdotes from *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語, a fifth-century anecdote collection. Wen Qiao (288–329), a middle-aged widower, was commissioned to find a marriage prospect for an attractive young female second cousin; announcing that he’d found someone of “no worse than” his own standing, he married her himself, his identity only being revealed to the cousin on the night of their wedding. Jia Chong (217–282) brought Han Shou 韓壽 into his household as a clerk; his daughter Wu 午 began an affair with him, which was uncovered when Jia Chong detected on Han Shou the scent of a rare incense from the Jia family’s private stock. See also 3.14.

- 70 the curtain-hook's cable is braided with five colors.  
 Mists of Shu fly across the layered brocade;  
 rain of the gorges spatters the gossamer gauze.<sup>1</sup>  
 Handling the mirror, she's abashed before Wen Qiao;  
 when scenting her clothes, she avoids Jia Chong.<sup>2</sup>
- 75 Fish live beneath the jade-white lotus-root;  
 a person is within the stony lotus-pod.<sup>3</sup>  
 Welling waters in the bend of moth-brows' kohl;  
 the tower-climber mists his horse's mane.<sup>4</sup>  
 The Governor dwells in a winding lane;
- 80 the Garden Supervisor lives at Linqiong.<sup>5</sup>  
 Osmanthus fire within the tasseled curtain warms;  
 from the gold censer, the fine ember's scent penetrates.  
 Spring sluggishness is the manner of the Wang scions;  
 amid the oriole's warbling, Miss Xie is filled with languor.<sup>6</sup>
- 85 To jade clepsydra's drip, dawn comes to this "three star" evening;

3 An example of the sort of cryptic punning of lover's songs, playing on homophones and near homophones such as "fish" *yu* 魚: "delight" *yu* 娛; "jade" *yu* 玉: "desire" *yu* 欲[慾]; "lotusroot" *ou* 藕: "pair/couple" *ou* 偶; "lotus" *lian* 蓮: "love/pity" *lian* 憐. The "person" is in the lotus pod here via a further pun on "person" *ren* 人: "kernel/seed" *ren* 仁.

4 The Tang "Story of Liu Yi" tells of a journey to a dragon's palace, where pouring water on a horse's mane produced rain in the outer world. "Wet the horse's mane" is here a figure for the bereft lover's weeping.

5 "Governor": the old Han dynasty term *shi jun* 使君, the designation of the would-be seducer of the beauty Luo Fu in the old *yuefu* "Mulberries on the Path." "Winding lane": a typical term for a pleasure district. "Garden Supervisor": a position once held by Sima Xiangru (see also 1.12.1); he courted his future wife Zhuo Wenjun with his *zither* playing while residing at Linqiong.

6 On the elegance of the young men of the aristocratic Wang family of the Eastern Jin, see 4.33, note to l. 6. "Miss Xie" refers to the courtesans in the household of Xie An 謝安 (320–385), and often by extension to a courtesan or beautiful and stylish woman (see 3.33, l. 11).

銅街五馬逢。

犀株防膽怯，

銀液鎮心忪。

跳脫看年命，

90 琵琶道吉凶。

王時應七夕，

夫位在三宮。

無力塗雲母，

多方帶藥翁。

95 符因青鳥送，

囊用絳紗縫。

漢苑尋官柳，

河橋閱禁鐘。

月明中婦覺，

100 應笑畫堂空。

- on Bronze Camel Street, a meeting with a five-horse carriage.<sup>1</sup>  
 Rhinoceros horn to guard against gall-bladder's cowardice;  
 the silvery liquid for settling heart's unease.  
 By the bracelet one regards the fated lifespan;  
 90 to the *pipa*'s strumming are pronounced the good and ill.<sup>2</sup>  
 "The kingly time accords with the Seventh Night;  
 the groom's station must be the Third Palace."<sup>3</sup>  
 Too weak to apply the mica unguent;  
 many are the remedies supplied by the old medicine seller.  
 95 A talisman is delivered by the Blue Bird;<sup>4</sup>  
 an amulet sewn with crimson silk-floss.  
 In the Han garden, one seeks the official willow;  
 by the river bridge, blocked by the curfew bell.<sup>5</sup>  
 In the bright moonlight, the middle wife awakes:  
 100 she must laugh that the painted hall is empty.<sup>6</sup>

---

1 The appearance of these "three stars" in the lunar lodge Heart (in the Western constellation Scorpio) was associated with evening trysts via reference to *Shijing* 118 ("Chou mou" 綢繆): "The three stars are in the sky; what night is this, that I see this fine man?" Bronze Camel Street in Luoyang derived its name from the bronze statue placed there by Emperor Ming of the Wei (cf. 3.45). "Five-horse carriage" echoes the description of the Governor in "Mulberries on the Path" (on this tradition, see note to l. 79 above).

2 Fortune telling by female mediums who entered trance states while playing the *pipa* is an attested folk practice in the Tang (cf. 4.40). Prognostication using a bracelet is otherwise unknown, but seems implied here.

3 The report from the prognostication described in the preceding couplet.

4 The Blue Bird is often mentioned as a message-bearer for the Queen Mother of the West.

5 "Official" willows were those planted by government agency along roadways; a willow branch was a token exchanged at parting. The "river bridge" here likely stands for the place of parting.

6 Here the implication seems to be that the affair is now over.

## 2.24 感諷五首

## 1.

合浦無明珠，  
 龍洲無木奴。  
 足知造化力，  
 不給使君須。  
 5 越婦未織作，  
 吳蠶始蠕蠕。  
 縣官騎馬來，  
 獰色虬紫鬚。  
 懷中一方板，  
 10 板上數行書。  
 不因使君怒，  
 焉得詣爾廬。  
 越婦拜縣官，  
 桑牙今尚小。  
 15 會待春日晏，  
 絲車方擲掉。  
 越婦通言語，  
 小姑具黃梁。  
 縣官踏飧去，  
 20 簿吏復登堂。

## 2.24 Oblique Reactions (Five Poems)

### 1.

Hepu has no bright pearls;  
 Longzhou, no “tree slaves” – <sup>1</sup>  
 ample witness that Creation’s force  
 cannot meet the Governor’s demands.

- 5 The Yue housewife has not begun her weaving;  
 the Wu silkworms have just begun to squirm.  
 When a County officer arrives on horseback –  
 with ferocious countenance, amid curling purple whiskers.  
 In his lapel he bears a square tablet,  
 10 and on the tablet, several lines of writing.  
 “If it were not that the Governor is angry,  
 how should I have come to your hut?”

The Yue housewife bows and replies to the County officer:  
 “The mulberry buds are now still small;

- 15 just wait till the days of spring grow late,  
 when the spinning-wheel flies and rocks.”

As the Yue housewife carries on this exchange,  
 the young sister-in-law prepares yellow millet.  
 The County officer gobbles his meal and departs,  
 20 when the Records clerk in turn mounts their hall.

---

1 Hepu precinct was known for producing pearls. *Hou Han shu* 後漢書 (*History of the Later Han*) records that when its governors did not regulate the harvesting of the pearls due to greed and corruption, the pearls shifted to neighboring precinct. The fourth-century *Xiangyang ji* 襄陽記 (*Account of Xiangyang*), records that Li Heng 李衡, the governor of Danyang precinct of the Wu state (220–280), sent servants to plant a thousand orange trees that he called “tree slaves” in Longzhou, to provide income for his descendants after his death.

## 2.

奇俊無少年，  
 日車何躡躡。  
 我待紆雙綬，  
 遺我星星髮。  
 5 都門賈生墓，  
 青蠅久斷絕。  
 寒食搖揚天，  
 憤景長蕭殺。  
 皇漢十二帝，  
 10 惟帝稱睿哲。  
 一夕信豎兒，  
 文明永淪歇。

## 3.

南山何其悲，  
 鬼雨灑空草。  
 長安夜半秋，  
 風前幾人老。  
 5 低迷黃昏徑，

---

1 The "Cold Food Festival" was an occasion for excursions to the tombs of ancestors and relations.

## 2.

- Among the splendid and outstanding are no young men –  
 how ponderously the sun's carriage progresses!  
 As I await the twining of the double bands of office,  
 I'm first endowed instead with star-flecked hair.
- 5 Around Master Jia's tomb by the capital gates  
 the buzzing of blue flies has long since ceased.  
 Beneath swaying skies at the Cold Food festival<sup>1</sup>  
 resentful sunbeams gleam with burning vehemence.  
 Of the twelve celestial sovereigns of August Han
- 10 he alone is called sagacious and wise.  
 On a single evening he took the word of a scoundrel –  
 from then his Cultured Brightness forever sank and dwindled.<sup>2</sup>

## 3.

- The South Mountains – my, how mournful!  
 ghost-rain spatters forlorn weeds.  
 At Chang'an, midnight in autumn:  
 within this wind, how many now grow old?
- 5 Obscure and faint are the footpaths at dusk;

---

2 This poem centers around the career of “Master Jia,” Jia Yi 賈誼 (200–168 BCE), a poet and official of the Western Han dynasty. Jia Yi served in the court of Emperor Wen of the Han 漢文帝 (r. 180–157 BCE; the “sagacious and wise” one in l. 10), but later suffered slander and died in exile.

裊裊青櫟道。  
月午樹無影，  
一山惟白曉。  
漆炬迎新人，  
10 幽壙螢擾擾。

## 4.

星盡四方高，  
萬物知天曙。  
己生須己養，  
荷擔出門去。  
5 君平久不返，  
康伯遁國路。  
曉思何饒饒，  
闐闐千人語。

- a meandering road winds among dark oaks.  
 As the moon stands at its apogee, the trees lack shadows:  
 throughout the hills is a single pallid dawn.  
 Lacquer-black torches welcome the new bride:  
 10 around the lonely vault fireflies busily jostle.<sup>1</sup>

## 4.

- The last stars gone, earth's four quarters loom upward:  
 the myriad creatures know sunrise is coming to the sky.  
 To have a self means having to feed it:  
 I pick up my load and go out the door.  
 5 Junping has for long now not returned;  
 Kangbo keeps away from official roads.<sup>2</sup>  
 Such a wrangling hubbub of thoughts at dawn:  
 through the bustling streets, a thousandfold conversation.

---

1 The setting appears to be burial grounds amid the Zhongnan mountain range, south of Chang'an. "Lacquer-black torches" are ghost-lanterns (cf. **1.19**, **2.11**). The term *xin ren* 新人 rendered "new bride" here could also be understood simply as "new person/arrival," so the application could be universal, but this wordplay eludes translation. These two lines describe old ghosts welcoming a new companion. The fireflies are a metaphor for ghosts' lanterns, or vice-versa.

2 Junping (i.e., Yan Junping 嚴君平) and Kangbo (i.e., Han Kang 韓康, whose style name is Boxiu 伯休) were renowned Han hermits (of roughly first century BCE and early second century CE, respectively).

## 5.

- 石根秋水明，  
 石畔秋草瘦。  
 侵衣野竹香，  
 蟄蟄垂葉厚。  
 5 岑中月歸來，  
 蟾光挂空秀。  
 桂露對仙娥，  
 星星下雲逗。  
 淒涼梔子落，  
 10 山璽泣清漏。  
 下有張仲蔚，  
 披書案將朽。

## 3.1 追和何謝銅雀妓

佳人一壺酒，  
 秋容滿千里。  
 石馬臥新烟，

1 Legend has it that there is a toad, an osmanthus tree, and a female immortal Chang'e in the moon.

2 Zhang Zhongwei: a virtuous recluse of the Eastern Han dynasty.

## 5.

At stones' roots are autumn waters bright;  
 by stones' sides are autumn grasses gaunt.  
 Robe-invading is the scent of bamboo of the wilds;  
 profuse is the thickness of the draping leaves.

- 5 Amid the peaks, the moon returns,  
 its toad-light hanging lovely in the void.<sup>1</sup>  
 Osmanthus dewdrops beside an immortal beauty,  
 sparkling and twinkling, coy amid clouds.  
 In the bleak chill, kapok-seeds fall,  
 10 from a mountain fissure weep drips of a pure clepsydra.  
 Beneath it all is Zhang Zhongwei,<sup>2</sup>  
 spreading his books over a lectern soon to rot.

### 3.1 Posthumously Responding to He and Xie's "Performers at Bronze Sparrow Terrace"<sup>3</sup>

The lovely ones, and a pitcher of wine;  
 the look of autumn fills a thousand *li*.  
 Stone horses recline amid this year's mist<sup>4</sup>

---

3 He and Xie are He Xun 何遜 (ca. 468–ca. 518) and Xie Tiao 謝朓 (464–499). Bronze Sparrow Terrace was a palace compound at Ye, the capital of the Wei kingdom of Cao Cao 曹操 (155–220), while he was still nominally a minister of the last Eastern Han emperor Xian 獻 (r. 189–220). Cao Cao commanded that after his death, on the first and fifteenth of every month, palace women should present offerings and perform song and dance before a spirit canopy, facing Cao Cao's gravesite in the western hills.

4 Stone horses: i.e., funerary statues at the tomb site.

憂來何所似。  
 5 歌聲且潛弄，  
 陵樹風自起。  
 長裾壓高臺，  
 淚眼看花机。

### 3.2 送秦光祿北征

北虜膠堪折，  
 秋沙亂曉聲。  
 髯胡頻犯塞，  
 驕氣似橫霓。  
 5 灞水樓船渡，  
 營門細柳開。  
 將軍馳白馬，  
 豪彥騁雄材。  
 箭射欃槍落，  
 10 旗懸日月低。  
 榆稀山易見，  
 甲重馬頻嘶。  
 天遠星光沒，  
 沙平草葉齊。  
 15 風吹雲路火，

the sadness that comes – to what can it be likened?

- 5 Let the singer's voice cajole a while unheard;  
among the trees of the tumulus a wind stirs on its own.  
Long skirts press along the high terrace;  
through tear-filled eyes they gaze on the flower-decked altar.

### 3.2 Sending off Mr. Qin of the Court of Splendid Emoluments on a Journey North

Among the northern caitiffs the glue has got its snap:<sup>1</sup>  
autumn's dust is churned with cavalry alarm-drums.  
The whiskered nomads repeatedly offend our passes;  
the aura of their arrogance juts forth like a rainbow.

- 5 At the Ba river we ford in triple-decked boats;  
the camp gates at Slender Willow open.  
The general gallops astride a white horse;  
doughty stalwarts give rein to manly valor.<sup>2</sup>  
Where their arrows shoot, the comet-spear topples;<sup>3</sup>  
10 where their battle standards loom, the sun and moon press low.  
Their elm trees bare, the hills come in clear view;  
the armor's weight causes the horses to often whinny.  
In the distant sky the starlight falls;  
across the desert plain the grasses stretch level.  
15 Wind blows beacon fires along the Yunzhong road;

---

1 Autumn weather gave stiffness to the animal glue used in bowmaking, in turn a signal to the ancient Xiongnu to begin their raiding season. Conflicts between the Xiongnu and the Han empire are borrowed to refer to T'ang conflicts with its northern and western neighbors.

2 The mobilization of T'ang forces: the Ba river and "Slender Willow" camp are in the region of Chang'an.

3 "Comet-spear": comets, more commonly called "broom stars" (*hui xing* 彗星), were often viewed as omens of invasion.

雪汙玉關泥。  
 屢斷呼韓頸，  
 曾然董卓臍。  
 太常猶舊寵，  
 20 光祿是新隲。  
 寶玦麒麟起，  
 銀壺狒狖啼。  
 桃花連馬發，  
 綵絮撲鞍來。  
 25 呵臂懸金斗，  
 當唇注玉壘。  
 清蘇和碎蟻，  
 紫膩卷浮杯。  
 虎韜先蒙馬，  
 30 魚腸且斷犀。  
 趁趨西旅狗，  
 蹙額北方奚。  
 守帳然香暮，

1 Envisioning the route of Qin's coming journey to the frontier.

2 Here Huhanye and Dong Zhuo serve as figures for foreign and domestic enemies, respectively. Huhanye 呼韓邪 (?–31 BCE) was a ruler of the Xiongnu best known in Chinese tradition for having received the Han palace lady Wang Zhaojun 王昭君 as his bride. Dong Zhuo (134–192) was a warlord in the late Eastern Han who kidnapped the young emperor Xian and attempted to establish a puppet

- snow is spattered with mud of Jade Pass.<sup>1</sup>  
 Of old you have severed Huhanyes' necks;  
 and lit flame in Dong Zhuos' navels.<sup>2</sup>  
 In Grand Standard of old you enjoyed favor;  
 20 to Splendid Emoluments, now newly ascended.<sup>3</sup>  
 On your precious pendant appears the *qilin*;  
 on the wine ewer there weep baboons and gibbons.  
 Peach blossoms issue forth along with your horse;<sup>4</sup>  
 bright willow-catkins puff against the saddle.  
 25 By your arm imposingly dangles a gold seal of grain-measure size;  
 into your lips there pours wine from a jade wine-jar.  
 On the Clear Cream brew float ant-flecks;  
 Purple Uncction is swept up in streaming cups.<sup>5</sup>  
 With tiger pelt you first blanket your horse;  
 30 your fish-gut blade is tested on rhinoceros hide.<sup>6</sup>  
 In panicked masses the western mastiffs will flee;  
 Xi of the north will knit their brows with worry.  
 In the commander's tents, you'll measure evenings with burning  
 incense;<sup>7</sup>

---

regime in Chang'an. He was said to be enormously fat; when he was killed and his body exposed in the streets at Chang'an, a flame set in the navel of his corpse burned for several days and nights.

3 I.e., Qin's recent reassignment involved a move from the Court for Imperial Sacrifices to the Court for Imperial Entertainments.

4 "Peach-blossom" is the name of a pattern on a fine steed's coat (cf. 2.4.12, l. 2). Thus "issue forth" (*fa* 發) here refers both to the *blossoming* of the peach-flowers along with the *setting out* of the horse on its journey. See also Endnote.

5 Praise of Qin's accoutrements and demeanor (the "precious pendant" at l. 21 is the type called a *jue* 玦, on which see 2.21, with notes), with depiction of a lavish farewell banquet. "Clear Cream" and "Purple Uncction" are both used here as names for types of wine; the small flecks of precipitate floating on the surface of new wine were termed "ants" by a widespread convention; this was a desirable feature.

6 On the "fish-gut" sword, see 2.4.20.

7 Incense sticks with marked segments were a means of measuring time.

看鷹永夜棲。  
 35 黃龍就別鏡，  
 青塚念陽臺。  
 周處長橋役，  
 侯調短弄哀。  
 錢塘偕鳳羽，  
 40 正室擘鸞釵。  
 內子攀琪樹，  
 羌兒奏落梅。  
 今朝擎劍去，  
 何日刺蛟回。

---

1 Hunting hawks were said to grow sluggish if allowed to sleep, so it was necessary to watch over them at night to keep them awake.

2 “Yellowdragon” and “Greenmound” are here used as evocative “frontier” place names rather than as specific sites on Qin’s coming journey. The latter is so called because it was the site of Wang Zhaojun’s tomb (see note to ll. 17–18 above), which was said to have remained green amidst the wastelands of the steppe.

watching the hawk through his night-long perching.<sup>1</sup>

- 35 At Yellowdragon you will gaze in the mirror of separation;  
by Greenmound you will yearningly recall the sunlit terrace.<sup>2</sup>

Zhou Chu departs for his service at Long Bridge;<sup>3</sup>

Hou Tiao's short airs are mournful.<sup>4</sup>

From Qiantang there comes with you your "phoenix feather";<sup>5</sup>

- 40 in the master chamber will be snapped a simurgh hairpin.<sup>6</sup>

Your goodly wife will pluck a branch from the jewel tree;

a Qiang boy plays "Falling Plums."<sup>7</sup>

Today you bear your sword and depart;

what day will you return from stabbing the dragon?

---

3 Zhou Chu aided his locality by killing a ravenous river dragon (see also **1.14** and **W.17**). This poem's final line involves a further reference to this story.

4 Hou Tiao was a court musician of Emperor Wu of the Han, composer of new ritual music repertoires. Commentators have plausibly suggested that the "airs" referred to here would be specific tunes indicating the end of the banquet, and thus the arrival of the hour of departure.

5 "Phoenix feather" was a complimentary term for a man's son; Qiantang would thus appear to be the site of this son's office prior to joining his father on campaign.

6 The suggestion is that Qin's wife snaps a hairpin to give one half as a love-token to Qin to take with him, while she keeps the other.

7 The "jewel tree" and the tune "Falling Plums" both figure in the *yuefu* lyric "Going Away with the Army." The "jewel tree" is thus a tree at home from which the wife will pluck a branch to send to the husband at the front.

### 3.3 酬答二首

#### 1.

金魚公子夾衫長，  
密裝腰鞵割玉方。  
行處春風隨馬尾，  
柳花偏打內家香。

#### 2.

雍州二月梅池春，  
御水鵝鵲暖白蘋。  
試問酒旗歌板地，  
今朝誰是撈花人。

### 3.4 畫角東城

河轉曙蕭蕭，  
鴉飛睥睨高。  
帆長標越甸，  
壁冷挂吳刀。  
5 淡菜生寒日，

---

1 The “golden fish pouch” was a perquisite bestowed on officers of third grade or higher. The fragrance that surrounds this figure bespeaks the special access he enjoys to the palace; the point of the closing image seems to be that even nature is mesmerized by the allure of this exalted figure.

### 3.3 Poems in Reply (Two Poems)

#### 1.

A young sire bearing the Golden Fish, his lined robes trailing long;  
densely set about his belt are blocks of cloven jade.  
Wherever he passes, a spring breeze follows his horse's tail;  
willow-floss bumps with special purpose against that fragrance from the  
Inner Quarters.<sup>1</sup>

#### 2.

In the second month in Yongzhou, spring by the plumbtree-lined pool,<sup>2</sup>  
in the palace waters, herons warm themselves amid white water-clover.  
Tell me now, at that spot beneath the tavern flag where the beats of  
song resound,<sup>3</sup>  
who is it today who plucks the flowers?

### 3.4 A Painting of Yongdong City

Heaven's river turns, growing indistinct towards dawn;  
crows fly above the towering battlement walls.  
Long sails stretched high loom over the Yue barrens;  
in the cold of garrison walls are hung Wu scimitars.  
5 Mussels grow in the cold sun;

---

2 Yongzhou was the ancient designation of what in the Tang was the metropolitan region of Chang'an.

3 Wood clappers were used to mark the beats in song performance; their sound is more clearly audible from a distance than that of the singer or other instruments.

鯪魚灑白濤。  
 水花霑抹額，  
 旗鼓夜迎潮。

### 3.5 謝秀才有妾縞練改從于人秀才引留之不得後生感憶座人制詩嘲誚賀復繼四首

#### 1.

誰知泥憶雲，  
 望斷梨花春。  
 荷絲製機練，  
 竹葉剪花裙。  
 5 月明啼阿姐，  
 燈暗會良人。  
 也識君夫婿，  
 金魚挂在身。

roefish blow bubbles amid the white waves.<sup>1</sup>  
 Flecks of foam spatter the headbands of soldiers  
 who amid flags and drums by night went out to meet the tide.

**3.5 Licentiate Xie had a concubine named Silkwhite, who left him for another (the Licentiate's efforts to persuade her to stay having proved unsuccessful). Afterwards, she was subject to feelings of nostalgia and yearning. At a banquet, the assembled guests composed poems on set topics to mock her. I further append four poems.**

**1.**

Who knew that mud could yearn for clouds?  
 Fixed gazing that lasted through the whole pear-blossom spring.  
 With lotus silk, they wove cloth at the loom;  
 from bamboo leaves they cut her splendid dress.  
 5 In the moonlight she weeps for her "big sister";<sup>2</sup>  
 where the lamp grows dark she meets her gentle groom.  
 I know that husband of yours –  
 from his person there hangs the golden fish.<sup>3</sup>

---

1 "Roefish": *er* 鰕 elsewhere refers to fish roe or to hatchling fish, but here designates a fish mentioned in classical texts as a delicacy of the southeastern seas.

2 "Big sister" likely refers to Licentiate Xie's primary wife, whom Silkwhite would have addressed in this way prior to entering her new household.

3 "Golden fish": a ceremonial marker of high office (see also 3.3.1, l. 1), worn by the new husband.

## 2.

銅鏡立青鸞，  
 燕脂拂紫綿。  
 腮花弄暗粉，  
 眼尾淚侵寒。  
 5 碧玉破不復，  
 瑤琴重撥絃。  
 今日非昔日，  
 何人敢正看。

## 3.

洞房思不禁，  
 蜂子遶花心。  
 灰暖殘香炷，  
 髮冷青蟲簪。  
 5 夜遙燈燄短，  
 睡熟小屏深。  
 好作鴛鴦夢，  
 南城罷搗砧。

## 2.

In the bronze mirror stands a blue simurgh;<sup>1</sup>  
 as rouge is brushed on with a puff of purple silk-floss.  
 Flowers at her cheeks play across the hidden powder;  
 from the corners of her eyes cold tears intrude.

- 5 When a precious jade is cracked it cannot be restored;  
 on the jasper-inlaid zither now new strings are strummed.  
 Today is not like that former day –  
 who now dares to look her in the face?<sup>2</sup>

## 3.

In the bridal chamber, thoughts that cannot be endured:  
 the bee wheels about the flower's center.  
 Where the ash is still warm, a remainder of incense stick;  
 hair lies cold against the dark green insect hairpin.

- 5 In night's far reaches the lampwick-flame grows short;  
 for the slumberer the bed-screen opens its depths.  
 As if to prolong that dream of mandarin ducks,  
 the fullers' mallets of the southern districts have stopped.

---

1 The simurgh may be read as a figuration on the bronze mirror; there may also a play here on the story of a lone captive simurgh that its owner could not induce to sing (cf. 1.30, l. 6). Having heard that a simurgh would sing on seeing its own kind, the man placed a mirror beside the bird. On seeing its reflection, the bird sang disconsolately, and died.

2 I.e. because she is now the wife of a powerful official.

## 4.

- 尋常輕宋玉，  
 今日嫁文鴛。  
 戟幹橫龍簾，  
 刀環倚桂窗。  
 5 邀人裁半袖，  
 端坐據胡牀。  
 淚濕紅輪重，  
 栖烏上井梁。

## 3.6 昌谷讀書示巴童

蟲響燈光薄，  
 宵寒藥氣濃。  
 君憐垂翅客，  
 辛苦尚相從。

---

1 Song Yu is used as a figure for the literary man (cf. 2.23, l. 1), here Licentiate Xie. There are historical accounts of a Wen Yang and a Duan Wenyang, both military men, the latter a Xianbei commander. Thus Silkwhite's new husband is a military officer, possibly of foreign extraction.

## 4.

Habitually you slighted Song Yu,  
 today you've married a Wen Yang.<sup>1</sup>  
 Halberd-shafts hang from the dragon-patterned bell-rack;  
 ringed sword-handles are propped on the osmanthus windowframe.  
 5 He entertains invited guests in a short-sleeved smock;  
 and sits with limbs splayed across a folding camp-chair.<sup>2</sup>  
 Damp with tears, her red silk gauze grows heavy;  
 crows come to roost upon the well's railing.

### 3.6 Studying at Changgu: to Show to my Ba Servant-boy

Amid insects' racket the lamplight is faint;  
 in nighttime cold, the medicine-pot's steam lies heavy.  
 Taking pity on this droop-winged wanderer,<sup>3</sup>  
 you stick with me even through such sufferings.

---

2 The series of images in these lines suggests a clash between Silkwhite's delicate and cultured tastes and her new husband's crude martial manner. The folding camp-chair, a military accoutrement of Roman origin, is called here by its ancient designation "barbarian chair" – perhaps a further innuendo about the husband's ethnicity.

3 "Droop-winged": also used for manner of a defeated bird in a cockfight (cf. 4.23, l.14).

## 巴童答

巨鼻宜山褐，  
龐眉入苦吟。  
非君唱樂府，  
誰識怨秋深。

## 3.7 代崔家送客

行蓋柳煙下，  
馬蹄白翩翩。  
恐隨行處盡，  
何忍重揚鞭。

## 3.8 出城

雪下桂花稀，  
啼鳥被彈歸。  
關水乘驢影，  
秦風帽帶垂。  
5 入鄉誠可重，

### The Ba Servant-boy's Reply

This outsized nose befits my rustic burlap;  
 your sweeping eyebrows suit such bitter chanting,<sup>1</sup>  
 If not for your singing of ballad tunes  
 who would know to resent the depth of autumn?

### 3.7 Written on Behalf of the Cui Family to Send off a Guest

Your carriage-canopy passes beneath misty willows;  
 the horses' hooves flash white in graceful fluttering.  
 I fear that moment when you'll vanish in your going –  
 how can you bear to raise the whip again?

### 3.8 Departing from the City

Snow falls, osmanthus blossoms now scant;<sup>2</sup>  
 the cawing crow, wounded by a pellet, flies home.  
 In the waters of the passes, a reflection of donkey and rider;  
 in the wind of Qin my capstrings dangle.  
 5 To enter one's hometown is indeed a valuable thing;

1 "Sweeping eyebrows": *pang mei* 龐眉 is a term Li He seems to habitually applied to himself (cf. 4.23, l. 12). It sometimes describes the mixed white and black eyebrows of the elderly, but Li He seems to use it in the sense of "large" or "bushy" (this is the sense reflected in later iconographic tradition). Li Shangyin's "Short Biography" (see Appendix) uses the term *tong mei* 通眉, meaning "connected eyebrows."

2 Success in the *jinshi* examination was likened to plucking a branch from the osmanthus in the moon; here the reference to the scarcity of osmanthus blossoms seems intended to indicate failure in the exam.

無印自堪悲。  
卿卿忍相問，  
鏡中雙淚姿。

### 3.9 莫種樹

園中莫種樹，  
種樹四時愁。  
獨睡南窗月，  
今秋似去秋。

### 3.10 將發

東牀卷席罷，  
護落將行去。  
秋白遙遙空，  
日滿門前路。

but lacking a seal of office is no less cause for sadness.  
 How can my Dear bear to inquire – <sup>1</sup>  
 in the mirror, I can see that tearstreaked face.

### 3.9 Don't Plant Trees

In the garden do not plant trees;  
 planting trees brings sorrow through four seasons.  
 I sleep alone in the moonlight of the southern window;  
 this autumn is just like last autumn.

### 3.10 About to Set Out

By the eastern bed I'm done rolling up my mat;  
 down and out, I'm going to leave this place.  
 Autumn is pale in the deep and distant sky;  
 sunlight fills the road before the gate.

---

<sup>1</sup> The *Shishuo xinyu* tells that when Wang Anfeng scolded his wife for a lack of decorum in addressing him as “dear” (*qing* 卿), she asked, “If I don’t call you dear, dear, then who will call you dear, dear?” – upon which he relented (cf. 4.37).

### 3.11 追賦畫江潭苑四首

#### 1.

吳苑曉蒼蒼，  
宮衣水濺黃。  
小鬟紅粉薄，  
騎馬珮珠長。  
5 路指臺城迴，  
羅薰袴褶香。  
行雲霑翠輦，  
今日似襄王。

#### 2.

寶袜菊衣單，  
蕉花密露寒。  
水光蘭澤葉，

---

1 Wu was an ancient Zhou state on the lower reaches of the Yangzi River, and later the name of the southeastern kingdom of the Three Kingdoms, more or less corresponding to the territory of the Southern Dynasties Liang. The Jiangtan (River and Pond) Garden was a grand imperial retreat near the Liang capital Jiankang (modern-day Nanjing). The four poems in this sequence center on an imagined imperial outing in which Emperor Wu of the Liang 梁武帝 (r. 502–549) is accompanied on a hunting party with palace women wearing military costume.

2 “Waterstain yellow” is the name of a pale yellow tint, also called “goose yellow.”

### 3.11 Retrospectively Composed on a Painting of Jiangtan Garden (Four Poems)

#### 1.

The Wu garden is vast and verdant at dawn; <sup>1</sup>

the palace robes are waterstain yellow.<sup>2</sup>

On ringleted maidens the pink powder is faint;

from their mounts pearl pendants hang low.

5 The road directs them to the Terraced City far away;<sup>3</sup>

silk gauze will infuse their riding breeches with its incense.

Floating clouds dampen the emerald carriage –

today's encounter will be like King Xiang's.<sup>4</sup>

#### 2.

Over the precious camisole the chrysanthemum robe lies sheer:

plantain blossom, chilled beneath fine dew.<sup>5</sup>

A sheen of water infused with thoroughwort leaves;<sup>6</sup>

---

3 "Terraced City": the Southern dynasties term for the palace precincts at Jiankang (cf. 1.3).

4 I.e., this excursion will offer Emperor Wu a semblance of the tryst with the Goddess of Shamanka Mountain as recounted in the "*Fu* on the Gaotang Shrine" (cf. 1.32, 4.3). See Endnote.

5 The palace woman's red (plantain-blossom colored) chemise shows through the yellow of a sheer outer robe.

6 The woman's hair, glistening and scented with fragrance.

帶重剪刀錢。  
 5 角暖盤弓易，  
 靴長上馬難。  
 淚痕霑寢帳，  
 勻粉照金鞍。

## 3.

剪翅小鷹斜，  
 緙根玉鏃花。  
 鞦垂粧鈿粟，  
 箭箠釘文牙。  
 5 鸞鸞啼深竹，  
 鷁鷁老濕沙。  
 宮官燒蠟火，  
 飛燼污鉛華。

her sash weighed down with its knife-coin pattern.<sup>1</sup>

- 5 The horn is warm, so stringing the bow is easy;  
her boots are long, so mounting the horse is hard.  
Tear-traces stain the bedroom canopy;  
a freshly made up face gleams beside a golden saddle.<sup>2</sup>

### 3.

With scissor wings the small falcon flies aslant,  
at jesses' end, a jade wheel carved with flowers.  
Bridle traces hang, adorned with golden stipple;  
quivers are inlaid with patterned ivory.

- 5 Baboons wail from within deep bamboo thickets;  
pond herons grow old upon the damp sands.<sup>3</sup>  
Palace officers bear flaming candles  
whose floating soot smirches floriate lead.<sup>4</sup>

---

1 Ekphrastic play: the "knife-coin" (an ancient form of money, in the shape of a blade with a ring on one end) is a pattern on the sash, but here "weights" the sash with the mass of what it represents.

2 The woman has shed tears of loneliness during the night, but now stands fully adorned and ready to go on the excursion.

3 The baboons and pond herons suggest the variety of exotic wildlife kept in the imperial park.

4 "Floriate lead," i.e., the women's powdered faces. Cf. 1.23.5.

## 4.

- 十騎簇芙蓉，  
 宮衣小隊紅。  
 練香熏宋鵲，  
 尋箭踏盧龍。  
 5 旗濕金鈴重，  
 霜乾玉鐙空。  
 今朝畫眉早，  
 不待景陽鐘。

## 3.12 潞州張大宅病酒遇江使寄上十四兄

- 秋至昭關後，  
 當知趙國寒。  
 繫書隨短羽，  
 寫恨破長箋。  
 5 病客眠清曉，  
 疎桐墜綠鮮。  
 城鴉啼粉堞，  
 軍吹壓蘆烟。  
 岸幘褰紗幌，

## 4.

Ten riders are clustered like lotus blossoms:  
 in palace robes, a little squadron of red.  
 Fragrance from pure silk infuses the Song Magpie;  
 following their arrows they tread Black Dragon.<sup>1</sup>

- 5 The flags grow damp, and their golden bells seem heavy;  
 when the frost has dried, their jade stirrups feel loose.  
 This morning eyebrows were pencilled early –  
 not waiting for the ringing of the Jingyang bell.<sup>2</sup>

**3.12 Suffering from Hangover at the Residence of Zhang the  
 Eldest at Luzhou, I Encountered an Emissary Bound  
 for the River, and Entrusted This to Send to my Elder  
 Cousin, Fourteenth of our Generation**

Once autumn has arrived at Zhaoguan  
 you ought to know the cold here in the state of Zhao.  
 I tie this letter to the short-feathered missives;  
 to vent resentments I waste this long slip of writing paper.  
 5 An infirm wanderer sleeps through the clear dawn;  
 sparse *wutong* trees cast off their green freshness.  
 Crows of the city caw along the whitewashed battlements;  
 martial buglecalls blast out over mist-shrouded reeds.  
 With turban askew I lift the gauze bed-canopy:

---

1 Magpie was the name of a famous hunting dog from Song; Black Dragon is the name of a mountain.

2 The bell on Jingyang tower inside the palace compound was said to have been put there by Emperor Wu of Qi (r. 483–493) due to his frequent excursions in the company of his palace women: the palace was so large and the women's quarters so secluded that they could not hear the bells from the outer gate.

- 10 枯塘臥折蓮。  
木窗銀跡畫，  
石磴水痕錢。  
旅酒侵愁肺，  
離歌繞懦絃。
- 15 詩封兩條淚，  
露折一枝蘭。  
莎老沙雞泣，  
松乾瓦獸殘。  
覺騎燕地馬，
- 20 夢載楚溪船。  
椒桂傾長席，  
鱸魴斫玳筵。  
豈能忘舊路，  
江島滯佳年。

- 10 across the dried-out pond recline broken stalks of lotus.  
 The wooden window-frame is adorned with snails' silver tracery;<sup>1</sup>  
 along a stone bench are coins of water stain.  
 Drink far from home invaded my anxious lungs;  
 songs of parting swirled from timid strings.
- 15 With this poem I enclose two streams of tears;  
 and pluck a dew-drenched stem of thoroughwort to send.  
 Out in the dying sedge a katydid weeps;  
 where the tile-pines have withered there protrude fractured roof-ridge  
 beasts.<sup>2</sup>
- Awake, I ride a horse from the land of Yan;  
 20 in dream, I am borne on a boat along Chu creeks.<sup>3</sup>  
 There, pepper and osmanthus wine is poured out along the banquet  
 seats;  
 chopped perch and bream arranged on tortoiseshell mats.  
 But how could you forget your former paths  
 to tarry in your best years amid the islands of the river?

---

1 "Snails" is the conjecture of Xu Wei 徐渭 (1521–1593); these "silver traces" might also be fading traces of painted or inlaid ornament on the window frame.

2 "Tile-pine": a coinage to render *wasong* 瓦松 (Fimbriate orostachys), a variety of stonecrop that often grows on old tile rooftops, and whose erect stalks resemble miniature pine saplings.

3 Yan and Chu are in the north and south; in waking life Li He rides a horse from Yan (while dwelling in Zhao, another ancient northern state), while in dream he sojourns with his cousin in Chu in the south.

### 3.13 難忘曲

- 夾道開洞門，  
 弱楊低畫戟。  
 簾影竹華起，  
 簫聲吹日色。  
 5 蜂語繞粧鏡，  
 畫蛾學春碧。  
 亂繫丁香梢，  
 滿欄花向夕。

### 3.14 賈公閭貴壻曲

- 朝衣不須長，  
 分花對袍縫。  
 嚶嚶白馬來，  
 滿腦黃金重。  
 5 今朝香氣苦，  
 珊瑚澀難枕。  
 且要弄風人，  
 暖蒲沙上飲。

1 “Painted halberds”: during the Tang, an emblem at the gates of mansions of high-ranking court officials.

2 Gonglü was the courtesy name of the renowned Jin statesman and aristocrat Jia Chong (see 2.23).

### 3.13 Tune: Hard to Forget

Along the narrow passage open layered gates;  
trailing poplars droop low beside the painted halberds.<sup>1</sup>  
In the curtains' shadow the patterns of bamboo appear;  
the flute's lilt plays in the sunlight.

- 5 A conversation of bees surrounds her makeup-stand mirror;  
in painting her moth-eyebrows she mimics spring hills' emerald green.  
Tied all at random, the stems of lilac;  
a flower-filled trellis faces the sunset.

### 3.14 Tune: Jia Gonglü's Noble Son-in-Law<sup>2</sup>

Robes for court need not be long;  
a divided flower is matched across the opening of his gown.  
Thin whinnies sound as his white horse is brought,  
its head covered in gold bangles that hang heavy.

- 5 This morning he found the scent of incense vexing,  
and coral a rough and uncomfortable sort of headrest.  
“Let me invite some chasers after breeze,<sup>3</sup>  
and beside the warm rushes let's drink upon the sands.”<sup>4</sup>

---

3 “Chasers of breeze”: I.e., seekers of dalliances; courtesans and their clienteles.

4 These lines describe the lavish life of the titular son-in-law, generally taken to refer to Han Shou, a young assistant in Jia's household administration who became his son-in-law after beginning an illicit affair with Jia's daughter Wu (for the story, see the footnote to 2.23, l. 74).

- 燕語踏簾鉤，  
 10 日虹屏中碧。  
 潘令在河陽，  
 無人死芳色。

### 3.15 夜飲朝眠曲

- 觴酣出座東方高，  
 腰橫半解星勞勞。  
 柳苑鴉啼公主醉，  
 薄露壓花蕙蘭氣。  
 5 玉轉濕絲牽曉水，  
 熱粉生香琅玕紫。  
 夜飲朝眠斷無事，  
 楚羅之幃臥皇子。

- Swallows jabber as they tread the curtain hook;  
 10 sunlight like a rainbow penetrates the emerald of the screen.  
 Magistrate Pan is at Heyang –  
 leaving no one to die for this fragrance and loveliness.<sup>1</sup>

### 3.15 Tune: Drinking at Night, Sleeping through Morning

Deep in cups, she leaves the banquet: the eastern horizon looms;  
 her waist-band is half loosened, as a few remaining stars feebly flicker.

In the willow garden where crows caw, the princess is drunk;  
 a light dew presses down the flowers' basil-and-thoroughwort breath.

- 5 On the jade windlass, drenched silk draws up dawn washing water;  
 powder on heated cheeks gives scent, their hue *langgan*-jewel purple.  
 Drinking at night, sleeping at dawn, cut off from all concern –  
 there in the bed-canopy of Chu silk gauze slumbers an imperial scion.

---

1 Pan Yue 潘岳 (247–300) was a Western Jin official and writer, renowned for his beauty. Heyang was known as the “flower county” after the time when he, while serving as magistrate there, planted it lavishly with peach and plum trees (cf. 3.27, 3.29). Here a figure for the titular “Son-in-Law,” now absent among his “chasers after breeze” (for alternate ways of understanding this enigmatic final stanza, see the Endnote).

### 3.16 王濬墓下作

人間無阿童，  
 猶唱水中龍。  
 白草侵烟死，  
 秋藜繞地紅。  
 5 古書平黑石，  
 神劍斷青銅。  
 耕勢魚鱗起，  
 墳科馬鬣封。  
 菊花垂濕露，  
 10 棘徑臥乾蓬。  
 松柏愁香澀，  
 南原幾夜風。

### 3.17 客遊

悲滿千里心，  
 日暖南山石。  
 不謁承明廬，

---

1 Wang Jun (252–314) was a military commander under the Jin who led a naval assault along the Yangzi river during the campaign to subdue the southern Wu kingdom and complete the Jin unification in 280.

2 The now-ancient song that heralded Wang Jun's first rise to prominence; see Endnotes.

### 3.16 Composed Beneath the Tomb of Wang Jun<sup>1</sup>

- In the human world “Ah Tong” is no more,  
 yet still they sing of the “dragon in the water.”<sup>2</sup>  
 Pale grasses extend into the mists, withered;  
 the red of autumn amaranth is scattered on all sides.
- 5 The ancient script now flattened into the black stone;  
 his divine sword must be shattered green bronze.  
 Plowed fields, crowding like fish-scales, have arisen all about;  
 the tomb fits the standard of the “horse mane” mound.<sup>3</sup>  
 Chrysanthemum blossoms suspend wet beads of dew;
- 10 along the brambly path lies dessicated fleabane.  
 The sad scent of pine and cypress is astringent;  
 across this southern plain, how many nights of wind have blown?

### 3.17 Wanderer's Journey

A heart whose sadness fills a thousand *li*,  
 sun warms the stones of the southern hills.  
 Not reporting at the Lodge for Receiving Light;<sup>4</sup>

---

3 “Horse-mane mound”: this expression appears in classical ritual texts as an alternate designation of a “hatchet-shaped” form of tomb mound seen and approved by Confucius. Sometimes used simply as a general term for a tomb, the “horse-mane mound” has slanting sides and a central ridge, resembling the ridge shape of the back of a horse’s neck.

4 “Lodge for Receiving Light”: the old Han designation for the place in the palace compound where the emperor would hold audiences with guests.

- 老作平原客。  
 5 四時別家廟，  
 三年去鄉國。  
 旅歌屢彈鋏，  
 歸問時裂帛。

### 3.18 崇義里滯雨

- 落漠誰家子，  
 來感長安秋。  
 壯年抱羈恨，  
 夢泣生白頭。  
 5 瘦馬秣敗草，  
 雨沫飄寒溝。  
 南宮古簾暗，  
 濕景傳籤籌。  
 家山遠千里，  
 10 雲脚天東頭。  
 憂眠枕劍匣，  
 客帳夢封侯。

---

1 Lord Pingyuan of Zhao was renowned as a generous patron (see also 1.25, ll. 11–12). Here the reference is to Li He's residence in Luzhou, in the former domain of Zhao, where his efforts to gain patronage in Chi Shimei's administration proved unsuccessful (see Introduction).

I instead grow old as a retainer of Lord Pingyuan.<sup>1</sup>

- 5 Through the four seasons I have parted from my ancestral temple;  
for these three years leaving behind my native state.  
To wayfarer's songs I often strum my sword;<sup>2</sup>  
and for inquiries about return, from time to time rip silk.<sup>3</sup>

### 3.18 Rained in at my Lodgings in Chongyi Ward

Down on his luck, what family's son is this,  
come to vent his feelings about Chang'an's autumn?  
In the prime of life he clasps a wanderer's regrets;  
from weeping in his dreams he's sprouted white hair.

- 5 His gaunt horse is foddered with rotten hay;  
runoff spume floats down the cold drain-ditch.  
Behind the ancient draperies of the Southern Palace all is dark;<sup>4</sup>  
across a damp sky resounds the clepsydra-rod's tally.<sup>5</sup>  
The hills of home are a thousand *li* away  
10 beyond the clouds at the sky's eastern edge.  
In anxious sleep I pillow my head on my sword's scabbard;  
and in my lodging's bed-canopy dream of enfeoffment as a lord.

2 "Strum my sword": in the story of Feng Xuan 馮諼, an eccentric retainer of the renowned patron Lord Mengchang 孟嘗君 of Qi (d. 279 BCE), Feng Xuan sang songs while strumming his sword to express dissatisfaction with his treatment, and in each instance Lord Mengchang obligingly satisfied his wishes.

3 "Rip silk": i.e. for writing letters on. The expression derives from a lyric to the old ballad "Crows Caw at Night" ("Wu ye ti" 烏夜啼).

4 "Southern Palace": a Tang colloquial expression for the Department of State Affairs (*Shangshu sheng* 尚書省), which was housed in the outer or southern portion of the imperial city within the walls of Chang'an.

5 A "clepsydra rod" was a ruled vertical rod serving to give time readings in a clepsydra; these readings were then communicated across the city by officers charged with beating drums or bells to indicate the passage of different increments of time (cf. 4.45, along with 4.50, ll. 3–4)

### 3.19 馮小憐

灣頭見小憐，  
 請上琵琶絃。  
 破得東風恨，  
 今朝值幾錢。  
 5 裙垂竹葉帶，  
 鬢濕杏花烟。  
 玉冷紅絲重，  
 齊宮妾駕鞭。

### 3.20 贈陳商

長安有男兒，  
 二十心已朽。  
 楞伽堆案前，  
 楚辭繫肘後。  
 5 人生有窮拙，  
 日暮聊飲酒。  
 祇今道已塞，  
 何必須白首。  
 淒淒陳述聖，

---

1 Feng Xiaolian was a palace entertainer who captured the affection of the Last Emperor of the Northern Qi 齊後主 (r. 565–577); when Northern Zhou forces captured the Qi capital, she was bestowed on a prince by Emperor Wu of the Zhou 周武帝 (r. 560–578).

### 3.19 Feng Xiaolian<sup>1</sup>

- If you see Xiaolian by the bay;  
 invite her to tune her *pipa* strings.  
 She can scatter spring's resentments;  
 and today how much is that worth?
- 5 From her skirts hangs a bamboo-leaf sash;  
 her locks are damp with mist from apricot trees.  
 That jade feels cold, those red silk threads weigh heavy:  
 the riding whip from my days in the Qi palace.

### 3.20 Presented to Chen Shang

- In Chang'an there was a young man:  
 whose heart, at twenty, had already rotted.  
 The *Lankāvatāra Sūtra* piled on the desk before him;  
 the *Songs of Chu* bundled behind his elbow.<sup>2</sup>
- 5 In human life there is a clumsiness beyond help;  
 at sundown he whiles the time away drinking.  
 Even now, the way is closed for him,  
 what need then to wait till the head turns white?  
 Chill and forlorn, Chen Shusheng:

---

2 "*Lankāvatāra Sūtra*": a Mahāyāna scripture central to so-called "consciousness-only" doctrine, as well as to Chan (or Zen) traditions; preached by the Buddha in the mountaintop citadel of the ten-headed demon-king Ravana. On the "*Songs of Chu*," see discussion in the Introduction.

- 10 披褐鋤俎豆。  
 學為堯舜文，  
 時人責衰偶。  
 柴門車轍凍，  
 日下榆影瘦。  
 15 黃昏訪我來，  
 苦節青陽皴。  
 太華五千仞，  
 劈地抽森秀。  
 旁苦無寸尋，  
 20 一上戛牛斗。  
 公卿縱不憐，  
 寧能鎖吾口。  
 李生師太華，  
 大坐看白晝。  
 25 逢霜作樸暉，  
 得氣為春柳。

---

1 Shusheng, Chen Shang's courtesy name, literally means "expounding the sage(s)." The couplet is so constructed as to allow the literal meaning of this name to appear made real through Chen's way of life. "Plow amid offering boards and cups" could mean either "engage in subsistence farming while studying ritual," or more likely here, figuratively, "labor in ritual studies." The emphasis in either case is that Chen pursues his classical studies without regard for worldly gain. *Zu* and *dou*, offering boards and footed cups, were ubiquitous ritual implements in sacrificial ceremonies, often used metonymically for the practice of ancient ritual or of classical studies as a whole (cf. 2.18, l. 1).

- 10 in coarse hempen robe he plows amid offering-boards and cups.<sup>1</sup>  
 He imitates a writing such as Yao and Shun might use,  
 when those of this age demand the feeble antithetical style.<sup>2</sup>  
 By my brushwood gate, wheelrut puddles freeze;  
 beneath the sun, the elms' shadows are gaunt.
- 15 At sundown you arrived to visit me;  
 in this bitter season when "green warmth" itself seems wrinkled.<sup>3</sup>  
 Taihua is five thousand fathoms high;  
 rending the ground, it juts up in forested splendor.<sup>4</sup>  
 By its side one seeks in vain an inch or yard of level ground:
- 20 it rises straight up, knocking against Ox and Bushel.<sup>5</sup>  
 Even if the dukes and grandees show no affection,  
 how could I bear to lock up these praises in my mouth?  
 Scholar Li takes Taihua as master and model,  
 sitting idly and watching the day go by.
- 25 Encountering frost, I'm a scrub oak;  
 in temperate weather I'll be a spring willow.<sup>6</sup>

---

2 I.e., the "modern style" in which imperial edicts and formal administrative communications were written, and whose mastery was indeed one of the key tasks of aspiring writers aiming for an official career (see Introduction).

3 "Green warmth": A traditional alternate designation for spring. The phrase rendered "bitter season" can also connote "strenuously maintained ethical principles," which would be appropriate to Chen Shang as Li He describes him, but a primarily calendrical sense seems to cohere better within this line.

4 "Taihua": the western sacred mountain Mt. Hua; here a figure for Chen Shang.

5 "Ox and Bushel": Two adjacent lunar lodges lying along the ecliptic in the zones of the Western constellations Capricorn and Sagittarius, respectively.

6 The type of oak in question is described in classical tradition as small and insignificant; here the point is that Li He, imitating Chen Shang's indifference to popular fashions and opinion, strives to adapt to outward circumstance with equanimity.

禮節乃相去，  
 顛顛如芻狗。  
 風雪直齋壇，  
 30 墨組貫銅綬。  
 臣妾氣態間，  
 唯欲承箕帚。  
 天眼何時開，  
 古劍庸一吼。

### 3.21 釣魚詩

秋水釣紅渠，  
 仙人待素書。  
 菱絲縈獨繭，  
 菰米蟄雙魚。  
 5 斜竹垂清沼，  
 長綸貫碧虛。  
 餌懸春蜥蜴，  
 鈎墜小蟾蜍。

1 "Straw dog": Echoing *Laozi*, chapter 5, "Heaven and earth are unkind, treating the myriad creatures as straw dogs." The straw dog, an implement of shamanic ritual, was revered as divine during the rite, and afterwards discarded as worthless trash.

2 The closing eight lines present a sardonic picture of Li He's duties as Vice-Director of Ceremonial. A medieval anomaly account tells of a sword that rose from an ancient tomb opened by grave robbers: it emitted a howl, terrifying the robbers, then rose into the sky and disappeared (cf. the similar image involving Liu Bang's "snake-killing" sword in 1.4).

- But in our ceremonial deportment is much discrepancy,  
 so that I am left forlorn and haggard as a straw dog.<sup>1</sup>  
 In wind and snow I attend at the sacred altar,  
 30 where black bands loop through bronze seals of office.  
 With a menial's ingratiating postures,  
 I strive only to wield dustpan and broom.  
 When will heaven's eyes open for once,  
 so that this ancient sword may let out one roar?<sup>2</sup>

### 3.21 Fishing Poem

- Amid autumn waters, he fishes along the pink-flowered canal:  
 an immortal, awaiting his letter on white silk.<sup>3</sup>  
 Caltrop-strands entwine his one-cocoon line;<sup>4</sup>  
 beneath zizania stalks a pair of fish lurk dormant.  
 5 The slanting bamboo pole hangs over the pure lake;  
 the long silk thread pierces the green void of sky.  
 As bait suspended, a spring skink;  
 plunging with the hook, a little toad.

---

3 An old ballad lyric speaks of receiving letters in fish; this poetic commonplace seems to be in a chicken-and-egg relation with the custom of using fish-shaped cases for letters. A hagiographical account of an immortal named Lingyangzi 陵陽子 tells how he began as an avid fisherman, and achieved immortality upon receiving secret formulae for elixirs from a white dragon he had once caught (and then released) in fish form.

4 A fishing line spun from the silk of a single cocoon appears in the *Liezi* as an item of fishing gear used by Zhan He 詹和 to land enormous fish from great depths. Zhan He is also the "Master Zhan" mentioned at line 9 below.

詹子情無限，  
 10 龍陽恨有餘。  
 為看烟浦上，  
 楚女淚沾裾。

### 3.22 奉和二兄罷使遣馬歸延州

空留三尺劍，  
 不用一丸泥。  
 馬向沙場去，  
 人歸故國來。  
 5 笛愁翻隴水，  
 酒喜瀝春灰。  
 錦帶休驚雁，  
 羅衣尚鬪雞。  
 還吳已渺渺，

---

1 Lord Longyang was the lover of King Anli 安釐 of Wei (r. 276–243 BCE). While fishing with the king, he caught ten fish in a row, and began weeping. When the king asked him why, he explained that he had realized that he himself was a “fish” caught by the king, and just as he, Lord Longyang, had lost interest in his first few fish upon catching the later ones, so King Anli was sure to lose interest in Lord Longyang as he continued catching more “fish.” In this poem the two strands of Lord Longyang’s speech are separated: a fisherman is catching a lot of fish, while on the shore a melancholy maiden mourns a lost love.

- A limitless expanse of Master Zhan's feeling;  
 10 a surplus of Lord Longyang's regret.<sup>1</sup>  
 Just look, there on the misty shore –  
 the Chu maiden's dress is spattered with tears.

### 3.22 Respectfully Responding to “My Commission Ended, I Send Away my Horse and Return to Yanzhou” by my Elder Brother, Second in our Generation

- In vain you've kept your three-foot sword;  
 they did not use your one ball of clay.<sup>2</sup>  
 The horse is bound for the sandy expanses;<sup>3</sup>  
 the man comes home to his former state.  
 5 The flute causes sorrow when reprising “Waters of Long”;  
 wine brings delight as we strain the spring lime-brew.<sup>4</sup>  
 In your brocade sash, desist from startling geese;  
 in gauze robes, give preference to fighting-cocks.<sup>5</sup>  
 Return to Wu is already a distant prospect;

---

2 Two historical allusions express the idea that the cousin's martial worth has not been recognized or put to proper use. The Han founder Liu Bang had said, “As a commoner lifting a three-foot sword, I took the world.” Kui Xiao 隗囂 (d. 33 CE), a warlord in the early years of the Eastern Han, had said, “With one ball of clay I can block the Hangu Pass.”

3 The “sandy expanses” may refer to an imperially-managed site for the pasturing and care of war horses (as with the site Shayuan 沙苑, or “sand-park,” of 4.49), or simply to the battlefield. In either case, the contrast here is between the horse that remains in service and the man who is let go.

4 “Waters of Long” is an old fife tune, sad in this context due to its associations with border warfare (and thus the cousin's recent employment); adding water mixed with lime was a method for clearing young cloudy wine.

5 I.e., don't persist in practicing martial skills such as archery; rather, devote yourself to banqueting and play. “Startling geese”: Geng Ying 更羸, a figure of the Warring States period, brought down a goose by drawing and releasing his bowstring, with no arrow. He explained that he had perceived the goose was forlorn and wounded by a previous arrow, and thus vulnerable even to the aural shock of the bow's twang.

- 10 入郢莫淒淒。  
自是桃李樹，  
何畏不成蹊。

### 3.23 答贈

- 本是張公子，  
曾名萼綠華。  
沈香燼小象，  
楊柳伴啼鴉。  
5 露重金泥冷，  
杯闌玉樹斜。  
琴堂沽酒客，  
新買後園花。

1 “Return to Wu” refers to the story of the Western Jin official Zhang Han 張翰, who, pining for home comforts, left office abruptly to return to Wu. “Entering Ying” refers to the story of Wu Zixu 伍子胥 (d. 484 BCE), who was exiled from his native Chu but yearned to take revenge and return to the Chu capital Ying in triumph.

2 Ll. 11–12: Citing a familiar aphorism (whose first appearance is in the *Shi ji* 史記 [Records of the Historian] biography of the Han general Li Guang), to the effect that “the peach and plum do not speak, but beneath them paths form of themselves” – here to console the cousin with the idea that his innate worth guarantees that the world will find its way to him somehow.

- 10 but as for entering Ying, do not be despondent.<sup>1</sup>  
 You are yourself a peach tree or plum tree;  
 what need you fear pathways will not form below?<sup>2</sup>

### 3.23 Reply to a Poem

- He was once Master Zhang;<sup>3</sup>  
 she, once known as Elühua.<sup>4</sup>  
 Aloes incense infuses the little elephant;  
 willows accompany the cawing crow.  
 5 Dew lies heavy, and the robe's gold appliqué feels cold;  
 as the drinking winds down, a jade tree totters.<sup>5</sup>  
 The wine-seller from the zither hall<sup>6</sup>  
 has newly purchased a flower for his rear garden.

---

3 "Master Zhang": here a reference to Zhang Fang 張放, pleasure-loving intimate of Emperor Cheng of the Western Han 漢成帝 (r. 33–7 BCE), who often accompanied the latter on his incognito forays into the capital's pleasure quarters.

4 Elühua was a female transcendent said to have made a series of epiphanic nighttime visits to the fourth-century figure Yang Quan 羊權 beginning in 359.

5 The fifth-century anecdote compilation *Shishuo xinyu* includes the metaphor of the jade tree as a figure for human beauty and talent, as well as a description of the renowned writer and *qin*-player Xi Kang, who was described, when drunk, as having the aspect of a jade mountain just on the point of collapsing.

6 I.e., Sima Xiangru, here a figure for a cultured man of romantic sensibilities (cf. 1.12.1).

### 3.24 題趙生壁

大婦然竹根，  
 中婦舂玉屑。  
 冬暖拾松枝，  
 日烟坐蒙滅。  
 5 木蘚青桐老，  
 石泉水聲發。  
 曝背臥東亭，  
 桃花滿肌骨。

### 3.25 感春

日暖自蕭條，  
 花悲北郭騷。  
 榆穿耒子眼，  
 柳斷舞兒腰。  
 5 上幕迎神燕，

---

1 Echoing the phrasing of the old *yuefu* “Song of Chance Meeting” (cf. the closing lines of 2.23; see also the Endnotes to 2.23 and 3.13). “Flakes of jade”: A figure for the whiteness of rice being pounded in the mortar, but the associations of jade as part of the diet of immortals are not out of place – the closing lines, via an echo of the oft-cited tradition of a realm of immortals called “Peach Blossom Spring,” contain the polite suggestion that scholar Zhao himself is, or is like, an immortal.

### 3.24 Inscribed on Scholar Zhao's Wall

The senior wife burns bamboo roots;  
 the middle wife grinds flakes of jade.<sup>1</sup>  
 On a warm winter's day are gathered pine branches;  
 sunlight and mists bring sudden shifts of shadow.  
 5 Covered in moss, the green *wutong* trees are old;  
 about the stony spring the splash of water resounds.  
 Warming your back, you recline at the east pavilion;  
 a peach-blossom hue suffuses your flesh and bones.

### 3.25 Stirred by Spring

As the sun grows warm, I myself wither;  
 flowers bring grief to this Beiguo Sao.<sup>2</sup>  
 Elm-pods are pierced with eyes of Leizi coins;  
 in willow-branches are snapped the waists of dancing girls.<sup>3</sup>  
 5 Raise the canopy to welcome the divine swallows;

---

2 Beiguo Sao, a figure mentioned in the third century BCE compilation *Lüshi chunqiu* 吕氏春秋, produced nets, mats and shoes to support his mother, but still could not make ends meet.

3 On the likening of elm-pods to coins and vice-versa, cf. 1.2. The “Leizi” was a particularly small coin said to have been minted in the Southern Dynasties Song (420–479).

飛絲送百勞。  
胡琴今日恨，  
急語向檀槽。

### 3.26 仙人

彈琴石壁上，  
翻翻一仙人。  
手持白鸞尾，  
夜掃南山雲。  
5 鹿飲寒澗下，  
魚歸清海濱。  
當時漢武帝，  
書報桃花春。

### 3.27 河陽歌

染羅衣，  
秋藍難著色。  
不是無心人，  
為作臺邛客。

1 The “*Yue ling*” chapter of the *Li ji* says that the swallows arrive in spring’s second month, and that when they arrive they are to be sacrificed to in a fertility rite (cf. the tradition of the impregnation of the founding mother of the Shang dynasty via the agency of a swallow, as celebrated in the *Shijing* ritual hymn “Xuan niao” 玄鳥); the shrike was viewed as a bird of ill omen.

with fluttering threads of silk, ward away the shriek.<sup>1</sup>  
 The nomad lute takes this day's resentments  
 and with urgent speech conveys them through its sandalwood bridge.<sup>2</sup>

### 3.26 An Immortal

Strumming a zither there on a stone cliff-top,  
 lithe and lovely, a transcendent one.  
 Holding in hand a white simurgh-tail duster  
 to sweep by night the south mountains' clouds.  
 5 Deer drink beneath the cold rivulet;  
 fish return to the shores of the clear ocean.  
 Back then, in the time of Emperor Wu of the Han,  
 once came a letter announcing the peaches' spring blossoming.<sup>3</sup>

### 3.27 Heyang Song

When dyeing a silk-gauze robe,  
 autumn indigo is slow to set.  
 Not without some purpose  
 has this man come, wayfarer to Terrace Mound.

---

2 The "nomad lute" is a name for a small five-stringed version of the *pipa*, plucked and strummed with the fingers rather than with a plectrum.

3 Recalling the story of Emperor Wu's banquet with the Queen Mother of the West, and her peaches of immortality, which take three thousand years to bloom, and three thousand to bear fruit (see 1.23.13, 1.25).

- 5 花燒中潭城，  
 顏郎身已老。  
 惜許兩少年，  
 抽心似春草。  
 今日見銀牌，  
 10 今夜鳴玉譙。  
 牛頭高一尺，  
 隔坐應相見。  
 月從東方來，  
 酒從東方轉。  
 15 觥船飮口紅，  
 蜜炬千枝爛。

---

1 The Jin poet and official Pan Yue once served as magistrate of Heyang and planted gardens there that earned it the nickname “flower county” (cf. the closing stanza of 3.14). “Middle Shoal Citadel” was the name of the part of Heyang located on an island in the middle of the Yellow River.

2 “Master Yan”: Yan Si 顏驥 was said to have been serving as a Court Attendant (*lang* 郎) at an advanced age. Emperor Wu of the Han happened to see him and asked how he came to be in this post at such an age (the word *lang* itself generally implies a young man). Yan replied, “Your minister entered service as attendant

- 5 Flowers burn Middle Shoal City;<sup>1</sup>  
 Master Yan finds himself already old.<sup>2</sup>  
 Giving doting acquiescence to two young persons,  
 his heart sends forth sprouts like spring grass.
- This day he sees the silver badges;<sup>3</sup>  
 10 this night he will attend the jade-jangling banquet.<sup>4</sup>  
 The bullhead ewer is a foot tall –  
 from across the seats perhaps he'll steal a glance.
- The moon rises from the east,  
 the winecups are passed from the east.
- 15 The barge-flagon is gorged in lip rouge;  
 beeswax candles on a thousand stalks blaze bright.

---

in Emperor Wen's reign, but Emperor Wen was fond of civil virtues, and your minister is fond of the martial; when the reign of Emperor Jing came, he was fond of the beautiful, and your minister is ugly; when your Highness came to the throne, you were fond of the young, and I am already old. Thus through three eras I have failed to meet favor, and grow old in the Attendants' pool." Since "Master Yan" here seems to serve as a figure for the poet, associations with the prematurely white-haired, short-lived Yan Hui 顏回 (see footnote to 3.43, l. 4) may also be relevant.

3 Tang official courtesans wore silver badges with their names engraved on them.

4 The ringing of jade pendants was an elegant musical accompaniment to banqueting (cf. 1.29, l. 4).

### 3.28 花遊曲并序

寒食，諸王妓遊，賀入座，因採梁簡文詩  
調賦花遊曲，與妓彈唱。

春柳南陌態，

冷花寒露姿。

今朝醉城外，

拂鏡濃掃眉。

5 烟濕愁車重，

紅油覆畫衣。

舞裙香不暖，

酒色上來遲。

### 3.29 春晝

朱城報春更漏轉，

光風催蘭吹小殿。

草細堪梳，

柳長如線。

5 卷衣秦帝，

掃粉趙燕。

日含畫幕，

### 3.28 Tune: Wandering Among the Flowers (with preface)

At the Cold Food festival, the imperial princes went on an outing with courtesans.<sup>1</sup> I joined the banquet, and thereupon, adopting the tune of the Emperor Jianwen of the Liang's poems, composed "Wandering Among the Flowers" to give to the courtesans to sing to string accompaniment.

The lovely manner of spring willows by the southern lane;  
the allure of chilled blossoms in cold dew.  
This day we go to be drunk outside the city;  
holding the mirror, we apply rich eyebrow-kohl.

- 5 In the misty dampness, we fear the carriage will be sluggish;  
a red oilcloth curtain covers our splendid robes.  
Our dancing-gowns are fragrant, yet not warm,  
so that the flush of wine is slow to appear.

### 3.29 Spring Daylight

In the vermilion citadel spring's arrival is announced, the clepsydra's  
hours run round;  
daylight and breeze impel the thoroughwort to waft its scent into the  
little hall.

The fine grass is fit to comb;  
willow branches trail long like threads.

- 5 A robe-rolling Qin prince,  
a rouge-brushed Flying Swallow Zhao.<sup>2</sup>  
Sunlight enfolds the figured canopy;

---

1 On the "Cold Food Festival," see 2.24.2, l. 7n.

2 Old repertoire lists record a tune titled "The Qin King Rolls up a Robe" 秦王卷衣曲; the robe of the title is rolled up to give to a lover. Zhao Feiyan ("Flying Swallow"; 45–1 BCE) was a renowned beauty, empress of the Emperor Cheng of the Han (cf. 4.45).

- 蜂上羅薦。  
 平陽花塢，  
 10 河陽花縣。  
 越婦搯機，  
 吳蠶作繭。  
 菱汀繫帶，  
 荷塘倚扇。  
 15 江南有情，  
 塞北無限。

### 3.30 安樂宮

- 深井桐烏起，  
 尚復牽清水。  
 未盥邵陵瓜，  
 瓶中弄長翠。  
 5 新成安樂宮，  
 宮如鳳凰翅。  
 歌迴蠟板鳴，

1 Princess Pingyang was an elder sister of Emperor Wu of the Han; a garden site associated with her became a familiar reference in poetry, but the original context is unknown.

2 On Pan Yue and the “flower county” of Heyang, cf. 3.14, 3.27.

- bees mount the silk gauze cushion.  
 Princess Pingyang's flowery bank;<sup>1</sup>  
 10 Heyang's "county of flowers."<sup>2</sup>  
 The Yue wife steadies her loom;  
 Wu silkworms form their cocoons.<sup>3</sup>  
 At the caltrop shore are tangled sashes;  
 in the lotus pool are tilted fans.  
 15 South of the River is full of feeling;  
 the north of the passes is boundless.

### 3.30 Anle Palace

- Beside the deep well, crows rise from the *wutong* trees;  
 to this day its clear waters are drawn.  
 Before being taken to rinse Shao Ping's melons,<sup>4</sup>  
 from the jar it sends a play of long emerald flashes.  
 5 "*When Anle palace was newly made ...*"  
 that palace was winged like the phoenix.<sup>5</sup>  
 Songs swirled, waxed clapper-boards rang out,

3 Wu and Yue are ancient states in the region south of the Yangzi River (the "River" of line 15 below).

4 Shao Ping 召平 was Marquis of Dongling 東陵 during the Qin empire; after that dynasty's fall he became a commoner who made his living growing melons, which were reputed to be especially fine. Li He's text here reads "Shaoling" 召陵, which is either an error for Shao Ping or Dongling, or a deliberate melding of the man's name and that of his former fiefdom.

5 Line 5 directly quotes the old lyric from which Li He borrows his title here. Curved and sweeping eaves were a traditional feature of palace and temple architecture; the association of these forms with birds' wings was a familiar commonplace.

左悺提壺使。  
 綠繫悲水曲，  
 10 茱萸別秋子。

### 3.31 蝴蝶舞

楊花撲帳春雲熱，  
 龜甲屏風醉眼纈。  
 東家蝴蝶西家飛，  
 白騎少年今日歸。

### 3.32 梁公子

風采出蕭家，  
 本是菖蒲花。  
 南塘蓮子熟，  
 洗馬走江沙。  
 5 御牋銀沫冷，

1 Zuo Guan was a favored eunuch in the court of Emperor Huan of the Eastern Han 漢桓帝 (r. 146–168). Here the image of such a powerful figure serving wine heightens the air of majesty in this evocation of past banquets at the palace.

2 On “drunken-eyed” tie-dye, cf. 2.23, l. 25.

Zuo Guan served, bearing the wine-pitcher ...<sup>1</sup>  
 Green artemisia grieves beside the water's bend;  
 10 dogwoods take leave of their autumn seed.

### 3.31 Butterflies Dance

Willow-floss bumps against the canopy, spring clouds are hot;  
 by a tortoiseshell screen is spread "drunken-eyed" tie-dye.<sup>2</sup>

A butterfly from the eastern house flies into the western house;<sup>3</sup>  
 that youth on his white mount returns today.

### 3.32 Lordling of the Liang

Your grand manner derives from the house of Xiao;  
 you yourself were once a rush blossom.<sup>4</sup>  
 By the south pool the lotus seeds have ripened;  
 you wash your horse and go galloping along river sands.  
 5 On your palace stationery the spatter of silver lies cold;

---

3 Butterflies entering a home or curtained enclosure was considered a harbinger of a traveler's return; the butterfly's flitting from one household to another could equally be a figure for a playboy.

4 Legend had it that the Liang dynasty founder Xiao Yan 蕭衍 (464–549), who reigned as Emperor Wu of the Liang, was born after his mother noticed, and then ate, an unusually dazzling rush blossom.

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;<sup>1</sup>  
 you inscribe calligraphy to bestow on the lovelies of the lodge.<sup>2</sup>

### 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,<sup>3</sup>  
 stirring its sleeves, the wind blows “Strings of Shu.”<sup>4</sup>

- 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?<sup>5</sup>  
 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.<sup>1</sup>

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.<sup>2</sup>

---

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;<sup>1</sup>  
 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.<sup>2</sup> I pondered on these past things and composed a lyric in long lines, to form a counterpart to that affair of Feng Zidu.<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup>

- 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;<sup>1</sup>  
 rolling up the Yellow River to drain onto himself alone.

August heaven itself in adverse fate once ripped;<sup>2</sup>  
 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 Cao<sup>3</sup>

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

---

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.<sup>1</sup>

- 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.<sup>2</sup>  
 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;<sup>1</sup>

10 Confucius's broad and clumsy stone is not worth mentioning.<sup>2</sup>

### 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;<sup>1</sup>  
 mist-shrouded willows fill the city's lanes.  
 The honored guest left behind a broken cap-string;<sup>2</sup>  
 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”?<sup>1</sup>

At the east of the sky is the Ruo Tree  
and beneath is placed a dragon with a candle in its mouth.<sup>2</sup>  
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?<sup>3</sup>

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

---

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,<sup>1</sup>  
 wind rustles through the fields;  
 wheat-spikes are as broad as brooms, rice-tassels dense as millet.<sup>2</sup>

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.<sup>3</sup>

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.<sup>4</sup>

---

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 – <sup>1</sup>  
 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.<sup>2</sup>
- 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.<sup>3</sup>  
 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 carriage<sup>1</sup>
- 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."<sup>2</sup>
- 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.<sup>1</sup>  
 The bird in Han dwells amid the line-arrows;<sup>2</sup>  
 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，  
 紫蒲交狹涖。  
 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，  
 壟秋拖光穉。  
 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;<sup>1</sup>  
 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,<sup>2</sup>

---

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.<sup>1</sup>  
 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.<sup>2</sup>  
 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;<sup>3</sup>

---

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;<sup>1</sup>  
 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;<sup>2</sup>  
 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.<sup>3</sup>  
 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.<sup>4</sup>  
*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.<sup>1</sup>  
 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;<sup>2</sup>  
 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.<sup>3</sup>  
 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.<sup>1</sup>  
 So that this harried scion of Chengji  
 wishes to emulate Master Chiyi.<sup>2</sup>

### 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.<sup>3</sup>

- 5 South of the bridge are many mounted merry-makers  
 the northern hills are filled with ancients.<sup>4</sup>  
 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.<sup>1</sup>  
 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 snakes' drool traces.<sup>2</sup>  
 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.<sup>3</sup>
- 15 The string of coins on my staff is not to buy drink – <sup>4</sup>  
 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.<sup>1</sup>  
 Those two lines of writing inside their covers –  
 dormant insects have devoured them, rue and all.<sup>2</sup>
- 25 Inquire for me of the attitude at the Qin terrace – <sup>3</sup>  
 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;<sup>4</sup>  
 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.

---

<sup>4</sup> 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;<sup>1</sup>
- 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.<sup>2</sup>  
 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，  
繡襠襦。  
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!<sup>1</sup>

- 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!<sup>2</sup>

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;<sup>1</sup>  
the fifty-stringed psaltery is heard over the sea.<sup>2</sup>

- 5 Heaven's river rustles along its bed of silver sand;  
in the Ying daughter's loom, a cut-off patch of misty paleness.<sup>3</sup>  
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;<sup>4</sup>  
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 趑趄胡馬蹄。  
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 Madalouzi<sup>1</sup>

From the Jade Pass to the Golden Man<sup>2</sup>  
 it's twenty-four thousand *li*.  
 Where winds blow the sands into banks of cloud  
 that in a moment cross over the Liao River.<sup>3</sup>

- 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.<sup>4</sup>

---

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

- 長戈莫舂，  
 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.<sup>1</sup>  
 On meeting a Zouyu on the road,
- 10 Niu Ai became indignant.<sup>2</sup>  
 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.<sup>3</sup>

---

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 betony<sup>1</sup>  
 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.<sup>2</sup>

- 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?<sup>3</sup>

---

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.<sup>1</sup>

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.<sup>2</sup>

### 4.8 Lyrics to the Whisk Dance

The Wu maiden's voice pierces the sky;

clouds in the void languidly hover.<sup>3</sup>

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.<sup>1</sup>

- 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.<sup>2</sup>

#### 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.<sup>3</sup>

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，  
 賢兄小姑哭嗚嗚。

- 5 For you I rise and sing “I Always Long for You” – <sup>1</sup>  
 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.<sup>2</sup>

#### 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.<sup>3</sup>
- 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.<sup>4</sup>  
 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.<sup>1</sup>

- 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.<sup>2</sup>

---

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.<sup>1</sup>

- 5 A thousand river-perch, a hundred kegs of ale:  
in the wine-jar lies the inverted green of southern hills.<sup>2</sup>  
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:<sup>3</sup>  
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。  
 繡段千尋賂皂隸，  
 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;<sup>1</sup>

his dappled coat and golden pendants interspersed with flowers' luster. In the jade hall there is teasing of the "Master of the Golden Loft";<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup>

- 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.<sup>4</sup>

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，  
雲弣絕騁聒旱雷。

- Before the twelve gates there spread his splendid mansions;<sup>1</sup>  
 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;<sup>2</sup>  
 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.<sup>3</sup>  
 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。  
 彈烏崦嵫竹，  
 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;<sup>1</sup>  
 40 Wu region songs: green birds that mimic human speech.<sup>2</sup>  
 He could cause stones to be carved, and filled level with purple gold;<sup>3</sup>  
 he knew how to cut the fur to mark the newly delivered rabbits.<sup>4</sup>

- 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;<sup>5</sup>  
 day or night she's never been at rest.  
 Striking the crow with bamboo of Mt. Yanzi;<sup>6</sup>  
 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.<sup>7</sup>

---

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.<sup>1</sup>

- 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.<sup>2</sup>

---

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;<sup>1</sup>  
 their eight bridles jangling as they wheel around the sky.  
 The Five Essences sweep the way before them, congealed clouds swing  
 open.<sup>2</sup>

- 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,<sup>3</sup>  
 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?”*<sup>1</sup>

*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:<sup>2</sup>

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，  
 寥落野湟秋漫白。

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 – <sup>1</sup>  
 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.<sup>2</sup>

- 5 To the clang of a bell the banquet starts, and they play at Shooting  
 Heaven:<sup>3</sup>  
 on his toadies' embroidered coats the gold tigers are splotted with  
 blood.<sup>4</sup>  
 Day after day, night after night, they worried the oceans would  
 overturn,<sup>5</sup>  
 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，  
狡獍猱貍吐饞涎。  
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.<sup>1</sup>  
 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.<sup>2</sup>  
 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.<sup>3</sup>  
 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.<sup>4</sup>

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?<sup>1</sup>

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.<sup>1</sup>

- 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.<sup>2</sup>  
 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.<sup>1</sup>

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 Calls<sup>2</sup>

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,<sup>3</sup>  
grand masters of writing:  
The twenty-eight lunar lodges arrayed within their breasts,<sup>4</sup>  
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.<sup>1</sup>  
 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.<sup>2</sup>  
 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.<sup>1</sup>  
 Orchid and osmanthus breathe out heady fragrance;  
 caltrops and lotuses are ever burgeoning there.<sup>2</sup>
- 15 While watching rainstorms she meets Jasper Consort;<sup>3</sup>  
 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.<sup>4</sup>
- 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;<sup>5</sup>  
 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,<sup>1</sup>

- 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.<sup>1</sup>  
 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.<sup>2</sup>

#### 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.<sup>3</sup>  
 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 Changping<sup>1</sup>

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.<sup>2</sup>

---

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.

- 訪古沅瀾收斷鑊，  
折鋒赤墜曾封肉。  
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.<sup>1</sup>

### 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.<sup>2</sup>

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."<sup>3</sup>

---

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.<sup>1</sup>

- 10 In autumn's stillness the yaktail-banner stars appear;<sup>2</sup>  
 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.<sup>3</sup>

---

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

玉甕汲水桐花井，  
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.<sup>1</sup>

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;<sup>2</sup>  
a fresh fragrance: several grains from it would make a meal for Hong  
Ya.<sup>3</sup>

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，  
 塘水聲湑湑。

#### 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。  
 北方逆氣汗青天，  
 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?<sup>1</sup>

#### 4.35 Ballad: By the Pond

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

#### 4.36 Song: General Lǔ

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

- 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，  
遙聞箴中花箭香。

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.<sup>1</sup>

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;<sup>2</sup>  
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.<sup>3</sup>

---

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;<sup>1</sup>  
 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.<sup>2</sup>  
 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，  
 攢蛾一蹙重一彈。  
 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.<sup>1</sup>

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.<sup>2</sup>  
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:<sup>3</sup>  
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.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>1</sup>

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 月漉漉篇

月漉漉，  
波烟玉。  
莎青桂花繁，  
芙蓉別江木。

5 粉態袂羅寒，  
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.<sup>1</sup>

- 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.<sup>2</sup>

- 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."<sup>3</sup>

---

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.<sup>1</sup>

- 5 Hammering forth a thousand years, while the sun stays pale and bright;  
 Wu of Han, the Qin emperor – they cannot hear it.<sup>2</sup>  
 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?<sup>3</sup>

#### 4.46 Song for Master Xu's Courtesan Zheng

Of an ancestral line of Xus and Shis, of imperial in-law rank,<sup>4</sup>  
 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;<sup>5</sup>  
 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;<sup>1</sup>  
when she entered Luoyang her fragrance wafted all about Tripod  
Gate.<sup>2</sup>  
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;<sup>3</sup>  
10 all fifty pure strings she played for her lord.<sup>4</sup>  
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.<sup>5</sup>  
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."<sup>1</sup>

#### 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.<sup>1</sup>

#### 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.<sup>1</sup>  
I won't hear this night's gate-tower drums – <sup>2</sup>  
some consolation for one whose feelings scorch within.

- 5 Zhao Yi's allotment of fate was scanty;  
Sima Xiangru's inheritance was poverty.<sup>3</sup>  
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"<sup>4</sup>  
10 where halberds and banners bedeck gates of the grand.<sup>5</sup>  
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;<sup>6</sup>  
awnings spread rosy clouds to the clear pool's edge.  
Unbinding cash-strings, they pour out their "Mother-moth"<sup>7</sup>

---

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”;<sup>1</sup>
- 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.<sup>2</sup>
- 25 Yet sagely light is obscured and not sent forth:  
 the tortoise-insignia by their waists, mere silver bricks.<sup>3</sup>  
 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.<sup>1</sup>  
 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.<sup>2</sup>

### W.1 South Garden

- Wanderer in square-collared robe and basil-scented sash, in a  
 bent-cornered headcloth;<sup>3</sup>  
 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.

草梢竹柵鎖池滯。  
 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;<sup>1</sup>  
 across the assembly washes Chu music as they intone the "Summons  
 to the Soul."<sup>2</sup>

## 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.<sup>3</sup>

- 5 Osmanthus drupes spontaneously drop;  
 clouds play at forming carriage canopies.<sup>4</sup>

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.<sup>5</sup>

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.<sup>6</sup>

---

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.<sup>1</sup>  
 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?<sup>2</sup>

---

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,<sup>1</sup>  
 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.<sup>1</sup>

- 5 She had no mind to take leave of the imperial carriage;<sup>2</sup>  
 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.<sup>3</sup>

## 6.

Butterflies fly about the red-powdered terrace;  
 willows sweep the road where panpipes sound.  
 Ten suns hang in the courtyard;<sup>4</sup>  
 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.<sup>1</sup>
- 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.<sup>2</sup>  
 By the southern balustrade the River turns and the curtain shadows  
 grow sparse;<sup>3</sup>
- 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;<sup>4</sup>  
 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.<sup>5</sup>  
 Delight comes from a thousand *li* away –

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

<sup>5</sup> “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;<sup>1</sup>  
 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.<sup>2</sup>

### 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;<sup>3</sup>  
 the plectrum-guard is figured with gold – the immortal phoenix is  
 stirred.<sup>4</sup>  
 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.<sup>5</sup>  
 Ah Hou ties it up in brocade and seeks Master Zhou,  
 relying on the east wind to give her a good start.<sup>6</sup>

---

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.<sup>1</sup>

### 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.<sup>2</sup>

The west wind has not risen as I sadly face my dragon-shuttle;<sup>3</sup>  
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?<sup>1</sup>

- 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.<sup>2</sup>  
 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 – <sup>1</sup>

- 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*.<sup>1</sup>  
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" – <sup>2</sup>  
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;<sup>3</sup>  
mist-shrouded trees at Maoling have an anxious air.  
On the bronze basins the jade dew flows freely as before,<sup>4</sup>  
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.<sup>1</sup>  
 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,<sup>2</sup>  
 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.<sup>1</sup>  
 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?<sup>2</sup>  
 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 – <sup>3</sup>  
 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?<sup>1</sup>  
 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;<sup>2</sup>  
 not deigning to regard the splendor of the southern lanes.<sup>3</sup>

### 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.<sup>4</sup>  
 Lotus leaves have fallen and the autumn simurgh has departed;  
 the King of Yue rises at night to climb Heaven's Crone.<sup>5</sup>
- 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?<sup>6</sup>

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.<sup>1</sup>
- 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?<sup>2</sup>

### 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.

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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。  
 粉窗香咽顏曉雲，  
 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;<sup>1</sup>  
 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.<sup>2</sup>

### 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:<sup>3</sup>  
 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.



## Endnotes

### 1.1 李憑箏篴引 **Rhapsody: Li Ping's Harp**

The *konghou* is a twenty-three-stringed harp with curved body, held vertically in the player's lap. This work of Li He's seems more likely an imagined evocation than a response to an actual performance of Li Ping's. YSJ 26 lists a "Harp Rhapsody" ("Konghou yin" 箏篴引) under the old Han "Response Songs" (*xiang he ge ci* 相和歌辭) repertoire, but here Li He simply borrows the old *yuefu* title for a poem describing a harp performance; cf. 4.10, where Li He does engage with the original scenario associated with the "Harp Rhapsody" title. *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic, rhyming every line.

l. 2: 空山: MG, QTS read 空白. l. 3 江娥: WQ notes "Also reads 湘娥."

### 1.2 殘絲曲 **Tune: The Last of the Willow-floss**

Not otherwise attested in *yuefu* repertoires. The title establishes the season as late spring, when the willow floss, a favorite emblem of the season, has almost disappeared. *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic, rhyming every line.

l. 3 年少: SS reads 少年.

### 1.3 還自會稽歌并序 **Song: Returning from Guiji (with preface)**

During the period of Hou Jing's rebellion, Yu Jianwu, in flight from the capital, was captured by Hou's general Song Zixian 宋子仙, who offered to spare his life in exchange for a poem to be composed on the spot; Yu Jianwu succeeded in this task. It is tempting to relate the "supplement" Li He presents here to this episode, but no such connection is made explicit either in the preface or in the poem itself. The image of the rushes at l. 6 involves a beautifully apt echo of an anecdote from the *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語: Sima Yu 司馬昱 (320–372), who briefly ruled as Emperor Jianwen 簡文 of the Jin, was born in the same year as his minister and friend Gu Yue 顧悅 (320–?), but Gu's hair turned white first. When Sima Yu asked Gu why, Gu elegantly replied, "Loveliness of willows and rushes [such as mine] declines at the first hint of autumn; substance of pine or cypress [such as yours] grows all the more luxuriant through the frost." *Form*: unregulated pentasyllabic, rhymed every other line.

Preface 國勢: SS, MG, QTS read 國世. 1.2 濕螢: QTS, WQ note “Also reads 濕螢.”

#### 1.4 出城寄權璩楊敬之 On Departing from the City: Sent to Quan Qu and Yang Jingzhi

Both addressees are mentioned in the “Short Biography” (see Appendix). They had both passed the *jinshi* examination of 807. This poem would appear to date from Li He’s 812 return home from Chang’an after leaving his post as Vice-director for Ceremonials due to illness (4.50 also likely dates from this time). *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic quatrain, rhymed aaxa.

#### 1.5 示弟 To Show to my Younger Brother

Possibly from the period after Li He’s return on leaving his position in Chang’an in 812. The character 猶 appears after the title in some editions; if this reading is authentic then this would evidently be the younger brother’s name. *Form*: pentasyllabic, in the tonally regulated eight-line form known as *lǚshi*.

Title 示弟: ZY, YWX read 示弟猶. 1.2 一日: SS, MG read 十日. 1.5 猶能: SS, MG, MJ read 獨能.

#### 1.6 竹 Bamboo

Titles simply naming a “thing” characterize the *yongwu* 詠物 (“poems on things”) subgenre: the montage-like series of “aspects” of the thing, and the riddling quality of this work (where the titular “thing” is never named directly in the poem) are typical of the subgenre. *Form*: pentasyllabic *lǚshi*.

1.3 生: WQ notes “Also reads 垂.” 1.6: 裁堪: WQ notes “Also reads 竿應.”

#### 1.7 同沈駙馬賦得御溝水 In Response to Imperial Son-in-Law Shen’s “On the Set Topic ‘Waters of the Imperial Canal’”

There are records of imperial sons-in-law surnamed Shen from around this time, but the identity of the one Li He encountered has not been determined. The imperial canal was a channel conducting water from the Zhongnan mountains south of the capital and passing into Chang’an, and through the imperial palace proper. *Yongwu* poems (see Endnote to 1.6 above) on prescribed topics drawing on scenes in and

around the imperial palace often featured in the *jinshi* examinations (though typically in the slightly extended six- or eight-couplet forms of the regulated verse), but the nature and circumstances of Shen's original work are unknown. *Form*: pentasyllabic *lǔshi*.

### 1.8 始為奉禮憶昌谷山居 **Having Just Taken up Duty as as Vice-Director for Ceremonials, Recalling my Changgu Mountain Dwelling**

Written during Li He's second sojourn in Chang'an; the consensus as to his chronology would place this in spring or summer of 810. *Form*: pentasyllabic *lǔshi*, in the twelve-line form common in examination *shi* compositions.

l. 11 知: Following SS, XC, QTS. WQ reads 如.

### 1.9 七夕 **Seventh Night**

*Form*: pentasyllabic *lǔshi*.

l. 1 別浦: ZY, YWX read 別渚. l. 4 花: LJ notes "Another edition reads 螢, which must be correct." l. 8 更值: ZY, YQ, YWX read 又值.

### 1.10 過華清宮 **Passing by Huaqing Palace**

The poem recounts a visit to Huaqing Palace in roughly 810, when it had fallen into a state of semi-ruin. *Form*: pentasyllabic *lǔshi*.

l. 4 紫錢: SS reads 紫泉. l. 6 點: JX reads 照. 舊紗: ZY reads 絳紗.

### 1.11 送沈亞之歌并序 **Song: Sending off Shen Yazhi (with preface)**

Shen Yazhi (781–832) was a renowned writer of the era, and a core member of Han Yu's circle. His subsequent attempt at the *jinshi* examination in 815 was to prove successful. *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic, in stanzas rhyming aaxa.

Preface 送之: SS, WZZ, YQ read 勞之. l. 11 歸江: SS, YQ read 歸家. l. 13 壯夫: WQ cites the YWX reading 丈夫.

### 1.12 詠懷二首 **Singing my Feelings (Two Poems)**

The first poem of the pair uses the story of Sima Xiangru – particularly his latter life of quiet retirement and the posthumous glory of his texts directing Emperor Wu of the Han to perform the *fengshan* sacrifice – as an implicit figure for Li He. The second poem directly treats Li He's own daily life as a writer in retirement. *Form*: unregulated pentasyllabic.

*Poem 2*, l. 1 著書: ZY, YQ, YWX read 看書. l. 8 相宜: SS, WZZ, MG read 自宜.

### 1.13 追和柳惲 **Posthumously Responding to Liu Yun**

Tingzhou, south of Lake Tai in the Jiangnan region, acquired the alternate name Baipingzhou 白萍洲, “islet of white waterclover,” from the first line of a *yuefu* verse Liu Yun wrote to the tune “Jiangnan” from an ancient repertoire of fifteen “response songs.” Li He’s “response” is so clearly directed to this poem that YSJ 26 includes it, despite its occasional title, as a *yuefu* under the same tune title. Liu Yun’s original reads: “They gather the white water-clover at Tingzhou, / as the sun sinks in the Jiangnan springtime. / A homebound wanderer hailing from Dongting / encounters an old friend in the region of the Xiao and Xiang. / ‘Friend, why not go back as well? / The time of spring flowers will soon again be past.’ / He does not mention the joy of his new love; / he only mentions how far it is to travel.” 汀洲採白蘋 / 日落江南春 / 洞庭有歸客 / 瀟湘逢故人 / 故人何不返 / 春華復應晚 / 不道新知樂 / 只道行路遠. Li He depicts Liu Yun himself languorously enjoying the region’s pleasures, along the lines of the “friend” in Liu’s own lyric: the first stanza depicts delights of scenery and climate; the second hints obliquely at an intimate banquet and romantic dalliance. On “posthumously responding” in Li He, cf. 3.1, along with the Endnote to that work. *Form*: unregulated pentasyllabic, two stanzas rhyming xaxa.

l. 7 陌: MG reads 脈.

### 1.14 春坊正字劍子歌 **Song: The Spring Compound Collator’s Sword**

The “Spring Compound” (*chun fang* 春坊) was a secretarial establishment in the administration of the Crown Prince (Hucker’s functional translation is “Secretariat of the Heir Apparent”), formally divided into “left” and “right” staffs. There were two collators, in the “left” division, with rank 9a. Another poem (3.48) is addressed to a cousin in the office of collator, but there is no further evidence as to whether the addressee here might be the same person. *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic.

Title: YX omits 春坊正字. l. 2 吳潭: WYYH reads 吳江. ll. 5–6: YX reverses the order of these two lines. l. 5 皮老: YX, MG read 老皮. l. 8 莫教: WYYH reads 分明. l. 12 鬼母: WYYH reads 鬼姥.

### 1.15 貴公子夜闌曲 **The Young Aristocrat's "Song of Night's Close"**

Not otherwise attested as a *yuefu* title, this piece generally evokes the mood and poetic vocabulary of Southern Dynasties songs like those collected in *Yutai xinyong* 玉臺新詠 (*New Songs from the Jade Terrace*). The opening lines echo the *yuefu* song "Yang pan'er" 楊叛兒: "I wander a while out White Gate, / where the willows can conceal crows. / My love will be the aloeswood incense, / and I'll be the Mt. Bo censor" 暫出白門前 / 楊柳可藏烏 / 歡作沈水香 / 儂作博山爐. This echo serves to situate the poem in the aftermath of a lovers' tryst. *Form*: unregulated pentasyllabic quatrain, rhymed xaxa.

### 1.16 雁門太守行 **Ballad: The Governor of Yanmen**

This title appears in *yuefu* repertoire lists among "tunes in *se* mode" in the category of "response songs" (YSJ 39). The tune is said to have originated from liturgies of praise for a virtuous minister named Wang Huan 王渙 (?–105), but Xiao Gang and others had written lyrics to the title, like this by Li He, on frontier battles. One tradition says that Han Yu's appreciation and subsequent patronage of Li He began from the moment when Han was electrified on first reading this poem's opening lines. *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic, rhyming every line.

l. 2 日: Following WYYH, ZY, YQ, YWX, QTS. WQ reads 月.  
l. 3 角聲: SS reads 鬼聲. l. 4 塞上: XC, WZZ, LK read 塞土.

### 1.17 大堤曲 **Tune: The Grand Dike**

This title appears among the "Songs to Western Tunes" in the old Southern Dynasties "pure *shang*-mode" repertoire (YSJ 48). *Form*: unregulated, mixed line lengths.

l. 10 妾食: WYYH reads 與客. l. 13 菖蒲花: WYYH reads 菖蒲短.

### 1.18 蜀國絃 **Strings of Shu**

This title appears among a group of four "string tunes" in the "Response Songs" repertoire (YSJ 30). See also the allusions to this repertoire in 3.33, W.17. Li He's version evokes typical Shu scenes and lore; several commentators suggest the possibility of reading it as an imagistic poetic rendering of a musical performance. *Form*: unregulated pentasyllabic.

l. 3 墜: ZY reads 墮. l. 4 竹雲: QTS notes "Also reads 行雲."  
l. 6 粼粼: SS reads 鱗鱗.

### 1.19 蘇小小墓 Little Su's Tomb

YSJ 85 gives the title as “Song of Little Su” 蘇小小歌. The following version, which YSJ records as the “original lyrics” (*gu ci* 古辭) for the song, was evidently Li He's immediate source. A comparison offers a revealing example of Li He's methods in adapting traditional material: “I ride in an oilcloth-sided carriage; / you ride a grey dapple horse. / Where shall we tie our lover's knot? / Beneath the pines and cypresses at the Western Hill.” 我乘油壁車 / 郎乘青驄馬 / 何處結同心 / 西陵松柏下. *Form*: unregulated, irregular line length.

Title 蘇小小墓: YSJ, SS, XC, MG read 蘇小小歌. YSJ notes “Also reads 錢塘蘇小小歌.” l. 10 夕相待: YSJ, SS, XC, MG read 久相待. l. 14 風吹雨: SS, XC read 風雨吹; MG reads 風雨晦.

### 1.20 夢天 Dream of Heaven

Not otherwise known as a tune title, but the rhyme scheme and quatrain structure of this work is a common one in Tang music. *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic, quatrains rhymed aaxa.

l. 2 壁斜白: YQ reads 壁斜白.

### 1.21 唐兒歌 Song: Tang Lad

An ostensibly original title note reads, “The son of Du, Duke of Bin” 杜幽公之子. The title and the poem itself allude to a marriage connection between this Du family and that of the emperor. The designation “Duke of Bin” in the title note has caused trouble to commentators; Du Huangchang 杜黃裳 (738–808) held that rank, but given that Li He's first sojourn in Chang'an was not until 808, he seems an unlikely candidate. Du Cong 杜悰 (ca. 780's–960's) married a Tang princess (Xianzong's 憲宗 [r. 805–820] eldest daughter, the Princess of Qiyang 岐陽) in 813, and was granted the title “Duke of Bin,” though Li He cannot have known of this latter fact, since it occurred after 859. It seems best to take Du Cong as the “Duke of Bin” referred to, and thus to infer that the title note was added by a later compiler (perhaps Wei Zhuang 韋莊 [836–910], whose *Youxuan ji* 又玄集 [YX] preface dates to 900). *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic, all lines except l. 7 rhyming. Title 唐兒歌: Wu Zhengzi notes that all his editions read 唐歌兒 and that he adopts the reading given here based on YX. The full title in YX reads 杜家唐兒歌. l. 2 真男子: YQ reads 奇男子. l. 8 濃笑: YX reads 含笑. 書空: SS, WZZ, YX read 畫空.

## 1.22 綠章封事 Green-text Sealed Petition

A putatively original title note reads, “Composed for a nighttime libation by the Daoist priest Wu” 為吳道士夜醮作。Sealed green-text petitions would commonly be offered to request long lifespan, or the cancellation of foredestined calamities. This work requests intercession on behalf of Yang Xiong, seemingly as an icon of the literary man, so directly or indirectly may be viewed as a prayer for deliverance on Li He’s own part as well. *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic; two quatrains rhymed aaxa followed by two rhyming couplets.

l. 1 覓: QTS notes “Also reads 貌.”

## 1.23 河南府試十二月樂詞并閏月 For the Henan Provincial Examination: Musical Lyrics for the Twelve Months, Including an Intercalary Month

Li He’s success in the Henan provincial examination at Luoyang likely occurred in 808 (see Introduction). YSJ 82 includes this suite in its collection of “lyrics from recent eras.” *Forms*: various; many of the stanzas seem to reflect attention to tonal metrical pattern, but none follows the prescriptions of regulated verse per se.

*Poem 1* l. 1 上樓迎春新春歸: YSJ notes “Also reads 正月上樓迎春歸.”

l. 4 幽風: YSJ reads 幽泥. l. 6 睞: following XC. WQ reads 臉.

*Poem 2* l. 1 飲酒采桑津: YSJ, QTS read 二月飲酒采桑津. l. 3 交劍: YSJ notes “Also reads 絞刀.” l. 5 生綠塵: YSJ notes “Also reads 香綠昏”; QTS notes “Also reads 香霧昏.”

*Poem 3* l. 2 愁殺人: YSJ, SS, XC read 愁幾人. l. 10 秋: YSJ, QTS note “Also reads 愁.”

*Poem 4* l. 3 青氤氲: ZY, YWX read 青氤氲; YSJ notes “Also reads 過清氣.” l. 6 重: YSJ, QTS note “Also reads 帖.”

*Poem 5* l. 1 簾額: XC, WZZ, MG, YSJ read 簾上. l. 7 羅袖從徊翔: YSJ reads 羅綬從風翔.

*Poem 7* l. 4 空園: YSJ reads 故園.

*Poem 8* l. 1 嬌: YSJ, QTS note “Also reads 宮.” l. 3 緝: YSJ, QTS note “Also reads 織.” l. 6 簾中: following YSJ, SS, XC. WQ reads 簾內.

*Poem 9* l. 1 螢: QTS notes “Also reads 雲.” l. 5 露花: YSJ, MG, MJ read 霜花.

*Poem 10* l. 4 燭籠: SS, XC, MG, ZY, YQ, YWX read 燭龍.

*Poem 11* 1. 1 團圓: YSJ, SS, XC read 團圓. 1. 4 戰卻: XC, YSJ, MG, QTS read 卻天. 1. 5 泉合: YSJ notes “Also reads 冰合”. 1. 6 溫泉: YSJ reads 溫水; WQ notes “Also reads 溫湯.”

*Poem 12* 1. 3 排: YSJ, SS, MG read 解.

*Poem 13* 1. 3 玉琯: HC reads 街琯. A marginal note in LJ suggests 街 is a mistranscription of 葭 *jia* (“rush”), plausible in light of the traditions adduced in the footnote to this line.

### 1.24 天上謠 A Ditty from Heaven

The category of *yao* 謠 typically refers to unaccompanied rhyming chants or ditties that emerge in popular circulation as if spontaneously. Where they figure in historical narratives they are often mined for riddling oracular meanings. Since *yao* in its primary sense refers to songs one might overhear, but which lack any clear authorship or context, to title one's own poem as a *yao* is in effect to invite the reader to imagine this as something one might overhear – in this case, in heaven. *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic, two quatrains rhyming aaxa and two rhyming couplets.

1. 1 漂: WYYH reads 杓. 1. 7 笙: WYYH reads 簫. 1. 12 海塵新生石山下: WYYH reads 海雲初生石城下.

### 1.25 浩歌 Flooding Song

This song title is Li He's invention, derived from a couplet in the “Junior Master of Lifespans” from the *Chuci* “Nine Songs” (“Jiu ge” 九歌): “I gaze out toward the fair one but [s]he has not come; / sadly facing the wind I give forth flooding song” 望美人兮不來 / 臨風恍兮浩歌. YSJ 68 includes it in its “lyrics to miscellaneous tunes,” meaning in effect that Guo Maoqian had no evidence of any preceding musical tradition. The reference at 1. 11 to the proverbially generous patron Lord Pingyuan of Zhao may involve some expression on Li He's part of hope or of frustration in relation to Chi Shimei, which would date this work to the time of Li He's sojourn at Luzhou, in the ancient domain of Zhao; see Introduction, along with 3.17, 1. 4, where the connection is made explicit. *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic; two stanzas rhymed aaxa each followed by two rhyming couplets. Rhyme changes do not always correspond to thematic shifts, but the frequent changes in rhyme in this work do mirror sharp discontinuities in sense, creating a montage-like effect.

l. 5 驄馬: WYYH reads 駿馬. l. 6 細煙: WYYH reads 細煙. l. 8 問誰: WYYH reads 是誰. l. 9 浪飲: WYYH reads 亂舞. l. 14 髮薄: WYYH reads 鬢薄. l. 15 看: WYYH notes “Also reads 羞.” 新綠: WYYH reads 深綠. 看見秋眉換新綠: SS reads 看看見秋眉換綠.

### 1.26 秋來 **Autumn Comes**

Bao Zhao wrote versions of two old funeral songs that speak in a stark and striking manner from the perspective of the deceased after death. This connection clearly underlies the image of singing ghosts in the penultimate line, and seems likely to have been Li He’s point of departure for this poem. *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic, quatrains rhyming aaxa.

l. 1 壯士: WYYH reads 志士. l. 3 一編書: WYYH reads 一篇書.  
l. 6 香魂: WYYH reads 鄉魂.

### 1.27 帝子歌 **Song: God’s Daughters**

Li He’s song here broadly follows the ritual scenario of the liturgical songs to local divinities of the “Nine Songs.” The Southern Dynasties “pure *shang*-mode” suite “Songs for the Divine Strings” (cf. 4.19, 4.38, 4.40) includes a song titled “White Stone Lad”: “The White Stone Lad / lives by the Yangzi’s banks; / before him the Yangzi Earl clears the way, behind follow troops of fishes” 白石郎 / 臨江居 / 前導江伯後從魚. *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic, quatrains rhyming every line.

l. 1 明月: Following MG, MJ, QTS. WQ reads 帝子.

### 1.28 秦王飲酒 **The King of Qin Drinks**

*Form*: unregulated, irregular rhyme change, all lines rhyming.

l. 13 黃娥: Following WYYH. WQ reads 黃鵠. l. 15 青琴: following suggested emendation in WQ. WQ reads 清琴. WYYH reads 青春, and notes “The collection reads 青琴: this is a goddess.”

### 1.29 洛姝真珠 **Pearl, the Luoyang Beauty**

This work is constructed around a recurrent scenario in Tang performance traditions, including both songs and quasi-operatic vignettes: the neglected woman pines at home as her lover or husband is off dallying with courtesans. *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic; two rhyming

couplets followed by three quatrains, two rhymed aaxa, and a final quatrain with all lines rhyming.

l. 1 青廓: WZZ, QTS read 清廉; ZY reads 青郭. l. 8 濃蛾: WZZ, SS, YQ read 濃娥. l. 9 金鵝: WZZ, MG read 金城. l. 10 鸞裾: SS, YWX read 鸞裙. l. 11 八聰: WQ notes “Should read 八窗.” 臉: MG, MJ read 臉.

### 1.30 李夫人 Lady Li

The *Han shu* 漢書 (*History of the Han*) describes the romance between Emperor Wu and Lady Li, a singer and the sister of the court music master Li Yannian 李延年 (?–90 BCE). After her premature death, a brief glimpse of Lady Li afforded via a séance left the emperor even more griefstricken; he composed a song about the encounter, which he commanded the imperial music bureau to set to music and perform, as well as a verse lament in the manner of the *Chuci*. When Emperor Wu’s lament on Lady Li says, “now that you’ve gone down to your new palace, you do not return to your former courtyard,” it is clear that this “new palace” is the tomb. Here, however, Li He reimagines her death as the departure of her soul to a celestial palace. YSJ 84 records this work, under the title “Song of Lady Li” 李夫人歌, among its “lyrics to miscellaneous ditties.” *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic, rhyming every line; rhyme changes after the first two lines, then every four lines.

Title 李夫人: YSJ, QTS read 李夫人歌. l. 4 青雲: following WYYH, SS, XC. WQ reads 青青. l. 5 翩翩: SS, YQ read 翩翩. l. 6 商絃: WYYH reads 商絃. l. 7 紅壁: XC reads 紅壁. WYYH reads 空壁. l. 8 小妓: WYYH reads 小柏.

### 1.31 走馬引 Rhapsody: The Galloping Horse

The ancient song, a *qin*-zither tune (see YSJ 58), is associated with the story of Chuli Mugong 欒里牧恭, who, having taken vengeance for his father’s death by killing a man, lived in hiding as an outlaw. One night a horse from heaven descended and galloped around the hut where he was hiding. He interpreted this as a warning and fled to the wilderness around the Yi river, whereupon he is said to have composed the first version of this song. YSJ 48 also records a tune in the “pure *shang*-mode” repertoire that was created for the Liang court: while the future founding Emperor Wu of the Liang 梁武帝 (r. 502–549) was serving

under the Qi dynasty at Xiangyang, a children's ditty circulated that went, "The white bronze hooves of Xiangyang / will bind the Yangzhou kid" 襄陽白銅蹄 / 反縛揚州兒. After founding the Liang, Emperor Wu had songs written to the tune "White Bronze Hooves of Xiangyang." Related titles were adopted by Li Bai 李白 (701–762) and other writers evoking Xiangyang as a place frequented by impetuous young toughs. *Form*: unregulated pentasyllabic (though the first four lines read as a regulated quatrain).

l. 2 截雲: WZZ reads 裁雲. l. 3 襄陽: YSJ, QTS note "Also reads 長安." l. 5 劍花: YSJ, MG read 劍光. l. 6 劍光: YSJ, MG read 劍花.

### 1.32 湘妃 The Xiang Consorts

According to legend, the sage-king Shun, while on a southern tour of his domain, died suddenly at Cangwu 蒼梧. The Xiang river divinities appearing in the "Nine Songs" liturgical sequence were from very early on identified with his wives Ehuang and Nüying. The titles "Xiang Consort" (*Xiang fei* 湘妃) and "The Xiang Consort's Grievance" (*Xiang fei yuan* 湘妃怨) appear in medieval repertoires of *qin*-zither tunes; YSJ 57 includes this work of Li He's as well in its "lyrics to zither tunes." Referring to this mottled bamboo as *yunzhu* 筠竹, and to the consorts as "Qin beauties" (*Qin e* 秦娥) as Li He seems to do here, however, is anomalous. *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic, rhymed every line; one rhyme change after the first couplet.

l. 2 秦娥: YSJ, QTS note "Also reads 神娥." Wang Qi cites this variant, as well as 英娥, which he proposes might be construed here as "[Nü]ying and E[huang]." l. 7 青楓: YQ reads 清峰.

### 1.33 三月過行宮 Passing by the Transit Palace in the Third Month

The "transit palace" referred to here is the Fuchang palace near Li He's home at Changgu (see also 3.44, ll. 47–56), which had been a stop in a network of waystations for imperial travel between the eastern and western capitals. These were employed intensively by Empress Wu Zetian 武則天 (r. 684–705), and continued in active use through Xuanzong's reign, but had fallen into disrepair since the civil wars of the mid-eighth century. *Form*: regulated heptasyllabic quatrain.

l. 1 紅繁: XC, ZY, YQ, YWX read 紅繁.

### 1.34 南園十三首 **The South Garden (Thirteen Poems)**

This group depicts scenes around Li He's home in Changgu, and the poet's life away from his desultory official career. The group displays a level of quotidian detail that is unusual in Tang poetry; in some cases this detail creates thorny interpretive problems. *Form*: poems 1–12 are regulated heptasyllabic quatrains; number 13 is a pentasyllabic *lǚshi*.

*Poem 1* 1. 4 春風: FF notes “春 also reads 東.”

*Poem 3* 1. 2 日光: YQ reads 月將. 1. 3: 迎夏: SS reads 近夏. 香: ZY reads 新. 1. 4: 越傭: ZY, YQ, YWX read 越儂.

*Poem 4* 1. 1 未有: QTS reads 未滿. 1. 4 因遺: SS reads 固遺, WZZ reads 因遺.

*Poem 5* 1. 1 吳鉤: XC, MG read 橫刀.

*Poem 8* 1. 4 石磯: YWX reads 釣磯.

*Poem 9* 1. 3 木蘭: WZZ, SS, XC read 木欄.

*Poem 10* 1. 3 堪書: YWX reads 堪題.

*Poem 12* 1. 3 誰遣: XC, MG read 誰為; SS reads 誰遣. 裁: YWX reads 藏.

*Poem 13* 1. 4 麥雨: XC, SS, MG read 菱雨.

### 2.1 金銅仙人辭漢歌并序 **Song of the Bronze Immortal Taking Leave of the Han (with preface)**

The preface summarizes the historical anomaly account from which this poem takes its departure. The “basin-bearing immortals” referred to here were installed in Emperor Wu's Jianzhang palace complex (constructed beginning in 104 BCE); their basins were meant to gather dew, for drinking, mixed with ground jade, as an elixir of immortality. Emperor Ming of the Wei modeled his own palace and garden construction at Luoyang after Emperor Wu's complexes around Chang'an, including, as indicated in these accounts, directly appropriating artifacts of Han palace architecture for the purpose. Although Li He's “Song” envisions the immortal being carried away, extant versions of the anomaly account state that the Wei officials were dissuaded from moving them when one (or more) of them wept; standard historical records report simply that they were found to be too heavy to move. *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic meter, rhyme change every four lines, each four-line stanza rhyming aaxa. Li He calls this a “song,” and the preface

gives an account of how he came to invent and compose it; this work is consistently cited by early readers as a typical example of Li He's innovative methods in composing *geshi*, or “song-poems.”

*Preface* 元年: XC, MG read 九年. 西取: ZY, YQ, YWX read 取. 露盤: ZY, YQ, YWX read 露. 前殿: ZY, YQ, YWX read 殿前. 臨載: SS, ZY, YQ, YWX read 臨行. 乃: absent in ZY, YQ, YWX. 遂作: ZY, YWX read 為作; 遂 absent in YQ. 1. 5 牽車: Critical materials assembled in the frontmatter of WQ include an argument by Zhao Yiguang 趙宦光 (1559–1625) that this should read 牽車 (*xia* 牽, also written 轄, referring to the lock-pins in the hubs of a carriage or wagon), and that it connotes that the wagons were closely crowded together – but this hardly seems an improvement.

## 2.2 古悠悠行 Ancient “Far Far Away” Ballad

Not otherwise attested as a *yuefu* title. *Form*: unregulated pentasyllabic.

1. 5 海沙: ZY, YWX read 海波. 1. 8 從年消: YWX reads 隨年消.

## 2.3 黃頭郎 Yellow-headed Lad

This is an imitation of the Southern Dynasties “folk liturgy” lyrics such as those collected in YSJ 47 as “Songs for the Divine Strings” (cf. 4.19, 4.38, 4.40); this work, since its title does not match any known pre-Tang exemplars, appears among the “new *yuefu* lyrics” in YSJ 95. The nature of the liturgical preparations at the close of the poem is unclear, but it may be that Li He is alluding to, or imagining, a ritual in which the absent boatman is the recipient of sacrifice. *Form*: unregulated, primarily pentasyllabic; rhyming even-numbered lines only.

1. 7 玉瑟: WZZ, HC read 玉琴. 1. 11 好持: WQ notes “Also reads 好待.” 1. 12 鴛鴦: WQ notes “Also reads 鴛籠, also reads 薰籠.”

## 2.4 馬詩二十三首 On Horses (Twenty-three Poems)

This series is a sustained exploration of the lore of horses and the traditions of the signs by which horses could be judged, also maintaining the traditional allegorical register whereby the misjudged fine steed was viewed as a natural analogue for the predicament of a man whose talents went unappreciated. From early times, the body of lore on expert judges of horses such as Bole and others was extensively developed; these figures’ expertise in assessing horses’ capacities was often invoked to con-

trast with flawed judges of human abilities (cf. 2.15, ll. 13–14 and 4.50, ll. 39–40). Bole himself, also known as Sun Yang 孫陽 (see 4.50, l. 39), was a quasi-divine figure, associated with a celestial officer charged with horse management in heaven, and was also said to have authored a classical treatise on horse-judging. Apart from the various aspects of the Bole legend invoked in this series, the most recurrent themes are the analogy or identity between horses and dragons, the legendary King Mu of Zhou, who was able to roam about the cosmos with his team of miraculous horses, along with a catalog of designations for the “bone-signs” (*gu xiang* 骨相) and other markers indicating to a discerning judge the quality of a horse. *Form*: regulated pentasyllabic quatrains.

*Poem 1* l. 3 錦驪: YWX reads 錦羈.

*Poem 2* l. 3 未知: YWX reads 不知.

*Poem 3* l. 2 玉山: MG reads 玉崑. l. 3 鳳苑: YWX reads 漢苑.

*Poem 4* l. 2 本是精: WQ reads 本是星. The reading given here follows suggestion of WZZ.

*Poem 5* l. 1 沙如雪: QTS reads 山如雪.

*Poem 9* l. 1 去匆匆: XC reads 死忽忽; MG reads 死葱葱.

*Poem 10* l. 1 烏江: QTS notes “Also reads 江東.” l. 3 君王: WQ, QTS note “Also reads 吾王.”

*Poem 11* l. 3 午時: MG reads 年時.

*Poem 16* l. 1 唐劍: MG, SS read 唐欲. l. 2 拳: the reading of most edd. WQ gives an anomalous character with 毛 instead of 手 as the lower component. l. 4: 颶風: following MG, XC. WQ reads 飄風.

*Poem 17* l. 2 礧聞: ZY, YWX read 礧聞.

## 2.5 申胡子觴策歌并序 *Shawm-song for Shen Huzi (with preface)*

This poem dates from Li He's longest known stint in Chang'an, from 810 to 813, when he was serving as Vice-Director for Ceremonials. The preface provides a rare glimpse into the process whereby this particular work went from impromptu composition, to group singing, and finally to adaptation and performance with instrumental accompaniment by a professional musician. The Prince of Jiangxia was a distant relation of the imperial Li clan who was enfeoffed at Jiangxia in recognition of military service under Emperor Taizong. Li He's citation of the designation “Great Peace pipe,” and his description of its wondrous climatic and cosmological effects in ll. 5–8, likely relates to traditions

of use of this instrument, along with the *bili* itself and other similar reed instruments, in normalizing tunings, and in acoustical calculations of equal temperament along with other supposedly lost ancient sagely musical and calendrical traditions. *Form*: unregulated pentasyllabic, one rhyme throughout, rhyme in even-numbered lines only.

Preface 亦世家子: SS, XC, WZZ, MG read 本亦世家子. 北郡: Following WZZ, SS, XC, MG. WQ reads 北部.

## 2.6 老夫採玉歌 Song of the Jade-gathering Old Man

Wei Yingwu 韋應物 (737–792) wrote a “Ballad of the Jade-Gatherers” 採玉行 that may have served as Li He’s model for this work: “The government drafts eligible labor – / saying it’s for gathering the Indigo Creek jade. / Across the hills by night the villages are empty; / deep in the brambles, they are bivouacked in the rain. / A lone woman returns from sending grain; / to the south of the huts is heard mournful weeping.” 官府徵白丁 / 言採藍溪玉 / 絕嶺夜無家 / 深榛雨中宿 / 獨婦餉糧還 / 哀哀舍南哭.

## 2.7 傷心行 Ballad of Heartache

Not otherwise attested as a song title. Line 5 involves an echo of the banquet scene from the *Chuci* “Summons to the Soul” (“Zhao hun” 招魂): “Bright candles of thoroughwort-scented oil, splendid sights are mingled” 蘭膏明燭華容錯些 ... The word play in line 6 resists translation, since the words for “moths” (*e* 蛾) and “beauties” (*e* 娥) were often conflated in writing, and since a salient aspect of the “beauties” appearance was their “moth-eyebrows.” *Form*: unregulated pentasyllabic.

l. 6 飛蛾: following XC. WQ reads 飛娥.

## 2.8 湖中曲 Lake Tune

This tune-title appears to be original to Li He; here he imitates the manner and imagery of Southern Dynasties love-song *yuefu*. It is included in YSJ 95 among the “new *yuefu* lyrics.” *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic; a quatrain rhyming aaxa followed by two rhyming couplets.

l. 2 水蘋: WQ notes “Also reads 水荇.” l. 3 橫船: ZY, YQ, YWX read 橫倚. l. 5 青渠: WQ notes “Should read 清渠.” YSJ, MG read 青渠. l. 7 封巾: YSJ, MG read 封中. l. 8 壺中: WQ notes “Also reads 銅壺.”

## 2.9 黃家洞 Caves of the Huang Folk

There were recurrent conflicts during Li He's adult life between Tang imperial forces and what the Tang called "Yellow [Huang] Cave Hill-folk" 黃洞蠻 in what is now Guangxi. As reflected here, the Tang forces were often ineptly led, and casualty rates from both warfare and disease were high. The final line is problematic, but likely refers to another recurrent practice, namely that of massacring non-combatant indigenous populations in order to report high body counts. The word *qiao* 蹻 in l. 5 is otherwise unknown; the explanation in latter-day dictionaries that it means "lower leg" is traceable to Wu Zhengzi's commentary on this poem. *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic; a quatrain rhyming aaxa followed by six lines all rhyming.

l. 5 綵中: XC, SS, MG read 綵布. l. 6 簇隊: ZY, YQ, YWX read 簇墜.

## 2.10 屏風曲 Tune: the Folding Screen

This "tune" appears to be Li He's invention. *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic, rhyming every line.

l. 2. 綠鴨: WYYH reads 鴨綠. l. 3 膏蘭: WYYH reads 銀蘭. l. 4 將鬟: WYYH reads 解鬟. l. 6 酒觥: WYYH reads 酒餘.

## 2.11 南山田中行 Ballad: Fields in South Mountain

The title poses a quandary: the *xing* 行 rendered "ballad" here could also just mean "walking," which would render an occasional title, "Walking in the Fields in South Mountain." The style and form seem more reminiscent of Li He's imagined musical works than of his occasional verse, but the question is difficult to determine. The close makes best sense if we infer burial grounds in the mountains; compare 2.24.3. *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic (with variant first line); two four-line stanzas rhymed every line.

l. 1 秋風: YWX reads 秋色. l. 8 照松花: Following XC, SS, MG, ZY, YQ, YWX. WQ reads 點松花.

## 2.12 貴主征行樂 Music for a Princess's Progress

Wang Qi assembles Tang usage to argue that the term *guizhu* 貴主 was conventionally applied to princesses. This poem would thus appear to describe an outing by a princess with an honor guard of women in military formation and garb. *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic, rhyming couplets in a series of four different rhymes.

l. 1 奚騎: XC reads 奚妓. l. 6 捐鞭: SS, XC read 梢鞭.

**2.13 酒罷張大徹索贈詩時張初效謫幕 After Drinking, Zhang the Eldest, Che, Demanded that I Present a Poem: At the time Zhang had just begun his service under the Military Governor of Luzhou**

Zhang Che (?–821) was a fellow member of Han Yu's circle, married to a niece of Han Yu's. Li He went to Luzhou (at Changzhi in modern-day Shanxi province) in summer of 813 to seek Zhang Che's help in procuring an official post in the Luzhou administration (see Introduction). The turn to self-depiction in the final stanza is marked by an abrupt stylistic shift from more ornately rhetorical to plainer *yuefu* diction. *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic, quatrains rhyming aaxa.

l. 1 八: XC, MG read 一. l. 5 太行: Following SS, XC, QTS. WQ reads 水行. QTS notes “Also reads 水符.”

**2.14 羅浮山人與葛篇 A Verse: Hemp Cloth Given by Luofu Mountain Folk**

“Luofu” is explained as a collective designation of Mt. Luo and Mt. Fu, the latter said to be so designated because it was a foothill of the immortal mountain-island Penglai 蓬萊 that had floated (*fu* 浮) ashore near Mt. Luo; this *yongwu* poem perhaps describes fine hemp fabric imported from this area, as though it were from a realm of immortal beings. *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic, quatrains rhyming aaxa.

Title 羅浮: MG reads 羅敷. 山人: XC, ZY, YQ, YWX read 山父; MG reads 交. l. 2 六月: MJ reads 十月. l. 5 蛇毒濃凝: XC reads 蛇毒濃吁; MG reads 毒蛇濃吁. l. 7 箱中: Following XC, MG, ZY, YWX, QTS. WQ reads 湘中.

**2.15 仁和里雜敘皇甫湜 In Renhe Ward: an Impromptu Account for Huangfu Shi**

A title note reads, “Shi was newly made Defender at Luhun” 湜新尉陸渾. Renhe Ward was a district in the Tang eastern capital, Luoyang, where Li He lodged after his failed attempt to pass the *jinshi* examination. The imperial clan operated something like a club or guild; Li He apparently gained access to these lodgings based on his status as a member of the clan, though in his case the accommodations were evidently far from elegant. Huangfu Shi's provincial appointment at Luhun, to an office of rank 9, was a punishment for his blunt criticism of court affairs in an essay he wrote for an 808 “Worthy and Upright”

examination. The resolution of the potentially baffling l. 13 in terms of horse-judging traditions comes from a comment by Dong Boying 董伯英 cited in XL. The reference to “Mt. Kongtong” in this context was also long problematic; Wu Qiming’s resolution seems persuasive and is followed here. *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic, quatrains rhyming aaxa.

l. 4 垂珠: SS, XC, WZZ read 垂朱. l. 13 堅都: XC reads 堅都.

## 2.16 宮娃歌 *Song of the Palace Maiden*

This song, whose title is Li He’s own invention, depicts a palace woman’s yearning for home and freedom. *Form*: unregulated pentasyllabic, two rhyming couplets followed by two quatrains rhyming aaxa.

## 2.17 堂堂 *The Hall*

This is a rare instance in Li He’s collection of a tune-title attested in Tang musical performance, said to stem from court repertoire under the Tang emperor Gaozong 高宗 (r. 649–683), derived from a song attributed to Chen Shubao 陳叔寶 (r. 583–589), the “Latter Emperor” of the Chen dynasty (557–589); YSJ 79 records this work in its category of “lyrics to tunes from recent eras.” Anecdotal traditions report folk ditties of Gaozong’s reign incorporating the phrase “the hall!” that hinted darkly at the precarious state of the dynasty when the imperial line of succession was in doubt. The Huaqing palace named in line 7 is the renowned warm spring site at Mt. Li favored by the Tang emperor Xuanzong and his Prized Consort Lady Yang (see 1.10). The closing vision of white phoenixes in the steam-plumes rising above that site evoke associations of a celestial cavalcade in the *Chuci* manner. Such intimations of (perhaps thwarted) transcendence are augmented by associations of the phrase “orpiment rock” in the penultimate line that resist translation: orpiment does indeed often occur in conjunction with hot springs, and the Huaqing source was said to be such a site. Itself also held to be a source of heat, orpiment was a precious tribute item, valued both as a golden-yellow pigment and as an alchemical ingredient in medicines and elixirs of immortality. *Form*: mixed pentasyllabic and heptasyllabic, rhyming every line.

l. 2 紅脫梅灰香: YSJ and WQ note “Also reads 紅熟海梅香.” l. 4 堆: following a variant noted in WQ. WQ reads 摧. SS, XC read 推.

l. 8 白鳳: SS, YSJ, MG read 百鳳.

## 2.18 勉愛行二首送小季之廬山 **Ballad: “Be Strong, Take Care” (Two Poems), Sending off My Little Brother to Mt. Lu**

Hu Yujin 胡玉蟠 notes that the opening couplet involves an oblique reference to a statement by Tao Qian that the vicinity of a stable is no place to pursue classical studies (see “To Show to the Three Gentlemen Zhou Xuzhi, Zu Qi, and Xie Jingyi” 示周續之祖企謝景夷三郎, in *Tao Yuanming ji jiaojian*, 90); here the point is made self-deprecatingly, as Li He observes that he has achieved neither the ideal of the successful official, nor that of the unworldly scholar. *Form*: (Poem 1) unregulated pentasyllabic; (Poem 2) mixed; one quatrain pentasyllabic rhyming xaxa followed by three heptasyllabic quatrains rhyming aaxa.

*Poem 1* 1. 2 慚: YWX and WQ both note and reject the variant 新.

*Poem 2* Wang Qi notes that an alternate edition divides this work into two poems, a pentasyllabic quatrain, and another poem from line 5 to the end. 1. 4: 持此: SS, XC, QTS read 持我. 1. 10 持鏡: YWX reads 對鏡.

## 2.19 致酒行 **Ballad: “Bring the Wine”**

WYYH includes a putatively original note: “written in my Chang’an dwelling at the solstice” 至日長安里中作. The exact title used here does not appear in *yuefu* registers, but this work is in the manner of banquet songs to the *yuefu* title “Bring in the Wine” 將進酒 and similar titles elsewhere in Li He and other poets (such as 4.14, 4.41). *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic, with two hypermetrical syllables before line 6. Free use of such “padding” phrases is common in heptasyllabic song forms. 1. 1 棲遲: WYYH reads 悽惶. 1. 9 龍顏: WYYH reads 龍髯. ZY, YWX read 龍鱗.

## 2.20 長歌續短歌 **“The Long Song Continues the Short Song”**

“Long Song” and “Short Song” are designations that appear in Jin *yuefu* repertoires; a lyric attributed to the Western Jin scholar Fu Xuan 傅玄 (217–278) includes the line, “I sigh, as the long song continues the short song” 咄來長歌續短歌, which Li He’s title seems to be citing. There is no clear indication of what musical or metrical features distinguished the “long song” and “short song” in these early medieval contexts. The preface to 2.5 uses the phrase “long tune” to refer to heptasyllabic line-length, but it is unclear whether Li He would have understood the traditional terminology in this way. If there is any the-

matic relation with “short” or “long” in this work it would seem to be in the form of a meditation on time and mortality. YSJ 31 includes this work in its category of “level-mode” (*pingdiao* 平調) tunes in the “response songs” repertoire. *Form*: unregulated pentasyllabic, rhyming every other line.

l. 6 飢: Following XC, MG, SS, YSJ, QTS. WQ reads 饑. l. 7 淒涼: SS, XC, YSJ, ZY, YWX, QTS read 淒淒 or 淒淒. 四月闌: YSJ, MG read 四月蘭.

## 2.21 公莫舞歌并序 Song: “Sir, Don’t Dance” (with preface)

Xiang Yu (see also 2.4.10) was deemed to have let slip his last chance at founding a new dynasty by his failure to assassinate the eventual Han founder Liu Bang at a banquet at Hongmen. Xiang Yu’s adviser Fan Zeng, seeing that Xiang Yu was hesitating, had Xiang Yu’s cousin Xiang Zhuang offer to perform a sword dance, as a pretext for killing Liu Bang. As Xiang Zhuang began dancing, however, Xiang Bo, an uncle of Xiang Yu’s with ties to Liu Bang’s faction, rose to dance as well, interposing himself between Xiang Zhuang and Liu Bang whenever Xiang Zhuang drew near his intended target. At this moment, Fan Kuai, a powerful bodyguard of Liu Bang’s, entered the hall to protect his master, who soon after took leave and escaped. The title “Sir, Don’t ...” appearing among dance tunes in medieval *yuefu* repertoires (see YSJ 54, which also includes this work of Li He’s) derives from the words spoken to Xiang Zhuang by Xiang Bo at the crucial moment. Thus this title, where it appears in old repertoire lists, would be more properly understood as “Lyrics for the ‘Sir, Don’t ...’ Dance” – but line 9 of this poem indicates that Li He understood it as given here.

*Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic.

l. 1 古: YSJ, QTS note “Also reads 石.” l. 3 華: YSJ, QTS note “Also reads 軍.” l. 8 欄前: SS, YSJ, QTS read 欄前. l. 15 須秦印: ZY, YQ, YWX, QTS read 頒秦印.

## 2.22 昌谷北園新筍四首 New Bamboo in the North Garden at Chang’gu (Four Poems)

*Form*: regulated quatrains – though poem 3 contains one fairly significant metrical fault, and lines 1 and 4 of Poem 4 exhibit metrical anomalies that are generally very rare in Tang practice.

*Poem 1* l. 1 長竿: SS, MG read 長華.

*Poem 2* l. 1 斫取: ZY reads 砍取.

*Poem 3* l. 1 石眼: SS, XC read 十眼. l. 2 紫陌: XC, MG, QTS read 紫脈.

*Poem 4* l. 2: 歎清貧: MG reads 欲清貧.

### 2.23 惱公 **Tormented**

The opening couplet introduces male and female protagonists, and the closing couplet alludes to the old *yuefu* song “Song of Chance Meeting” (“Xiang feng xing” 相逢行), which enumerate the activities of the three wives of a large family’s three sons: “the eldest wife is weaving figured gauze; / the middle wife is weaving the flowing yellow; / the youngest wife does nothing at all – / carrying her psaltery she mounts the high hall; / ‘Sir, sit comfortably a while, / I’ve not yet finished tuning my psaltery’” 大婦織綺羅 / 中婦織流黃 / 小婦無所為 / 挾瑟上高堂 / 丈人且安坐 / 調瑟方未央. The potential for erotic titillation in the actions of the youngest wife was fully explored in rewritings of the song by Southern Dynasties poets (for Li He’s own highly elliptical version of this tradition, see 3.13). In between, there are broad hints of an overarching narrative, from first meeting and mutual yearning to surreptitious communication and assignation, prognostication, illness, and a final dissolution, but here these skeletal indications of a narrative frame in effect serve as the pretext for a catalog of poetic conventions relating to the boudoir and the lyric language of romance, as each aspect of the woman’s surroundings, interior décor, personal adornments, and body becomes the site of labyrinthine webs of association and suggestion, coded messages and erudite word-play. The title, though Li He’s invention, echoes *yuefu* traditions such as the Six Dynasties “*Aonao*” 懊惱 (also “Tormented”) songs, with which it shares a general tone of erotic insinuation and flirtatious cryptic punning. As with 3.44, the extended series of striking but fleeting images in this work, and the focus on composition at the couplet level, have invited comparison with the long works in linked-verse (*lianju* 連句) by Han Yu and Meng Jiao 孟郊 (751–814). In linked verse, two or more writers take turns, each first completing an unfinished couplet with an even-numbered line, and then inventing a striking first line for the next writer to complete in turn. Harada Kenyū went so far as to suggest that in these two works

Li He, though writing alone, imagined a dramatic scenario with two characters conversing and competing in this way. Regardless of the validity of this theory, it is not a bad approach to reading and appreciating these works. In this dense and often obscure poem, the phrase *xiao song* 削菘, “pared cabbage” (the reading of all early edd.), at l. 66 has proven particularly troublesome to commentators: reading 崧 to create a reference to Mt. Song with Zeng Yi, Wang Qi, and others fails to produce the formally required parallel with “millet” (*su* 粟) in the preceding line. Ye Congqi cites the parallel usage “pared scallion” (*xue cong* 削葱) from a poem by Yuan Zhen 元稹 (779–831), where it is used as a metaphor for the fingers of a zither-player. Some such conception must have been intended by Li He, though considering the smooth cream-white appearance of hearts of Chinese cabbage, directly emending to 葱 as Ye Congqi suggests seems unnecessary. *Form*: regulated pentasyllabic – a long example of “extended regulated verse” or *pai lü* 排律. Note that actual Tang linked verses are typically unregulated (as is the case with 3.44). l. 13 清露: MG reads 清霽. l. 16 靨: MG reads 臉. l. 19 密書: SS, ZY, YQ, YWX read 寄書. l. 54 滲墨: SS, WZZ read 澡墨. l. 66 崧: following SS, MG, XC, MJ, WZZ. WQ, ZY read 崧. Ye Congqi suggests emending to 葱. l. 70 總: following SS, YWX. WQ reads 馳. l. 74 薰衣: SS, MG read 薰香. l. 77 彎蛾: Following SS, XC, YWX, QTS. WQ reads 灣蛾. l. 79 居: SS, MG read 屈.

## 2.24 感諷五首 Oblique Reactions (Five Poems)

Commentators have looked for thematic continuity in this group, but it seems quite disparate; several works give clear indications of topical political reference, while others read as atmospheric studies. See also W.3. *Form*: unregulated pentasyllabic with rhyme in even-numbered lines.

*Poem 1* l. 2 龍洲無: SS, ZY read 龍陽有. l. 12 詣: SS reads 請.

*Poem 2* l. 7 搖揚: LK, ZY, YQ read 搖楊. YWX reads 垂楊. l. 11 一夕信豎儿: WQ, QTS note “Also reads 反信豎儿言.”

*Poem 3* l. 4 風前幾人老: ZY, YWX read 風剪春姿老. l. 7 無影: Following SS, XC, YQ. WQ reads 立影.

*Poem 5* l. 4 垂葉: MG reads 垂雲. l. 6 空秀: MG reads 雲岫. l. 7 桂露: WQ notes “Also reads 秋露.” l. 12 將: SS reads 前.

### 3.1 追和何謝銅雀妓 Posthumously Responding to He and Xie's "Performers at Bronze Sparrow Terrace"

The title "Performers at Bronze Sparrow Terrace," or simply "Bronze Sparrow Terrace," appears among the "level-mode tunes" category of the "response songs" repertoire in early *yuefu* registers; YSJ 31 assembles this work of Li He's, along with lyrics by over two dozen Six Dynasties and Tang authors (including He Xun and Xie Tiao), under the title "Performers at Bronze Sparrow Terrace." The "responding" Li He does in this poem (signaled by the verb *he* 和 of his title; elsewhere Li He and other Tang poets use the verb *tong* 同 with the same sense) means composing new verses to the title of another writer's poem, a common practice during the Tang in verse exchanges among contemporaries. Li He's adoption of this practice to "respond" to long-dead authors, however, is anomalous (cf. 1.13. For more conventional examples of such "response" poems in Li He, see 1.7, 3.22). *Form*: unregulated pentasyllabic, rhymed every other line.

### 3.2 送秦光祿北征 Sending off Mr. Qin of the Court of Splendid Emoluments on a Journey North

The recipient has not been identified. The "Court of Splendid Emoluments" (Guanglu si 光祿寺) was a central imperial agency charged with palace catering (Hucker's functional translation is "Court of Imperial Entertainments"). The context for Qin's assignment is thought to have been the Tang military response to Uighur incursions in fall and winter 813, in the region of what is now Hohhot. Thematically the work falls into two main sections: (a) lines 1–16, setting the scene of military affairs in the north where Qin's journey will take him, and imagining the upcoming journey and (b) lines 17–44, which shift to a eulogistic account of Qin's credentials, and his preparations and departure on the present campaign. Parts of the work remain obscure due to the paucity of external evidence about its occasion and dedicatee. Lines 17 and 18 use somewhat involved historical references to imply Qin had a prior service record in subduing foreign and domestic enemies. The abrupt shift in seasonal imagery beginning at l. 23 has puzzled commentators; it could simply be that the opening section provides background on the border crisis, whereas Qin's journey itself took place in the following spring. Wu Qiming proposes avoiding this seasonal question by reading the "peach blossoms" and "bright catkins" at lines 23–24 as referring

only to the coat and accoutrements of the horse, but the language of the poem suggests pairing or correspondence between the horse and a springtime scene. *Form*: extended pentasyllabic regulated verse (*pailü*), the customary form for long formal epistolary verse.

l. 20 階: XC reads 階. l. 39: 偕鳳羽: following the emendation suggested in WRL. WQ reads 階鳳羽. l. 40 擘鶯釵: Following XC, QTS. WQ reads 擘鶯釵.

### 3.3 酬答二首 Poems in Reply (Two Poems)

It is not known whether the context for these “replies” is simply lost, or enigmatically withheld. *Form*: regulated heptasyllabic quatrain.

### 3.4 畫角東城 A Painting of Yongdong City

All edd. give the title of this work as “Huajiao dong cheng” 畫角東城, which might be construed as something like “painted bugle at/of the eastern city.” The phrase “painted bugle” (*huajiao* 畫角) refers to an instrument with ethnic or military associations, and some readers have seen this poem as taking its departure from the idea of a bugle call at dawn. Zeng Yi and Wang Qi, however, both conclude that this title as it appears in extant edd. must be a mistranscription of 畫甬東城. Yongdong is a town on an island off the Zhejiang coast. In light of the geographical references in the poem and the evident interest in “local color,” this hypothesis seems persuasive, and it is followed in the text and translation presented here. *Form*: pentasyllabic regulated verse.

Title 甬東: WQ reads 角東 but argues, together with ZY, for 甬東 as the likely original reading.

### 3.5 謝秀才有妾編練改從於人秀才引留之不得後生感憶座人製詩嘲誚賀復繼四首 Licentiate Xie had a concubine named Silkwhite, who left him for another (the Licentiate’s efforts to persuade her to stay having proved unsuccessful). Afterwards, she was subject to feelings of nostalgia and yearning. At a banquet, the assembled guests composed poems on set topics to mock her. I further append four poems.

Poems commenting, often in risqué or bantering tone, on a friend’s romantic entanglements were an established part of elegant literary social exchange, often, as here, the topic for extempore verses at banquets (Li He specifies that this set of four was composed after the banquet

where the topic was set). For broadly similar scenarios in Li He's works, see also 3.23, 4.46). Silkwhite is represented as having abandoned Xie for a patron from a military background with more political clout. This "Licentiate Xie" may well be the same person referred to in the preface to 4.34. *Form*: pentasyllabic regulated verse (though metrically loose).

*Poem 1* 1. 5 姐: SS, XC reads 姊.

*Poem 2* 1. 5 破不復: SS, MG read 破瓜復. 1. 6 瑤琴: JX reads 瑤臺.

*Poem 3* 1. 1 洞房: SS, MG reads 洞庭. 1. 2 遶花心: following SS. WQ reads 作花心; MG reads 採花心.

### 3.6 昌谷讀書示巴童 **Studying at Changgu: to Show to my Ba Servant-boy; 巴童答 The Ba Servant-boy's Reply**

The Ba were an ethnic group native to what is now Sichuan, and are often mentioned as servants in elite households (cf. the Cong servant in 2.23, l. 28). *Form*: regulated pentasyllabic quatrains.

### 3.7 代崔家送客 **Written on Behalf of the Cui Family to Send off a Guest**

The context is unknown. *Form*: regulated pentasyllabic quatrain.

Title 崔家: ZY reads 崔氏. 1. 1 煙: MJ reads 陰. 1. 3 恐隨行處盡: following MG, ZY, QTS. WQ reads 恐送行處盡. 1. 4 重: WQ, QTS note "Also reads 復."

### 3.8 出城 **Departing from the City**

This poem recounts Li He's return home from Chang'an after his failed attempt at the *jinshi* examination; the late fall-early winter seasonal references here are potentially troublesome for Wu Qiming's argument that Li He did sit for the exam in the spring after his arrival at Chang'an. The fifth line has caused considerable trouble: the reading of most edd., besides being difficult to understand, gives neither the metrical pattern nor the antithetical phrasing expected. The resolution adopted here is that advocated most explicitly by Li Jian. The closing couplet is the single strongest piece of evidence Li He was married. *Form*: pentasyllabic regulated verse, with an irregular final line.

1. 5 誠可重: A variant reading cited in YQ, WQ, and QTS. WQ and most edd. read 試萬里. A note in LJ posits serial mis-transcriptions: 試 for 誠, 万[萬] for 可, 里 for 重.

### 3.9 莫種樹 **Don't Plant Trees**

This title evokes the manner of old *yuefu* songs, but appears to be Li He's invention. *Form*: regulated pentasyllabic quatrain.

l. 3 南窗: following SS. WQ reads 南牀.

### 3.10 將發 **About to Set Out**

*Form*: unregulated pentasyllabic quatrain.

l. 2 將行: MJ notes “Also reads 行將.” l. 4 日: MG reads 月.

### 3.11 追賦畫江潭苑四首 **Retrospectively Composed on a Painting of Jiangtan Garden (Four Poems)**

Construction on the Jiangtan Garden was begun in 543, and ongoing improvements were still underway when the Hou Jing rebellion put a *de facto* end to the dynasty (see 1.3, with notes). This sequence of four poems is tightly organized, starting from an overview of the site and the early morning in the first poem, and then following the morning preparations of a single palace woman for the hunting party, and concluding with a tableau of the imperial excursion itself. In the “*Fu* on the Gaotang Shrine,” it is in fact King Huai of Chu (r. 328–299 BCE) who experiences the dream encounter, which is later recounted by Song Yu to King Huai's son and heir, King Xiang (r. 298–263 BCE). But it was common to cite this story as if King Xiang were the protagonist, as Li He does here at the close of the first poem of this set. *Form*: pentasyllabic regulated verse.

Title: SS, MG omit 追賦.

*Poem 2* l. 4 帶重: following WZZ, SS, XC. WQ reads 重帶.

### 3.12 潯州張大宅病酒遇江使寄上十四兄 **Suffering from Hangover at the Residence of Zhang the Eldest at Luzhou, I Encountered an Emissary Bound for the River, and Entrusted This to Send to my Elder Cousin, Fourteenth of our Generation**

“Zhang the Eldest” is Zhang Che (see also 2.13). This poem dates from Li He's sojourn in Luzhou from 813 to 815, where he sought unsuccessfully to gain an appointment in the local administration with Zhang's help (see Introduction). The term “elder brother” applies equally to a cousin on the father's side; as customary in Tang practice, “fourteenth” refers to this cousin's birth rank within their common lineage. The cousin addressed here has not been identified. Zhaoguan 昭關,

where Li He's cousin was residing, was in Hezhou, on the left bank of the Yangzi upstream from modern-day Nanjing; Luzhou, in the territory of the ancient state of Zhao, was in modern-day Shanxi, roughly midway on a north-south line between Luoyang and Taiyuan. Urgent governmental communiques (*xi* 檄) were traditionally adorned with feathers, to indicate the need for flying speed. As the title states, Li He is entrusting this letter-poem to a government messenger headed south, bearing such “short-feathered missives” (l. 3). *Form*: extended pentasyllabic regulated verse (*pailü*).

l. 9 紗幌: ZY, YQ, YWX, QTS read 沙幌. l. 11 銀跡畫: YQ, YWX read 銀畫跡.

### 3.13 難忘曲 **Tune: Hard to Forget**

Listed as a “pure-mode tune” among the “response songs” in YSJ, due to its clear filiation to the “Song of Chance Meeting” tradition (YSJ 35; cf. the closing lines of 2.23; see also the Endnote to that work), but this title, derived from a quoted fragment from the original lyrics to that tune, appears to be Li He's innovation (see discussion in Introduction). Many lyrics in the “Song of Chance Meeting” family provide far more narrative detail, but this work may be read as a highly condensed version with the core elements: hidden amid city streets, a splendid mansion; in the mansion, an alluring woman – a prime example of the power of the “subtractive” method in Li He's use of old *yuefu* traditions (see Introduction). *Form*: unregulated pentasyllabic, rhymed every other line.

Title: XC includes the explanatory note: “Among ancient poems there are the lines, Your place is easy to spot; / easy to spot, and also hard to forget 君家誠易知, 易知復難忘.” l. 2 弱楊: MG reads 弱柳; YQ reads 強楊. l. 6 畫蛾: WZZ, XC, ZY read 拂蛾.

### 3.14 賈公閭貴壻曲 **Tune: Jia Gonglü's Noble Son-in-Law**

Jia Chong counted a prince and an emperor among his sons-in-law, but Han Shou was the most renowned in song and story – a man of romantic sensibilities, who very much “married up.” In Li He's poem, at any rate, the “Son-in-Law” is a voluptuary young man who has married above his station (as attested by both the splendor of his in-laws' mansion as well as the uxori-local nature of his marriage). The shift of scene in the final stanza is abrupt, and the closing enigmatic;

the divergence of interpretations hinges on how we construe the reference to Pan Yue in the penultimate line. Most modern commentators infer a reference to some previously unmentioned male figure; since Pan Yue was renowned as a great beauty, they read the closing line as voicing regret that this figure, unlike the playboy “Son-in-Law,” has no one to dote on him. The translation here reflects a more parsimonious approach to the implied scenario: the “Son-in-Law,” grown jaded with the luxuries of his in-laws’ mansion, goes off to make merry, outdoors, with courtesans. The abrupt shift (with rhyme change) from outdoors (swallows, sunlight) to indoors (curtain-hook, screen) in ll. 9–10 indicates a boudoir setting – which by narrative economy is most naturally read as that of the neglected wife, back in the Jia family mansion. Similarly, “Pan Yue” and his merrymaking among flowers at Heyang most economically refers again – this time, from the wife’s perspective – to the merrymaking “Son-in-Law.” Doubtless he is lovely in her eyes – but the “fragrance and loveliness” with none to die for it is hers. Such an approach situates the song firmly within the ubiquitous scenario of indoor lonely woman and outdoor/distant faithless lover of the *yuefu* “boudoir lament” subtype, as well as much Tang banquet lyric (compare, e.g., 1.29, 4.9), and renders its final stanza perhaps the extreme expression of Li He’s “subtractive” song-composition method (see discussion in Introduction). The point in the end is not which approach is “correct,” but how adepts in these song forms would likely have “heard” such a song. Modern readers’ resistance to reading in this way perhaps stems from a general impression that both Han Shou and Pan Yue were “good” men; but Tang readers were less prudish in such matters. *Form*: unregulated pentasyllabic, quatrains rhymed xaxa.

l. 3 白馬來: MG reads 白馬春. l. 5 今朝: MG reads 金朝.

### 3.15 夜飲朝眠曲 **Tune: Drinking at Night, Sleeping through Morning**

This tune-title appears to be Li He’s own invention. The point of the final couplet has baffled commentators; it could be either the woman herself or a lover who is the “imperial scion” mentioned. *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic, rhymed every line.

l. 3 柳苑: Following MG, QTS. WQ reads 柳花. 鴉: SS reads 鶯.

l. 4 蕙蘭: WZZ, SS, XC read 蕙園. l. 6 熟: XC, QTS read 熟.

### 3.16 王濬墓下作 **Composed Beneath the Tomb of Wang Jun**

The *Jin shu* 晉書 (*Jin History*) recounts that before Wang Jun's rise to military command, a children's ditty had circulated saying, "Ah Tong, Ah Tong, / bearing a sword he floats across the river. / Don't fear the tiger on land, / just fear the dragon in the water" 阿童復阿童 / 御刀浮渡江 / 不畏岸上虎 / 但畏水中龍. The Jin general Yang Hu, interpreting the ditty as an omen that a naval force would play a decisive role, and observing that Wang Jun's childhood name was Ah Tong, appointed Wang Jun general and ordered him to begin plans for a river-based invasion force. Wang Jun's tomb was located near Guozhou 虢州, not far from the main route connecting Luoyang to Chang'an. *Form*: extended pentasyllabic regulated verse (*pailü*), with metrically irregular first line.

1. 4 秋黎: SS, XC read 秋梨. 1. 6 神: QTS reads 袖. 1. 7 魚鱗: MG reads 魚龍. 1. 8 科: WQ, QTS note "Also read 斜."

### 3.17 客遊 **Wanderer's Journey**

The references to Lord Pingyuan of Zhao, a patron of renowned generosity toward his many retainers, suggests both in terms of geography and circumstance (though Li He's hopes to find in Chi Shimei his own Lord Pingyuan went unfulfilled) that this work dates from Li He's sojourn in Luzhou (see discussion in the Introduction). *Form*: unregulated pentasyllabic, rhymed every other line.

### 3.18 崇義里滯雨 **Rained in at my Lodgings in Chongyi Ward**

Chongyi Ward was in the eastern half of Chang'an, about half a kilometer south of the walls of the "Southern Palace," i.e. the Department of State Affairs (*Shangshu sheng* 尚書省). As Wu Qiming argues, the reference to the "Southern Palace" at line 7 seems to imply some critique; Wu's further suggestion that the specific target would likely have been the Ministry of Personnel (*Li bu* 吏部), charged with the assignment of official posts, is plausible, in which case the complaint here would pertain to Li He's appointment and ongoing service as Vice-Director of Ceremonial. *Form*: unregulated pentasyllabic.

### 3.19 馮小憐 **Feng Xiaolian**

It is said that once when Feng Xiaolian was playing her *pipa* at the prince's residence, a string broke, and she extemporized the song,

“Though I receive the favor of this day, / still I recall the love of former times. / If you wish to know how my heart is broken, / you should look at this string in my lap” 雖蒙今日寵 / 猶憶昔時憐 / 欲知心斷絕 / 應看膝上絃. *Form*: unregulated pentasyllabic.

l. 3 東風: XC, WZZ, MG, LK, QTS read 春風. l. 8 妾駕鞭: following WZZ, SS, ZY; WQ reads 駕妾鞭. XC reads 妾駕鞍.

### 3.20 贈陳商 Presented to Chen Shang

Written at Chang'an, likely in 811 or so. Chen Shang was another young writer in Han Yu's circle, who would go on to pass the 814 *jinshi* examination and enjoy a successful career. He was known for an extreme version of the “ancient style” writing espoused by Han Yu. Lines 1–8 are among the most memorable self-portraits in Li He's work; the middle section turns to an oblique account of a visit Li He received from Chen, praising Chen's scholarly and moral excellence. The closing section returns to Li He's own self-mockery and frustration. The closing lines of this verse epistle present one of the most vehement expressions of Li He's sense of resentment and helplessness regarding his post as Vice-Director for Ceremonials. *Form*: unregulated pentasyllabic, with a single rhyme throughout.

l. 19 旁苦: SS, XC, ZY, YQ, YWX read 旁古. l. 21 不憐: SS, ZY, YWX read 不言.

### 3.21 釣魚詩 Fishing Poem

*Form*: extended pentasyllabic regulated verse (*pailü*).

l. 1 紅渠: XC reads 紅渠. l. 4 菰米: SS, XC, WZZ read 蒲米. l. 5 清沼: ZY, YQ, YWX read 青沼.

### 3.22 奉和二兄罷使遣馬歸延州 Respectfully Responding to “My Commission Ended, I Send Away my Horse and Return to Yanzhou” by my Elder Brother, Second in our Generation

On “elder brother” being used to reference a cousin, see Endnote to 3.12 above; “second” here refers to this cousin's birth rank within their common lineage. The cousin addressed has not been identified, but we see from the assignment he is carrying out and the language Li He uses in describing him that he was a military man. Yanzhou was near the site of modern-day Yan'an in Shaanxi. Commentators are divided as to

whether the cousin sends the horse or horses back to Yanzhou, or sends away horse or horses, and himself returns to Yanzhou. The title itself might be construed either way, but the phrasing of the third and fourth lines of Li He's response poem seems to weigh somewhat in favor of the latter option, which is adopted in the translation. *Form*: extended (six-couplet) pentasyllabic regulated verse (*pailü*), with metrically irregular final couplet.

Title 奉和: YQ, YWX read 奉賀. 1. 8 尚闕難: following WZZ, SS, XC. WQ reads 向闕難. 1. 12 何畏: following WZZ, SS, XC, ZY. WQ reads 何患.

### 3.23 答贈 Reply to a Poem

The title does not specify the nature of the verse exchange, but the final couplet insinuates that someone has acquired a new concubine. In this sense this poem may be seen as emerging from a similar social scenario to that underlying the poems on “Licentiate Xie” and his former mistress “Silkwhite” (3.5). Lines 3 and 4 involve a skewed echo of the old lyrics to a “pure *shang*-mode” melody called “Yang Pan'er” 楊叛兒: “Take a walk outside the White Gate; / where the willows can hide crows. / My love is the aloeswood incense / and I am the Mt. Bo censor” 暫出白門前 / 楊柳可藏烏 / 歡作沈水香 / 儂作博山爐. *Form*: pentasyllabic regulated verse.

1. 1 本是: SS, XC read 本作. 1. 3 小象: Following MG. WQ reads 小像. 1. 5 露重: MG reads 露濕.

### 3.24 題趙生壁 Inscribed on Scholar Zhao's Wall

This “scholar Zhao” has not been identified. The poem is an encomium of the home and daily existence of a man living in quiet seclusion. Li He's opening echo of the “three wives” motif from the “Song of Chance Meeting” (see 2.23 endnote) may be intended contrastively here: in the *yuefu* tradition it was the wives of various sons in a grand urban mansion that were in question, whereas here Li He may have in mind a smaller scale and more rustic establishment where the “three wives” are wife and concubines of Scholar Zhao himself. *Form*: unregulated pentasyllabic.

1. 3 冬暖拾松枝: MG reads 冬暖十松枝. 1. 4 坐蒙減: Following WZZ, XC, MG, LK, QTS. WQ reads 生蒙減. 1. 6 石泉: SS, XC, WZZ read 石井.

### 3.25 感春 Stirred by Spring

*Form:* pentasyllabic regulated verse.

l. 3 来子: all edd. read 萊子. WZZ notes: “The character 来 was mis-transcribed as 來, then further mistaken as 萊.”

### 3.26 仙人 An Immortal

*Form:* unregulated pentasyllabic.

l. 2 翩翩: ZY reads 翩翩. l. 7 當時: SS, XC read 時時.

### 3.27 河陽歌 Heyang Song

This is an enigmatic work even by Li He's standards. Heyang is a city straddling the Yellow River, just north of Luoyang, including a central district on an island in the middle (see also **2.12**, **3.14**, **3.29**). The “Terrace Mound” (Taiqiong 臺邛) mentioned in line 4 is otherwise unattested; in this context it would appear to be a place at Heyang, or an alternate designation of Heyang itself. Wu Zhengzi suggests that “Taiqiong” may be an error for Linqiong 臨邛, the town in Sichuan where Sima Xiangru encountered Zhuo Wenjun (see **1.12.1**, along with **2.23**, l. 80); Yao Wenxue proposes a combined reference to Linqiong and “Qin terrace” (*Qin tai* 琴臺), a site in Sichuan where Sima Xiangru was said to have played the zither. At any rate, some sort of romantic assignation seems implied, and the “Master Yan” of line 6 is generally understood as self-reference on the part of the poet. Li Shangyin was to compose one of his most mesmerizing imitations of Li He's style in his own “Poem of Heyang.” *Form:* unregulated pentasyllabic (with irregular first line), quatrains rhyming xaxa.

l. 4 臺邛: WZZ notes “Perhaps should read 臨邛.” l. 8 惜許: ZY, YQ, YWX read 昔許. l. 13 月: MG reads 日.

### 3.28 花游曲并序 Tune: Wandering Among the Flowers (with preface)

The Cold Food festival is celebrated one hundred and five days after the winter solstice. What Li He means by the “tune” of the poetry of Xiao Gang, Emperor Jianwen of the Liang; apparently he means something equivalent to “manner” or “style.” This is one of the two poems that Li He specifically says was performed to musical accompaniment (along with **2.5**); the translation reflects the idea of the lyric as being

performed by the courtesans as Li He indicates. *Form*: pentasyllabic regulated verse, metrically somewhat free.

Preface 賀入座: JX reads 賞入座. 彈唱: SS reads 彈曲.

### 3.29 春晝 Spring Daylight

*Form*: heptasyllabic rhyming couplet, then tetrasyllabic rhyming in even-numbered lines; one rhyme throughout.

l. 4 如練: XC, MG read 如練. l. 16 無限: SS, XC read 無限.

### 3.30 安樂宮 Anle Palace

Anle Palace was constructed near Wuchang in the Three Kingdoms era state of Wu. A work titled “The New Citadel Anle Palace” (from one line in an early lyric to this tune) is listed as a “response song” work in early repertoire lists; versions by Xiao Gang and Yin Keng 陰鏗 (?511–?563) are extant. *Form*: unregulated pentasyllabic.

l. 1 深井: WQ notes “Also reads 漆井.” l. 2 尚復: XC reads 尚服. 清水: SS, ZY, YQ, YWX read 情水. l. 3 邵陵瓜: SS reads 邵陵王. l. 5 新成: YSJ, MG, ZY, YQ, YWX read 新城.

### 3.31 蝴蝶舞 Butterflies Dance

Not otherwise attested as a song title; written as a vignette set in the boudoir of a woman awaiting the return of an absent lover. *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic; two rhyming couplets.

Title: SS, XC, YQ, YWX read 蝴蝶飛.

### 3.32 梁公子 Lordling of the Liang

The subject would seem to be a contemporary of Li He’s with the surname Xiao, which was also that of the Liang dynasty (502–557) imperial lineage. The penultimate line suggests someone holding a military post. An alternate possibility is that the Xiao family of the Liang may serve here as a figure for the Tang imperial clan. *Form*: pentasyllabic regulated verse, though metrically quite free.

l. 4 江沙: ZY, YQ, YWX read 江涯.

### 3.33 牡丹種曲 Tune: Peony Bulbs

This tune-title is apparently Li He’s invention. Tang peony-mania was both a social phenomenon – fortunes being spent on the most prized varieties – as well as a favorite topic of verse composition. *Form*: unregu-

lated heptasyllabic, quatrains rhyming aaxa, followed by two rhyming couplets.

l. 12 樓臺: SS, XC, ZY, YWX read 樓庭.

### 3.34 後園鑿井歌 **Song: “I Bored a Well in the Rear Garden ...”**

A much longer song titled “The Prince of Huainan” is listed among the Jin dynasty court repertoire of “whisk dance” tunes, and includes the line, “I bored a well in the rear garden, with silver for its curb” 後園鑿井銀作牀; Li He borrows the line as the “tune” for his new version. *Form*: unregulated, irregular line length.

Title 歌 absent in SS, XC. l. 3 絃聲: XC, MG read 絲聲.

### 3.35 開愁歌 **Song: Giving Vent to Sadness**

Not otherwise attested as a *yuefu* title. A title note reads, “Written beneath Mt. Hua” 華下作. If this reading is correct, and if the title note does give reliable information as to the place of composition, this work would likely date from one of Li He’s several journeys between Luoyang and Chang’an, which would have taken him by the region of Mt. Hua. The poem’s final two characters have caused considerable trouble to commentators. The text and translation here follow a conjecture of Wang Qi’s, which he himself admits is tenuous. In context the phrase must at any rate refer to some form of persecution inflicted on the poet by the “vulgarians.” *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic, quatrains rhymed aaxa.

Title note 華下作: Following XC, LK. WQ reads 花下作. WZZ, SS, MG read 筆下作. WZZ notes “Also reads 華下.” l. 9 天雲: ZY, YWX read 雲天. l. 12 填談: Wang Qi’s proposed emendation. WQ, WZZ read 填談; QTS, in a note, cites its predecessor compilation *Tang yin tong qian* 唐音統籤 for a suggestion that the anomalous character 狹 should be understood as a non-standard variant for 應. ZY, YWX read 填歎.

### 3.36 秦宮詩并序 **Poem: Qin Gong (with preface)**

Feng Zidu’s story is reflected in the ancient *yuefu* ballad “Yulin lang” 羽林郎 (“Gentleman of the Palace Guard”), the work to which Li He’s present poem is meant to form a pair. Whereas “Yulin lang” focuses on a single episode of Feng Zidu’s attempted seduction of a charming tavern hostess, and the latter’s staunch refusal of his advances, however, this work of Li He’s presents a far more elaborately hyperbolic depiction

of Qin Gong's hubris and hedonistic indulgence, reminiscent of the orgiastic pleasure-seeking passages in the *Chu ci* "Summons to the Soul." *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic, in stanzas rhyming aaxa.

Preface 辭以馮子都: TWC reads 辭似與馮子都. 1. 1 衫袂: TWC reads 夾衫. 1. 5 雲閑: following MG; WQ reads 人間; TWC reads 人閑. 1. 8 午夜: following TWC, MG; WQ reads 十夜. 午夜銅盤: WQ notes "Also reads 半夜朦朧." 1. 12 夜半: WQ notes "Also reads 夜來." 1. 13 桐陰: following MG. WQ reads 桐英. 騎新馬: MG reads 調生馬; WQ, QTS note "Also reads 騎主馬." 1. 14 深屏: TWC reads 珍屏; MG reads 屏風. 1. 18 花底: SS, XC read 花裏. 1. 20 醉卧: Following SS, MG. WQ reads 醉睡. LK reads 醉眠.

### 3.37 古鄴城童子謠效王粲刺曹操 A Children's Rhyme from the Ancient City of Ye: In imitation of Wang Can criticizing Cao Cao

There is no record of Wang Can criticizing Cao Cao, but the term *xianggong* 相公 or "Minister Duke" originated with Cao Cao, as a prime minister who was enfeoffed as Duke under the last puppet emperor of the Han, emperor Xian. Perhaps Li He intended this poem to be imagined as composed by Wang Can before his arrival at Cao Cao's court. Wang Qi posits a contemporary reference to the murder of a civil officer by Tian Ji'an 田季安, the Military Commissioner of the northern splinter region of Wei-Bo, in around 811. YSJ 87 includes this work, under the title "Children's Rhyme from Yecheng" 鄴城童子謠. *Form*: unregulated trisyllabic, quatrains rhymed xaxa.

Title: WZZ, MG, LK, HC omit 刺. LJ notes on HC "The character 刺 was originally present in this title." 1. 2 暮塵: SS, MG read 墓塵. 1. 3 探: MG, QTS read 將.

### 3.38 楊生青花紫石硯歌 Song: Scholar Yang's Green-flecked Purple Inkstone

During the Tang, as at present, inkstones from Duanzhou (in modern-day Guangdong) were highly prized. The "scholar Yang" to whom this work is addressed has been tentatively identified as Li He's friend Yang Jingzhi (cf. 1.4). *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic, rhyming every line.

Title: 青花: absent in ZY, YQ, YWX. 紫: absent in SS.

1. 8 光秋: YWX reads 秋光. 1. 10 頌: SS, YQ read 碩; QTS notes "Also reads 碩."

### 3.39 房中思 **Boudoir Yearning**

*Form*: unregulated pentasyllabic, first quatrain rhyming xaxa, and the second bcbc. Li He seems fond of using off-rhymes in a stanza's odd-numbered lines, but the exact rhyme between the first and third lines of the second stanza here is unusual.

l. 4 玉鑾: Following XC, MG, LK, QTS. WQ reads 鶯. l. 8 臥聽: SS, MG read 臥對.

### 3.40 石城曉 **Dawn at Stone Citadel**

The place “Stone Citadel” (Shicheng 石城) and the singer Grieve-not (Mochou 莫愁) were both immortalized, and bound together, in lyrics from the Southern Dynasties “pure *shang*” repertoire (cf. 4.20, W.4). A singer whose name evokes emblematic lyric sentiments, and whose name itself is perpetuated through song, Grieve-not became a natural figure for any woman singer. The cluster of associations from old lyrical traditions guides us to read this poem – where the name Grieve-not does not explicitly appear – as an evocation of the boudoir of a female entertainer the morning after a tryst. *Form*: unregulated, two pentasyllabic quatrains rhymed xaxa and two rhyming heptasyllabic couplets.

l. 5 女牛: MG reads 石子. l. 11 鵝毛: XC, WZZ, MG, LK, QTS read 鵝毛. l. 12 無所似: MG reads 無所以.

### 3.41 苦晝短 **Plaint at Day's Shortness**

Although the song-title itself seems to be Li He's invention, this work is reminiscent both of a hymn titled “The Sun Rises and Sets” (*Ri chu ru* 日出入) from the Western Han imperial liturgical repertoire, and particularly of an odd work by Li Bai to the old *yuefu* title “Song: The sun rises ...” (*Ri chu xing* 日出行). The formula *ku* “苦 X” usually marks a subgenre of “plaints about X,” in which medieval poets composed whimsically hyperbolic descriptions of the afflicting condition in question. 4.16, though not titled *ku han* 苦寒 “Plaint at the Cold,” is rhetorically more typical of the “plaint” subgenre than this work. *Form*: unregulated, mixed line lengths. The predominant rhyme pattern is xaxa, though the second stanza is anomalous.

l. 7 食熊: SS, MG read 食龍. l. 19 服: SS, ZY, MG, YQ, YWX read 餌. l. 21 誰是: SS, XC, ZY, YWX read 誰似. l. 22 白驢: SS, XC, WZZ, MG read 碧驢.

### 3.42 章和二年中 In the Second Year of Zhanghe

Originally a ritual song from the court of Emperor Zhang 漢章帝 (r. 75–88) of the Eastern Han (25–220); successively adapted by the Wei and Jin courts under different titles (compiled together along with this work of Li He's in YSJ 53). This court repertoire item, in all its forms, seems always to have been a celebration of good harvest and auspicious omens. The original Eastern Han lyrics appear to have been long lost, so Li He's decision to use this title rather than those used in the Wei or Jin for their versions (lyrics for which did survive), may reflect an intention for this work to serve as a "supplement" for the lost text. It also seems possible (particularly in light of the sentiment of the final couplet) that Li He found some irony in the fact that this "second year of Zhanghe," 88 CE in the Western calendar, would in fact prove to be the last year of Emperor Zhang's life. *Form*: unregulated, predominantly heptasyllabic.

- l. 2 田風: YSJ omits 田. XC reads 由風. l. 3 麥芒: MG reads 稜芒.  
l. 9 攜償: SS, MG read 攜賞.

### 3.43 春歸昌谷 Returning to Changgu in Spring

This work has been generally supposed to date from Li He's second documented departure home from Chang'an in spring 813, when he resigned his post as Vice-Director for Ceremonials due to illness. *Form*: unregulated pentasyllabic, one rhyme in even lines throughout.

- l. 24 裝盡: XC, MG, QTS read 裝盡. 徧峯嶠: XC, MG read 徧峯嶠. l. 27 香氣: ZY, YQ, YWX, QTS read 香風. l. 34 刻鵠: XC, MG, LK, QTS read 刻鶴. l. 40 笑貌: XC, WZZ, MG, LK read 容貌. l. 51 廊落: Following SS, XC, WZZ, ZY. WQ reads 廊路.

### 3.44 昌谷詩 Poem of Changgu

A putatively original title note reads "Written the twenty-seventh day of the fifth month" 五月二十七日作. Changgu is Li He's home county, in Henan Commandery, to the west of Luoyang. *Form*: unregulated pentasyllabic, maintaining a single rhyme throughout – a virtuosic display in a poem of this length (no rhyming words are repeated), though here as elsewhere Li He's rhyming practice is distinctive. This poem (along with long extended regulated verse "Tormented," 2.23) has been compared to long works in the linked-verse form by Han Yu with Meng Jiao and other members of his circle, and shares with those linked-verse

works a strong sense of individual couplets as the basic compositional unit. As in those *lianju* compositions, there is a tendency toward antithetical balance within the couplet, though strict parallelism is not maintained (whereas 2.23, being an extended regulated verse, does observe strict parallelism). In its long meandering form this poem recalls the story in Li Shangyin's "Short Biography" of Li He's aimless wandering in the company of his servant with the brocade bag; there are however a few more or less clear-cut section divisions: from about line 25 to 46 the scenic description focuses with building intensity on the site of the shrine of the Goddess Lanxiang (cf. 4.25), culminating in an epiphanic dream; lines 47 to 56 then abruptly shift to the ruins of Fuchang Palace and the legacy of Wu Zetian. From line 57 to the end there is a clear shift away from the wild mountainous scenes toward town and farmland scenes around Changgu.

1. 5 秋思: SS reads 愁思; XC reads 秋絲. 1. 8 塗: SS reads 徒. 1. 9 草: SS reads 華. 1. 14: 蟬子: following SS, WQ reads 蟬于. 1. 23 姑: Following XC, MG, SS, WQ reads 姑. 1. 27 礫: SS reads 礫. 1. 32 壘: SS reads 瓏. 壘秋: WQ notes "Perhaps should read 壘楸." 1. 35 笑眼: WQ notes "Perhaps should read 笑恨." 1. 37 篠: SS, XC read 條. 1. 39 昏翳: MG reads 歸翳. 1. 43 服玉容: Following MG, WZZ, SS, XC. WQ reads 復玉容. 1. 49 鴻瓏: SS reads 鴻龍. 1. 66 鈎餌: SS, XC reads 鈎餌. 1. 69 岑光: XC, MG read 岑色.

### 3.45 銅駝悲 Grief of the Bronze Camels

*Form*: unregulated pentasyllabic, quatrains rhyming xaxa.

### 3.46 自昌谷到洛後問 An Inquiry after Going from Changgu to Luoyang

This work centers on a visit to a fortune-teller in the vicinity of Luoyang; Wu Qiming conjectures that this poem dates from the period leading up to Li He's second journey to Chang'an, when he was eventually to take up the post as Vice-Director for Ceremonials. *Form*: unregulated pentasyllabic, one rhyme throughout.

Title 洛後問: following SS, MG; WQ reads 洛後門. 1. 3 十月: XC reads 交月. 1. 4 雪霰: SS reads 霧霰; XC, MG, HC, QTS read 霧霰. 1. 9 石澗: SS, MG read 石欄. 凍波聲: XC, MG, LK read 東波聲. 1. 11 東舍: XC reads 都舍.

### 3.47 七月一日曉入太行山 **First Day of the Seventh Month, at Dawn: Entering the Taihang Mountains**

This appears to date from Li He's journey north in 813 to seek the help of his friend Zhang Che at Luzhou to find an appointment there. In the traditional Chinese calendar, the first day of the seventh month is the first day of autumn. The translation of line 6 follows Yao Wenxie's reading *yueqin* 越禽, elsewhere attested in Tang literature as a variety of crabapple, which seems to give a more or less viable sense. WQ and all early edd. however, read *yuejin* 越衾, or "quilt of Yue," for which none of the proposed interpretations seems quite satisfactory. *Form*: unregulated pentasyllabic.

l. 2 露: MJ reads 霧. l. 4 嘶: SS, ZY, YQ, YWX read 新. l. 5 洛南: YQ reads 洛陽. l. 6 越禽: following YWX. WQ and all early edd. read 越衾. l. 8 老莎: SS reads 老松.

### 3.48 秋涼詩寄正字十二兄 **"Autumn Chill" Poem, Sent to the Collator, My Twelfth Elder Brother**

On "elder brother" being used to reference a cousin, see Endnote to 3.12 above; "twelfth" here refers to this cousin's birth rank within their common lineage. 1.14 is also addressed to a Collator, but it remains uncertain whether or not this is the same person. Wu Qiming's conjecture that this poem dates from the autumn of 812, after Li He's return to Changgu subsequent to resigning his capital post, seems plausible. *Form*: unregulated pentasyllabic.

l. 3 大野: SS reads 天夜. MG reads 大夜. l. 4 天地: SS reads 大地. l. 5 露光: XC, ZY, YQ, YWX read 光露. l. 7 房寒: SS, MG read 戶寒. 寸輝: SS reads 冷輝. l. 9 披書: SS reads 題書. l. 15 度: XC reads 瘦. 白馬: WQ notes "Also reads 瘦馬."

### 4.1 艾如張 **Net in the Wormwood**

Along with 4.3, 4.22, 4.41, and W.9, this work takes its title from the notoriously obscure "*nao-gong songs*" in the old "drum and fife" *yuefu* repertoire (see YSJ 16–18). The traditions related in YSJ 16 regarding this title suggest a meaning along the lines of "mow [the grasses] and spread [the nets]." The translation reflects the way Li He apparently understood the old title. *Form*: unregulated, mixed (trisyllabic and heptasyllabic) meter.

1. 6 莫信: MG reads 莫逐. 籠媒: XC reads 籠媒; MG, ZY, YWX read 良媒. 1. 7 野田: XC, YSJ read 野春. 1. 10 爾: SS reads 矣.

#### 4.2 上雲樂 Music for Mounting the Clouds

This title, from the ancient “pure *shang*-mode” repertoire (see YSJ 51), derives from a type of court opera or pantomime traced to the court of Emperor Wu of the Liang, in which scenes of heaven and celestial realms and beings were performed before the emperor. Li Bai wrote a far more elaborate set of lyrics to this title, and it has been argued that his work might in fact have served as the libretto for such a performance. This version by Li He seems rather an evocation of such an event and of the preparations leading up to it. *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic, with variation in the penultimate line.

1. 3 宮女: YSJ, WQ note “Also reads 綵女.” 1. 5 天江: YSJ reads 大江. 1. 6 斷烟素: WZZ, LK, HC read 烟素素; XC reads 烟斷素. 1. 7 縫舞衣: SS, XC, WZZ read 縫衣縷; MG reads 縫衣舞.

#### 4.3 巫山高 Shamanka Mountain is High

As with 4.1, the title of this work is drawn from the “*nao-gong* songs” in the old “drum and fife” repertoire (see YSJ 17). The earliest extant lyrics are by Southern Dynasties poets, who had established the tradition of linking this title to the story of the Goddess at Shamanka Mountain encountered by King Huai of Chu (cf. 3.11.1, with End-note). *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic (first line irregular), each line rhyming.

1. 1 WQ notes “Also reads 巫山叢碧高插天.” 高插天: WYYH reads 齊插天. YSJ notes “高 also reads 齊.” 1. 2 大江: WYYH reads 巴江. 1. 3 颺: WQ notes “Also reads 颺.” 1. 4 曉嵐: MG reads 曉嵐. 1. 8 間: YSJ notes “Also reads 端.”

#### 4.4 摩多樓子 Madalouzi

The lyrics listed in the *Yuefu shi ji* for this title, in the category of “miscellaneous lyrics” (YSJ 78), include this work, which it attributes to Li Bai, preceded by a similarly-themed unregulated pentasyllabic quatrain with no author specified. Current consensus assigns the quatrain to Li Bai; the case for Li He’s authorship of the present work seems strong given that it appears in all known editions of his works. An Indian Buddhist pantomime depicting the early careers of the Buddha’s

eminent disciples Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana circulated into Tang China, and tunes named for these two disciples are attested in Tang musical performance, including the title Li He adopts here, which derives from a transliteration of Maudgalyāyana's name. Narratives and dramas relating to Maudgalyāyana were widespread in the Tang, but neither Li Bai nor Li He's extant compositions to this tune-title seem to reflect any direct connection with such traditions (the term "golden man" appears in other contexts in reference to early Buddha-images transported into China, but this sense does not seem to be directly relevant here). This version by Li He, like the quatrain of the same title now commonly attributed to Li Bai, is emphatically in the lyric sub-genre of the Tang "frontier poem." References to the Liao river in the far northeast, along with the term Long 隴 in line 12 properly referring to the mountain range running between what are now Shaanxi and Gansu in the far west, give no coherent geographical sense. For Li He more important were likely the associations in *yuefu* lyrics, e.g., the "Lyrics for Flowing Water on the Long Highlands" ("Long tou liu shui ge ci" 隴頭流水歌辭; YSJ 25): "Flowing water on the Long highlands, / flows all about and descends west; / have a thought for me, alone, / who drift about these empty wilds" 隴頭流水 / 流離西下 / 念我一身 / 飄然曠野. *Form*: unregulated pentasyllabic, quatrains rhyming xaxa.

l. 3 風吹: YWX reads 風捲. l. 11 臨水別: SS reads 臨隴別; MG, YSJ read 聽水別. l. 12 隴水: XC, WZZ, LK, YSJ, QTS read 隔隴; MG reads 隴上.

#### 4.5 猛虎行 **Ballad: The Fierce Tiger**

Included in YSJ 31, along with **2.20** and **3.1**, among lyrics for "level-mode" tunes in the "response songs" repertoire. *Form*: unregulated tetrasyllabic, rhyming in even-numbered lines.

l. 2 強弩: WZZ reads 長弩.

#### 4.6 日出行 **Ballad: "The Sun rises ..."**

The title of this work suggests a connection with the song also known as "Mulberries by the Path" 陌上桑, the narrative ballad recounting the story of the heroic Luo Fu and her resistance of the advances of the local governor – "The sun rises from the east corner" being the opening line of the original lyrics to the song (see also **2.23**, l. 79). Accordingly, this work of Li He's appears in YSJ 28, along with various renditions

of the Luo Fu story in the “response songs” repertoire. Li Bai had composed a lyric to this title beginning with a near-quotation of the first line of the ancient *yuefu*, but then shifting into a fantastic meditation on time and mortality; it seems clear that it was this latter work that served as Li He’s model here (cf. 3.41). WYYH gives a somewhat different version of the closing section: “Yi could bend a bow and nock an arrow, / so why didn’t he hit your foot, / so the crow couldn’t soar, / the fire couldn’t rush – / how then could the morning light grow dusky at evening?” QTS, XL, and WRL suggest placing a line-break between 中 and 足, so that those two lines read as “why did he not hit [the target], / sufficiently [*zu* 足] to make the crow unable to soar, / the fire unable to rush.” (For the text, see the collation notes below.) *Form*: unregulated, irregular: two pentasyllabic quatrains rhymed xaxa, followed by a very free final stanza where the sense of balanced couplets is strongly disrupted.

l. 4 不照: SS, MG read 不見. 遊子: WYYH reads 遊者. l. 5 折折: WYYH reads 浙浙. l. 8 若木: WYYH reads 弱水. l. 9 奈爾: YQ, YWX read 奈何. ll. 11–14: WYYH reads 羿能彎弓屬矢, 那不中足, 令鳥不得翔, 火不得奔, 詎教晨光夕昏.

#### 4.7 苦筇調笑引 Teasing Rhapsody on the Bitter Bamboo

There are “Teasing Songs” in Tang musical repertoires and in song lyric meters passed down in later ages. This work addresses traditions relating to the institution of musical pitches and modes as part of the kingly craft of the first legendary demiurge and sage-king Xuanyuan (or “Yellow Emperor”). The role of Xuanyuan’s music master Ling Lun as presented here accords with the ancient accounts; the immortal Hong Ya 洪崖 Li He mentions elsewhere (4.13, 4.34) is a transcendent and divine musician, said in Daoist tradition to be none other than Ling Lun himself. The further details about the single pipe left on earth and its connection with the cult of the sage-king Shun, however, are Li He’s own innovations, although in his *Fengsu tongyi* 風俗通義 the Eastern Han scholar Ying Shao 應劭 (ca. 140-before 204) described the unearthing of a jade *sheng* (a panpipe-like wind instrument) and a jade pipe beneath a shrine to Shun, an account that likely underlies Li He’s conception in the closing lines. *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic meter with irregular rhyming pattern (six lines rhymed aaxaxa; five lines rhymed aaaxa).

Title 調笑引: Following WZZ. WQ reads 調嘯引. l. 3 崑邱: ZY reads 崑侖. YQ, YWX read 崑崙. ll. 4–5: absent in TWC. l. 10 無德不能得此管: SS, MG read 人間無德不能得.

#### 4.8 拂舞歌辭 Lyrics to the Whisk Dance

Jin court repertoires include a series of “whisk dance” songs; here Li He uses the category as his title (which led to this work’s inclusion in YSJ 55 under the category of “whisk-dance lyrics”). One of the numbers in the Jin “whisk dance” titled “Jie shi” 碣石 echoes the opening lines of a lyric to this same title by Cao Cao: “Though the divine tortoise be long-lived, / it too has its time of end. / Surging up from earth and riding on fog, / in the end it becomes soil and ash ...” 神龜雖壽 / 猶有竟時 / 騰地乘霧 / 終為土灰. *Form*: unregulated, mixed pentasyllabic and heptasyllabic lines. The second stanza is quite irregular; Wang Qi suggests accepting the YSJ variant 龜 “tortoise” instead of 土 “soil, mud” in lines 12 and 13, which allows a more regular rhyme pattern (creating a rhyme with 時 at the end of line 10) and resolves what he feels is an unreasonable degree of obscurity in this latter part of the poem: Li He’s topic in these lines is certainly the tortoise of Cao Cao’s song, but unless we accept this variant reading, it is never named directly.

l. 8 晴寒: WYYH reads 晴空; QTS reads 寒空. l. 12 玉井土: YSJ reads 玉井龜. l. 13 從蛇作土: YSJ reads 從蛇作龜. 二千載: WYYH reads 三千載. l. 14 綠草: WYYH reads 春綠. l. 15 背有: WYYH reads 背文.

#### 4.9 夜坐吟 Chant: Sitting at Night

The title derives from a lyric by Bao Zhao (see YSJ 76, which includes both Bao Zhao’s work and this of Li He in the category of “lyrics to miscellaneous tunes”): “The winter night is deep and long; by night I sit and chant. / Before the harbored feeling is expressed, I already know your heart. / Frost enters the canopy; wind crosses the wood. / The ruddy lamp burns out; our ruddy complexion will follow. / I feel your song, and follow your tone. / It is not the sound I treasure, but rather the deep intent.” 冬夜沉沉夜坐吟 / 含情未發已知心 / 霜入幕, 風度林 / 朱燈滅, 朱顏尋 / 體君歌, 逐君音 / 不貴聲, 貴意深. Li He borrows several images from this original, while turning Bao Zhao’s song of requited love into one of frustration. *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic, rhyming every line.

l. 1 馬蹄: YSJ, SS read 馬頭. l. 5 起唱: ZY, YQ, YWX read 起舞.

#### 4.10 箜篌引 **Harp Rhapsody**

Some editions give the alternate title “Sir, Don’t Ford the River.” Unlike 1.1, where Li He borrows the title “Harp Rhapsody” for a poem on a harp performance, this work closely follows the odd story of the tune’s origin as preserved in pre-Tang repertoire lists: a ford officer saw an old man bearing a gourd run headlong into the river and drown. The man’s wife, who had arrived too late to stop him, performed a spontaneously invented song, accompanying herself on her harp, and then leapt into the river as well and died. When the ford officer returned home, he recounted the story, and the song, to his wife, who, deeply moved, “copied” the sound onto her own harp, thereby establishing the song in circulation (see YSJ 26 for the original account and lyrics along with Li He’s version). *Form*: one rhyme throughout, with all even-numbered and several odd-numbered lines rhyming.

Title: WYYH reads 公無渡河; SS notes “Also reads 公無渡河.” 1. 9 蒹: QTS notes “Also reads 禾.” 1. 10 瓦甌濁醪蟻浮浮: YSJ notes “Also reads 瓦瓶濁酒醪蟻浮.”

#### 4.11 平城下 **Beneath Pingcheng**

It is said that while on campaign against the Xiongnu, the Han founder Liu Bang had been besieged at Pingcheng. Some commentators have looked for allusions to this incident here, but more likely Li He is simply using the name as a stock reference for a frontier outpost in the far west (cf. 4.4).

1. 9 日晚: MG reads 日魄. 1. 11 枯蓬: MG reads 孤蓬.

#### 4.12 江南弄 **Jiangnan Caprice**

This was both a category and the title of a particular number in Southern Dynasties “pure *shang-mode*” court repertoire (see YSJ 50, which includes both this work of Li He’s along with many of his likely models among Southern Dynasties poets). *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic, one rhyming couplet followed by six lines, all rhyming.

1. 4 如: WQ notes the variant 猶.

#### 4.13 榮華樂 **Music of Flourishing Splendor**

Wang Qi, along with several other edd., notes the alternate title, “Ditty on the Liang Clan of Eastern Luo” 東洛梁家謠. Liang Ji was a scion of

a very powerful clan (the final stanza gives a tally of the figures of high status it produced). Soon after the boy emperor Zhi 質 (r. 145–46), annoyed by Liang Ji's domineering behavior, called Liang "General Bossy," Liang Ji had him poisoned, and installed emperor Huan 桓 (r. 146–168) in his place. Finally, in 159, conspiring with a faction of eunuchs at court, emperor Huan succeeded in having Liang Ji and his entire clan exterminated. This work forms a natural pair with 3.36, which focuses on Liang Ji's trusted household slave Qin Gong, with whom Liang Ji's wife Sun Shou carried on an affair. The anachronistic reference in line 8 to "Master of the Golden Loft" carries a somewhat involved set of associations. This was a cognomen of Xiao Yi, Emperor Yuan of the Liang, as well as the title of a volume of his writings. His unhappy marriage with Empress Xu 徐 is invoked here as an analogue to Liang Ji's marriage to Sun Shou; both Empress Xu and Sun Shou had numerous lovers. "Teasing" here recalls stories of Empress Xu mocking Xiao Yi – he was blind in one eye, and when Empress Xu knew he was coming to her quarters, she would prepare by making up one side of her face. Here either Liang Ji mocks a cuckolded husband while cavorting with the man's wife, or is himself teased by his wife or others who know the secret. *Form*: unregulated, mixed line lengths. Title: WQ, SS, MG, LK, ZY, QTS all note: "Also reads 東洛梁家謠." ll. 3–4 氣如虹霓·飲如建瓴: MG reads 氣如虹霓飲建瓴. l. 7 彪裘: ZY, LK, YQ, QTS read 龍裘.

#### 4.14 相勸酒 Urging to Drink

Not recorded as a *yuefu* title, but this work is clearly in the manner of banquet *yuefu*; stylistic affinities with Li Bai are pronounced here, particularly the latter's well-known lyric to the title "Bring in the Wine" ("Qiang jin jiu" 將進酒; see *Li Bai ji jiaozhu*, 1: 3.225; for Li He's own work to this title see 4.41). *Form*: unregulated, irregular line lengths. l. 2 晝夕: MG, WYYH read 晝夜. l. 3 崦嵫竹: WYYH reads 崦嵫石. l. 4 蟠桃: MG reads 蟠螭. l. 11 騰熊: following MG. WQ and most early edd. read 臞熊, though WQ notes, "I suspect this is an error for 騰熊." l. 12 會: SS reads 又會. l. 16 人生: following SS, XC. WQ reads 人之. l. 21 來長安, 車駢駢: WYYH reads 東洛長安車駢駢; SS reads 東來長安車駢駢.

#### 4.15 瑤華樂 **Music of Alabaster Splendor**

The phrase *yao hua* 瑤華, or “gleaming blossom,” appears in the “Senior Master of Fate” hymn from the *Chuci* “Nine Songs,” where it describes the flowers of a variety of hemp plucked as a gift by the god’s human suitor. Such associations with a romance between a human lover and a divine beloved are relevant here, though Li He’s specific reference in this work is King Mu’s visit to the Queen Mother of the West. Since the Queen Mother’s “Alabaster Pool” (*yao chi* 瑤池) is described as the site of their banquet, it would have been more transparent to simply title this work “Yao chi yue” 瑤池樂, “Music for the Alabaster Pool” – but perhaps Li He preferred this less obvious title. The depiction here of King Mu’s banquet with the Queen Mother is reminiscent of scenes in the “Secret Biography of Emperor Wu of the Han” involving epiphanic visits to Emperor Wu by the Queen Mother and “Lady Shangyuan.” *Form*: unregulated, mixed meters. The heptasyllabic passages all rhyme every line, while the interposed tetrasyllabic passage rhymes xaxaxa.

l. 2 冬曦: WZZ, LK, HC read 冬曦; YWX reads 玲瓏. l. 12: 殿秋: WQ notes variant 斂秋. l. 17 玄霜: WQ and other Qing commentators, following the routine Qing taboo substitution of 元 for 玄 (because 玄 appeared in the given name Xuanye 玄燁 of the Kangxi emperor [r. 1661–1722]), read 元霜.

#### 4.16 北中寒 **Cold in the North**

The compositional idea of this work is similar to the old *shi* subgenre of “Complaining about X,” consisting of hyperbolic flights of fancy about the thing complained about (heat, cold, rain, etc.; see Endnote to 3.41). A *yuefu* in a similar vein by Cao Cao titled “Ballad on Going North” 北上行 has been mentioned as a possible model for Li He here.

#### 4.17 梁臺古意 **In the Antique Style: Liang Terrace**

Liu Wu, commonly known as Prince Xiao of Liang, was the first patron of Sima Xiangru (see 1.12.1, along with 3.33, l. 7). He was renowned as a patron of men of letters as well as for his lavish palaces and parks. Persistent questions regarding his prospects or intentions in regard to the imperial throne were rendered moot by his premature death, three years before the accession of Emperor Wu. *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic; quatrains rhymed aaxa (first and third) and aaaa (second).

Title 古意: SS, XC, MG, WZZ read 古愁. 1. 10 蘭臉: MG reads 蘭臉. 別春: MG reads 引春. 1. 12 野惶: XC, WZZ, MG, LK, QTS read 野望.

#### 4.18 公無出門 Sir, Do Not Go Out the Gate!

The *yuefu* title “Sir, Don’t Ford the River” (cf. 4.10) seems to have given Li He his point of departure in inventing this title. This poem draws heavily for its imagery and basic conception on the demonic visions of the first section of the *Chuci* “Summons to the Soul.” The ritual of “summoning the soul” is aimed at reintegrating a living person’s soul back into the body; in this context, however, it is worth noting that the *Chuci* “Summons to the Soul” text includes an enigmatic and seemingly fragmented opening frame dialogue, suggesting the idea of a “summons” of an afflicted living person (identified by Wang Yi and later readers as Qu Yuan) away from earthly tribulations, and up to heaven. If Li He read the antecedent *Chuci* text in this way, then this would accord very well with the notion in this poem that the early deaths of figures such as Bao Jiao and Yan Hui were a means of rescue from persecution, and summons to celestial rewards – as well as uncannily prefiguring the account of Li He’s own death in Li Shangyin’s “Short Biography” (see Appendix). *Form*: unregulated, mixed meter.

1. 4 雪霜: YQ, YWX read 霜雪. 雪霜斷人骨: WQ notes “Also reads 雪風破人骨.” 1. 5 嗾犬狺狺: Following SS, XC. WQ reads 言言, and also notes this is an error for 狺狺. 1. 7 自息: following WZZ, SS, XC. WQ reads 自滅.

#### 4.19 神絃別曲 Parting Tune for the “Divine Strings”

Eleven “Divine Strings” tunes are recorded in medieval repertoire records. See YSJ 47 for the extant early medieval liturgical songs, along with this work of Li He’s, as well as 4.38; 4.40 also seems clearly related. *Bie* 別, rendered “parting” here, could also be understood as “alternate,” so that the title would be construed as, “An Alternate Tune for the ‘Divine Strings’.” But the text itself does deal with a parting. Suites of ritual hymns for sacrificial ceremonies often included musical numbers for “welcoming the god(s)” as well as for “sending off the god(s)” (see discussion of Han court liturgies in the Introduction) and the imagery of the goddess’s receding cavalcade in the first stanza here

is reminiscent of the latter type. *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic, two stanzas rhyming aaxa.

l. 2: 春風松花: YSJ reads 松花春風. l. 4 前子子: SS reads 長子子. l. 8 淺汚: MG, YSJ read 殘汚.

#### 4.20 淥水詞 Lyrics for Clear Water

There are several lyrics titled either “Tune for Clear Water” or “Lyrics for Clear Water” in Southern Dynasties court repertoires of dance music and “pure-*shang*” lyrics (YSJ 59). This seems to be a general evocation of the manner of those works rather than a close imitation. The final couplet seems to echo the closing lines of an old “pure *shang*-mode” song called “Children’s Tune for Picking Lotus” 採蓮童曲 that read, “[I/we] don’t take this song to make merry; / but take it to dispel sad thoughts” 不持歌作樂 / 為持解愁思. *Form*: unregulated pentameter, two couplets rhymed xaxa.

Title 淥水辭: following YSJ; most edd. read 綠水詞. l. 6 拔蒲根: YSJ notes “Also reads 折蒲茸.” l. 8 感愁魂: YSJ notes “Also reads 感秋風.” 愁魂: ZY, YQ, YWX read 秋魂.

#### 4.21 沙路曲 Tune for the Sanded Road

This tune-title is Li He’s own invention. The “sanded road” refers to the custom of covering the road between a newly appointed prime minister’s home and the imperial palace with sand for a ceremonial procession on the occasion of his accession to the new office. *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic, quatrains rhyming aaxa, bbbb, and a final couplet rhyming cc.

l. 1 柳臉: Following MG. WQ reads 柳臉. TWC reads 柳陰. l. 4 燭騎: WZZ notes “Also reads 獨騎.” 蹄鳴: XC, LK, HC read 啼鳴; SS, ZY, YQ, YWX read 啼鳥; MG reads 鳴啼. l. 5 開九關: TWC reads 擬九關. l. 6 動笏: TWC reads 簪笏. 移南山: TWC 稱南山.

#### 4.22 上之回 His Majesty’s Return

As in the cases of 4.1, 4.3, and W.9, the title Li He adopts here is drawn from the lists of “*nao-gong* songs” in the drum and fife repertoire (YSJ 16). The original lyrics commemorate the Han emperor Wu’s excursion via the Huizhong road. Li He’s version shares with the ancient texts the idea of an imperial triumph, but he seems to understand the

title as rendered here. Early editions of Li He's works include a nearly identical lyric under the title "Before White Gate" (see **W.15**, along with discussion in the Introduction). *Form*: unregulated, two trimeter quatrains rhymed xaxa, and a rhymed heptasyllabic couplet.

l. 3 懸紅雲: MG reads 懸紅雪. l. 9 慶雷: MG reads 度雷; WQ suggests the emendation 慶雲. 墮: SS, XC read 墜. l. 10 海千里: SS reads 海千封.

#### 4.23 高軒過 A Lofty Carriage Calls

An ostensibly original title note reads, "Written by command, on the occasion of a visit by Extranumerary Officer Han Yu and Retinue Officer Huangfu Shi" 韓員外愈皇甫侍御湜見過因而命作. This poem became closely linked with an apocryphal anecdote describing it as an impromptu composition by Li He at the age of seven. Han Yu and Huangfu Shi were indeed patrons on whom Li He relied in his attempts to promote his official career, and this does seem to be a rather fawning tribute to those two, but Li He's first contact with Han Yu's circle, likely initiated when Li He sent a portfolio of sample compositions to Han Yu, seems to have occurred in 807, when Li He was eighteen. Apart from the anecdote, the poem itself is remembered mostly because of the striking phrasing of l. 11, which apart from its fervently encomiastic tone does aptly resonate with the recurrent theme in Han Yu's works of the poet as demiurge. *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic, rhymed every line apart from the metrically varied lines 5–7.

l. 3 隱耳: WZZ reads 隱隱; MG reads 殷耳. l. 5 云是: absent in XC, SS, MG. l. 7 鉅: absent in XC, MG. l. 9 元精耿耿: MG reads 九精照耀.

#### 4.24 貝宮夫人 Lady of the Cowrie Palace

For Li He's conception in this work, compare the "Earl of the Yellow River" from the *Chuci* "Nine Songs" suite, where the dwelling of the "Earl" is described: "Chambers of fish-scales, and a dragon hall; / gate-towers of purple cowry, and an ochre palace" 魚鱗屋兮龍堂 / 紫貝闕兮朱宮 (*Chuci buzhu*, 2.77). *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic, rhymed every line.

l. 1 金環: SS reads 金錢; 環: WZZ notes "Also reads 錢." l. 2 翹揭: ZY, YQ, YWZ read 揭翹.

#### 4.25 蘭香神女廟 Shrine of the Goddess Lanxiang

A title note reads, “Written in the Third Month” 三月中作. This Goddess Lanxiang is understood to be the same whose shrine on Goddess Altar mountain, in the vicinity of Li He’s hometown of Changgu, appears in 3.44 at ll. 25–46. As in that passage, here landscape description merges imperceptibly into epiphanic description of the goddess herself.

*Form*: unregulated pentasyllabic, one rhyme throughout.

l. 5 沙砌: following MG, SS, XC. WQ reads 沙砲. l. 13 濃香: MG reads 濃眉. l. 22 膩頰: XC reads 膩脣. l. 23 珠窠: MG, SS, XC read 蛛巢. l. 29 乘風: MG reads 承嵐. l. 30 山上聞: Following SS. WQ reads 山上門.

#### 4.26 送韋仁實兄弟入關 Sending off my Brother Wei Renshi to Enter the Passes

Likely the Wei Renshi recorded as having been in the office of Omissioner in 824, who appears to have had a moderately successful career at court. Apart from this poem, apparently composed for a farewell banquet at or near Luoyang as Wei departed for Chang’an, however, we know nothing about his connection with Li He. *Form*: unregulated pentasyllabic.

l. 2 緒顏: HC reads 頰顏; LK reads 緒顏. l. 6 秋明: SS reads 秋月. l. 10 梢: following SS, XC; WQ reads 稍. After l. 10, WYYH includes the lines 君子送秦水, 小人巢洛煙. l. 16 春聲: following MG. WQ reads 春聲. l. 17 勞勞: WYYH reads 勞苦.

#### 4.27 洛陽城外別皇甫湜 Taking Leave of Huangfu Shi Outside the Luoyang Walls

On Huangfu Shi, see 2.15, 4.23, and 4.29. Wu Qiming’s hypothesis that this dates from Li He’s second known departure from Luoyang to Chang’an, in 809, seems plausible. *Form*: unregulated pentasyllabic.

l. 8: 奉墮: SS, XC read 奉墜.

#### 4.28 谿晚涼 Evening Cool by the Creek

*Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic, rhymed every line.

l. 2 碧空: MG reads 玉空. l. 3 玉煙: MG reads 石煙. 青: WQ notes “Possibly an error for 清.”

#### 4.29 官不來題皇甫湜先輩廳 His Excellency Does Not Come: Inscribed in the Audience Hall of Senior Licentiate Huangfu Shi

On Huangfu Shi, see 2.15, 4.23, 4.27. Wu Qiming cites Li He's use of the term "Senior Licentiate" (*xianbei* 先輩) here among his evidence for his argument that Li He must have taken but failed the *jinshi* examination in 810. Yao Wenxie conjectures that this poem was written after an unsuccessful visit by Li He to Huangfu Shi's offices in the magistrate's compound at Luhun, about sixty kilometers southwest of Luoyang (see Endnote for 2.15). *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic with substitutions of pairs of three-syllable lines at the first and last lines, rhymed every line.

#### 4.30 長平箭頭歌 Song of an Arrowhead at Changping

Sima Qian's account relates that after Qin forces under Bai Qi 白起 (?–257 BCE) routed the army of Zhao at Changping, they buried alive 400,000 surrendered Zhao soldiers. This site would have been on Li He's route between Luoyang and Luzhou in the north, where he went to seek an appointment to the secretarial staff of the Military Commissioner of Zhaoyi through his connection with Zhang Che (see 2.13, 3.12, along with discussion in the Introduction). Assuming the phrase *dong cheng* 東城 (which could mean "eastern city" or "east district of the city") at l. 15 refers to Luoyang, as is commonly supposed, the poem would likely date from Li He's southward return journey in 815. The implications of the term *liao zhu* 簾竹 in the final line are unclear. Most commentators have taken it to refer to bamboo that might be used to make a new shaft for the arrowhead. From the poem itself, however, it is not clear this is something Li He would have wanted to do, so if this is indeed the meaning it must be ironic – perhaps the misconstrual by the "youngster on horseback" of the object's significance for the poet is the point. In the *Rites of Zhou* (*Zhou li* 周禮), however, the word *liao* appears as the name of a type of basket for holding meat offerings during a sacrificial ritual; thus the phrase could mean not "*liao* bamboo to make a shaft," but "bamboo for a *liao* basket," perhaps with the implication that the impromptu sacrifice recounted in the poem could then be performed in a more formal way. There are parallels in conception between this work and "The King-

dom's Fallen" ("Guo shang" 國殤), a sacrificial hymn to soldiers killed in battle, from the *Chuci* "Nine Songs." *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic, four quatrains rhyming aaxa – the third quatrain is anomalous; it is unclear whether Li He is deviating from usual rhyming practice or whether the received text is corrupt.

l. 8 黑旗: SS, MG read 星旗. l. 9 肌: Harada, following Suzuki, emends to 飢.

#### 4.31 江樓曲 **Tune for the River Loft**

This tune-title appears to be Li He's invention. *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic, two rhyming couplets followed by two quatrains rhyming aaxa.

l. 3 催: WYYH reads 摧. l. 11 千里思: WZZ, SS, XC, WYYH read 千里愁.

#### 4.32 塞下曲 **Tune: Beneath the Passes**

This is included in YSJ's catalog of "new *yuefu* lyrics" among various Tang *yuefu* on frontier themes designated "Tunes Along the Passes" 塞上曲 and "Tunes Beneath the Passes" 塞下曲 (see YSJ 93). The "mat-grass" of line 10 is so called because it was commonly used for weaving mats or window-blinds; it was also known as *sai lu* 塞蘆 or "reed of the passes" due to its associations with the landscapes of the western frontier. Here it is "gloomy" (or instills gloom in the viewer) due to forebodings of coming warfare: this is Wang Qi's preferred solution to a line whose text and meaning have been found troublesome. *Form*: unregulated pentasyllabic; two quatrains rhyming xaxa, final quatrain aaxa.

l. 10 箕: following MG; YSJ reads 箕; WQ and most other edd. read 羈. The name of the grass is now more properly written 箕, but 箕 is a common alternate form in medieval texts.

#### 4.33 染絲上春機 **Dyed Silk Goes on the Springtime Loom**

Not attested as a *yuefu* tune, but the poem is in the vein of Southern Dynasties imitations of popular love songs such as those collected in the *Yutai xinyong*. *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic, a series of four rhyming couplets.

l. 8 春酒: ZY, YQ, YWX read 春雪.

#### 4.34 五粒小松歌并序 **Song of the Little Five-needle Pine (with preface)**

The “Licentiate Xie” referred to here is possibly the same person as in 3.5; Du Yunqing is otherwise unknown. The five-needle pine, recorded in some Tang sources as an import from Korea, was said to produce abundant pine nuts, and touted for longevity-promoting power. This particular pine tree had been acquired as an addition to an elite garden. The title specifies a small tree; Li He’s description here suggests a truly miniature specimen groomed similarly to latter-day bonsai. The final stanza is unmistakably satirical, though its intended target is unknown. Presumably this satirical barb was part of Xie and Du’s motive in commissioning such a work from Li He. *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic; two quatrains rhyming aaxa.

l. 7 月明白露秋淚滴: WZZ notes “Also reads 月明露泣懸秋淚.”

l. 8 肯寄書: ZY, YWX read 好寄書.

#### 4.35 塘上行 **Ballad: By the Pool**

This tune is listed in YSJ among the “pure mode tunes” (*qing diao qu* 清調曲) in the “response songs” repertoire of the Wei and Jin dynasties (see YSJ 35). The original song was said to have been composed by Empress Zhen of the Wei, after she had fallen from favor; she would ultimately be compelled through slander to commit suicide. Although the early versions speak of rushes rather than lotuses in the pool, Li He’s version seems to assume the same implicit scenario of the abandoned woman. *Form*: unregulated pentasyllabic; rhyming aaxa.

l. 4 溘溘: YSJ reads 溢溢.

#### 4.36 呂將軍歌 **Song: General Lü**

The opening lines recall the general and warlord Lü Bu of the waning years of the Eastern Han, but the case here for a contemporary reference is strong. Qian Zhonglian argues that Lü Yuanying 呂元膺 (749–820), who gained a reputation as an upright official in this era, is intended (see his “Li He nianpu hui jian,” 39–40). At any rate, Wang Qi’s inference that the middle section of the poem (ll. 4–11) refers specifically to Wang Chengzong’s rebellion in 809 is likely correct. Xianzong, over the objections of many court officials, placed his trusted eunuch officer Tutu Chengcui in command of the imperial expedition against Wang Chengzong, which failed to make headway against the rebel forces.

*Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic (with irregular first line). Irregular triad rhymed axa, four rhymed couplets, and a final octave rhyming aaxaaaxa. l. 6 拂劍鏢: SS, XC, WZZ read 揮劍鏢. l. 9 火旗: WQ notes “Also reads 大旗.” l. 13 親: following SS, XC, ZY, YQ, YWX. WQ reads 新. l. 14 排: WZZ, LK read 挑.

#### 4.37 休洗紅 Don't Wash the Red

The title and basic situation are adapted from an anonymous *gushi*: “Don't wash the red / much washing makes the red grow faint. / If you don't care for the sewing of your old robe, / remember that first setting of the madder dye. / A life is ‘a hundred years’ – how long can that last? / Your newlywed wife of late has become an old woman” 休洗紅 / 洗多紅色淡 / 不惜故縫衣 / 記得初按舊 / 人壽百年能幾何 / 後來新婦今為婆. *Form*: unregulated pentasyllabic, apart from the first line; six lines rhyming xaxaxa.

l. 2 淺: YQ reads 淡.

#### 4.38 神絃曲 Tune for “Divine Strings”

The Southern Dynasties “pure *shang*-mode” repertoire includes a series of “Songs for the Divine Strings” 神絃歌 commemorating local divinities. In this work, as in 4.19 and 4.40, Li He adopts this title for his own lyric evocation of the atmosphere of such rites (see YSJ 47, along with the endnote to 4.19). *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic, rhyming every line.

l. 8 雨工騎入秋潭水: YSJ notes “Also reads 雨公夜騎入潭水.”

#### 4.39 野歌 Song of the Wilds

An invented “song.” *Form*: unregulated heptameter, one rhyme throughout, every line rhyming except the penultimate.

#### 4.40 神絃 Divine Strings

This poem, unlike the similarly titled 4.19 and 4.38, is not included in the YSJ, possibly simply because its title does not explicitly contain the word “tune.” But in conception, style, and form, these three works are closely analogous. *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic, every line rhyming.

Title 神絃: MG reads 神泣. l. 3 海神: MG reads 寒雲. l. 5 舞鸞: MG reads 鳳鸞. l. 11 神嘖: MG reads 神顛.

#### 4.41 將進酒 **Bring in the Wine**

This is an old *yuefu* tune listed among the “*nao-gong* songs” in the old “drum and fife” repertoire (YSJ 17; cf. 4.1, 4.3, 4.14). *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic, with some substitution of doubled three-syllable hemistichs; two stanzas rhyming aaxa, aaaaxa, with an extra rhyme between the two hemistichs of the first line.

l. 4 羅幃: SS, WZZ, YSJ read 羅屏. 圍: MG reads 生. 香風: WQ notes “Also reads 春風.”

#### 4.42 美人梳頭歌 **Song of the Beauty Combing her Hair**

This song title is Li He’s own invention. Traditional readers persistently sought alternatives to the reading “hairpin” (*chai* 釵) at line 8 here. In later eras the repetition of the word (at lines 8 and 10) would be viewed as a fault, though Tang poets seem to have treated this rule more flexibly. Several editors also evince a desire for some object still more directly connected with combing the hair than a hairpin – their suggested alternatives are all combs of some kind. This “song” does show traces of a *yongwu* compositional approach, but it is unclear that rigid application of such principles is warranted. *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic, four rhyming couplets followed by two aaxa stanzas.

l. 8 玉釵: WQ suggests this should read 玉鑷, and cites unnamed anthologies that emend to 玉梳, with the idea that what falls here should be an implement specifically for combing the hair.

#### 4.43 月漉漉篇 **Stanza: The Moonlight Glistens**

This tune-title is apparently Li He’s invention. Line 4 recalls the “Lady of the Xiang” (“Xiang jun” 湘君) from the “Nine Songs”: “I gather wild fig in the water; / I pluck lotus-blossoms from treetops” 采薜荔兮水中 / 攀芙蓉兮木末, where these actions are figures for impossibility or futility. Li He’s echo of these lines seems more loosely atmospheric. The final couplet echoes a “Lotus Picking Song” by Xiao Gang: “Strands of lotus, on both sides, entangle her wrists; / caltrop-vines, from afar, tug at her robe” 荷絲傍繞腕 / 菱角遠牽衣. This work was included in YSJ 95 in the category of “new *yuefu* lyrics.” *Form*: unregulated pentasyllabic (first stanza irregular); quatrains rhyming aaxa (xaxa in the second quatrain).

l. 2 波烟玉: YSJ reads 波咽玉.

#### 4.44 京城 The Capital City

*Form*: unregulated pentasyllabic xaxa.

#### 4.45 官街鼓 Drums of the Imperial Avenues

The dawn and dusk drums at the heads of streets in the capital were a Tang innovation over earlier systems that had relied on criers to announce the beginnings and ends of days. They served to alert travelers of the beginning and end of nighttime curfew and corresponding closing and opening of the ward gates (cf. 4.50, l. 3). *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic, stanzas rhyming aaxa and bbbxbx.

l. 2 呼: Following SS, XC, MG, ZY, YQ, YWX. WQ reads 催.

l. 5 碰發: Following SS, XC, MG. WQ reads 碰碎. WZZ reads 鉞發. l. 10 斷絕: XC, QTS read 斷緣.

#### 4.46 許公子鄭姬歌 Song for Master Xu's Courtesan Zheng

An ostensibly original title note reads, “Zheng herself, in the garden, asked me to compose this” 鄭園中請賀作. As reflected in many Tang classical tales (and e.g. in 3.5), affairs between courtesans and their clients were a popular topic for gossip among broader publics in the Tang capitals; this work appears to have been informally commissioned from Li He by Zheng in order to enhance her fame among this broader public. *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic, in stanzas rhymed aaxa.

l. 3 酒熟: SS, ZY, YQ, YWX read 酒熟. l. 5 桂開客: WYYH notes

“The collection reads 精聞客.” l. 20 少見人: MG reads 人見少.

l. 23 蛾鬟: WYYH reads 蛾眉.

#### 4.47 新夏歌 Song of New Summer

This song title is not otherwise attested. *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic. A rhymed couplet followed by two quatrains rhyming aaxa, although the variant reading 縹帶 for the end of line 3 would yield two three-line units followed by one four-line unit.

l. 1 蠟綵: WZZ notes “Also reads 絳綵.” l. 2 落蒂: SS, MG read 落帶;

WZZ, HC, QTS read 落蕊; QTS notes “落 also reads 絳.” l. 3 拳:

QTS reads 秀. 縹茸: LK, ZY, YQ, YWX read 縹帶. l. 9 搖揚: Follow-

ing XC, MG, QTS. WQ reads 搖楊. l. 10 地濃: XC, MG read 地穰.

#### 4.48 題歸夢 On a Return Home in Dream

The image of fishes' eyes in line 8 derives from the fact they never close, and were thus an emblem for sleeplessness, anxiety, or grief (cf. 1.3, l. 7). *Form*: unregulated pentasyllabic.

l. 4 裁: XC, LK, QTS read 裁.

#### 4.49 經沙苑 Passing by Shayuan

Shayuan was the site, roughly a hundred kilometers east-northeast of Chang'an, of a former palace compound as well as a center, through the mid-eighth century, for the breeding and pasturing of horses to supply the empire, and for agricultural products for imperial banquets and sacrifice. Qian Zhonglian suggests Li He may have passed by this site while on official trips as Vice-Director for Ceremonials to the tomb complexes of Ruizong and Xuanzong. Li He represents the site as dis-used and ruined. *Form*: unregulated pentasyllabic – though prosodically close to a pentasyllabic *lǔshi* in an oblique (mixed falling- and rising-tone) rhyme.

#### 4.50 出城別張又新酬李漢 Going out of the City: Parting from Zhang Youxin, and Responding to Li Han

This work likely dates to 812, when Li He left Chang'an to return home to Chang'gu for what was probably the last time. Zhang Youxin was to pass the *jīnshì* examination two years later, and had a prominent career, though his reputation suffered due to his allegiance to Li Fengji 李逢吉 (758–835). Li Han (?–821) is best known as Han Yu's son-in-law, and compiler of the first edition of Han Yu's collected works. Several passages in this work have caused difficulties to commentators. It seems natural to take ll. 31–34 as continuing the reflections on the poet's own career and aspirations that began with line 27, but the rendering given here is conjectural. Wu Rulun's proposed emendation in line 39, on the other hand, seems to have definitively resolved persistent problems with that couplet. *Form*: extended pentasyllabic regulated verse (*pǎilǔ*), though metrically loose.

l. 7 何所報: MG reads 無所報. l. 16 池潯: following SS, XC; WQ reads 地潯. l. 19 大被: XC, MG read 大袂. l. 24 拖長紳: Following MG, SS, XC. WQ reads 施長紳. l. 25 不發: MG reads 不斷. l. 32: 流采: following SS, XC; WQ reads 流來. l. 39 地理: following the emendation proposed by WRL; WQ reads 地理; MG reads 地里. l. 40 遂:

following SS, XC, MG; WQ reads 遂. 1. 42 講道調: following a variant reading noted in WQ, QTS; WQ, XC, and SS read 調道講; MG reads 調道調. 1. 44 疏篠穿: SS reads 疏篠芽; MG reads 疏篠竿。

### W.1 南園 South Garden

It has been suggested that this work was inadvertently left out of the group under the same title in *juan* 1 (1.34). That group, however, is entirely in regulated heptasyllabic meters, apart from the concluding pentasyllabic *lǚshi*. *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic.

1. 5 熟杏: ZY, YQ, YWX read 熟杏. 1. 6 草梢: following ZY, QTS. WQ reads 草稍 and notes “also reads 草蒲, or 草滿.” 竹柵: WZZ, HC read 竹色. 池潒: following alternative reading noted in XC. WQ reads 池痕. WYYYH reads 池根.

### W.2 假龍吟歌 Song: Imitation Dragon-keening

The conception of this piece derives from an anecdote relating that rubbing a bronze basin could create an imitation of the keening of a dragon, so like a real dragon’s call that it could provoke rainstorms, just as if an actual dragon were present. *Form*: unregulated, mixed tetrasyllabic and heptasyllabic.

1. 1 石乾: ZY, YQ, YWX read 石乾. 1. 3 蒼鷺: Following the variant reading noted in XC, WQ. WQ reads 蒼鷹. 1. 11 蒼蒼: XC reads 蒼苔.

### W.3 感諷六首 Oblique Reactions (Six Poems)

As in the case of W.1, these poems have been thought to have been omitted from a set from the main collection (in this case, 2.24). *Form*: unregulated pentasyllabic.

*Poem 4* 1. 10 乃老: WZZ notes “Also reads 乃云.”

*Poem 5* 1. 1 泣: WQ notes “Also reads 泣.”

*Poem 6* 1. 4 衰草: WQ notes “Also reads 素草.” 1. 9 茅蒙: WQ notes “Also reads 茅草.” 1. 11 苦花: this is the reading of all early edd. XL suggests this is a mistranscription of 晚花. Suzuki reports having seen the variant reading 芳花, which is still more plausible as a mistranscription (芳 and 苦 often appear as variants for one another due to the ease with which they can be confused), but he does not specify his source. 1. 14 悲峭: LK, ZY, YQ, YWX read 悲嘯. WRL reads 悲悄.

#### W.4 莫愁曲 **Tune: Grieve-not**

This title appears among medieval lyrics to the “pure *shang*-mode” tunes; this particular tune was supposed to derive from music of “Stone Citadel,” i.e., the Southern Dynasties capital of Jinling (see YSJ 48). See also 3.40. *Form*: unregulated pentasyllabic.

l. 1 坡: WQ’s note shows he reads this as an alternate form of 陂. YSJ reads 龍坂. l. 15–16 若負平生意 / 何名作莫愁: following YSJ. WQ reads 莫負平生意 / 何名何莫愁, though in a note WQ also suggests the YSJ text is preferable.

#### W.5 夜來樂 **Music for the Coming of Night**

Not attested in *yuefu* repertoires. This work depicts an evening in the life of a courtesan. *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic, rhymed every line.

l. 15 新: following XC. WQ reads 續.

#### W.6 嘲雪 **Innuendo on Snow**

The phrase “make innuendoes on wind and snow and tease flowers and plants” 嘲風雪弄花草 appears in a letter from Bai Juyi to Yuan Zhen disparaging Southern dynasties writing. The import of “innuendo on snow” would thus seem to be “pointless and florid literary bother about trivialities.” Li Jian, however, observes that Tang writers sometimes used the formula 嘲 X for ordinary “poems on things,” and cautions against looking too hard for satire – and indeed this poem does not seem to show any clear signs of satirical target or intent. The snow’s spread across vast distances provides an opportunity for a montage of contrastive scenes of pleasure and hardship, concluding with a transcendent. As noted in the footnote, the final image seems a bit obscure; Yao Quan posits that having got off to a nice start Li He ran out of steam at the end. *Form*: unregulated pentasyllabic, rhyming even lines.

l. 4 春語: WQ notes “Also reads 春雨.” l. 8 應故: ZY, YQ, YWX read 如故.

#### W.7 春懷引 **Rhapsody: Spring Yearnings**

Included in YSJ 95 among the “new *yuefu* lyrics,” but otherwise unknown as a song title. *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic, rhyming every line but the third and seventh (line 3 may be a deliberate off-rhyme).

Title 春懷引: ZY, YQ, YWX read 懷春引. l. 1 芳蹊: LK reads 芳溪. l. 2 煙: YSJ notes “Also reads 陰.” 花帶重: YSJ reads

香帶重. 1. 3 挂明弓: ZY, YQ, YWX read 作明弓. 1. 5 寶枕: HC reads 寶帳. 1. 6 寒: YSJ notes “Also reads 空.”

### W.8 白虎行 **Ballad: The White Tiger**

A crude pastiche of Li He's historical fantasies, recounting in broadly ballad-like manner the excesses and eventual downfall of the Qin dynasty. Lines 13–20 retell the renowned story of Jing Ke's failed assassination attempt on the future “First Emperor” (Qin Shihuang) in 227 BCE. This work is included in YSJ 95, in the category of “new *yuefu* lyrics.” *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic, quatrains rhyming aaxa.

1. 4 呼將軍: XC, WZZ, YSJ read 惟將軍. 1. 11 雄豪猛餓烈燒空: XC, YSJ reads 雄豪氣猛如餓煙. 1. 19 未終: WZZ reads 未移. 1. 21 卓地: YWX reads 卓立. 1. 22 知: YSJ, TWC read 卻.

### W.9 有所思 **Someone I'm Thinking of**

This title appears among the Han *nao-gong* lyrics, though these lyrics are not included in YSJ. The original lyrics for the tune title are in the voice of a woman whose lover has betrayed her. *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic with one pentasyllabic couplet.

1. 22 橋南: WZZ reads 城南.

### W.10 嘲少年 **Mocking a Youth**

*Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic, quatrains rhymed aaxa (the first, aaaa); final couplet aa.

Title: XC reads 嘲少年. 1. 3 狹坐: LK, ZY, YQ, YWX read 挾坐; TWC reads 狎坐. 1. 12 沒人織: XC, QTS read 勿人織. 1. 13 長金: XC, QTS read 長得. 1. 20 豈肯: WZZ, XC read 不肯.

### W.11 高平縣東私路 **East of the Gaoping County Seat: a Private Road**

Gaoping county was in Hedong, one of the Tang circuits or provinces, corresponding to present-day Shanxi. The title would place this work some time around Li He's sojourn with Zhang Che at Luzhou. *Form*: unregulated pentasyllabic.

1. 7 者: QTS notes “Also reads 道.”

### W.12 神仙曲 **Tune: Gods and Transcendents**

This is collected in YSJ 64 among the “lyrics to tunes of recent eras.” The poem presents a vision of the life of immortals on one of the fairy

mountain-islands in the sea. *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic; all lines rhyme.

l. 2 仙人: XC, WZZ, YSJ read 神仙. l. 3 清明: YSJ reads 晴時. l. 5 書字: YSJ reads 剪字. ll. 7–8: absent in some edd. l. 10 妖鬟: WZZ, XC, YSJ read 娃鬟. 轉語: WZZ, XC, YSJ read 傳語.

### W.13 龍夜吟 A Dragon Keens at Night

*Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic.

### W.14 崑崙使者 Kunlun Emissary

A meditation on ancient remnants of Emperor Wu of the Han's quest for immortality. *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic, quatrains rhyming aaxa.

l. 5 石文裂: JX reads 石文長.

### W.15 白門前 Before White Gate

This text appears in the “outer *juan*” of some early editions, but was excised by Wu Zhengzi because it largely duplicates 4.22 (see the Introduction for discussion). Wang Qi's comments on 4.22 include a version of this text. Though clearly versions of a single work, these two texts do exhibit some noticeable differences apart from the title. It is reinserted here in the order in which it appears in the “outer collection” of XC, since it seems of some interest both in terms of the history of Li He's collection and as an example of processes of revision or adaptation – whether such changes were made by the author or subsequently in the process of transmission.

l. 8 龍蓬: WQ (in note to 4.22) reads 逢逢.

### W.16 漢唐姬飲酒歌 Drinking Song of Consort Tang of the Han

This song is in the mode of Li He's “supplements” of songs or poems for historical figures. In 189, during the chaos of the dissolution of the Eastern Han dynasty, the warlord Dong Zhuo stripped Emperor Shao 少帝 (r. 189) (lit. the “young emperor” or “junior emperor”) of the imperial title he had carried less than a year, and made him Prince of Hongnong 弘農王. In the following year, as military resistance to Dong Zhuo's power increased, Dong Zhuo had the prince given poisoned wine. At the banquet before the prince drank the poison, his consort,

Consort Tang, danced while lamenting their fate. After the prince's death, Consort Tang refused her family's efforts to arrange marriages for her (as alluded to in the final couplet). The reference to a "Yunyang terrace" at l. 7 involves a somewhat complex set of associations: Yunyang is a prefecture north of Chang'an, near the site of the Qin and Western Han Ganquan 甘泉 ("Sweet Springs") palace complex, and is also the name given to the palace (and site of death) of Lady Gouyi 鉤弋, a consort of Emperor Wu of the Han, and mother of his successor Emperor Zhao 昭 (r. 87–74 BCE). Legends surrounding her hinted she was immortal; although the standard histories indicate Emperor Wu himself brought about her death, apocryphal traditions describe him as later yearning for her, and constructing a "Heaven-communicating Terrace" (*tongtian tai* 通天臺), also sited at the Ganquan complex – this is likely the place referred to as "the Yunyang terrace." It could thus stand both for a place of previous happy outings, while also raising the idea of posthumous contact, though as the following line notes, even if such contact were possible it would be no remedy to the present calamity. *Form*: unregulated pentasyllabic, rhyming every other line.

ll. 9–10 仗劍明秋水，兇威屢脅逼：XC, WZZ read 鐵劍常光光，至凶威屢逼。 l. 16 黃泉客：WQ notes "Also reads 黃泉隔。" l. 21 張總帷：ZY, YWX read 覓總帷。

### W.17 聽穎師彈琴歌 **Song: Listening to Master Ying's Zither**

Han Yu also wrote a poem called "Listening to Master Ying's Zither." Master Ying was a Buddhist monk (hence the reference to "Indus monk" at l. 9). *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic, quatrains rhyming aaxa.

l. 6 牽：QTS notes "Also reads 乘。" l. 15 當請：following the variant noted in XC; WQ reads 直請; LK reads 宜請; YQ reads 置請。

### W.18 謠俗 **Ditty on Customs**

The purport of the title is obscure. Wang Qi posits that it may be an allegorical comment on a palace woman who was dismissed from service, and subsequently unlucky in her choice of spouse. *Form*: unregulated pentasyllabic.

l. 2 春：Following XC. WQ reads 君。

**W.19 靜女春曙曲 Tune: Spring Daybreak of the Quiet Maiden**

This and W.20 are attributed to Li He in YSJ, but absent from editions of Li He's works. Wang Qi added these in his *variorum* commentary. This work, which appears among the “new *yuefu* lyrics” in YSJ 95, is an atmospheric evocation of a woman's boudoir; referring to her as a “quiet maiden” (*jing nü* 靜女) is perhaps double-edged, since it evokes a demure and retiring person, but also via its association with the *Shijing* song of that name (poem #42 of the classic), connotes an assignation, as suggested by its opening lines: “The quiet maiden, how lovely; / she awaits me by the corner of the city wall; / she hides and does not appear, / and I scratch my head and pace to and fro” 靜女其姝 / 俟我於城隅 / 愛而不見 / 搔首踟躕. *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic, rhyming every line except l. 3.

**W.20 少年樂 Delights of Youth**

Included in YSJ 66 among “lyrics to miscellaneous tunes.” *Form*: unregulated heptasyllabic, a sestet rhyming aaxaxa followed by a rhyming couplet.



## **Appendix: Major Early Sources for Li He Biography and Reception**

## 1. 杜牧, 李賀集序

i) 大和五年十月中，半夜時，舍外有疾呼傳緘書者。牧曰：「必有異。亟取火來。」及發之，果集賢學士沈公子明書一通，曰：

ii) 我亡友李賀，元和中義愛甚厚，日夕相與起居飲食。賀且死，嘗授我平生所著歌詩，離為四編，凡二百二十三首。數年來東西南北，良為已失去。今夕醉解，不復得寐，即閱理篋帙，忽得賀前所授我者。思理往事，凡與賀話言嬉游，一處所，一物候，一日夕，一觴一飯，顯顯焉無有忘棄者，不覺出涕。賀復無家室子弟，得以給養郵問，常恨想其人，詠其言止矣。子厚於我，與我為賀集序，盡道其所由來，亦少解我意。

1 The text appears in WYHY 714.3685B–3686A, as well as in Du Mu's *Fanchuan wenji* 樊川文集, 10.148–49, TWC 93.2A–B, and QTW 743.9B–10B. TWC renders the title as 唐太常寺奉禮郎李賀歌詩集序, “Preface to the Collected Song-poems of Li He, Vice-Director for Ceremonials in the Court of Imperial Sacrifices of the Tang.”

2 Courtesy name (zi 字) of Shen Shushi 沈述師.

3 飲食: WYHY notes the variant 飲會 (“drink and gather”; “gather for parties”).

4 二百二十三首: *Fanchuan wenji* reads 千首 (“a thousand [poems]”); TWC reads 若干首 (“a certain number [of poems]”). The text here follows WYHY. Many

# 1. Du Mu (803–852), “Preface to the Collected Works of Li He”<sup>1</sup>

i) In the middle of a certain night during the tenth month of Taihe 5 (831), there was an urgent cry outside my dwelling, announcing the delivery of a sealed letter. I said “Surely something strange is afoot – bring a light, quickly!” And sure enough – when I opened the seal, it was the following letter from Mr. Shen Ziming,<sup>2</sup> of the Academy of Assembled Worthies, which read:

ii) *My deceased friend Li He and I were extremely devoted friends during the Yuanhe era (806–820), in one another’s company day and night, and always eating and drinking together.<sup>3</sup> When He was about to die, he handed me the song-poems he had written throughout his life, divided into four sheaves, amounting to two hundred and twenty-three works.<sup>4</sup> These past several years, I have wandered east, west, south, and north,<sup>5</sup> and quite thought I’d lost them. Tonight when I sobered up after drinking, I was unable to get back to sleep. I began rummaging through and arranging my writing-cases, and suddenly came across He’s poems – the ones he’d given me before. As I thought back over all those events of the past, all my conversations and outings with He – the places, the seasons and weather, each day and each evening, each shared cup and each meal – all were clearly present to my mind, with nothing lost or left out. Without realizing it I found myself weeping. He has no more family, no sons or brothers whom I might be able to give assistance or make inquiries about. I often imagine him to myself with regret, musing long as I recall his speech and demeanor.<sup>6</sup> You have been kind to me – for me, compose a preface for his collection, giving a full account of how all this came about. This would offer some relief to my mind.*

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edd. of Li He’s works include texts of Du’s preface that read 二百三十三首 (“two hundred and thirty-three [poems].” On these discrepancies and other issues in the early transmission of Li He’s collection, see the discussion in the Introduction.

5 Echoing Confucius’s self-description of himself in the “Tan gong” chapter of the *Li ji* as “a man of east, west, north, and south,” referring to the itinerant life of an advisor to rulers.

6 詠其言止: WYYH notes the variant 味其言止 (“savor his speech and demeanor”).

iii) 牧其夕不果以書道其不可，明日就公謝，且曰：「世謂賀才絕出於前。」讓。居數日，牧深惟公曰：「公於詩為深妙奇博，且復盡知賀之得失短長。今實敍賀不讓，必不能當公意，如何？」復就謝，極道所不敢敍賀，公曰：「子固若是，是當慢我。」牧因不敢復辭，勉為賀敍，然終甚慚。

iv) 唐皇諸孫賀，字長吉。元和中，韓吏部亦頗道其歌詩。雲煙綿聯，不足為其態也；水之迢迢，不足為其情也；春之盎盎，不足為其和也；秋之明潔，不足為其格也；風檣陣馬，不足為其勇也；瓦棺篆鼎，不足為其古也；時花美女，不足為其色也；荒國陟殿，梗莽丘壠，不足為其恨怨悲愁也；鯨呿鼉擲，牛鬼蛇神，不足為其虛荒誕幻也。蓋《騷》之苗裔，理雖不及，詞或過之。《騷》有感怨刺懣，言及君臣理亂，時有以激發人意。乃賀所為，無得有是。賀復能探尋前事，所以深歎恨今古未嘗經道者，如金銅仙人辭漢歌、補梁庾肩吾宮體謠，求取情狀，離絕遠去筆墨畦逕間，亦殊不能知之。賀生二十七年死矣，世皆曰：「使賀且未死，少加以理，僕奴命《騷》可也。」賀死後凡十有五年，京兆杜牧為其序。

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1 The following quoted speech might be read as addressed to Shen Shushi directly (the person-marker *gong* 公 rendered “that gentleman” can equally serve as a polite term of address), but then the point of saying “I went again in person” further down becomes obscure. Harada Kenyū proposed resolving the issue by reading this initial quoted speech as giving the substance of a letter Du Mu wrote before his in-person visit, though understanding it as giving the substance of Du Mu’s internal monologue seems a simpler solution.

iii) I didn't get around that night to writing back to explain why it just wouldn't do. I went the following day to that gentleman's home to present my excuses. Saying, "The common opinion is that He's talents were far in advance of the age," I declined the request. A few days later, I meditated carefully about that gentleman, thinking,<sup>1</sup> "That gentleman has a wondrously profound and astonishingly erudite grasp of poetry; and fully understands, moreover, He's various strengths and weaknesses. Now if I really do as he asks without declining, and compose a preface, it is certain not to satisfy his expectations – what of that?" So I went again in person to excuse myself, exhaustively explaining all the reasons for which I did not dare compose a preface for He. That gentleman said, "If you really insist on this, I shall take it as a deliberate snub." At this point I did not dare decline any further, and did my best to compose a preface for He. I still feel exceedingly ashamed about it, however.<sup>2</sup>

iv) He, of the Tang imperial clan,<sup>3</sup> bore the courtesy name Changji. During the Yuanhe era, Han of the Personnel Ministry<sup>4</sup> also praised his song-poems quite highly. Sinuous whorls of cloud and mist are not enough to convey their loveliness; the vast expanses of open waters are not enough to convey their feeling; the fullness of springtime is not enough to convey their gentleness; the bright clarity of autumn is not enough to convey their rigor;<sup>5</sup> wind-driven masts and battle-steeds are not enough to convey their boldness; tiled sarcophagi and tripods inscribed with seal-script are not enough to convey their antiquity; blossoms in season and lovely women are not enough to convey their sensuality; ruined capitals and crumbling palaces,<sup>6</sup> weed-choked moors and burial mounds – these are not enough to convey their pained resentments

2 Most edd. read 然其甚慚, while QTW reads 終甚慚. The text presented adopts what seems the best choice among the available options here.

3 Du Mu's collection and TWC omit the word 唐 here.

4 I.e., Han Yu.

5 格, following the reading of most edd. WYYH reads 清, and notes "most editions read 格."

6 陟殿, following the reading of most edd. WYYH reads 侈殿.

## 2. 李商隱，李賀小傳

i) 京兆杜牧為李長吉集序，狀長吉之奇甚盡，世傳之。長吉姊嫁王氏者，語長吉之事尤備。

and bitter sorrows; gaping leviathan and bounding sea-tortoise, bull-demons and serpent-spirits – these are not enough to convey their wild fancifulness and outlandish illusions. He may be called a descendant of the “*Sao*” poet – though in cogency he does not reach his ancestor, in rhetorical flourish he perhaps exceeds him. The “*Sao*” has deep resentments and angry attacks, yet when its words turn to matters of ruler and minister, and good and bad governance, it often provides incitements to reflection in its reader. As for what He wrote, there is no finding such things. He was able, moreover, to ferret out events of the past, as grounds for deep laments over what no one from antiquity to the present had ever thought of before, as in the “Song for the Bronze Immortal Taking Leave of the Han,” or the “Substitute for a Palace-Style Rhyme by Yu Jianwu of the Liang.” In seeking out the way such things were, he utterly departed from and left far behind the pathways of brush and ink – and these things are exceedingly hard to understand. He died at the age of twenty-seven. The world says of him that if he hadn’t died, and had somewhat bolstered the cogency of his writing, he would have been able to command the “*Sao*” poet as his servant. Fifteen years after He’s death, I, Du Mu of the Metropolitan Region, have composed this preface.

## 2. Li Shangyin (813–ca. 858), “Short Biography of Li He”<sup>1</sup>

i) Du Mu of the Metropolitan Region has composed a preface for Li Changji’s collected works, which gives a very exhaustive account of his wondrousness, and is in general circulation. An elder sister of Changji’s who married into the Wang clan [Li Shangyin’s in-laws] is able to speak about matters relating to Changji with particular comprehensiveness:

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1 This text appears in *Li Yishan wenji* 4.20B–22A, as well as TWC 99.7B–8B and QTW 780.17A–18A [8149]. See also *Fannan wenji*, 1: 8.464–467; *Li Shangyin wen biannian jiaozhu*, 5: 2265–2272.

ii) 長吉細瘦，通眉，長指爪，能苦吟疾書，最先為昌黎韓愈所知。所與游者，王參元、楊敬之、權璩、崔植為密。每旦日出，與諸公游，未嘗得題然後為詩，如他人思量牽合，以及程限為意。恆從小奚奴騎距驢，背一古破錦囊，遇有所得，即書投囊中。及暮歸，太夫人使婢受囊，出之，見所書多，輒曰：「是兒要當嘔出心始已耳。」上燈與食，長吉從婢取所書，研墨疊紙足成之，投他囊中。非大醉及吊喪日，率如此，過亦不復省。王、楊輩時復來探取寫去。長吉往往獨騎，往還京洛，所至或時有著，隨棄之，故沈子明家所餘四卷而已。

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1 Since there *are* in fact many examples in Li He's collection of works written to set topics, several interpreters of this line have tried to avoid contradiction by construing this clause as meaning, "He never, having received a topic, wrote the poem as others do, trying to make things match ..." But it seems simpler to take the sentence in its more immediately apparent sense, and as a general characterization of Li He's approach, rather than as a rigidly categorical statement – indeed, on balance, the proportion of social occasional verse in Li He is much lower than the norm in Tang collections.

ii) Changji was thin and frail, with eyebrows that connected in the middle, and long fingernails. He was good at painstaking poetic composition, and could write fast. He was first appreciated by Han Yu of Changli. Of his acquaintances, he was closest to Wang Canyuan, Yang Jingzhi, Quan Qu, and Cui Zhi. Every morning when he'd go out socializing with those various gentlemen, he never composed a poem having first set out the topic, the way others do when they ponder how to force their work to accord with some prescribed limits.<sup>1</sup> He'd always go about on a hinny,<sup>2</sup> with an old tattered brocade bag on his back, followed by a Xi slave.<sup>3</sup> Whenever he struck upon something, he'd write it down and put it in the bag. When he returned home at evening, Her Ladyship<sup>4</sup> would have the servant girl take the bag and remove the writing. When Her Ladyship saw that he had written a lot, she'd say, "This child is not going to stop until he's vomited out his heart." When they'd lit the lamps and given him his meal, Changji would take what he'd written from the servant girl and, grinding out ink and folding paper,<sup>5</sup> complete the poems, and throw them in another bag. Except when he was exceedingly drunk or on days when he paid mourning calls, this was his normal practice. Once he'd finished the poems he'd never look at them again. Then again sometimes Wang and Yang and that lot would come and take away what he'd written to make copies. Changji would often ride alone between home and Luoyang, and wherever he went he'd often compose something and then throw it away, so that what was left in the home of Shen Ziming was no more than four scrolls.

2 *Juxu* 距驢: This is the reading of TWC; *Li Yishan wenji* and QTW read 疲驢 ("lame donkey"). 距驢 is a scribal variant or error for *juxu* 駘驢, a mule-like animal described as the offspring of a male horse and a female mule, which would seem to be something of a genetic anomaly. "Hinny," the offspring of a stallion and a female donkey, is perhaps the cross referred to.

3 The term Xi 奚 appears in classical texts as a designation of a foreign ethnicity, but by the Tang appears to have become a loose designation for persons of hereditary menial status (cf. 2.12, l. 1). Other terms such as Ba 巴 and Cong 竇 (cf. 2.23, l. 28; 3.6) seem to reflect the actual geographical and ethnic origins of certain populations of Tang domestic slaves.

4 That is, Li He's mother.

5 "Folding paper": i.e., to form creases to serve as rule-lines for writing out a fair copy.

iii) 長吉將死時，忽晝見一緋衣人，駕赤虬，持一版，書若太古篆，或霹靂石文者，云當召長吉。長吉了不能讀，歎下榻叩頭，言「阿彌老且病，賀不願去。」緋衣人笑曰：「帝成白玉樓，立召君為記。天上差樂，不苦也。」長吉獨泣，邊人盡見之。少之，長吉氣絕。常所居窗中勃勃有烟氣，聞行車嘒管之聲。太夫人急止人哭，待之如炊五斗黍許時，長吉竟死。王氏姊非能造作謂長吉者，實所見如此。

iv) 嗚呼！天蒼蒼而高也，上果有帝邪？帝果有苑囿宮室觀閣之玩邪？苟信然，則天之高邈，帝之尊嚴，亦宜有人物文彩愈此世者，何獨番番於長吉而使其不壽邪！噫，又豈世所謂才而奇者，不獨地上少，即天上亦不多邪？長吉生二十四年，位不過奉禮太常，中當時人忌，亦多排擯毀斥之，又豈才而奇者，帝獨重之，而人反不重邪？又豈人見會勝帝邪？

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1 Most edd. insert a putatively original note here: “This was how Changji had called her Ladyship when he was learning to speak” 長吉學語時呼太夫人云。

2 常所居: Following the text of QTW and most edd.; the *Li Yishan wenji* text reads 長所居。

iii) When Changji was about to die, suddenly, in broad daylight, he saw a crimson-robed personage – riding a red dragon, and bearing a tablet with writing on it like the seal-script of high antiquity or thunder-stone script – who said he had come to summon Changji. Changji was utterly unable to read it; he quickly got down from his bed and kowtowed, saying, “Ah Mi<sup>1</sup> is old and sick – I do not wish to go.” The figure in crimson robes laughed and said, “God has completed a white jade tower, and summons you instantly to compose a commemorative inscription. Tasks in heaven are delightful, and not painful.” Changji continued weeping there alone – everyone present saw it. After a while, he stopped breathing. In the window where he’d always sat<sup>2</sup> there was a surging flow of mist, and they heard sounds of moving carriages and clear pipe music. Her Ladyship urgently stopped everyone from weeping. They waited, and in about the time it takes to cook a measure of millet, Changji at last died. This sister who married into the Wang clan is not someone who could fabricate stories about Changji – the fact is that this is what she saw.

iv) Alas! Heaven is grey and high. Is there indeed a God up there? Does God indeed have such diversions as parks and preserves, palaces and halls, towers and pavilions? Supposing this truly to be the case, then – in view of heaven’s remote loftiness, and God’s fearful majesty – surely there ought to be talents there with literary ornament to surpass those of this world. How should a God so fussily insist on getting Changji, and thereby cause him to die young? Ah! – could it be, then again, that what this world calls the talented and wondrous are not only scarce here on earth, but even in heaven are not numerous?<sup>3</sup> Changji lived twenty-four years,<sup>4</sup> and his rank never exceeded that of Vice-Director

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3 Following the reading of QTW and most edd.; *Li Yishan wenji* and TWC read 邪 for 即 here.

4 This is generally assumed to be a mistake, though it was adopted in some later accounts (see the *Jiu Tang shu* biography below).

### 3. 《舊唐書》《新唐書》〈李賀傳〉

#### a) 《舊唐書》

李賀字長吉，宗室鄭王之後。父名晉肅，以是不應進士，韓愈為之作諱辨，賀竟不就試。手筆敏捷，尤長於歌篇。其文思體勢，如崇巖峭壁，萬仞崛起，當時文士從而效之，無能髣髴者。其樂府詞數十篇，至於雲韶樂工，無不諷誦。補太常寺協律郎，卒時年二十四。

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1 中當時人忌: The reading of the *Li Yishan wenji* text. 忌 is absent in most edd., rendering 中 an extraneous supplement to the preceding clause. Ignoring or omitting 中, and reading without 忌, as is done in most modern edd., however, also yields good sense: "There were also many among the people of his age who persecuted and slandered him."

for Ceremonials in the Court for Imperial Sacrifices. He became a target of the envy of people of his time; and many also persecuted and slandered him<sup>1</sup> – could it be, then again, that as for these talented and wondrous ones, only God esteems them, whereas humans, conversely, do not? Or, then again, could it be that the judgment of humans is superior to God's?

### 3. Biographical notices from the *Jiu Tang shu* and *Xin Tang shu*

#### a) *Jiu Tang shu*<sup>2</sup>

Li He, who bore the courtesy name Changji, was descended from Prince Zheng of the imperial lineage. His father was named Jinsu, and for this reason he did not participate in the *jinsshi* examination. Han Yu composed a “Clarification Regarding Taboo-Names” on his behalf, but to the end Li He never sat for the examination. A nimble and swift writer, he was particularly good at songs. His literary conceptions and the forms he gave them were like lofty crags or sheer cliff-faces, abruptly surging ten thousand fathoms aloft. Literary men of that era took his lead and imitated him, but there was no one who could produce even a vague semblance. As for the several dozen lyrics to “Music Bureau” tunes he composed, there was no one, all the way up to the Yunshao music masters, who didn't intone and recite them. He was appointed to the vacant post of Harmonizer of the Pitchpipes in the Court for Imperial Sacrifices. At the time of his death he was twenty-four.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *Jiu Tang shu* 11: 137.3772.

<sup>3</sup> As noted above, this figure for Li He's age at death likely derives from Li Shang-yin's “Short Biography.” Current consensus is that Du Mu's figure of twenty-seven is more likely.

**b) 《新唐書》**

i) 李賀字長吉，系出鄭王後。七歲能辭章，韓愈、皇甫湜始聞未信，過其家，使賀賦詩，援筆輒就如素構，自目曰高軒過，二人大驚，自是有名。

ii) 為人纖瘦，通眉，長指爪，能疾書。每旦日出，騎弱馬，從小奚奴，背古錦囊，遇所得，書投囊中。未始先立題然後為詩，如它人牽合程課者。及暮歸，足成之。非大醉、弔喪日率如此。過亦不甚省。母使婢探囊中，見所書多，即怒曰：「是兒要嘔出心乃已耳。」

iii) 以父名晉肅，不肯舉進士，愈為作諱辨，然卒亦不就舉。辭尚奇詭，所得皆驚邁，絕去翰墨畦逕，當時無能效者。樂府數十篇，雲韶諸工皆合之絃管。為協律郎，卒，年二十七。與游者權璩、楊敬之、王恭元，每譔著，時為所取去。賀亦早世，故其詩歌世傳者鮮焉。

## b) *Xin Tang shu*<sup>1</sup>

i) Li He, who bore the courtesy name Changji, was from a line descended from Prince Zheng. He was able to compose literary works from the age of seven. When Han Yu and Huangfu Shi first heard it they didn't believe it. They paid a call at his home and had him compose a poem. He picked up the brush and just like that it was done, as though it had been composed in advance. He gave his poem the title "A Lofty Carriage Calls." Those two gentlemen were greatly astonished – it was from this moment that Li He gained renown.

ii) As to his person, he was slight of build and gaunt, with connected eyebrows and long fingernails. He was able to write very fast. He'd go out each morning astride a feeble nag, with a Xi slave following in attendance, bearing an old brocade bag. Whenever something striking occurred to him, he'd write it out and throw it in the bag. He never composed a poem having first set out the topic, the way others do when they force their work to accord with some prescribed assignment. When he returned home in the evening he would work out the lines he'd written into complete poems. Except when he was exceedingly drunk, or on days when he had to go and pay mourning calls, this was his habitual practice. And once something was finished, he didn't particularly trouble himself with it further. His mother had a maid reach into the bag, and when she saw that he'd written a lot she'd say angrily, "This child won't stop until he's vomited out his heart."

iii) Since his father was named Jinsu, he was unwilling to participate in the *jinsu* examination. Han Yu composed a "Clarification Regarding Taboo-Names" on his behalf, but in the end he still didn't present himself as a candidate. His style inclined toward the wondrous and fantastic. The things he came up with were all startling departures that left the usual pathways for brush and ink utterly behind. In that time there was no one who could imitate him. His several dozen "Music Bureau" pieces were all set to string and wind accompaniment by the various masters of the Yunshao Academy. He served as Harmonizer of

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1 *Xin Tang shu* 18: 128.5787–5788.

#### 4. 沈亞之，序詩送李膠秀才

i) 歌詩之所以為發寤，其旨甚遠。夫物情衡樂怨抑之感，吁而散之大空，還會於風雲，降於水土，包聲於陶埴之器。髣髴之變，盡搖於樂。樂之所感，微則占於音，章則見於詞。微於音者，聖人察之；章於詞者，賢人畏之。故勤人之君欲以聞其下，忠主之佐使以達其上。夫往代之詩樂皆能沿聲諧韻；今徵其文以觀之，而其代興衰可見也。寧近世學者固不變風從律耶？何為其詞不聞充陳於管絃乎？今樂府既闕所奏，如有忠言之意眾所仰哉？

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1 王恭元: This name should read “Wang Canyuan” 王參元. See the discussion in Liu Xuekai and Yu Shucheng, *Li Shangyin wen biannian jiaozhu*, 5: 2268n5.

the Pitchpipes, and was twenty-seven when he died. Quan Qu, Yang Jingzhi, and Wang Gongyuan<sup>1</sup> were companions of his, and whenever he'd compose something it was often taken away by one of these men. He also died young, so that the poems and songs of his transmitted today are scanty.

#### 4. Shen Yazhi, "An Account of Poetry, to send off Licentiate Li Jiao"<sup>2</sup>

i) As for the way in which song-poems serve to open up [the hearer's] awareness – the import of this process is exceedingly far-reaching. Now, with all those stirrings whereby creatures' inner states are moved to free-flowing delight, or to cramped and pent-up resentment, when they are cried out and scattered into the great void, there comes a returning encounter of wind and clouds; when they are sent down amid water and earth, they enfold their voices within earthenware instruments. And all those fleeting semblances transforming there – all of it is set moving by music. As for the stirrings that issue forth in music, the subtle ones are those that may be divined through tones, while the manifest ones appear in lyrics. Those that reside subtly in tones, the sage discerns; those that are manifest in lyrics, worthy persons fear. Thus rulers assiduous in the care of their people will wish in this way to hear those below; assistants loyal to their lords will use this means to get their message across to the one above. Now, the lyric music of former ages could all be issued forth in voice in a way that accorded with acoustical resonance. When we now observe that [ancient] music by examining the texts, the flourishing or decline of each era comes into view. Could it be that scholars of recent times have deliberately refused to adapt their mode of expression so as to remain in step with musical tones? [If not,] Why then is it that we do not hear their lyrics being matched and set

2 From *Shen Xiaxian wenji* 沈下賢文集 9.7A–7B; QTW 8: 735.13B–14B [7593–7594]. QTW renders the title as 送李膠秀才詩序.

ii) 余故友李賀善擇南北朝樂府故詞，其所賦亦多怨鬱悽艷之功，誠以蓋古排今，使為詞者莫得偶矣。惜乎其終亦不備聲絃唱。賀名溢天下，年二十七官卒奉常。由是後學爭踵賀，相與綴裁其字句以媒取價。嗚呼。貢諷合韻之勤益遠矣。膠亦諸王孫，頗專七言詞。始來長安，人以為思轍賀。今一不中第，言歸故楚江陵下。豈欲以廣其情於煙波。顧有課，余乃敢悉叙詩歌之大端以為別贊。

forth to the accompaniment of pipes and strings? Now it is not only that the Music Bureau lacks many of the things that ought to be performed there – what moreover of those intentions to utter loyal speech, upon which everyone relies?<sup>1</sup>

ii) My old friend Li He was good at selecting former lyrics from the “Music Bureau” repertoires of the Northern and Southern Dynasties, and what he composed was likewise<sup>2</sup> rich in effects of pent-up resentments and wistful loveliness. Indeed, in this he surpassed the ancients and pushed the moderns aside, so that among those writers of lyrics there was none who could match him. How sad, then, that his works as well were never set to music and sung with string accompaniments!<sup>3</sup> Li He’s fame resounded throughout the world; at the age of twenty-seven he died, his highest official post being Vice-Director for Ceremonials.<sup>4</sup> From then on, latter scholars vied to follow in his footsteps, piecing together phrases and lines of his to seek reputation. Alas! – with this, any thought of presenting something with an implicit point, or of according to musical tones, grew all the further from mind. Jiao, also descended from princes of the imperial line, has made lyrics in heptasyllabic meters something of a specialty. On his first arrival at Chang’an, people thought he meant to follow in Li He’s tracks. Now after suffering this one setback in the examinations, he intends to return to his former Chu, in that region downstream of Jiangling. Might it be that he intends in so doing to broaden his affections there amid the mists and waves? He looked to me to compose something, and only thus have I made bold to give this account of poetry in its main essentials, to serve as a parting-gift.

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1 The translation follows the text as given, but the expression seems somewhat awkward. Possibly 眾 is a mis-transcription for an interrogative pronoun such as 奚. The clause would then read, “Where there is an intention to utter loyal words, on what will it rely [as its medium]?”

2 亦: *Shen Xiaxian wenji* reads 不; emended based on QTW. Here “likewise” means “like those (good) ancient *yuefu* lyrics.”

3 “As well”: Here meaning, “like those (faulty) *yuefu* lyrics of recent times, that are not suited for musical performance.”

4 Extant texts for this preface read *feng chang* 奉常, which seems almost certainly a garbled rendering of Taichang 太常 (“Court for Imperial Sacrifices”) and *fengli* [lang] 奉禮[郎] (“Vice-Director for Ceremonials”).



# Abbreviations

CHZ	Cheng Hongzhi 陳弘治, <i>Li Changji geshi jiao shi</i> 李長吉歌詩校釋
FF	<i>Fang Funan piben Li Changji shi ji</i> 方扶南批本李長吉詩集
JX	<i>Tang Li Changji geshi</i> 唐李長吉歌詩 [“Jinxiang edition” 巾箱本]
LJ, HC	<i>Li Changji ji</i> 李長吉集 [Li Jian 黎簡, Huang Chunyao 黃淳曜, comm.]
LK	<i>Li Changji geshi</i> 李長吉歌詩 [Ling Mengchu 凌濛初 edition]
MG	<i>Li Changji geshi bian</i> 李長吉歌詩編 [“Mongol edition” 蒙古本]
MJ	<i>Geshi ji</i> 歌詩集 [Mao Jin 毛晉 edition]
QTS	<i>Quan Tang shi</i> 全唐詩
QTW	<i>Quan Tang wen</i> 全唐文
SKZM	<i>Siku quanshu zongmu</i> 四庫全書總目
SS	<i>Li Changji wenji</i> 李長吉文集 [“Song Shu edition” 宋蜀本]
TWC	<i>Tang wen cui</i> 唐文萃
WQ	<i>Li Changji geshi</i> 李長吉歌詩 [Wang Qi 王琦, comm.]
WRL	<i>Li Changji shi pingzhu</i> 李長吉詩評註 [Wu Rulun 吳汝綸, comm.]
WYYH	<i>Wenyuan yinghua</i> 文苑英華
WZZ	<i>Kanpan Ri Chökitsu kashi</i> 官皮李長吉歌詩 [Wu Zhengzi 吳正子, comm.]
XC	<i>Li He geshi bian</i> 李賀歌詩編 [“Xuancheng edition” 宣城本]
XL	<i>Xielü gouyuan</i> 協律鉤元 [Chen Benli 陳本禮, comm.]
XW	<i>Li Changji shiji</i> 李長吉詩集 [Xu Wei 徐渭, Dong Maoce 董懋策, comm.]
YQ	<i>Li Changji Changgu ji jujie dingben</i> 李長吉昌谷集句解定本 [Yao Quan 姚佺, comm.]
YSJ	<i>Yuefu shiji</i> 樂府詩集
YWY	<i>Yao Wenxie Changgu shi jizhu</i> 姚文燮昌谷詩集註
YX	<i>Youxuan ji</i> 又玄集
ZY	<i>Changgu ji</i> 昌谷集 [Zeng Yi 曾益, comm.]



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