

I.1 常建

高才而無貴仕，誠哉是言。曩劉楨死於文學，左思終於記室，鮑昭卒於參軍，今常建亦淪於一尉。悲夫。建詩似初發通莊，却尋野徑，百里之外，方歸大道。所以其旨遠，其興僻，佳句輒來，唯論意表。至如「松際露微月，清光猶為君」，又「山光悅鳥性，潭影空人心」，此例十數句，並可稱警策。然一篇盡善者，「戰餘落日黃，軍敗鼓聲死」，「今與山鬼鄰，殘兵哭遼水」，屬思既苦，詞亦警絕。潘岳雖云能敘悲怨，未見如此章。

I.1 Chang Jian

“Highly talented but without a position of honor”¹—how accurate are these words! Of yore, Liu Zhen died as a mere secretary, Zuo Si came to his end as a clerk, Bao Zhao passed away as a military aide. Now, Chang Jian, for his part, has foundered as no more than a district constable. It is sad indeed!

Jian’s poems seem at first to start out on the public avenue, but then withdraw to explore uncultivated byways, and only a hundred miles off do they return to the main road. This is the reason why his purport is far-reaching and his evocative power uncommon, with fine verses tumbling forth that can only be regarded as from the other side of thought—such as “At the edge of pine-trees a slip of moon is revealed, / Whose pure light is here, sir, for you”;² or “The mountain’s light gladdens the being of a bird; / Shadows in the pool empty out a person’s heart.”³ Dozens of lines of this sort may be praised alike as strikingly compelling. And still, in a whole poem of consummate excellence—“... In the aftermath of battle, the setting sun was brown; / His army was defeated, the sound of drums died off. / ... This one is now together with the mountain spirit; / And the soldiers that are left weep by the Liao River”⁴—the combination of thoughts will be poignant and the phrasing also strikingly distinct. Though Pan Yue is said to have been skilled at expressing grief and discontent,⁵ compositions such as this have never been seen before.

1 Cf. Liu Jun 劉峻, “Bianming lun” 辯命論, *Wen xuan* 文選 54.2344–45; also *Wei shu* 魏書 82.1802, where Chang Jing 常景 uses this phrase to refer to Sima Xiangru (179–117 BCE), Wang Bao (ca. 84–ca. 53 BCE), Yan Junping (fl. ca. 40–30 BCE), and Yang Xiong (53 BCE–18 CE).

2 From poem I.1.5.

3 From poem I.1.9.

4 The second and fourth couplets from poem I.1.2.

5 Pan Yue’s (247–300) poems in memory of his deceased wife were especially famous for their pathos.

I.1.1

夢太白西峰

夢寐昇九崖

杳藹逢元君

遺我太白岑

4 寥寥辭垢氛

結宇在星漢

宴林閉氤氲

簷楹覆餘翠

8 巾鳥生片雲

時往青溪間

孤亭晝仍曛

松峰引天影

12 石瀨清霞文

恬目緩舟趣

齋心投鳥群

春風有搖櫂

16 潭島花紛紛

I.1.1

In a Dream: the West Peak of Mount Taibo

- Deep in a dream I ascended the ninefold cliffs,
 In a thin film of fog met the Primal Mistress.¹
 She left me on one of Taibo's crags,
 4 Out of the world, quitting the fumes of filth.
 I made a shelter there, amid the starry Han,²
 Resting in a grove, shut away from cloying vapors.
 Where eaves and pillars override the suffused blue,
 8 My headcloth and slippers are in diffused clouds.
 At times I travel amidst an azure stream,
 To a lone pavilion where twilight stays all day.
 There pine-clad peaks draw out shadows from the sky,
 12 And rose-cloud figurings show clear in stony shoals.
 Content with the sight, I slow the boat's progress;
 With heart purged, I take refuge with the flocking birds.³
 In the springtime breeze is just a movement of oars,
 16 As over pool and islet blossoms fall in fullness.

1 The mountain's goddess. Mount Taibo was on the westernmost spur of the Zhongnan mountain range, running southwest of the capital, Chang'an.

2 The "starry Han" is the Han River in heaven, that is, our Milky Way.

3 The *Zhuangzi* speaks admiringly of "the fasting (or purging) of the heart" which allows one to act in complete accord with the world. A well-known story tells of an innocent boy who played daily with gulls on the seashore; when he went there after his father asked him to catch one, the gulls would no longer come near him. "Taking refuge" with the birds here suggests that the poet is free of worldly desires, like the boy in his original state.

I.1.2

弔王將軍墓

嫖姚北伐時

深入強千里

戰餘落日黃

4 軍敗鼓聲死

嘗聞漢飛將

可奪單于壘

今與山鬼鄰

8 殘兵哭遼水

I.1.3

昭君墓

漢宮豈不死

異域傷獨歿

萬里駝黃金

1 In memory of Wang Xiaojie 王孝傑, a Tang general who fell in a brave but losing battle in the northeast with the Khitans in 697.

2 Drums signaled the army to advance.

3 “Flying Leader” was the epithet given to the great Han-dynasty general Li Guang 李廣 (d. 119 BCE) who fought against the Central Asian Xiongnu tribes under the leadership of their ruler, the *chanyu*.

4 In Liaoning, where General Wang died.

I.1.2

In Memoriam, at the Grave of General Wang¹

Agile and on alert in the time of the northern assault,
He drove on deep, exceeding a thousand leagues.

In the aftermath of battle, the setting sun was brown;

4 His army was defeated, the sound of drums died off.²

I have heard before that Han's "Flying Leader"

Was able to take the *chanyu's* own fort.³

This one is now together with the mountain spirit,

8 And the soldiers that are left weep by the Liao River.⁴

I.1.3

The Grave of Zhaojun⁵

Surely she should not have died but in the Han palace;

Yet she suffered and met her end alone in an alien land.

A myriad leagues the dowry of gold was carried,

5 Wang Zhaojun 王昭君 was one of the scores of women in the harem of Emperor Yuan of the Han. Because she did not bribe the painter Mao Yanshou 毛延壽, who painted portraits of the numerous palace ladies for the emperor to choose favorites from, he misrepresented her as ill-favored in appearance instead of as the great beauty she was, and the emperor therefore never considered her for his preferment. When in 33 BCE a Chinese princess was promised to the Chanyu, ruler of the Xiongnu, as part of a diplomatic agreement, the emperor, thinking little of her, chose her to be the woman sent north to the barbarian lands. When he actually saw her as she was about to depart, he regretted this, but it was impossible to negate the agreement. She would become in legend a symbol of Chinese civilization sacrificed to barbarians, for the sake of politics. Her grave was located south of present-day Hohhot, in Inner Mongolia, and was said always to remain green with vegetation even when the weather turned cold.

- 4 蛾眉為枯骨
迴車夜出塞
立馬皆不發
共恨丹青人
8 墳上哭明月

I.1.4

江上琴興

- 江上調玉琴
一絃清一心
冷冷七絃遍
4 萬木澄幽陰
能使江月白
又令江水深
始知枯桐枝
8 可以徽黃金

- 4 To where her moth-eyebrows would become dried bones.
 The returning carriages went out at night from the frontier;
 Of the drawn-up horses, not one wished to go farther.
 All of us now revile that painter of reds and greens,¹
 8 As by her cairn we weep in the luminous moonlight.

I.1.4

Zither Evocations by the River

- By the river, I tune the jade-trimmed zither,
 Whose every string cleanses my whole heart.
 The chill “plink” of seven strings sounds far and wide,
 4 As a myriad trees are washed in haunting shade.
 Able to bring out the whiteness of river moonlight,
 And even to make the river’s water seem deeper.
 Now I realize how a bough of dried paulownia
 8 Can indeed be studded with yellow gold.²

1 Red for vermilion and green for malachite are combined as metonymy for the pigments of painting.

2 Paulownia wood was favored for making zithers. The zither’s inlaid studs are of yellow-gold jade (cf. line 1).

I.1.5

宿王昌齡隱處

清溪深不極

隱處惟孤雲

松際露微月

4 清光猶為君

茆亭宿花影

藥院滋苔紋

予亦謝時去

8 西山鸞鶴群

I.1.6

送李十一尉臨溪

冷冷花下琴

君唱渡江吟

天際一帆影

I.1.5

Passing the Night at Wang Changling's Secluded Place¹

By a clear bourn—its depths not to be plumbed,
 This place of seclusion—for just a solitary cloud.
 At the edge of pine-trees a slip of moon is revealed,²

- 4 Whose pure light remains here, sir, for you.
 By the thatched pavilion, flower shadows keep the night,
 And in the herb garden, strips of lichens fill out.³
 I too shall renounce the times and go off,
 8 To the western hills, where cranes and simurghs flock.⁴

I.1.6

Seeing Off Li (Eleven) to be District Constable of Linxi⁵

To the chill “plink” of a zither beneath the blossoms,
 You, sir, sing the air of “Crossing the River.”
 At the sky's edge is the shadow of a lone sail,

1 Wang Changling (II.17 in this anthology) seems no longer to be residing here, or at least not on this night; some commentators suggest the poem was written after his death.

2 The term “a slip of moon” usually specifies the third day after the new moon, so the poet must be looking west near sunset.

3 The lichens fill out because the garden is untended and there are no visitors.

4 Where the noble brothers Bo Yi and Shu Qi secluded themselves in protest against the martial actions of King Wu of Zhou. Cranes and simurghs are transcendent birds that do not flock with everyday species.

5 Linxi was near present-day Deqing 德清, Zhejiang. A constable was the lowest-ranking centrally appointed official in a district, responsible for local military affairs, tax collection, etc.

- 4 預懸離別心
 以言神仙尉
 因致瑤華音
 回軫撫商調
 8 越聲澄碧林

I.1.7-8

閒齋臥疾，行藥至山館，稍次湖亭二首

（其一）

- 旬時結陰霖
 簷外初白日
 齋沐清病容
 4 心魂畏虛室
 閑梅照前戶
 明鏡悲舊質
 同袍四五人
 8 何不來問疾

- 4 Already dangling is a heart of parting at separation.
 Let it be that a constable of divine transcendence¹
 May thence convey to me notes of chalcedony flowers.²
 With tuning-pegs turned to play the sad *shang* mode,³
 8 Piercing notes wash pure the deep-blue forest.

I.1.7–8

(1) Laid Up with Illness at my Retreat for Rest, (2) I Quicken My Medicine with a Walk to a Mountain Inn; Two Poems while Stopping Briefly at a Lakeside Pavilion

- (1)
 Ten straight days, bound in a darkening downpour,
 But now at last, beyond the eaves, is the daytime sun!
 Abstinence and bathing have cleansed my sickly features,
 4 Yet mind and soul are disquieted in a desolate room.
 Though a languid prunus catches the light by the front door,
 I rue what the bright mirror shows my appearance now to be.
 Those four or five persons with whom I would “share a robe,”⁴
 8 Why have they not come to ask after my health?

1 Mei Fu 梅福 served as constable in Nanchang 南昌 district, near the end of the Eastern Han dynasty. After giving up this position, he returned home to Jiujiang 九江 but still memorialized about governmental affairs. When Wang Mang assumed power during Emperor Ping's reign, Mei Fu left his wife and children and went off to the Kuaiji mountains where he was said eventually to have become a transcendent. Hence, an incorrupt district constable was called a “divine transcendent constable.”

2 “Notes of chalcedony flowers” are precious messages sent by a friend, alluding to a phrase in a poem by Xie Tiao 谢朓 (464–499).

3 The *shang* is the mode of the Chinese pentatonic scale that is associated with autumn and hence sadness.

4 One with whom you would “share a robe,” recalling a line from a *Shijing* poem, is a close friend.

(其二)

行藥至石壁
 東風變萌芽
 主人門外綠
 4 小隱湖中花
 時物堪獨往
 春帆宜別家
 辭君為滄海
 8 爛漫從天涯

I.1.9

題破山寺後禪院

清晨入古寺
 初日照高林
 竹徑通幽處
 4 禪房花木深
 山光悅鳥性
 潭影空人心
 萬籟此都寂
 8 但餘鐘磬音

1 The effects, or “rush,” of some medicinal drugs were stimulated (or “kicked in”) by vigorous walking. This was perhaps best known with regard to the famous “cold-food powder” 寒食散 of the Wei-Jin period. The east wind is that of

(2)

To quicken the medicine, I walk to the rocky bluff;

The east wind has transformed the sprouts and buds.¹

Outside this proprietor's gate all has now turned green,

4 And there are blossoms by the "little hidiers" lake.²

The season's conditions are fit for going off by oneself;

A springtime sail would be best for departing one's home.

—Here I'd take leave of you, sir, for the sake of the watchet sea,

8 On toward the sky's farthest shore, unfettered and free!³

I.1.9

Inscribed at the Rear Meditation Cloister of the Mt. Po Temple⁴

Clear dawn-light enters into the ancient temple,

With an early sun brightening the lofty grove.

A pathway through bamboo gives onto a hidden place;

4 By the meditation chamber, flowering trees grow deep.

The mountain's light gladdens the being of a bird;

Shadows in the pool empty out a person's heart.

Here nature's sounding-pipes are fully hushed,

8 Excepting only tones of a chiming bell.

springtime—just as the first poem of the two had taken place in spring, with the blossoming of the prunus.

2 The proprietor (or "host") is that of the inn mentioned in the title. According to a poem by Wang Kangju 王康琚 (late-4th/early-5th century), "Little hidiers hide in the barrows and fens,/ Big hidiers hide in the court and marketplace."

3 The blue-gray ("watchet") sea to the east of China is where the fabled paradise isles of the "immortals" was said to be.

4 Mt. Po is in Changshu 常熟 district, Jiangsu. The monastery was probably the Xingfu si 興福寺.

I.1.10

鄂渚招王昌齡張儉

刈蘆曠野中

沙上飛黃雲

天晦無精光

4 茫茫悲遠君

楚山隔湘水

湖畔落日曛

春鴈又北飛

8 音書固難聞

謫君未為歎

讒枉何由分

五日逐蛟龍

12 宜為吊冤文

翻覆古共然

官宦安足云

貧士任枯槁

16 捕魚清江濱

有時荷鋤犁

曠野自耕耘

不然春山隱

20 溪澗花氛氲

山鹿自有場

I.1.10

At Ezhu, Summoning Wang Changling and Zhang Fen¹

- Reeds lie mown in the far-stretching wilds,
 And above the sands yellow clouds go flying.
 In the month-ending sky there is no vital light;
 4 Dim beyond vision, I lose heart for you so distant.
 Chu's hills cordon off the waters of the Xiang,
 As by the lake's shore the setting sun brings dusk.
 The wildgeese of springtime will fly north again,
 8 But it's impossible to get word of your messages or letters.
 A noble man relegated is not worth sighing over;
 Can reasons for calumny and crookedness be discerned?²
 On the Day of Fives, when dragon-boats compete,
 12 It is right to draft a text of lament and grievance.³
 Topsy-turvy is how it has been always for everyone;
 For officials and officeholders, how is it worth noting?
 Impoverished gentlemen endure hardship and want,
 16 Catching fish by the banks of a clear river.
 And when it is time, one may handle hoe and plough,
 To weed and till the far-stretching wilds by oneself.
 Or if not this, in the springtime hills one may be hidden,
 20 By bourn and beck, in favoring vapors of blossoms.
 As mountain deer have a clearing all their own,

1 Ezhu is in Wuchang 武昌 district, Hubei. Wang Changling had been sent south to be constable (*wei*) in Longbiao 龍標 (near Qianyang 黔陽, Hunan). The supposition is that Zhang Fen, whose exact identity is unknown, was a friend who was also ordered somewhere south. Chang Jian is "summoning" them to reclusion, as though their being rusticated is something to be celebrated and indeed to be furthered by eventually giving up office altogether.

2 That is, being "castaway" or "banished" to the south is not a disgrace, especially when brought about by false accusations and slander.

3 The fifth day of the fifth month, when by Tang times it had become tradition for "dragon-boats" to compete on the river, in commemoration of the drowning of Qu Yuan, the archetypal unappreciated courtier—for whose sake it is appropriate on that day to write a "text of lament and grievance."

賢達亦顧羣
 二賢歸去來
 24 世上徒紛紛

I.1.11-12

春詞二首

(1)

宛宛黃柳絲
 濛濛雜花垂
 日高紅粧臥
 4 倚對春光遲
 寧知傍淇水
 騷裊黃金羈

(2)

翳翳陌上桑
 南枝交北堂
 美人金梯出
 4 手自提竹筐
 非但畏蠶飢
 盈盈矯路傍

The worthy and accomplished also look to their kind.
May both of you worthies find your way back home—¹

24 In the world, to no avail, is just flurried confusion.

I.1.11–12

Springtime Lyrics; Two Poems

(1)

Supplely sweeping, yellow willows turn silky;
In clumps and clusters, sundry blossoms hang.
When the sun is high, she in pink make-up lounges,

4 Leaning into the springtime light, marking time.
If only she could know, alongside the Qi River,
Of the “graceful galloper” with the yellow-gold bridle.²

(2)

Deep and densely shaded, the mulberry-trees by the balk,
Their southerly boughs touching the northern hall.
A lovely person now takes out a golden ladder,³

4 Carries by her own hand a bamboo basket.
It’s not just that she fears the silkworms may go hungry,
But lushly, voluptuously, she would charm the passersby.⁴

1 Reminiscent of Tao Qian’s famous return home, upon giving up his official position, which he saw as a most positive act.

2 The Qi River, in northern Henan, is traditionally associated with lovesick women, owing to several songs in the *Shijing*. “Graceful Galloper” is the name of a legendary horse with a gold snout and russet body, who could run a myriad *li* in a day. Here it is used as metonymy for the poetic speaker’s absent man who is parted from her (on military or official assignment), while his former lover yearns for him, prettily made up at home in the erotically charged springtime season.

3 Being gold, the ladder is as exaggeratedly ornamental as it is functional.

4 This poem plays on the well-known *yuefu* poem, “The Mulberry-trees by the Balk” (Moshang sang), in which the lovely young woman Luofu 羅敷, when picking mulberry leaves to feed the silkworms in spring, dazzles the passersby and eventually faces down a too forward prefect.

I.1.13

古意張公子

日出乘釣舟

嫋嫋持釣竿

涉淇傍荷花

4 驄馬閑金鞍

使客白雲中

腰間懸鹿盧

出門事嫖姚

8 為君西擊胡

胡兵漢騎相馳逐

轉戰孤軍海西北

百尺旌竿沉黑雲

12 邊笳落日不堪聞

I.1.13

A Theme of Old, for Young Sir Zhang¹

As the sun comes out, he boards a fishing boat;
A thinly threaded curve is the fishing pole he holds.
He may ford the Qi, skirting lotus blossoms,²

4 Or, on a dappled horse, be at ease in a gold-trimmed saddle.

A commissioned recruit from amidst the white clouds,
With a pulley-patterned sword now hanging from his waist.³
He goes out the gate, in service of the “agile and alert,”

8 For his prince’s sake, to assail the Huns in the west.⁴

Hun soldiers and Han cavalry pursue each other swiftly;
After consecutive battles only his army, northwest of the lake.⁵

A standard-pole a hundred feet tall is engulfed in black clouds there,

12 And at sunset one cannot bear to hear the borderland reed-pipe.⁶

1 The young man of the poem is first described as something of a recluse, fishing on his own. Then, beginning with line 4 and continuing through the end of the poem, he is seen as a military officer serving in the far northwest. Note that the poem’s first line begins with the sun rising, on a pleasant carefree morning, and its final line ends with the sun setting, in the dark-clouded frontier lands.

2 The Qi River, in northern Henan, is known from the *Shijing* as a site of thwarted longings and lovesickness.

3 The pulley-pattern is a mark of high status, engraved on the sword-hilt.

4 “Agile and alert” usually refers to the cavalry. “Huns” is a paraphrase, with intentionally negative connotation, of the term *hu* which designates natives of Central and Western Asia. During the Qin and Han dynasties this would have referred particularly to the Xiongnu 匈奴.

5 The lake is Lake Baikal where, in the Han dynasty, Chinese forces fought the Central Asian Xiongnu.

6 The sound of the barbarian reed-pipe is a traditional image evoking the soldier’s longing for the kinder sounds of home.

I.1.14

仙谷遇毛女，意知是秦時宮人

溪口水石淺

冷冷明藥叢

入溪雙峯峻

4 松枯踈幽風

垂嶺枝嫋嫋

翳泉花濛濛

黃緣霽人目

8 路盡心彌通

盤石橫陽崖

前臨殊未窮

迴潭清雲影

12 瀾漫長天空

水邊一神女

千歲為玉童

羽毛經漢代

16 珠翠逃秦宮

目覲神已寓

鶴飛言未終

祈君青雲祕

20 願謁黃仙翁

嘗以耕玉田

I.1.14

In Transcendents' Vale Happening upon the Downy Woman and Imagining I Recognize Her as the Palace Lady from Qin Times¹

- At the stream's mouth, the water shallows over rocks,
 Its tinkling chill glazing tussocks of plants.
 Where I join the stream is a pair of lofty peaks,
 4 And pine and juniper are spread in a haunting wind.
 Hanging at ridgeline, boughs are thinly, threadily curved;
 Masking the wellspring, blossoms are clumped and clustered.
 Steadily scrabbling onward shows a fairing sky to view,
 8 And when the road runs out my heart is utterly freed.
 Where a stone slab juts across a sunlit bluff,
 One looks out ahead on a scene virtually boundless.
 Shadows of clouds show clear in a winding tarn,
 12 Which, flooded brimful, extends to the spacious sky.
 There by the waterside is an unearthly woman,
 Who for a thousand years has been as a jade youth.
 Feathered with down, she lived through the Han era,
 16 Having fled the Qin palace in pearls and halcyon plumes.
 Seen now face to face, my spirit goes out to her,
 But she flies off on a crane, before our talk is done.
 I implore you, mistress, for secrets from clouds in the blue,
 20 And wish to pay respects to Transcendent Elder Huang.²
 Let me try out the tilling of fields of jade,

1 The place is unidentified and may be imaginary as is the meeting with the "downy woman" of legend. Her story is told in *Liexian zhuan* 列仙傳, which relates that she was a palace woman named Yujiang 玉姜 during the Qin dynasty, who fled from Chang'an in the turmoil at the end of the dynasty and took refuge on Mount Hua 華山. There she met an adept named Guchun 谷春 who instructed her in occult matters, including the eating of natural items conducive to longevity, thanks to which she became impervious to hunger and cold, and her body, covered now in what seemed downy plumes, became so light it seemed she could fly. She was said to have lived for 170 years. Guo Pu 郭璞 (276–324) in his *Baopuzi* 抱朴子 has a story about a hunter who encountered her at the end of the Western Han dynasty.

2 Identified as several different figures but probably the adept usually known as Lord Yellowstone 黃石公, who bestowed on Zhang Liang 張良 a book that was of aid in the latter's helping of Liu Bang to establish the Han dynasty.

龍鳴西頃中
金梯與天接
24 幾日來相逢

I.1.15

晦日馬鐙曲稍次中流作
夜來宿蘆葦
曉色明西林
初日在川上
4 便澄遊子心
晴天無纖翳
郊野浮春陰
波靜隨釣魚
8 舟小綠水深
出浦見千里
曠然諧遠尋
扣船應漁父
12 因唱滄浪吟

- In the western acres where a dragon gives voice.¹
 If, with a golden ladder, I could reach the sky,
 24 How long would it be till I meet with you again?

I.1.15

At Stirrup Bend on the Last Day of the Month; Composed while Pausing
 Briefly in Mid-Current²

- During the night I stayed over by the reeds and rushes,
 Till daybreak's hues lit up the woods to the west.
 The early sun rests now upon the riverway,
 4 Instantly bathing pure a traveler's heart.
 Fair skies have not a hint of lowering,
 And in the open wilds drift shadings of spring.
 The waves are gentle enough to angle for fish;
 8 The boat so small that green waters seem deeper.
 Emerging from the cove, I can see a thousand leagues,
 Vast enough to agree with my most distant seekings.
 Beating the boat's sides, I am like "The Fisherman,"
 12 As I sing out aloud the Canglang chant.³

1 To till a jade field is to practice certain occult arts. A dragon gives voice upon ascending to the sky.

2 Stirrup Bend was below Mount Hu 嵒山, ten miles east of Xichuan 淅川 district in Henan, overlooking Xi River to the west.

3 The chant of the carefree "Fisherman" in the section so named of *Chu ci*, as he rows away from the complaining Qu Yuan, was: "When the Canglang's waters are clear,/ I can wash my capstrings in it;/ When the Canglang's waters are muddy,/ I can wash my feet in it."

I.2 李白

白性嗜酒，志不拘檢。常林棲十數載，故其為文章，率皆縱逸。至如『蜀道難』等篇，可謂奇之又奇。然自騷人以還，鮮有此題調也。

I.2.1

戰城南

去年戰桑乾源
今年戰葱河道
洗兵條支海上波
4 放馬天山雪中草
萬里長征戰
三軍盡衰老

胡人以殺戮為耕作
8 古來惟見白骨黃沙田
秦家築城備胡處
漢家還有烽火燃

[stanza break]

1 Probably referring to the years of his youth in Sichuan, when Li Bo himself claimed he lived the life of a recluse for some time in the mountains.

2 Playing off of the well-known phrase describing the Dao in the first chapter of *Laozi*, “ever more mysterious than what is mysterious” 玄之又玄. “The Way to Shu is Hard” is poem I.2.4 in this collection.

I.2 Li Bo

By his very nature Bo is given over to wine and his impulsiveness cannot be held in check. Having nestled in the hinterlands for more than a decade,¹ it is no wonder that his writings are for the most part self-willed and uninhibited. Poems like his “The Way to Shu is Hard” and others are even more singular than what is singular.² So it is that from the *sao*-poet to now scarcely has there been this kind of lyric style.³

I.2.1

Fighting South of the Fort

Last year fighting at the source of the Sanggan River,
This year fighting on the road to Conghe;⁴
Cleansing our weapons, washing our pikestaves in the waves of a distant
sea,

- 4 Loosing the horses on the snow-covered grass of Heaven's Mountains.⁵
For a myriad miles ever on campaign and fighting,
The triple army has grown thoroughly old and weak.⁶

The Huns regard slaughter and carnage as plowing work,⁷

- 8 So all there is from of old are white bones in brown sand fields.
The House of Qin erected for defense a fort in this place of Huns,
And the House of Han has even yet the beacon fires alight.

[stanza break]

3 The *sao*-poet is Qu Yuan 屈原, reputed author of “Li sao” 離騷 and other poems in the *Chu ci* anthology. The implication is that Li Bo is as originally distinctive a poet in his own way as Qu Yuan was.

4 Known by different names at different periods, the Sanggan, was in north Shanxi, outside the Great Wall. The Conghe, or Congling 葱嶺 River was in southwestern Xinjiang, near the Kunlun mountain range bordering Kashmir and Afghanistan.

5 The “sea” is the large Lake Kokonor 青海, just west of Xining 西寧, Gansu, and northeast of the Kunlun mountains. Heaven's Mountains are the range in central Xinjiang, in the vicinity and eastward of Urumchi.

6 “Triple army” is an old term describing a field corps comprising soldiers on foot, on horse, and in chariots.

7 For “Huns” here, and in line 9, see I.1.13, note 4.

烽火燃不息

12 征戰無已時

野戰格鬪死

敗馬號鳴向天悲

烏鳶啄人腸

16 銜飛上掛枯樹枝

士卒塗草莽

將軍空爾為

乃知兵者是凶器

20 聖人不得已而用之

I.2.2

遠別離

古有皇英之二女

乃在洞庭之南瀟湘之浦

海水直下萬里深

4 人言不深此離苦

日慘慘兮雲冥冥

猩猩啼煙兮鬼嘯雨

我縱言之將何補

8 皇穹竊恐不照予之忠誠

雷憑憑兮欲吼怒

- The beacon fires, once alight, are never desisting,
 12 Of campaigns and fighting there is no ending time.
 Fighting in the wilds they die in close-quarter combat,
 And the steeds of the vanquished cry neighing in grief to the sky.
 Ravens and kites peck up the men's guts,
 16 Fly up full-mouthed to hang them from branches of dead trees:
 The soldiers and troops are smeared over weeds and brushgrass,
 For the leaders of the armies did their doings in vain.
 Know now that weapons are indeed implements of malevolence,
 20 And only when there is no other way will the wise man use them.

I.2.2

Far-distant Parting

- Of old there were the two daughters Huang and Ying,¹
 Residing south of Lake Dongting, in a cove of Xiao-Xiang River,
 Where bottomless waters go straight down, a myriad miles deep,
 4 But no words are as deep as the misery of that parting.²
 The sun is pale and pallid, clouds gloom glowering,
 An orangutan cries in the mist, ghosts howl at the rain—
 Even were I to tell of it, would there be anything more to add?
 8 I fear the sublime firmament doesn't shine on full-hearted sincerity such
 as mine.
 Thunder rumbles gruffly, about to give vent in anger;

1 The sage-king Yao's two daughters, Ehuang 娥皇 ("Fairy Radiance") and Nüying 女英 ("Maiden Bloom"), were wives of Shun, to whom Yao passed on the throne.

2 The parting at death of Shun and his two wives. The tears they shed upon learning of his death are said to be preserved in the dark spots mottling the stems of several types of bamboo (line 21).

- 堯舜當之亦禪禹
君失臣兮龍為魚
12 權歸臣兮鼠變虎
- 堯幽囚舜野死
九疑聯綿皆相似
重瞳孤憤竟誰是
- 16 帝子降兮綠雲間
隨風波兮去無還
慟哭兮遠望
見蒼梧之深山
- 20 蒼梧崩湘水絕
竹上之淚乃可滅

Yao and Shun did it rightly, and likewise was Yu yielded to.¹
 The ruler gives way to his minster—a dragon turns into a fish;

- 12 With power assumed by a minister—a mouse becomes a tiger.

Yet Yao was confined in isolation, and Shun died in the wilds;²
 Ninefold Confusion in its joins and junctions seems in all cases alike;
 And with doubled pupils, alone and discomfited, after all who was
 this?³

- 16 The high god's children had come down to him—amidst green-tinted
 clouds;⁴

But now with the windswept waves was he gone—without a coming
 back.

Weeping bitterly—gazing far off,
 They look toward Cangwu's deep-set mountain.

- 20 Cangwu may crumble, the Xiang River run out,
 But their tears on the bamboo never can be effaced.

1 That is, Yao eventually yielded the throne to his most able minister Shun, as the latter eventually did to his most able minister Yu. These were the three legendary sage-kings of remote antiquity.

2 One tradition, here followed by Li Bo, says that when Yao's virtue declined, Shun placed him in prison and did not allow him to see his father. Shun was said to have died while attending to the people's business, in the wilds of Cangwu, in eastern Guangxi. His burial place was reputedly on Mount Jiuyi ("Ninefold Confusion"), south of present-day Ningyuan in southern Hunan, whose valleys were all so similar to each other that they would confuse a visitor.

3 Shun was said to have the countenance of a dragon and eyes with doubled pupils.

4 Yao is referred to here as a high god, in keeping with phrasing from *Chu ci*. The verb in this line, usually meaning to come down or condescend from above, here has its derived sense of a princess's leaving the palace for marriage, as Yao's daughters did upon marrying Shun. Green-tinted clouds are often associated with transcendent beings.

I.2.3

野田黃雀行

遊莫逐炎洲翠

棲莫近吳宮燕

炎洲逐翠遭網羅

4 吳宮火起焚爾窠

蕭條羽翅蓬蒿下

縱有鷹鷂奈爾何

I.2.4

蜀道難

噫吁嚱

危乎高哉

蜀道之難

4 難於上青天

蠶叢及魚鳧

開國何茫然

爾來四萬八千歲

8 不與秦塞通人煙

西當太白有鳥道

I.2.3

Ballad of the Brown Sparrow in the Open Fields

Going out, do not follow the halcyon of the Isles of Flame;
Roosting, be not near the swallow of the Palace of Wu.¹

- In the Isles of Flame follow the halcyon, you'll meet with net and snare;
4 In the Palace of Wu when fire rises, it will scorch your very nest.
Soft and silent, keep your two wings below the tangled wormwood:
Even were goshawk or merlin to come, what could they then do to
you?

I.2.4

The Way to Shu is Hard

- Yeee—hooo—syee!
How perilous! So high!
Hardships of the way to Shu—
4 *Much harder than climbing the blue sky!*
Caocong it was, and also Yufu,
Who founded that state in the oh so dim past,²
Thence were four myriad, eight thousand more years,
8 Till its homefires were joined up with the Qin frontier.
Facing west from Mount Taibo was a pathway but for birds,

1 The “Isles of Flame” refers to the lands of the far south, a prime habitat of the kingfisher which was caught there, to be stripped of its iridescent blue plumes for use in various items of luxury adornment. It is said that a swallow nested at the Palace of Wu in 236 BCE; a palace guard, wishing to look at the bird, brought his lamp too close and set fire to the nest, which spread and destroyed the whole palace.

2 Caocong (“Silkworm Tussock”) and Yufu (“Fishing Duck”) were legendary early rulers of parts of Shu.

可以橫絕峨眉巔

地崩山摧壯士死

12 然後天梯石棧方鉤連

上有六龍回日之高標

下有衝波逆折之回川

黃鶴之飛尚不得過

16 猿猱欲度愁攀緣

青泥何盤盤

百步九折縈巖巒

捫參歷井仰脅息

20 以手撫膺坐長歎

問君西遊何時還

畏途巖巖不可攀

但見悲鳥號古木

24 雄飛雌從遶林間

又聞子規啼

夜月愁空山

蜀道之難

28 難於上青天

使人聽此凋朱顏

[stanza break]

By means of which one could cut across to the summit of Emei.¹

There the land crumbled, a mountain collapsed, stalwart men died;²

- 12 Only after came sky-strung ladders, edgeways of stone, to clinch the
link at last.

Above is: the high bough where the six dragons reversed the sun's
course,³

And below: a backflow of waters where waves crashing swirl and recoil.

Even the flight of the brown crane cannot push beyond this place;

- 16 Long-armed gibbons who wish to cross over fear to swing up here.

Twisted so and torturous is the Blue Mud Pass,

Nine turnings for every hundred paces to wind round the rugged crest.⁴

Grab onto Triaster! Pass through the Well! Look up and gasp in alarm!⁵

- 20 Hold your hand against your panting chest—sit down, catch your breath.

I ask you, sir, as you travel west, when is it you'll come back?

One dreads the craggy steep of the route, impossible to scale.

There you'll see only disheartened birds, calling in age-old trees;

- 24 When the male takes wing, its mate follows after, circling amidst the
grove.

And, too, you will hear the cuckoo crying,

On moonlit nights so sad in the empty hills.⁶

The hardships of the way to Shu—

- 28 *Much harder than climbing the blue sky!*

It will waste the ruddy features of all who give ear to this.

[stanza break]

1 Mount Taibo (its name the same as that of Venus and also a byname of Li Bo) is in southwest Shaanxi, near the border of the old states of Qin and Shu. See also poem I.1.1. Mount Emei is in central Sichuan

2 An ancient king of Qin sent five daughters as a gift to the king of Shu, who deputed five stalwart men to meet them on the way. When they were near to Zitong 梓潼 in northern Sichuan, the men saw a monstrous snake slither into a mountain cave. When they tried to pull it out by its tail, the mountain collapsed upon them.

3 A legend told that when the six dragons pulling the chariot of the sun reached the highest peak in Shu, near to or on Mount Emei, they had to turn back.

4 The challenging Blue Mud Pass was in the mountains in the southwest of Shaanxi

5 Triaster refers to what we see as the three stars of Orion's belt. The Well is a constellation comprised of eight stars in our Gemini.

6 Legend had it that the hawk-cuckoo, with its insistently plaintive call often lasting through the night, was the posthumous avatar of an ancient king of Shu.

連峯去天不盈尺
枯松倒掛倚絕壁

32 飛湍暴流爭喧豗
砅崖轉石萬壑雷
其嶮也若此
嗟爾遠道之人

36 胡為乎來哉
劒閣崢嶸而崔嵬
一夫當關
萬人莫開

40 所守或匪親
化為狼與豺

朝避猛虎
夕避長蛇

44 磨牙吮血
殺人如麻
錦城雖云樂
不如早還家

48 蜀道之難
難於上青天
側身西望長咨嗟

Linked peaks there lie apart from the sky by no more than a foot,
Where withered pines hang head-downward against sheer walls.

- 32 And airborne billows, currents of spray, clash in a deafening din;
Pounded banks, hurtling rocks, thundering through ten-thousand straths.
The cramped hazards of it are just as I say;
Oh you, who are on such a distant road,
36 Why ever did you come this way?
Loftily lifted, Sword Gallery is so towering and tall,
With one man at its barrier,
Ten thousand cannot force through.
40 If that guard be any but one of our kin,¹
He is just as well changed into wolf or dhole.

At morning beware of fell tigers,
At night beware of long snakes.

- 44 Their whetted teeth will suck your blood,
They crop people like rows of hemp.
And though the Brocade City is said to be so pleasing,²
Better it is to turn back home as quickly as you can.
48 *The hardships of the way to Shu—
 Much harder than climbing the blue sky!*
Turned to the side, I gaze off to the west, sighing long, alas! oh no!

1 Sword Gallery (or Sword Gate Gallery 劍門關) was an extremely narrow pass, crossed with plank-bridges attached to the cliffs, about ten miles south of Zitong. Zhang Zai's 張載 "Sword Gallery Inscription" 劍閣銘, written in the early 280s, was a source of allusions for many later poets, including Li Bo whose lines here recall Zhang Zai's lines "If just one person wield a halberd here,/ Ten thousand men will be blocked./ In a land of such strategic terrain,/ If he be not of our kin, let him not preside here."

2 Brocade City was a familiar name for Chengdu, the destination of the traveler from Chang'an to whom Li Bo is addressing his poem.

I.2.5

行路難

- 金壘清酒價十千
 玉盤珍羞直萬錢
 停杯投筯不能食
 4 拔劒四顧心茫然
 欲渡黃河冰塞川
 將登太行雲暗天
 閑來垂釣坐溪上
 8 忽復乘舟落日邊

行路難

- 道安在
 長風破浪會有時
 12 直掛雲帆濟蒼海

I.2.5

Traveling the Road is Hard

Golden cannikins of clearest wine, valued at ten thousands,
Jade plates of exquisite savories, worth a myriad coins.

I stopped the cup, threw down my chopsticks, was unable to eat,

4 Pulled out my sword, looked all around, my heart blindly lost.¹

I wanted to cross the Yellow River, but ice blocked the waterway,
Was about to climb the Taihang range, but clouds darkened the sky.

When I was at ease, I dangled a fish-hook, sitting by the stream,

8 Suddenly then I boarded a boat, at the edge of the setting sun.

Traveling the road is hard,

And where now am I?

When the long wind smites the waves there will come a time

12 To hang straight the cloudy sail and traverse the Watchet Sea.²

1 The first four lines of this poem carry echoes of certain lines from a few of Bao Zhao's 鮑照's (ca. 414–466) set of eighteen poems "In Imitation of 'Traveling the Road is Hard'."

2 Recalling the words of the famous general Zong Qiao 宗慤 (fl. 445–462) who, when a youth and asked by an uncle what his ambition was, answered "I would avail myself of the long wind and smite the billows a long way off." The "Watchet (i.e., Blue-Gray) Sea" is the East China Sea, in the direction of sunrise, where the isles of Daoist "immortals" were fabled to be.

I.2.6

夢遊天姥山別東魯諸公

海客談瀛洲

煙波微茫不易求

越人話天姥

4 雲霓明滅如何覩

天姥連天向天橫

勢拔五嶽掩赤城

天姥四萬八千丈

8 對此絕倒東南傾

我欲冥搜夢吳越

一夜飛度鏡湖月

湖月照我影

12 送我到剡溪

謝公宿處今尚在

綠水蕩漾清猿啼

腳穿謝公屐

16 明登青雲梯

半壁見海月

空中聞天雞

[stanza break]

I.2.6

A Dream-Journey to Mount Tianmu (Heaven's Matron), Parting from
Several Gentlemen of Eastern Lu¹

Travelers on the sea speak of the paradise isle Yingzhou,²
Just barely perceptible in the misty waves, not easy to be found.

The men of Yue talk of Tianmu Mountain,
4 Vivid then vanished in cloudy aureoles, but hardly to be viewed.

Heaven's Matron, linked to heaven, stretches broadly to heaven,
Its shape surpassing the Five Great Peaks, overtopping Red Wall.³
Heaven's Terrace, four myriad and eight thousand rods long,
8 Faces the latter, falling steeply away and inclining southeast.

Wishing to search out secretly a dream to Wu and Yue,
Through the night I flew up and across to moonlight on Mirror Lake.⁴

The lake's moonlight showed sharply my shadow,
12 Escorting me on to the streams of Shan county.
Lord Xie's places of lodging still are there today,⁵
As green waters lap and dash, while clear-voiced gibbons howl.
On my feet I'm wearing Lord Xie's climbing clogs,
16 Wise to climb a ladder up to clouds in the blue.
Halfway up the steep bluff I see the sun over the sea,
And hear from out of the void the cockerel of heaven.⁶

[stanza break]

1 Mount Tianmu was in the old Shan district (line 12) of the Kuaiji 會稽 area so famous for its hilly and watered landscape; in the south of present-day Xinchang, Zhejiang.

2 One of the three elysian isles of "immortals," far off in the eastern sea.

3 Red Wall Mountain, so called because of its flushed-red rocky cliffs, leads onto the Tiantai range in Zhejiang.

4 In the Shanyin (or Kuaiji) area.

5 Xie Lingyun 謝靈運 (385–433) wrote many poems during travels in the Kuaiji region. He invented a cleated clog for climbing (line 15), the front "tooth" of which was removed when ascending, the rear tooth removed when descending.

6 Ensconced in a tree far to the southeast of the ocean, heaven's cockerel was said to be first to herald the sunrise each day.

千巖萬轉路不定

20 迷花倚石忽以暝

熊咆龍吟殷巖泉

慄深林兮驚層巔

楓青青兮欲雨

24 水澹澹兮生煙

列缺霹靂

丘巒崩摧

洞天石扉

28 訇然而中開

青冥濛鴻不見底

日月照耀金銀臺

霓為裳兮鳳為馬

32 雲中君兮紛紛而來下

虎鼓琴兮鸞迴車

仙之人兮列如麻

忽魂悸兮目眈

36 恍驚起兮長嗟

惟覺時之枕席

失向來之煙霞

[stanza break]

In a thousand cliffs, a myriad turnings, the route cannot be fixed,
 20 Astray amid blossoms, leaning on rocks, abruptly all becomes blurred.

Bears roar, dragons shriek, churning cliffside fountains;
 Trembling in the deep forest—I'm frightened by high-tiered peaks.
 Sweetgum trees are green as can be—just before it rains;
 24 Then water falls in rolling waves—giving rise to mist.

Lashes of lightning, cracking of thunder,
 Hills and pinnacles collapse and topple.

In grotto-heavens the stone doors¹
 28 With a crash are thrown wide open.
 I cannot see the bottom of the darkling deepest blue,
 But sun and moon shine brilliantly on gold and silver pavilions.

With rainbows making a skirt—a phoenix being his horse,
 32 The lord in the clouds—comes down with riotous retinue.

Tigers playing zithers—simurghs wheeling carriages about,
 Persons that have transcended—lined up like rows of hemp.
 Abruptly my soul is in panic—eyes bulging in terror,
 36 Dazed and frightened I rise—with a long, panting gasp.
 Yes, awake now on pillow and mat,
 I've lost the hazy mists that just now were here.

[stanza break]

1 The grotto-heavens are vast, self-contained worlds for transcendent beings within the holy mountains of Daoism. They have their own heavens, their own sun and moon (lines 29–30).

世間行樂皆如是
 40 古來萬事東流水
 別君去兮何時還
 且放白鹿青崖間
 欲行即騎向名山
 44 何能摧眉折腰事權貴
 使我不得開心顏

I.2.7

憶舊遊寄譙郡元參軍
 憶昔洛陽董糟丘
 為余天津橋南造酒樓
 黃金白璧買歌笑
 4 一醉累月輕王侯
 海內賢豪青雲客
 就中與君心莫逆
 迴山轉海不作難
 8 傾情倒意無所惜

1 The white deer is the earthly conveyance for a transcendent, counterpart of the crane that is ridden for celestial travel.

2 The addressed recipient is Yuan Yan 元演, a cousin of Li Bo's oft-mentioned friend Yuan Danqiu 元丹丘. The poem recalls four meetings of Li Bo and Yuan Yan, plus interludes of separation.

The pleasures enjoyed in the world all are like these,
 40 From ever past the myriad things are an east-flowing river.

Parting from you sirs, I leave, unknown when I'll be back,
 Yet I'll let loose a white deer upon the green highland,¹
 Wishing to go riding it toward the fabled mountains.
 44 How humble my brow or bend my waist in service to power and
 privilege?
 It would make me ever unable to show my true heart or
 countenance.

I.2.7

Remembering Our Former Travels; Sent to Yuan of Qiaojun, Aide-de-Camp²

I remember long past in Luoyang, Mr. Dong of the Mound of Lees,
 Made mine his wine-loft south of the Bridge of Heaven's Ford,³
 Where I bought song and laughter with yellow gold and white-jade
 rondels,
 4 During one long binge of many months disdaining princes and nobles.

Of the worthies and powerful within the seas, or guests from clouds in
 the blue,⁴
 Among all it was only you with whom my heart was never at odds.
 Compassing the mountains, rounding the seas, was not any trouble for us,
 8 Spilling thoughts and pouring out feelings with nothing ever held back.

3 "Mound of Lees" is a nickname indicating that the otherwise unknown Mr. Dong was a wineshop proprietor (it might also have been the name of his shop). The Bridge of Heaven's Ford was the middle of three bridges spanning the Luo River just south of the Meridian Gate (Duanmen 端門) that led into the "imperial city" (*huangcheng* 皇城) that was the main bureaucratic center of Luoyang and which itself led northward to the palace city.

4 "Guests from clouds in the blue" are those who have risen to official positions (see also line 53 where the poet hopes for this himself).

[stanza break]

我向淮南攀桂枝
君留洛北愁夢思
不忍別還相隨

- 12 相隨迢迢訪仙城
三十六曲水迴縈
一溪初入千花明
萬壑度盡松風聲
16 銀鞍金絡到平地
漢東太守來相迎
紫陽之真人
邀我吹玉笙
20 食霞樓上動仙樂
嘈然宛似鸞鳳鳴
袖長管催欲輕舉
漢東太守醉起舞
24 手持錦袍覆我身
我醉橫眠枕其股

[stanza break]

[stanza break]

Then I went south of the Huai, lingering by cinnamon branches,
As you stayed north of the Luo, longed for in sadness and dreams:
A separation I could not bear, till again we should go on together.

- 12 And going on together some time after, we visited Mount Xiancheng,
With the river winding round about six and thirty bends.¹
Along one stream first we plunged into brilliance of a thousand flowers,
Passed all the way through a myriad vales to the sound of wind in the
pines.
- 16 On silver saddles with halters of gold we moved on to level ground,
Where the Prefect of Handong commandery came out to welcome us.²
There the Perfected One of Purple Yang³
Blew a jade mouth-organ, inviting us
- 20 To his Loft for Quaffing Rose-Clouds, where transcendent music
played,⁴
So dulcetly mellisonant as the calls of simurgh or phoenix.

As the pipes hurried, sleeves swayed long, on the verge of lifting away,
While the Prefect of Handong commandery tipsily sang and danced.

- 24 Taking up in his hands a damask robe, he draped it over me,
As drunkenly I lay insensate, pillowed on his thigh.

[stanza break]

1 This mountain ("Transcendents' Fortress") lay to the east of Suizhou 隨州 (present-day Suixian, Hubei). The river referred to here is the western run of the Huai.

2 Handong commandery was an alternate name for Suizhou. Founded by the Sui as Handongjun, its name was changed to Suizhou in 620, then back to Handong in 742 which gives a *terminus post quem* for the composition of this poem.

3 The religious name of a Daoist priest surnamed Hu 胡, who, we know from references in other poems, was a teacher of Daoist arcana to Li Bo.

4 "Quaffing rose-clouds" was a Daoist method of nourishing one's spiritual essence, known to adepts.

當筵意氣凌九霄
 星離雨散不終朝
 28 分飛楚關山水遙
 余既還山尋故巢
 君亦歸家度渭橋

君家嚴君勇貔虎
 32 作尹并州遏戎虜
 五月相呼度太行
 摧輪不道羊腸苦

行來北京歲月深
 36 感君貴義輕黃金
 瓊杯綺食青玉案
 使我醉飽無歸心

時時出向城西曲
 40 晉祠流水如碧玉
 浮舟弄水簫鼓鳴
 微波龍鱗莎草綠

[stanza break]

1 Suizhou (Handong) was near the northern border of the old state of Chu.

2 The Wei River bridge outside the capital city, Chang'an. Although Yuan's home may have been in that area, his father was posted to Bingzhou, where Yuan soon went afterward, as we see in the next stanza.

3 This refers to Yuan's father. Bingzhou included Taiyuan 太原 (also called Jinyang 晉陽 in Tang times), in present-day Shanxi. It was the ancestral place of the

From the mats our thoughts and fancies rose up to the ninth empyrean,
 But like stars were scattered, like rain dispersed, before the dawn was full,
 28 Each in own flight from the borders of Chu, to mountains and rivers
 afar—¹

I heading back to the mountains, to seek out my one-time nest,
 And you returning home, to cross the Wei River bridge.²

The respected lord of your family was fearless as tiger or bear,
 32 Serving as governor of Bingzhou whence he curbed the hostile caitiffs.³
 From there in a fifth month you bid me to cross the Taihang range;
 Though it dash my cart-wheels I didn't heed the ordeal of Sheep-gut
 Pass.⁴

So I came on into the northern capital when the months of the year
 were full,
 36 And was moved by your noble manner making free with gold at hand.
 Snow-gem cups and gossamer food on trays of blue-green jade
 Made me drunk and sated, left me no thought of going home.

One time and another we went out beyond the city-wall's west corner,
 40 Where the river's flow by the shrine of Jin was as jade of cyan-blue.⁵
 Adrift in a boat, enjoying the river, we made the syrxn sing forth,
 As the rippling waves were dragon scales and nut-grass was bright green.
 [stanza break]

Li 李 family that ruled the Tang dynasty. Li Bo's visit there probably took place in 735. In 742 Taiyuan was officially designated the northern capital, and its chief civil magistrate was a "governor," like those of Chang'an and Luoyang, the western and eastern capitals. The use of the term "northern capital" in line 35 is from the time-perspective of the poem's composition. The "hostile caitiffs" are Türkic tribes north of Bingzhou, in what is today Inner Mongolia, who were a constant worry for the dynasty.

4 The Taihang mountains separate southern Hebei from Shanxi. Li Bo was evidently in the Shandong area before responding to Yuan's invitation to visit him in Taiyuan. Sheep-gut Pass in the Taihang range was known from works by previous poets as a perilous spot for soldiers on campaign and travelers.

5 The "Jin shrine" was dedicated to Shu Yu 叔虞, son of King Wu 武王 of Zhou and the first enfeoffed ruler of the old state of Tang. The shrine was about four miles southwest of Taiyuan, near the Jin River, and was for obvious reasons important to the Tang dynastic house.

興來攜妓恣經過

44 其若楊花似雪何
紅粧欲醉宜斜日
百尺清潭寫翠蛾

翠蛾嬋娟初月輝

48 美人更唱舞羅衣
清風吹歌入空去
歌曲自繞行雲飛

此時行樂難再遇

52 西遊因獻長楊賦
北闕青雲不可期
東山白首還歸去

渦橋南頭一遇君

56 鄴臺之北又離群
問余別恨今多少
落花春暮爭紛紛

[stanza break]

When in the mood we took courtesans by hand, indulging our every whim,

- 44 Like willow flowers they were, and oh so resembling snow!
In their rosy make-up, nearly drunk, just right in the sun's slanting rays,
Or by a tarn, clear a hundred feet down, that traced their alcedine
brows.

With alcedine brows alluringly drawn, in the glow of first moonlight,

- 48 The beauties sang in turns and danced in their gauzy clothing.
A clear breeze wafted their songs away and into space,
Where songs and tunes wrapped round clouds flying on high.

The happiness we made of those times was hard to come by again,

- 52 As westward I made my way to proffer a "*Fu* on Tall Poplars Palace."¹
At the northern pylons I could not hope to mount up to clouds in the
blue;²
To my eastern mountains, white-haired back home once more I went.³

Then at the south end of Guo River's bridge all at once I came upon
you,⁴

- 56 But soon north of the Terrace of Cuo we parted company again.⁵
You asked me there how often must we be pained by such separations,
As falling blossoms in springtime's waning fluttered in fractious
confusion.

[stanza break]

1 Li Bo was now going to Chang'an. To offer up a "*Fu* on Tall Poplars Palace," alluding to a composition on imperial hunting expeditions by Yang Xiong 揚雄 (53 BCE–18 CE), means to seek favor at court.

2 The northern pylons were traditionally where petitions to the throne were presented. Mounting up to "clouds in the blue" means ascending to official preferment.

3 Returning to the "eastern mountains" is reminiscent of the celebrated reclusion of the statesman Xie An 謝安 (320–385), but before—not after, as here with Li Bo—his service at court.

4 The Guo River bridge referred to here was near Qiaoxian 譙縣, in Bozhou 亳州 (near present-day Boxian), Henan. It was in Qiaoxian that Yuan held the office of aide-de-camp mentioned in the poem's title.

5 The Terrace of Cuo was in Cuoxian, just east of Qiaoxian (near present-day Yongcheng 永城 district, Henan).

言亦不可盡
 60 情亦不可極
 呼兒長跪緘此辭
 寄君千里遙相憶

I.2.8

詠懷

莊周夢蝴蝶
 蝴蝶為莊周
 一體更變易
 4 萬事良悠悠
 乃知蓬萊水
 復作清淺流
 青門種瓜人
 8 舊日東陵侯
 富貴固如此
 營營何所求

- My words, they cannot say it all,
 60 Nor can feelings be told to their end.
 I call to the boy, who kneels long, as now I seal up these lines,
 To send a thousand miles to you—so far, but remembering you.

I.2.8

Singing My Cares

- Zhuang Zhou dreamed of a butterfly,
 The butterfly becoming Zhuang Zhou.¹
 With whole beings altering and changing in turn,
 4 The myriad matters indeed are faint and indefinable.
 So one knows that the waters around Penglai
 Will once more turn to a clear, shallow current,²
 While the man planting melons by the Green Gate
 8 In former times was the Marquis of Dongling.³
 Since wealth and honor are surely like this,
 What is there to seek with our worrying, hurrying?

1 The famous dream in *Zhuangzi* where Zhuang Zhou says that when dreaming of a butterfly he couldn't be sure he was not actually a butterfly dreaming it was Zhuang Zhou.

2 Penglai was one of the isles of the "immortals" in the Eastern Sea, which itself was said periodically to ebb and become mulberry fields.

3 During the Qin dynasty, Shao Ping 召平 was Marquis of Dongling. With the fall of the dynasty he became a commoner, who grew melons outside the east gate of the former capital.

I.2.9

酬中都小吏以斗酒雙鱗見贈

魯酒瑚珀色

汶魚紫錦鱗

山東豪吏有俊氣

4 手攜此物贈遠人

意氣相傾兩相顧

斗酒雙魚表情素

雙鯉呀呷鰭鬣張

8 跋刺銀盤欲飛去

呼兒拂机霜刃揮

紅肥花落白雪霏

為君下筯一餐飽

12 醉著金鞍上馬歸

I.2.9

To Reciprocate a Minor Clerk from Zhongdu who Brought a Gift of a Gallon of Wine and a Pair of Fish¹

There is wine of Lu, with amber-gold hue,
Fish from the Wen, with scales of red-blue brocade.²
A stalwart clerk from Shandong, with a hardy spirit,

4 Brought these things in hand to present to a man from afar.

In high spirits we pour together, each one looking at the other,
A gallon of wine and pair of fish to show the candor of feelings.
A pair of gills are gaping and gulping, dorsal fins stretched straight,
8 As they flick and flap on a silver plate, seeming ready to fly away.

I call the boy to wipe off the table and wield the frosty blade;
Petals of pink flesh fall, a flurrying of whitest snow.

For you, laying down chopsticks when full from our meal,
12 I'll help you up drunk, onto the horse, so you may go back home.

1 Zhongdu district (so named in 742, being called Pinglu 平陸 before that) was near present-day Yuncheng 鄆城 in southwestern Shandong.

2 Lu was the classical name of this area in Shandong. The Wen is a tributary there of the Yellow River.

I.2.10

答俗人問

問予何事栖碧山
 笑而不答心自閑
 桃花流水杳然去
 4 別有天地非人間

I.2.11

古意

白酒初熟山中歸
 黃雞啄黍秋正肥
 呼兒烹雞酌白酒
 4 兒女歡笑牽人衣
 高歌取醉欲自慰
 起舞落日爭光輝
 遊說萬乘苦不早
 8 著鞭跨馬涉長道

[stanza break]

1 This poem plays off of one by the Daoist priest Tao Hongjing 陶弘景 (456–536), who, when asked by the Qi emperor, “What is there to be had amidst the mountains?” 山中何所有, answered with this quatrain: “What is there to be

I.2.10

Reply to a Plain Man's Question¹

You ask why it is that I roost in the deep-green hills:

Smiling, I do not reply, my heart freely at ease.

Drifting water with peach blossoms goes off inscrutably;²

4 It's another heaven and earth, not amidst the human realm.

I.2.11

On an Olden Theme

When the potent wine has just matured, I came home to the hills,³

As brown chickens, feeding on millet, are fattened in the autumn.

I call the boy to cook the chicken, pour the potent wine,

4 And the children, laughing happily, are tugging at my clothes.

Singing loudly, I drink my fill, just wishing to please myself;

I rise and dance in the setting sun, oppugning its radiant glow.

As a visiting persuader to a great state, sadly I've not been in time,⁴

8 But astride the horse, with whip at hand, I'll venture the long road.

[stanza break]

had amidst the mountains?'/Plenty of white clouds atop the ridge./ Here alone may one be freely cheerful and content—/ Impossible to send *this* in hand to you milord" 山中何所有/ 嶺上多白雲// 只可自怡悅/ 不堪持寄君.

2 The peach blossoms drifting on the water recalls the river carrying peach blossoms that Tao Qian 陶潛 (365–427) told of a fisherman following, which led him to the Shangri-La of "Peach Blossom Font."

3 The "potent" wine is literally "white." As any drinker of modern *baijiu* knows, it has a high alcohol content.

4 "Visiting persuaders" were men in the Warring States period who traveled from state to state, offering strategic advice and arguments to rulers of the states, hoping to be employed in ministerial posts. "Great state" in this line is literally one that could field "ten thousand chariots."

會稽愚婦輕買臣
 余亦辭家西入秦
 仰天大笑出門去
 12 我輩豈是蓬蒿人

I.2.12

將進酒

君不見黃河之水天上來
 奔流到海不復回
 君不見高堂明鏡悲白髮
 4 朝如青絲暮成雪
 人生得意須盡歡
 莫使金樽空對月
 天生我材必有用
 8 千金散盡還復來
 烹羊宰牛且為樂
 會須一飲三百杯

[stanza break]

- An unknowing wife in Kuaiji thought little of Maichen;¹
 For my part I too will take leave of home, going west into Qin.²
 Looking up to Heaven, I give a great laugh, as I go out the gate—
 12 How can people of my kind stay in the tangled wormwood?

I.2.12

Bring In the Wine

- Haven't you seen: the Yellow River's waters coming from the sky above,³
 Its current rushing on to the sea, not ever turning back?
- Haven't you seen: a bright mirror in a high hall bringing sadness to
 white hair,
 4 Which at morning resembled blue-black silk and by nightfall turned to
 snow?
 To get satisfaction from your life you must needs make the most of
 pleasure,
 And do not let your golden goblet stand empty before the moon.
- The knack that Heaven birthed me with is sure to have its use;
 8 If a thousand in gold is squandered all, it yet will come back to me.
 So cook the mutton, butcher the ox, that we now make merry,
 Together at every drinking bout we must have three hundred cups.
 [stanza break]

1 Zhu 朱 Maichen was a native of Kuaiji (modern Shaoxing), Zhejiang, in the first century BCE, who while gathering firewood to sell for a living was fond of reciting texts he had read, sure that he would one day be found and employed as an official. His wife criticized him for his useless dreams and eventually left him because he would not apply himself to bettering their condition. In his fifties he was raised up by a local official who recognized his true talents.

2 The territory of the old state of Qin was where the capital Chang'an was located. Li Bo is saying he will try to impress an influential official at the court enough to gain his patronage.

3 One tradition said that the Yellow River was joined at its source with the Sky River (our Milky Way).

岑夫子

12 丹丘生

與君歌一曲

請君為我聽

鍾鼎玉帛不足貴

16 但願長醉不願醒

古來聖賢皆寂寞

唯有飲者留其名

陳王昔時宴平樂

20 斗酒十千恣歡謔

主人何為言少錢

徑須沽取對君酌

五花馬千金裘

24 呼兒將出換美酒

與爾同銷萬古愁

- Good Master Cen,
 12 And Mister Danqiu,¹
 In your company I'll sing this tuneful air,
 So, sirs, if you please, listen now to me.
 Bells and cauldrons, jade and silks, are not worth valuing;
 16 I just would drink my fill for long, not wanting to sober up.
 From of old the sages and worthies are all now still and null,
 It is only those who are drinkers that have left a name behind.
- Like the Prince of Chen in times of yore feasting at Pingle,²
 20 Ten thousands for a gallon of wine, we'll let loose in joy and jests.
 How is it the host says now that we are short of cash?
 Let us sell straightway whatever we must for more to pour before him.
- My much-dappled horse, the thousand-gold fleece,
 24 I call to the boy to take them away and barter for fine wine,
 In fellowship with you to dispel ten thousand ages of cares.

1 These are Cen Xun 岑勛 and Yuan Danqiu 元丹丘, two friends who are mentioned together in another of Li Bo's poems celebrating convivial drinking.

2 Cao Zhi 曹植 (192–232) was Prince of Chen, who mentioned in one of his poems feasting at the Pingle (Peaceful Happiness) Belvedere on the Luoyang city-wall; in the next line of that poem he talks of "fine wine worth ten thousands a gallon," which Li Bo copies in his own next line.

I.2.13

烏棲曲

姑蘇臺上烏棲時

吳王宮裏醉西施

吳歌楚舞歡未畢

4 青山猶銜半邊日

金壺丁丁漏水多

起看秋月墜江波

東方漸高奈爾何

I.2.13

An Air of the Crows Nesting

At the hour when crows nest by the Gusu terrace,
In the palace of the king of Wu, Xi Shi is drunk.¹

With the cheer of Wu songs and Chu dances yet to be finished,
4 The dark-green mountains still hold the half-edged sun.

The bronze ewer sounds “ding-ding” as the clepsydra’s water increases;²
She rises and looks on the autumn moon falling into the waves of the
Jiang,
While the east-side sky seems gradually higher, but what is there to be
done?

1 The beauty Xi Shi was sent as a *femme fatale* by the king of Yue to Fuchai, the king of Wu, in the 5th century BCE (see also I.3.1). The latter had built a compound on Mount Gusu (near present-day Suzhou), with a palace in which he and Xi Shi indulged themselves in pleasure. In the end king Fuchai’s neglect of state affairs resulted in his being conquered by an invading Yue army, as Yue’s king had planned.

2 The reference is to the periodic sounding of an outflow-type waterclock. The enjoyment of the king and his concubine has lasted from twilight, when the crows return to their nests, to the next morning when the full moon is setting and the sun is beginning to brighten the eastern sky.

I.3 王維

維詩詞秀調雅，意新理愜。在泉為珠，著壁成繪，一句一字，皆出常境。至如「落日山水好，漾舟信歸風」，又「澗芳襲人衣，山月映石壁」，「天寒遠山淨，日暮長河急」，「日暮沙漠陲，戰聲煙塵裏」。

I.3.1

西施篇

艷色天下重
西施寧久微
朝仍越溪女
4 暮作吳宮妃
賤日豈殊衆
貴來方悟稀
要人傳香粉
8 不自着羅衣
君寵益嬌態

I.3 Wang Wei

In Wei's poetry the phrasing is graceful and the lyric tone decorous, the impressions are fresh and the inner coherence pleasing—like a pearl found in a wellspring, or a painting brushed on a wall, with each line and word coming free of ordinary surroundings; as in “In the fading sun, mountain and water are lovely,/ And a swift-borne boat trusts to a homeward breeze”;¹ and “The scent of the rill works into one's clothing,/ And mountain moonlight glints against a stone bluff”; or “As the sky turns cold, far mountains look cleaner;/ As the sun sets, the long river runs more quickly”;² or “The sun sets at the edge of the desert sands,/ And sounds of battle are within the haze and dust.”³

I.3.1

Poem about Xi Shi⁴

- When alluring beauty is what the whole world prizes,
 How could Xi Shi have remained for long inconspicuous?
 In the morning she was but a girl by a stream in Yue,
 4 By nightfall was a consort in the king of Wu's palace.
 In humbler days, no different from anyone else,
 But when valued, now perceived as one of a kind.
 Requesting others to apply her fragrant powder,
 8 She did not put on gossamer clothing by herself.
 In her lord's favor her manner was ever more charming,

1 This couplet and the next are from the poem titled “At Stonegate Monastery in the Lantian Mountains” 藍田山石門精舍, not included in Yin Fan's selection here.

2 From poem I.3.5 here.

3 From the poem “On Li Ling” 李陵詠, not included here.

4 The beauty of the young country-girl Xi Shi (see also I.2.13) was discovered while washing silk by a river in the state of Yue. The king of Yue had her brought to his palace and trained in all the feminine arts. He then sent her as a gift to the king of the neighboring state of Wu, hoping she would be to him a distracting *femme fatale*. The Wu king indeed became so infatuated with her that he neglected state affairs, and Yue was able to invade and conquer Wu.

君憐無是非
 常時浣沙伴
 12 莫得同車歸
 寄謝鄰家女
 効顰安可希

I.3.2

偶然作

陶潛任天真
 其性頗耽酒
 自從棄官來
 4 家貧不能有
 九月九日時
 菊花空滿手
 心中竊自思
 8 儻有人送否
 白衣攜觴來
 果不違老叟
 且喜得斟酌
 12 安問升與斗
 奮衣野田中

- In her lord's affection there was no distinguishing right or wrong.
 Her companions washing silk from those normal times,
 12 Can certainly not go home now in the same carriage with her.
 Send a disclaimer to the girls of neighboring households:
 How hope for anything by imitating her pinched brows?¹

I.3.2

Composed Offhandedly

- Tao Qian was devoted to being naturally genuine,
 By predisposition was quite addicted to wine.
 But from when he gave up official position,
 4 His household was poor, he was unable to have it.
 At the time of the ninth month and the ninth day,
 Chrysanthemum blossoms in vain filled his hands.²
 In his heart he dared to imagine for himself
 8 Whether someone might come bearing him a gift.
 When a common-clad man arrived with drink in tow,³
 Indeed it was no affront to that old fellow.
 More than happy was he to pour from the jug,
 12 Why question if it was a pint or a gallon?
 Shaking out my sleeves in the fallow fields,

1 *Zhuangzi* tells of how Xi Shi knit her brows together in a scowl when feeling ill from heartburn. An ugly neighbor, seeing this and knowing Xi Shi was thought beautiful, took to scowling herself, which only frightened others away.

2 Autumn-blooming chrysanthemum blossoms were a symbol of longevity and were used to flavor the season's wine. Here the famous poet Tao Qian (365–427), particularly associated with chrysanthemums and wine, is pictured as having the flowers but no wine. The ninth of the ninth month (otherwise the day of “doubled yang” (*chongyang* 重陽) was a day to celebrate the last peak of autumn. A famous anecdote tells of Tao Qian once being without wine on that day, but being unexpectedly visited by a messenger bringing him some from the local administrator.

3 He literally has a goblet in hand, which is metonymy for wine.

今日嗟無負
 兀傲迷東西
 16 簞笠不能守
 傾倒強行行
 酣歌歸五柳
 生事不曾問
 20 肯愧家中婦

I.3.3

贈劉藍田

籬間犬迎吠
 出屋候荊扉
 歲晏輸井稅
 4 山村人夜歸
 晚田始家食
 餘布成我衣
 詎肯無公事
 8 煩君問是非

1 Referring to lines in the 20th of Tao Qian's poems "On Drinking Wine," in which he says that if he is not made happy by drinking, it is useless to put on the informal turban through which he was said to strain his wine. There is probably a secondary reference here to Wang Wei currently being in retirement, without a formal cap of office; this helps to explain his proclaimed complacency in line 15.

2 In Tao Qian's pseudo-autobiography the subject called himself Mister Five Willows because of the five willow trees planted before his house.

- Today I lament there is nothing to wear on my head.¹
 Unshorn yet self-satisfied, I can't tell east from west,
 16 Unable even to keep up bamboo rain-cloak and -hat.
 Nearly falling over, I force myself on and on,
 Singing tipsily, go home to the five willows.²
 Human affairs I will not ask about anymore,
 20 Willingly ashamed before the wife in my house.

I.3.3

For Liu of Lantian³

- From amidst the hedge the dog is barking in welcome,
 So I come out of the house, looking by the thornwood door.
 Near year's end, having delivered up the well-tax,⁴
 4 To their mountain village people are returning at night.
 Only from late-yielding fields can they have food for the family,
 Just from the left-over cloth can they now make their own clothing.⁵
 But how could one disregard public duties?
 8 I would trouble you, sir, to ask if this is right or not?

3 In the 740s Wang Wei acquired the mountain estate by the Wang River 綢川 in the Lantian ("Indigo Fields") hills east of Chang'an, which had once belonged to the poet Song Zhiwen 宋之問 of the preceding generation. Wang Wei seems to have been quite fond of the place and resided there at different times when out of office. The addressee is someone living in the same area or perhaps, in light of the final couplet, the district magistrate of Lantian.

4 Households (counted as a well) and adult individuals were required to remit each year a set amount of tax in grain and in cloth.

5 That is, their winter provisions depend on crops planted after those that are grown to pay the grain tax, and their clothing can be made only from the scraps left after payment of the cloth tax. The poem's last four lines might equally be understood as in the voice of the villagers, with "we" and "our" instead of "they" and "their" in lines five and six.

I.3.4

入山寄城中故人

中歲頗好道
 晚家南山陲
 興來每獨往
 4 勝事空自知
 行到水窮處
 坐看雲起時
 偶然值林叟
 8 談笑滯還期

I.3.5

淇上別趙仙舟

相逢方一笑
 相送還成泣
 祖席已傷離
 4 荒城復愁入
 天寒遠山淨

1 The “Way” here refers to Buddhism.

I.3.4

Into the Mountains; Sent to an Old Friend in the City

- In middle years I have become quite fond of the Way,¹
 My house of late is at the edge of the south mountains.²
 When in the mood, I can always fare out in solitude,
 4 Superb things in emptiness I appreciate freely myself.³
 Going to the place where the water runs out,
 Just now I watch when the clouds rise up.
 If by chance I come upon an old fellow from the forest,
 8 Our laughter and talk deters my going home.

I.3.5

By the Qi River, Parting from Zhao Xianzhou⁴

- When I meet up with you, right away a smile,
 When I see you off, instead it turns to tears.
 On the setting-out mat, there is already pain at separation,
 4 And into a desolate city, I will go back in sadness.⁵
 As the sky turns cold, far mountains look cleaner;

2 The “southern mountains” are presumably the Zhongnan (“Full-ended South”) mountains near Chang’an, at the eastern edge of which was Wang Wei’s residence at Lantian. But we may also read this as “South Mountain,” a term with a long pedigree in reference to a mountain that shelters a recluse.

3 See the Additional Notes for comment on this line.

4 Zhao’s personal name, or perhaps sobriquet, has a Daoist import: “Transcendent’s Boat.” The Qi River, tributary to the Yellow River, is in present-day northern Henan.

5 A setting-out ceremony, involving a sacrifice to the spirit of the roads, was often performed when someone was departing on a journey. The city to which the poet will return is “desolate” now, because of the absence of his friend.

日暮長河急
 解纜君已遙
 8 望君猶佇立

I.3.6

春閨

新粧可憐色
 落日捲簾帷
 鑪氣清珍簟
 4 牆陰上玉墀
 春蟲飛網戶
 暮雀隱花枝
 向晚多愁思
 8 閑窻桃李時

As the sun sets, the long river runs more quickly.

With the hawser untied, you are already drifting away,

8 While gazing after you, sir, I am still waiting, standing here.

I.3.6

The Women's Quarters in Springtime

With newly done make-up, an appearance most attractive,

In the fading sun she rolls up the drop-curtains.

Smoke from the brazier purifies the choice bedmat,

4 As shadows by the wall ascend the jade staircase.

Springtime's insects fly in through the latticed door,

While nightfall's sparrows are sheltered on flowering boughs.

On into evening her sad longings increase,

8 By a languid window in the season of peach and plum.

I.3.7

寄崔鄭二山人

翩翩京華子
多出金張門
幸有先人業
4 早蒙明主恩
童年且未學
肉食驚華軒
豈知中林士
8 無人薦至尊
鄭生老泉石
崔子老丘樊
賣藥不二價
12 著書仍萬言
息陰無惡木
飲水必清源
余賤不及議
16 斯人竟誰論

I.3.7

Sent to Cui and Zheng, Two Men of the Mountains

- They glide along lightly, the scions of the capital's elite,
 Most of them coming from the gates of the Jin and Zhang.¹
 Fortunately enjoying a legacy from those who came before,
 4 They early accept the favors of an enlightened ruler.
 In their boyhood years they were not even schooled,
 Fed on meat, they now madly race their elegant coaches.
 And it is hard to know why good men from mountain groves
 8 Have no one to recommend them to the Most Honored.
 So Mister Zheng grows old among rocks by a wellspring,
 And Master Cui grows old within his hillside fencing.
 Offering simples for sale, they do not dicker over price,²
 12 But what they set down in writing is more than plenty.
 For resting in shade, they'll have no malefic tree;
 For drinking water, are sure to go to the pure source.³
 Since my insignificance is not fit to make the argument,
 16 Who will speak up after all for such men as these?

1 The Jin and the Zhang were two illustrious families who occupied high positions at court for generations in the Western Han dynasty.

2 They are like Han Kang 韓康, a recluse during the Eastern Han period, who gathered herbs to sell in the Chang'an marketplace where he never changed the price he asked.

3 In several different poems and anecdotes there are tigers, phoenixes, or men of integrity who refuse to drink water from the offensively named "Robber's Spring" or rest in the shade of "malefic trees."

I.3.8

息夫人怨

莫以今時寵
能忘舊日恩
看花滿眼淚
4 不共楚王言

I.3.9

婕妤怨

宮殿生秋草
君王恩幸疎
那堪聞鳳吹
4 門外度金輿

I.3.8

The Complaint of Lady Xi¹

She must not permit the present time's preferment,
 To allow the forgetting of the former days' favor.
 As she looks on blossoms, eyes filled with tears,

- 4 She does not speak with the king of Chu.

I.3.9

Plaint of the Preferred Beauty²

Around her palace hall autumn's grasses grow,
 But the sovereign king's gracious favor has shriveled.
 How to endure hearing the sound of the phoenix's call,

- 4 When from outside her gate his gold-trimmed carriage passes?³

1 Xi Gui 息嬀 was the wife of Marquis Xi of the Zhou dynastic house during the Chunqiu era. When Chu took over the territory of the marquis, the king of Chu claimed Lady Xi for his wife. But she refused ever to speak with the king, since a woman should not serve two husbands.

2 "Preferred Beauty" (*jieyu* 婕妤) was the title given in the Han dynasty to imperial concubines ranked just below a consort. The most famous was Lady Ban 班, the *jieyu* of Emperor Cheng (r. 33–7 BCE), who enjoyed his favor until later in his reign he became infatuated with the two Zhao 趙 sisters and thereafter neglected Lady Ban. She removed herself to a side palace and her sorrowful longings (especially as expressed in a poem famously attributed to her) became the subject-matter of many later poets.

3 An ancient prince who became an "immortal" learned how to mimic the phoenix's call when playing the syrx. Here the term is used as a metaphor for the gay music being played as the emperor, with his new favorites, goes out for an excursion, bypassing his former favorite's residence.

I.3.10-11

漁山神女智瓊祠二首

(1) 迎神

坎坎擊鼓

漁山之下

吹洞簫望極浦

4 女巫進紛屢舞

陳瑤席湛清醑

風淒淒而夜雨

不知神之來不來

8 使我心苦

(2) 送神

紛進拜兮堂前

目眷眷兮瓊筵

來不語兮意不傳

4 作暮雨兮愁空山

悲急筦思繁絃

神之駕兮儼欲旋

倏雲消兮雨歇

8 山青青兮水潺潺

I.3.10–11

Two Poems for the Cult-Sacrifice to Zhiqiong, Goddess of Fisher's Mount¹

(1) Welcoming the Spirit

Kam-kam, striking the drum,

At the foot of Fisher's Mountain.

Blowing the vented syrx, look to the end of the cove,

4 As the shamankas advance, dancing in crowded blur.

Laying out gem-trimmed mats, decanting clear ritual liquor;

With the wind gusting in gales, there is rain at nighttime.²

Not knowing if the spirit has arrived or not arrived

8 Leaves my heart troubled.

(2) Seeing Off the Spirit

The crowd advanced worshipping—in the front of the hall,

Our eyes fixed and focused—on the rose-gem matting.

She came, not speaking—her intention not conveyed,

4 Now being the evening rain—sad in the empty hills.³

Grieving, the quick pipes, and longing, the lush strings,

As the spirit's carriage solemnly is about to turn away.

Of a sudden the clouds disperse and the rain lets up,

8 Mountains are green as can be, the water purls and ripples.

1 Fisher's Mount was in the west of present-day Dong'e 東阿, in west-central Shandong. Poem I.3.14 was written on Wang Wei's departure to this area.

2 The arrival of spirits of the natural world is often presaged by wind and/or rain.

3 The evening rain here embodies the goddess of Mount Yu, just as the goddess of Mount Wu 巫山 was said once to have told a king of Chu after enjoying a dalliance with him, that he might thereafter recognize her in the morning clouds at dawn and the driving rain at nightfall.

I.3.12

隴頭吟

長安少年遊俠客
夜上戍樓看太白
隴頭明月迥臨關

4 隴上行人夜吹笛

關西老將不勝愁
駐馬聽之雙淚流
身經大小百餘戰

8 麾下偏裨萬戶侯
蘇武纔為典屬國
節旄落盡海西頭

I.3.12

A Longtou Descant¹

- Those young in age from Chang'an, roving-gallant recruits,
 At nighttime from a border tower look upon the Star of War.²
 As Longtou's luminous moon shines over the pass so far away,
 4 A man on campaign in Long plays a cross-flute in the night.

- The veteran general west of the pass is unbearably disheartened,
 Pulling up his horse, hearing this, as twin lines of tears flow.
 In person he's been through a hundred-some battles, big and small,
 8 His subordinate officers enfeoffed as nobles of a myriad households.
 Su Wu would finally be made director of dependent states,
 After the yak-tail hairs of his pennant were all shed west of the lake.³

1 Longtou is a mountain range stretching from Longxian, Shaanxi to Qingshui, Gansu, referring generally to China's northwest border.

2 A "roving-gallant" was someone who took up arms to avenge wrongs, protect the unfortunate, or defend noble principles when under attack. The Star of War is literally "Greatest White" (white, the color of mourning), which was the name for Venus, whose movements were seen as ominous of battles.

3 Su Wu was a statesman sent in 100 BCE to the Central Asian Xiongnu peoples, a perennial problem for the Western Han dynasty. Unexpectedly he was detained by the Xiongnu, whose ruler tried repeatedly but unsuccessfully to turn Su Wu's allegiance. Sent to a wilderness area west of Lake Baikal with few provisions, Su Wu tended sheep for many years, keeping his staff of office (the yak-tail pennant or verge) intact as long as possible, until its hair fell out. After nearly twenty years Su Wu was returned to China and given the title mentioned in line 7. The disheartened old veteran in this poem, whose subordinates have all returned home and been ennobled, is seen as a modern-day Su Wu, spending his years in the inhospitable frontier in service of the dynasty. He might in years past have resembled one of those young bravos of the poem's opening lines.

I.3.13

少年行

一身能擘兩彫弧
 虜騎千重只似無
 偏坐金鞍調白羽
 4 紛紛射殺五單于

I.3.14

初出濟州別城中故人

微官易得罪
 謫去濟川陰
 執政方持法
 4 明君無此心
 閭閻河潤上
 井邑海雲深
 縱有歸來日
 8 多愁年鬢侵

I.3.13

Ballad of Youth

- To this one fellow able to draw a couple of carved bows,
 Caitiffs on horseback a thousand strong simply seem nothing.
 Sitting aslant a gold-trimmed saddle, dressing his white-fletched arrows,
 4 In a blur and flurry he'll shoot dead all five *chanyu*.¹

I.3.14

On First Going Out to Jizhou, Parting from Old Friends in the City²

- An insignificant official can easily commit an offense,
 And be relegated away to the shade of the River Ji.
 Those in charge of government are wielding the laws,
 4 The enlightened lord himself would not have this in mind.
 There village gates and lanes are above the Yellow River's damps,
 Markets and towns are deep within clouds from the sea.³
 Even were there a date set for my coming back,
 8 Too much sadness will wear away years and hair.

1 In the mid-first-century BCE the leadership of the Xiongnu was split among five individuals, all with the ruler's title of *chanyu*.

2 Jizhou was near present-day Dong'e, Shandong. Wang Wei was sent to serve in local administration there because of an offense at court.

3 The banks of the Yellow River (to which the Ji is tributary in this region) have been raised over the centuries, mirroring the bed of the river which has risen because of constant silting. The poet imagines the towns in Jizhou prefecture are closer to the sea than they actually are.

I.3.15

送綦毋潛落第還鄉

聖代無隱者
 英靈盡未歸
 遂令東山客
 4 不得顧採薇
 既至君門遠
 孰云吾道非
 江淮度寒食
 8 京兆縫春衣
 置酒臨長道
 同心與我違
 行當浮桂棹
 12 未幾拂荊扉
 遠樹帶行客
 孤村當落暉
 吾謀適不用
 16 勿謂知音稀

1 For a selection of Qiwu Qian's poems, see II.13.

I.3.15

Seeing Off Qiwu Qian, Returning to His Homeplace after Failing the Exam¹

- In a sage's era there shall be no men in reclusion,
 None of the finest souls will have gone back to their homes.
 So it happens that the East Mountains guest
 4 Is not able to turn himself to culling bracken.²
 Having arrived afar at one's lord's gate,
 Who can now say "My way has failed"?³
 As the Cold Food day comes to the Jiang-Huai region,
 8 In the capital municipality springtime clothes are being mended.⁴
 Here I set out wine by the side of the long road,
 Where one who shares my heart will be going away from me.
 Let his journey be to float out on oars of cinnamon wood,
 12 And not be long till he'll touch his simple thornwood door.
 While distant trees are surrounding the journeying traveler,
 A deserted village will be facing the fading sunlight.⁵
 Even if our plans do not turn out as we'd have them,
 16 Don't say that friends who truly know you are scarce.⁶

2 Two allusions are combined in this couplet. The first is to the famous Eastern Jin statesman Xie An 謝安 (320–385) who secluded himself in the Eastern Mountains until he was forty and then agreed to become one of the key officials in government. Culling bracken is what the two brothers Bo Yi 伯夷 and Shu Qi 叔齊 contented themselves with doing on Mount Shouyang 首陽山, when they could not bring themselves to acknowledge King Wu of the Zhou who, in their view, had been disloyal in ousting the bad, last king of the Shang dynasty.

3 When Confucius was once in dire straits when traveling from one state to another, with no provisions for himself or his disciples, he exclaimed "Has my way failed?"

4 Cold Food day was the 105th day after the winter solstice, early in the third month of the year (the last month of springtime). The region around the Jiang and Huai rivers is where Qiwu Qian is going, while Wang Wei will remain in the capital.

5 The place where Wang Wei remains seems "deserted" because his friend has departed.

6 Literally, a friend who "knows the tune," as the master zither player Bo Ya's 伯牙 perfect auditor Zhong Ziqi 鍾子期 understood what was in Bo Ya's mind simply from the tunes he played.

I.4 劉脊虛

脊虛詩，情幽興遠，思苦詞奇；忽有所得，便驚眾聽。頃東南高唱者十數人，然聲律婉態，無出其右。唯氣骨不逮諸公。自永明已還，可傑立江表。至如「松色空照水，經聲時有人」，又「滄溟千萬里，日夜一孤舟」，又「歸夢如春水，悠悠繞故鄉」，又「駐馬渡江處，望鄉待歸舟」，又「道由白雲盡，春與青溪長。時有落花至，遠隨流水香。開門向溪路，深柳讀書堂。幽映每白日，清暉照衣裳」，並方外之言也。惜其不永，天碎國寶。

I.4 Liu Shenxu

In the poems of Shenxu feeling is subtly profound and inspiration far-reaching, the thought is painstakingly earnest and the phrasing remarkable. All at once he gets hold of something and immediately surprises all who hear him. These days there are dozens from the southeast who sing loftily, but in the fluent mannerings of tonal euphony there are none who surpass him. It is only in strength of spirit that he does not come up to some others. Going back even to the Yongming era (483–93), he stands out prominently along the far shore of the Jiang.

Take, for example, “The color of the pines reflects emptily in the water; / But from sutra voicings, at times one senses people”;¹ or again, “Over the deeps of watchet-blue, a thousand myriad leagues, / Through day and night, on your lone and solitary boat”;² or again, “A dream of going home is like springtime’s waters, / Far-dwindling in the distance, wrapping round my native village”;³ or again, “Stopping my horse at the River’s ferry-point, / I gaze off to my old village, awaiting the homeward boat”; or again, “The pathway vanishes within white clouds, / As springtime together with the blue stream lengthens. / At this time there is the advent of falling blossoms, / Trailing far their fragrance in the flowing water. / I open the gate across from the stream’s route; / In deep-set willows is a hall for reading texts. / There, hidden glintings in each day’s light, / With clearest radiance shine upon jacket and skirt”⁴—all are wordings from “beyond the mundane realm.”⁵ I regret that such men do not last long and that Heaven has shattered this national treasure.

1 From poem I.4.4 in this anthology.

2 From poem I.4.1.

3 This couplet and the one quoted immediately afterward appear in QTs only as unattached verses; the poems they were part of are now unknown.

4 These eight lines are not from a poem in this anthology; they appear in Tsjs and QTs as a complete poem identified as “Lacking a Title” 闕題.

5 A phrase used in *Zhuangzi* by the figure of Confucius to describe men who are not bound by convention.

I.4.1

海上詩送薛文學歸海東

日處歸且遠

送君東悠悠

滄溟千萬里

4 日夜一孤舟

曠望絕國所

微茫天際愁

有時近仙境

8 不定若夢遊

或見青色石

孤山百丈秋

前心方杳眇

12 此路勞夷猶

離別惜吾道

風波敬皇休

春浮花氣遠

16 思逐海水流

日暮驪歌後

永懷空滄洲

I.4.1

An Over-the-Sea Poem, To See Off Literatus Xue on His Return East of the Sea¹

- To the sun's own place you are going home and far away,
 As I see you off, sir, eastward into the dim-dwindling distance.
 Over the deeps of watchet-blue, a thousand myriad leagues,
 4 Through day and night, on your lone and solitary boat.
 I gaze beyond range toward that unapproachable country,
 Hardly to be seen in sadness at the edge of the sky.
 In time you'll draw near to the precincts of the transcendents,
 8 But indistinctly, as though traveling in a dream.²
 Perhaps there will appear rocks of azure blue,³
 A lone mountain, a thousand feet high in autumn.
 Thoughts ahead now shrink to but a squint,
 12 For this route you are troubled, and linger here, hesitating.
 As we separate in parting, you begrudge the road I take,
 But may wind-blown waves offer you their august beneficence.⁴
 And when springtime drifts its flowered air far away,
 16 My thoughts will trail the flowing of waters to the sea.
 At sunset, in the aftermath of this song of farewell,
 I yearn ever for those watchet isles in emptiness.⁵

1 Xue seems to have been a visitor or envoy from abroad, probably from Japan, judging by the association in line 1 of his country with the homeplace of the sun.

2 The fabled isles of the transcendents or "immortals" in the Eastern Sea, which were reputed to be hard to reach, sometimes shifting upon the sea. Here they represent flatteringly Xue's homeland to which he is returning.

3 The rocks are presumably those of the transcendent isles, colored azure because that is the symbolic color of the east.

4 That is, you would rather stay here with me; but the wind and waves carry you on with the respectful blessings of our empire (or emperor).

5 The "Watchet Isles" is another name for the Isles of the Transcendents. "In emptiness" applies both to the poet's vain yearnings for his departing friend and also to the location of the Watchet Isles in the seeming emptiness of the distant sea.

I.4.2

送東林廉上人還廬山

石溪流已亂

苔徑入漸微

日暮東林下

4 山僧還獨歸

常為鑪峯意

況與遠公違

道性深寂寞

8 世時多是非

會尋名山去

豈復無清機

I.4.2

Seeing Off His Eminence Lian of the Eastern Grove Monastery, Returning to Mount Lu¹

- The rock-ribbed stream flows on, becoming fretful,
 A moss-lined path leads away, ever fainter.
 As the sun sets below the Eastern Grove,
 4 A mountain monk sets off homeward alone.
 I have always had thoughts for Incense-Burner Peak,
 More so now that Lordship Yuan must leave me.²
 The nature of the Way deepens in hush and stillness,
 8 While the world now makes much of what is “so” or “not-so.”
 Someday I shall go seek out that mountain of renown;
 Could I any longer be without an instinct for the pure?³

1 “His (or Your) Eminence” is a common honorific for a Buddhist monk. The Eastern Grove monastery on Mount Lu (in north Jiangxi) was founded by the famous monk Huiyuan 慧遠 (334–416) and was his residence for the last thirty years of his life.

2 Incense-Burner Peak is one of Mount Lu’s highest points, metonymy for the mountain and its monastery. The poet claims he has long desired to retire there himself. The monk Lian is here flatteringly identified with Huiyuan.

3 Recalling a line from a poem by Cao Shu 曹摅 (d. 308), on thinking of a friend, which says “Through his instinct for the pure, he broaches the truth of the marvelous.”

I.4.3

送韓平兼寄郭微

上客夜相過

小童能酤酒

即為臨水處

4 正值雁歸後

前路望鄉山

近家見門柳

到時春未暮

8 風景自應有

余憶東州人

經年別來久

慇懃為傳語

12 日夕念攜手

兼問前寄書

書中復達否

I.4.3

Seeing Off Han Ping; Sent Also to Guo Wei

- Since a respected guest has visited this evening,
 My young lad knows well to get some wine.
 We are right at a place overlooking the river,
 4 Just after the wildgeese have been returning north.
 On the road ahead, you look off toward your native hills,
 Where, nearing home, you'll see willows by the gateway.
 When you reach there, springtime will not have faded,
 8 The breezy sunlight shall still be as ever it should.
 This brings to my mind a person from Dongzhou,¹
 He from whom many years ago I parted.
 Let me with care and courtesy send along these words,
 12 At dusk of day remembering you who took me by the hand.
 And let me also ask after the letter I previously sent:
 Did its contents after all get through to you or not?

¹ This refers to Guo Wei, who is the focus of the rest of the poem. Dongzhou is Yanzhou 兗州, Shandong.

I.4.4

寄閻防（防時在終南豐德寺讀書）

青暝南山口

君與緇錫鄰

深路入古寺

4 亂花隨暮春

紛紛對寂寞

往往落衣巾

松色空照水

8 經聲時有人

晚心復南望

山遠情獨親

應以修往業

12 亦惟立此身

深林度空夜

煙月鎖清真

莫歎文明日

16 彌年從隱淪

I.4.4

Sent to Yan Fang (who at this time is studying at the Fengde Monastery in the Zhongnan Mountains)¹

In the dim blueness by an opening of the South Mountains,
You are neighbor to those of ebon robe and tin-ringed staff.²
Where a deep-set path leads in toward the olden temple,

- 4 Jumbled blossoms escort the waning springtime.
In confused fullness against a hush and stillness,
Here and there they scatter on robe and headwrap.
The color of the pines reflects emptily in the water,
- 8 But from sutra voicings one senses people at times.
At evening I am minded to gaze southward, toward you;
The mountains are distant, but our feelings yet are close.
One must try to improve on the karma from the past,
- 12 Put on a firmer footing this present existence.
In the deep grove you measure out the empty night,
As misty moonlight envelops the pure and true.
Sigh not for those days of culture and brilliance,³
- 16 Through the year just defer to the eddies of reclusion.

1 Yan Fang's poems (II.24) are the last ones included in this anthology. The Zhongnan mountains are south of the capital Chang'an.

2 The dark robes and the staffs topped with tin rings (*khakkara*) belong to the monks of the monastery.

3 Days when one tries to influence worldly events for the better, at court or in official service.

I.4.5

暮秋揚子江寄孟浩然

木葉紛紛下

東南日煙霜

林山相晚暮

4 天海空青蒼

暝色沉復久

秋聲亦何長

孤舟兼微月

8 獨夜仍越鄉

寒笛對京口

故人在襄陽

詠思勞今夕

12 漢江遙相望

I.4.5

Waning Autumn by the Jiang at Yangzi Ford; Sent to Meng Haoran¹

- Leaves of trees are falling in confused profusion;
 In the southeast there is daily more haze and frost.
 Forested mountains stand across evening's sunset,
 4 And the sea of heaven in its emptiness is blue cerulean.
 Hues of gloaming linger on here even more,
 As autumn's sounds too seem to lengthen so.
 On a solitary boat in company with the faint moon,
 8 In the lonely night I'm still in the countryside of Yue.
 A chill cross-flute plays opposite Jingkou town,
 But my old friend is home in his Xiangyang.²
 Chanting thoughts in verse troubles me at dusk,
 12 As from the Jiang toward the Han I turn my gaze afar.³

1 In Tang times only the section of the Long River 長江 from Jiangdu 江都 to Zhenjiang 鎮江, with the Yangzi Ford 揚子津, was called the Yangzi Jiang (that is, the Jiang at Yangzi). A selection of Meng Haoran's poems is included later in this anthology (II.14).

2 Jingkou is present-day Zhenjiang, Jiangsu, just south of Yangzhou. Xiangyang, in north-central Hubei, was Meng Haoran's homeplace.

3 That is, my gaze looks far from where I am on the Jiang to where you are, by the Han River that runs past Xiangyang.

I.4.6

寄江滔求孟六遺文

南望襄陽路
 思君情轉親
 偏知漢水廣
 4 應與孟家鄰
 在日貪為善
 昨來聞更貧
 相如有遺草
 8 為一問家人

I.4.7

潯陽陶氏別業

陶家習先隱
 種柳長江邊
 朝夕潯陽縣

1 “Meng (Six)” is Meng Haoran. He died in 740; this poem must have been written not too long after that. Jiang Tao is otherwise unidentified. For poems by Meng in this anthology, see II.14.

2 The refrain of a poem from the *Shijing* says, “The waters of the Han are wide,/ And cannot be waded across.”

3 Problematic lines. See Additional Notes.

I.4.6

Sent to Jiang Tao, Searching Out Remaining Works of Meng (Six)¹

Southward I gaze toward the road to Xiangyang,
Thinking of you, sir, my feelings grow ever closer.
Well I know “the waters of the Han are wide,”

- 4 But you must be now in the Meng family’s neighborhood.²
When he was there, he was avid to achieve excellence,
Yet recently I’ve heard he became all the poorer.³
If there be any drafts by this Xiangru remaining,
8 Ask one for me from a member of his family.⁴

I.4.7

The Country Seat of Mr. Tao of Xunyang⁵

This Tao householder copies the former recluse,
With willows standing by the side of the Long River.⁶
Morning and evening in the district of Xunyang,

4 Meng is being flatteringly identified with the great Han-dynasty *fu* poet Sima Xiangru 司馬相如 (179?–117 BCE). The allusion refers to the story of the emperor, upon hearing that Sima Xiangru was gravely ill, sending a messenger to his home, in order to collect any writings that might otherwise have been irretrievably scattered after his death. But Sima was already dead when the messenger arrived, and his wife said there was only one item remaining, his essay on the imperial *feng* and *shan* sacrifices. In light of this, the reference in the last line here to a member of the family might be specifically to Meng’s wife.

5 Xunyang is present-day Jiujiang 九江, Jiangxi, the homeplace of the poet Tao Qian, between the Chang Jiang and Mount Lu.

6 The “former recluse” is Tao Qian, who in his pseudo-autobiography said he had five willow-trees at his homestead, from which he took his sobriquet. See also poem I.3.2.

- 4 白衣來幾年
 霽雲明孤嶺
 秋水澄寒天
 物象自清曠
 8 野情何綿聯
 蕭蕭丘中賞
 明宰非徒然
 願守黍稷稅
 12 歸耕東山田

I.4.8

登廬山峯頂寺

- 孤峯臨萬象
 秋氣何高清
 庭際南郡出
 4 林端西江明
 山門二緇叟
 振錫聞幽聲
 心照有無界

1 The autumn water here is not the rivers in flow but rather the rain that has just abated.

2 "Serene and sedate" is how Xi Kang 嵇康 (223–262), one of the "Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove," was described in the fifth-century *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語.

- 4 He in plain garb has been here many years.
 Thinning clouds now are bright over lonely ridges,
 As autumn water has washed pure the chill sky.¹
 The imagings of all things are so clear and unconstrained,
 8 Untenanted feelings run farther and how farther on!
 Serene and sedate, contented in his farmland,
 An enlightened official is not something useless.²
 Would that I might preserve the income from my millet,
 12 And return to plow the fields in the Eastern Mountains.³

I.4.8

Climbing to the Crest-of-the-Peak Monastery on Mount Lu⁴

- A solitary peak looks over the myriad imagings,
 In the air of autumn so high and so clear!
 At the courtyard's edge, the south prefecture begins,
 4 From the border of the grove, the Jiang to the west brightens.⁵
 By the mountain gateway, two ebon-robed elders,
 Shaking their metal-ringed staffs, make heard a far-secluded sound.
 Mind reflects the realms of existence and non-existence,

Mr. Tao must be the enlightened official who, like Tao Qian, has returned to his fields to dwell; but the poet might also see his ideal self in such a description.

- 3 The poet wishes to forgo the taxes in kind required of normal householders and instead to live the kind of reclusive retirement practiced by Tao Qian. Reference to the Eastern Mountains recalls the lofty retirement of Xie An who remained there, aloof to the world until in his forties he came forth to the serve the state in crisis.
 4 The monastery is on Incense Burner Peak 香鑪峯, on the famous Mount Lu in Jiangxi.
 5 The suggestion here is that the monastery and the peak are set apart from the rest of the world and its "myriad imagings."

- 8 業懸前後生
徒知真機靜
尚與愛網并
方首金門路
12 未遑參道情

I.4.9

尋東溪還湖中作

- 出山更回首
日暮清溪深
東嶺新別處
4 數猿叫空林
昔遊初有迹
此迹還獨尋
幽興方在往
8 歸懷復為今
雲峯勞前意
湖水成遠心
望望已超越
12 坐鳴舟中琴

- 8 Upon karma depends one's past and future lives.
 Useless, to know the repose of an instinct for suchness,¹
 While yet being attached to the web of desires.
 I turn my head toward the route to the Bronze-Horse Gate,²
 12 Not avid yet to partake of the reality of the Way.

I.4.9

Composed while Following the Eastern Stream and Returning on the Lake

- Coming out of the mountains, I turn my head back;
 With the setting of the sun, the clear stream deepens.
 The pass to the east is where we newly parted;
 4 Gathered gibbons cry out there in the empty grove.
 From our roamings ago, here once were the traces;
 These traces still I follow out alone.
 Moods of hidden beauty reside now in the past,
 8 While longings to go back instead take over the present.
 Cloudy peaks assuage thoughts of what lies ahead,
 And the lake's waters fill out feelings of being distant.
 Gazing far, gazing off, all passes beyond and away,
 12 As I idly give voice to the zither aboard the boat.

1 "Suchness" is the actual state of reality in the absence of conceptual dualities.

2 During the Western Han period, the Gate of the Metal Horse 金馬門 (because flanked by statues of two bronze horses) gave entry to the bureaucratic precincts; it hence became a metaphor for the road to officialdom.

I.4.10

越中問海客

風雨滄洲暮

一帆今始歸

自云發南海

4 萬里速如飛

初謂落何處

永將無所依

冥茫漸西見

8 山色越中微

誰念去時遠

人經此路稀

泊舟悲且泣

12 使我亦沾衣

浮海焉用說

憶鄉難久違

縱為魯連子

16 山路有柴扉

I.4.10In Yue, Inquiring of a Seafaring Visitor¹

- Wind and rain at sunset toward the Watchet Isles,²
 As your lone sail just now begins its journey home.
 You say you are setting out for the Southern Sea,
 4 Over a myriad leagues to speed as though in flight.
 At whatever place you plan first to stop over,
 Never will there be one there to draw close to.
 Ever darker and dim, as you gaze back westward,
 8 The look of Yue's mountains will fade away for you.
 Who shall keep in mind from afar the time you departed?
 Those who go by this route of yours are so very few.
 You mooring your boat in sadness and tears,
 12 Will make my own weeping drench my cloak.
 Adrift on the sea, how is one to be pleased?
 Recalling one's homeplace, hard to be away for long.
 Even for the sake of Master Lian of Lu,
 16 By the mountain road was a simple brushwood door.³

1 Yue is in general the area of the lower Yangzi.

2 The Watchet Isles are the Daoist paradisaical isles in the Eastern Sea, mentioned here to establish the traveler's bona fides.

3 Or "Even he who was Master Lian of Lu, / Had still a brushwood door by the mountain road." Lu Lianzi was an itinerant statesman from Qi in the Warring States period. He famously would not accept payment or office for his (usually successful) advice but preferred to maintain his freedom by living alone in the mountains. Even the traveler departing for distant places must have, like Lu Lianzi, a home to which he ultimately prefers to go.

I.4.11

江南曲

美人何蕩漾

湖上風日長

玉手欲有贈

4 徘徊雙明璫

歌聲隨綠水

怨色起青陽

日暮還家望

8 雲波橫洞房

I.4.11A Jiangnan Tune¹

A lovely woman, so careless and free,
 At lakeside as the breezy days lengthen.

In her jade-white hands she seems to hold a gift,

4 Pacing back and forth, with a pair of bright pendants.²

But as voices in song move along with the virid water,

Her look of discontent grows with the greening season.³

At sunset she returns home and looks out afar,

8 Clouds and waves disquieting her closed bedchamber.

1 Jiangnan ("South of the Jiang") is a general term for the Wu and Yue regions.

2 She is holding girdle-pendants that she wishes to give to her lover, but he is absent.

3 The songs are sung by women lotus-pickers who are moving downstream with the current, as the lonely woman grows more unhappy in springtime when amorous feelings are heightened.

I.5 張謂

謂『代北州老翁答』及『湖中對酒行』並在物情之外，但衆人未曾說耳。亦何必歷遐遠，探古迹，然後始為冥搜。

I.5.1-2

讀後漢逸人傳二首

(1)

子陵沒已久
 讀史思其賢
 誰謂潁陽人
 4 千秋如比肩
 嘗聞漢皇帝
 曾是曠周旋
 名位苟無心
 8 對君猶可眠
 東過富春渚

1 Not included among the selections in this anthology.

2 Poem I.5.5 here.

3 This poem is about Yan Guang 嚴光, byname Ziling, who was a friend of the first emperor of the Later Han (Guangwudi, r. 25–57) before the latter took the throne. After that, the emperor tried repeatedly to bring him to court. When Yan

I.5 Zhang Wei

Wei's poems "Answering On Behalf of an Old Fellow from Beizhou"¹ and "Ballad of Facing Wine while On the Lake"² both lie beyond our conventional feelings, yet have never reached the ears of the multitude of people. But why must one fare into the far distance and search out the tracks of the ancients, before one is able finally to make an exploration of the dark source of insight?

I.5.1–2

Upon Reading Biographies of Men who Withdrew from the World, in the *History of the Later Han*; Two Poems

(1)

Ziling has been gone now for a very long time,³
 But we can read history and take thought of his worth.
 Who would say the person from the sunward side of the Ying,
 4 A thousand autumns ago, is his equal, shoulder-to-shoulder?⁴
 I have heard that the august emperor of Han
 In fact kept coming round to see him, but in vain.
 And he, quite careless and unmindful of renowned rank,
 8 Even went to sleep when across from the sovereign.⁵
 Moving away east, he stopped at the Fuchun shoreline,⁶

finally came, in 30 CE, he refused to involve himself in government and lived at his leisure, usually sleeping late even when the emperor came to call on him. Eventually he retired to Fuchun 富春 in the Kuaiji 會稽 region, where he farmed simply till his death at age eighty.

4 Referring to the legendary recluse Xu You 許由 who, when offered control of the government by the sage-king Yao fled to the sunward (north) side of the Ying River where he washed out his ears, to remove the taint of that request.

5 An anecdote in the biography tells that once when the emperor succeeded in bringing him to his quarters, the two lay back and fell asleep, with Yan's foot on the emperor's stomach.

6 The stretch of the Zhe 浙 River running through present-day Fuyang 富陽 and Tonglu 桐廬, Zhejiang, was called the Fuchun River, along which was the spot from which Yan supposedly fished (lines 13–14) and which is still remembered.

樂此佳山川
 夜臥松下月
 12 朝看江上煙
 釣時如有待
 釣罷應忘筌
 生事在林壑
 16 悠悠經暮年
 于今七里瀨
 遺迹尚依然
 高臺竟寂寞
 20 流水空潺湲

(2)

龐公南郡人
 家在襄陽里
 何處偏來往
 4 襄陽東陂是
 誓將業田種
 終得保妻子
 何言二千石

- Delighting best in the pleasing mountains and streams there.
 At night he lay down in moonlight under the pines,
 12 In the morning looked upon mist over the river.
 Dangling a fishhook, he seemed to have “something to rely on,”
 But when that was done, he would “forget about the fish-trap.”¹
 The affairs of his life then lay in the groves and valleys,
 16 As placid and serene he went through his later years.
 Up to today there are the Seven League Rapids,²
 Where his remaining traces are still as they were before.
 But his lofty terrace is at last hushed and silent,³
 20 While beside it the running water emptily laps and splashes.

(2)

- Lordship Pang was a person of Nanjun,
 His home being in Xiangyang hamlet.⁴
 In what place was he inclined to come and go?
 4 It was the flank of a hill to Xiangyang's east.
 He vowed to devote himself to farming the fields,
 To the end be able to maintain his wife and children.
 Why speak of salaries of two thousand bushels,

1 In ancient times Lü Wang 呂望 dangled a straight fishhook in the river, not wanting to catch fish but rather being in wait for King Wen of Zhou 周文王 who then employed him as his chief advisor. The allusion is only half-relevant, as Yan was not angling for a position, merely unconcerned about whether he actually would catch any fish. The quoted phrase more exactly recalls a passage in the *Zhuangzi*, where a certain Liezi is said to have been able to travel for days indifferently through the air but still needed to rely on the wind to do so. Also in *Zhuangzi* it is said that once you've caught a fish, you can discard the fish-trap; likewise once words have communicated their meaning, they can be forgotten.

2 A difficult stretch of the Qiantang River in Zhejiang, west of Mount Yanling 嚴陵 (named after Yan Ziling).

3 At the spot where Yan used to fish.

4 This poem is about “Lord Pang,” a famous recluse at the end of the Eastern Han and beginning of the Three Kingdoms periods, whose given name is not recorded. Xiangyang in north-central Hubei was his homeplace, and late in life he had a special connection with Deer Gate Mountain, a short distance southeast of the city (in line 2 called a “hamlet” out of necessity for the rhyme). Nanjun was the prefecture to which Xiangyang belonged.

- 8 乃欲勸吾仕
 鸛鵲巢茂林
 黿鼉穴深水
 萬物從所欲
 12 吾心亦如此
 不見鹿門山
 朝朝白雲起
 採藥復採樵
 16 優游終暮齒

I.5.3

同孫構免官後登薊樓懷歸作

- 昔在五陵時
 年少亦強壯
 嘗矜有奇骨
 4 必是封侯相
 東走到營州

1 The equivalent of two thousand bushels of grain was the salary in Eastern Han times of a comfortable official.

2 Recalling an incident in his biography in which Pang was visited by the great warlord Liu Biao 劉表 who wished to recruit him as an advisor. In rejecting Liu's offer, Pang said, "The swan makes its nest in the lofty groves, and at sunset has a place to roost; turtle and alligator make their dens in the deep pools, and at

- 8 Wanting to persuade me to take up official position?¹
 The stork makes its nest in the leafy grove,
 As turtle and alligator make their dens in deep waters.
 All creatures follow what it is they most need,
 12 And my heart, for its part, is like this, too.²
 Even unseen, on Deer Gate Mountain,
 Morning after morning the white clouds rise up.
 Collecting herbs and collecting firewood,
 16 Idly and at ease he finished out his later years.³

I.5.3

To Go With Sun Gou's "Composed Upon Climbing the Jimen Watchtower and Yearning for Home, After Being Removed from Office"⁴

- In the past, when you were in Wuling,⁵
 Young of years, indeed robust and vigorous,
 You held yourself to have "the frame of someone uncommon,"
 4 And were certain to be enfeoffed as a noble minister.
 Then, going eastward you arrived at Yingzhou,⁶

evening have a place to spend the night. Now, retreat after advance, cessation following activity, are similarly a person's nest and den. As long as each one obtains his perch or his lodge, the empire does not need 'protecting' [by a ruler and ministers]."

3 It is possible to understand the final lines as if spoken by Pang himself.

4 Sun Gou is otherwise unidentified and his poem is not extant, but Zhang Wei's poem written to accompany his gives the outline of his life up to the misfortune connected with the fall of his commanding general. Jimen was near present-day Beijing.

5 Wuling ("Five Tumuli") refers to the area north of Chang'an where lay the mausolea of five Western Han emperors, thus metonymy for the capital itself.

6 Near present-day Liaoning 遼寧 in the northeast.

投身事邊將
一朝去鄉國
8 十載屢亭障
部曲皆武夫
功成不相讓
猶希虜塵動
12 更取林胡帳
去年大將軍
忽負樂生謗
比別傷士卒
16 南遷死炎瘴
濩落悲無成
行登薊丘上
長安三千里
20 日夕西南望
寒沙榆關沒
秋水樂河漲
策馬從此辭
24 雲中保閑放

- Gave yourself up for service with a frontier general.
 Having departed one day from the land of your homeplace,
 8 For ten years you were always at outposts on the border.
 The contingents of troops all were fighting men,
 Who in their fine exploits would not yield to one another.
 While anticipating movements of the caitiffs' dust,
 12 They even took the tents of the forest barbarians.¹
 But last year the Great Leader of the Army
 Unexpectedly succumbed to the same calumny as Yue Yi.²
 Upon his leaving them, it sorely grieved his soldiers;
 16 Transferred south, he died amidst the humid miasmas.³
 Despairing and desperate, lamenting a lack of success,
 You have gone on and now ascended a mound in Ji.
 Toward Chang'an, three thousand leagues away,
 20 At dusk of day you gaze off to the southwest.
 As the cold sands by Elm Barrier are piled deep,
 Autumn waters on Chinaberry River are swelling up.⁴
 Whip on the horse and bid farewell henceforth,
 24 Amidst the clouds to keep your unrestrained freedom.

1 "Forest barbarians" was a designation of one of the Xiongnu tribes during the Han dynasty.

2 In the Warring States period, King Zhao of Yan put the general Yue Yi in charge of his troops and eventually achieved his goal of conquering the state of Qi. But when King Zhao's son succeeded him on the throne of Yan, the new king's counselors slandered Yue Yi, causing a rift between the two and resulting in Yue Yi's fleeing from Yan.

3 See the Additional Notes for information on the contemporary references in the preceding lines.

4 Elm Barrier is present-day Shanhaiguan, Hebei, easternmost point of the Great Wall. Chinaberry River (Luan He) arises in Inner Mongolia and flows east through Hebei to the sea.

I.5.4

贈喬琳

去年上策不見收

今年寄食仍淹留

羨君有酒能便醉

4 羨君無錢能不憂

如今五侯不待客

羨君不問五侯宅

如今七貴方自尊

8 羨君不過七貴門

丈夫會應有知己

世上悠悠何足論

I.5.4

For Qiao Lin

Last year you sent up documents which were not accepted,
This year you are given food and yet stay lingering here.¹

You I admire, sir, for drinking your fill whenever there is wine,

4 And you I admire for not feeling troubled when there is no cash.

At present the fivefold nobility do not welcome retainers,²

But you I admire for not inquiring at the nobility's manors.

At present the seven honored clans now are naturally respected,³

8 But you I admire for not stopping by the gates of those honored seven.

Since a mature man is sure to have those who know his true self,

What's the use of discussing the trite trivialities of the world?

1 Presumably the documents were Qiao's examination papers which were not judged passable. He has stayed on in the capital afterward, despite having to rely on others for his room and board.

2 The five ranks of nobility were duke, marquis, count, viscount, and baron.

3 The seven influential families who supplied consorts to the throne during the Western Han dynasty and thus enjoyed the most prestige and power, symbolizing the leading clans of the present day.

I.5.5

湖中對酒作

夜坐不厭湖上月

晝行不厭湖上山

眼前一樽又長滿

4 心中萬事如等閑

主人有黍百餘石

濁醪數斗應不惜

即今相對不盡歡

8 別後相思復何益

茱萸灣頭歸路賒

願君且宿黃翁家

風光若此人不醉

12 參差辜負東園花

I.5.5

Composed while Facing Wine on the Lake

Sitting up at night I never tire of moonlight by the lake,
 Walking in daytime I never tire of mountains by the lake.
 If before my eyes is a single goblet and it be always full,

4 In my heart the myriad doings are just the same as idleness.

My host has millet for winemaking, more than a hundred bushels,
 Several pecks for unstrained thick brew will not be begrudged.
 At this very moment across from each other is utter happiness,
 8 But after we part, thinking of each other will be of no use at all.

At the head of Evodia Bay is the route homeward, so far away,
 I pray that you, sir, might stop for the night at Master Huang's place.¹
 With the breeze and the light like this, for someone not to be drunk
 12 Is quite like begging one's pardon of the blossoms in the east garden.

1 North of present-day Jiangdu 江都, Jiangsu. The wineshop of a certain Master Huang is mentioned in the fifth-century *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語 as a place that was visited by three members of the Seven Worthies of the Bamboo Grove. The poet is asking his "host," on whose boat he is, to moor by the tavern at the head of the bay.

I.5.6

題長安主人壁

世人結交須黃金

黃金不多交不深

縱令然諾暫相許

4 終是悠悠行路心

I.5.6

Inscribed on my Host's Wall in Chang'an

Men of the world for a bond of friendship require yellow gold;
 If the yellow gold is not very much, the friendship doesn't go deep.
 Even supposing that one agrees at the time on a mutual pact,

- 4 At the end there will be, as commonly so, the mood of "traveling the road."¹

1 The *yuefu* title "Traveling the Road is Hard" is for poems that speak of life's vicissitudes. As used here, the abbreviated phrase suggests that one cannot count on what lies ahead.

I.6 王季友

季友詩，愛奇務險，遠出常情之外。然而白首短褐，良可悲夫。至如『觀于舍人西亭壁畫山水』詩：「野人宿在人家少，朝見此山謂山曉。半壁仍棲嶺上雲，開簾放出湖中鳥」，甚有新意。

I.6.1

雜詩

采山仍采隱
在木不在深
持斧事遠遊
4 固悲匠者心
翳翳青桐枝
樵爨日所侵
樵聲出巖壑
8 四聽無知音
豈為鼎下薪

I.6 Wang Jiyou

Jiyou's poems are partial to the uncommon and strive for the venture-some, coming free by far of ordinary moods. Even so, his being in short homespun clothes when white-haired is truly dismaying. Take, for example, from the poem "Looking at a Landscape Painted on the Wall of Secretary-Drafter Yu's West Pavilion":¹ "A man of the countryside seldom stays over in anyone else's house, / So on seeing these mountains at morning, I think 'it's daybreak in the mountains.' / Still settling on half the wall are clouds above the ridge, / So I open the curtains to set free those birds over the lake"—these are fresh ideas in the extreme.

I.6.1

Unsorted Poem

In selecting wood, yet selecting what's hidden in it,
It depends on the tree, not how deep in the forest you go.
With axe in hand, to engage in "far roaming,"

- 4 Surely is not the true heart of a craftsman.
Densely masked and shaded, a bough of growing paulownia
To use for kindling and cooking would be a daily insult.²
The woodcutter's sounds coming from cliff or gorge,
8 Though heard on all sides, have no "knower of tone."³
Why is it used as firewood under the cauldron

1 Poem I.6.3 in this anthology.

2 "Far roaming" is usually a term for unrestrained, even mystical, travels. Here the woodcutter likewise intends to indulge his passion to the fullest; but his habit of chopping the wood into small bits for kindling is appalling to the artisan who would fashion into a zither the bough of a paulownia (traditionally the best wood for zithers).

3 "Knower of tone" describes a perfect auditor who recognizes what is in a zither player's mind simply through the music produced. The sound of the woodsman's axe is of a different, less pleasing kind.

當復堂上琴
鳳鳥久不棲
12 且與枳棘林

I.6.2

代賀若令譽贈沈千運
相逢問姓名亦存
別時無子今有孫
山上雙松長不改
4 百家惟有三家村
村南村西車馬道
一宿通舟水浩浩
澗中磊磊十里石
8 河上淤泥種桑麥
平坡塚墓皆我親
滿田主人是舊客
舉聲酸鼻問同年
12 十人七人歸下泉
分手如何更此地
迴頭不去淚潸然

- When instead it should be a zither in the main hall?
 If the phoenix for too long does not alight on it,
 12 It might as well be in a grove of spiky orange or jujube.¹

I.6.2

On Behalf of Heruo Lingyu; For Shen Qianyun

- Upon meeting we ask surnames, personal names too are inquired;
 When we parted there were no children, there are grandchildren now.
 The pair of pinetrees on the hill for long have not changed,
 4 But of a hundred families there is now just a three-family village.

South of the village, west of the village, a road for horse and carriage,
 For a boat in passage on a night's stopover, the waters course onward.

- In the streambed massed and mounded are ten leagues of rocks,
 8 In the riverside's silt and mud are planted mulberry and wheat.
 On a level slope the tombs and graves are all of our kin,
 Throughout the fields the owners now are the tenants of old.

- Raising a cry, in sour-nosed grief, I ask about those of my same years:
 12 Of every ten men, seven have gone home to the nether springs.
 As we part hands, however could I forsake this land?
 I turn my head back, not leaving yet, as tears come flooding down.

1 The *wutong* 梧桐 tree (*Firmiana simplex*) was said to be the only tree in which the phoenix would roost. It is often, as here, thought of together with the *tong* tree (*Paulownia fortunei*).

I.6.3

觀于舍人壁畫山水

野人宿在人家少

朝見此山謂山曉

半壁仍棲嶺上雲

4 開簾放出湖中鳥

獨坐長松是阿誰

再三招手起來遲

于公大笑向予說

8 小弟丹青能爾為

I.6.4

滑中贈崔高士瓘

夫子保藥命

外身保無咎

日月不能老

4 化腸為筋不

十年前見君

甲子過我壽

于何今相逢

I.6.3

Looking at a Landscape Painted on Secretary-Drafter Yu's Wall

A man of the countryside seldom stays over in anyone else's house,¹
 So on seeing these mountains at morning, I think "it's daybreak in the
 mountains."

Still settling on half the wall are clouds above the ridge,

4 So I open the curtains to set free those birds over the lake.

Sitting alone under tall pines, who could that be?

I wave several times to call him here, but he's slow to get up.

Sir Yu laughs loudly and explains for my benefit:

8 "Little brother, it's red and green that are making it like this."²

I.6.4

In Hua; For the High-minded Gentleman Cui Guan³

You, master, protect your destiny with medicines,⁴

Your outer person being protected without harm.

If like sun and moon, you are unable to grow old,

4 Can you transform innards into sinews, or not?

It's been ten years since I saw you, sir,

While time's cycles have passed me on to longevity.

How can it be that on meeting each other today,

1 The line might equally be read as "A man of the countryside usually stays where others' houses are few." Either way the poet is playing the role of the country hick who would not have a wall-painting in his house and so can't tell a mural from reality.

2 Red and green are cinnabar and malachite pigments, synecdoche for colored paints.

3 Hua is Huazhou, Henan.

4 Made from plants, herbs, and minerals.

- 8 華髮在我後
近而知其遠
少見今白首
遙信蓬萊宮
- 12 不死世世有
玄石采盈檐
神方祕其肘
問家惟指雲
- 16 愛氣常言酒
攝生固如此
履道當不朽
未能太虛同
- 20 願亦天地久
實腹以芝朮
賤體仍芻狗
自勉將勉余
- 24 良藥在苦口

- 8 The gray flecks in your hair appeared after mine?
 Close up, you've known what is far away,
 When young could see today's white pate.
 You have trusted far off in Penglai's palaces,
- 12 Where undying, one exists generation to generation.¹
 Dark stones are collected to fill up what you carry,
 Spirit formulas are kept secret by your elbow.²
 When I ask about family, you just point to clouds;
- 16 As for tending to *qi*, you usually speak of wine.
 If taking care of life is indeed like this,
 Proceeding in the Way, one ought not to decay.
 Not having been able to share in the Grand Emptiness,³
- 20 One can still wish to be enduring as heaven and earth.
 Upon filling the stomach with long-life wondergrowths,
 This lowly body is as always to be a straw dog.⁴
 You striving this way gets me to do the same myself;
- 24 The best medicine is bitter to the taste.

1 Penglai is one of the three paradise isles in the Eastern Sea, said to be the home of Daoist "immortals."

2 The precise referent of the "dark" (or "mysterious") stones is not clear. It may refer to a stone needle as synecdoche for medical accoutrements, or perhaps mineral ingredients for use in an elixir of long life. The formulas kept in Cui's sleeve are of techniques and recipes conducing to long life.

3 The primordial era before phenomena appeared, and potentiality was all.

4 One's body is of no more worth than the straw dogs burned in sacrificial rites, even or especially after consuming elixirs that lead to transcending the mortal world.

I.6.5

山中贈十四祕書山兄

出山祕芸署

山木已再春

食我山中藥

4 不憶山人

山中誰余密

白髮日相親

雀鼠晝夜無

8 知我廚廩貧

有情盡捐棄

土石為周身

依依舍北松

12 不厭吾南鄰

夫子質千尋

天澤枝葉新

今以不材壽

16 非智免斧斤

I.6.5

In the Mountains; For (Fourteen) the Librarian, a Mountain Brother¹

You went out from mountains for the Office of Private Rue,²
But for a mountain tree it's already another springtime.
You fed on my simples from in the mountains,

4 But no longer hold in your mind this man in the mountains.

What in the mountains is now most closely held to me?

With my white hair daily I've become more intimate.

There are no sparrows or rats, by day or by night,

8 For they know there is little in my kitchen or granary.

Sentient beings I've all given up and set aside,

It is soil and stone that keep my person whole.³

So attached to me, the pinetree north of the house,

12 It never tires of me, its neighbor to the south.⁴

You, great master, are of material a thousand spans high,

And Heaven's moisture refreshes your limbs and needles.

Now, long life is owing to "not being good timber,"

16 It is not intelligence that lets one avoid axe or hatchet.⁵

1 A poem that has puzzled editors and given rise to many variants, starting with the title. See Additional Notes. The translation here presents one possible interpretation, adhering to the Song text.

2 The addressee of the poem has left the mountains, where he was symbolically an elder brother of the poet, for a position in the imperial library. "Emerging from the mountains" for office recalls Xie An; see I.3.15, note 2. The imperial library (*Mishusheng*, "Bureau of Private Texts") was also called Office of Private Rue, rue being an insectifuge used to protect the books from silverfish and other damaging insects.

3 "Sentient beings" is a Buddhist term for humans.

4 The pine, described in the next four lines and addressed as "great master," is the wholly bent and crooked tree from the *Zhuangzi* which, since it is not good straight timber that an artisan can use, is enabled to live out its full life without harm.

5 In the final couplet the poet seems to identify the "uselessness" of the tree with his own condition, an identification made obvious with a variant in some other texts that in line 15 reads 余 "my" for 今 "now."

I.6.6

酬李十六岐

鍊丹文武火未成

賣藥販履俱逃名

出谷迷行洛陽道

4 乘流醉臥滑臺城

城下故人久離怨

一歡適我兩家願

朝飲杖懸沽酒錢

8 暮食囊有松花飯

于何車馬日憧憧

李膺門館爭登龍

千賓揖對若流水

12 五經發難如扣鐘

下筆新詩行滿壁

立談古人坐在席

問我草堂有臥雲

16 知我山儲無檐石

[stanza break]

I.6.6

To Reciprocate Li Qi (Sixteen)

In refining the elixir, with tempered and free fire, I've not been
 successful;
 Selling simples or peddling sandals I've generally avoided being known.
 Going out from the valley, I lost my way on the route to Luoyang,
 4 So I rode the current, lounging while drunk, to the city of Hua's
 Terrace.

By the wall is an old friend sorry to be separated from for so long,
 But happiness all at once satisfied me and the desires of both of us.
 In the morning we drank wine bought with the cash hung from my
 staff,

8 At sunset supped on the pine-blossom fare that I had in my bag.¹

Why is it that carriages and horses trundle on daily, with no break?
 At the doorway of Li Ying's place they vie to ascend the dragon gate.²
 A thousand guests bowing before him, as if a river flowing onward,

12 Adducing arguments from the five classics, as though striking a bell.³

They set brush to work for new poems, with lines covering a wall,
 Or stand and chat of the men of old, or sit at ease on their mats.
 They ask me if at my thatched hut there are clouds to lounge with,

16 For they know my mountain grain-bin hasn't a catty or picul.

[stanza break]

1 Ruan Xiu 阮脩 (ca. 270–312) used to go out with a string of coins dangling from his staff, with which he would buy wine when coming upon a wineshop. Pine flowers, which bloom in spring before later becoming cones, were ground up, mixed with honey and flour, to make a rustic treat called “pine-blossom dough-balls” (*songhua bing*).

2 Li Ying (110–169) was an influential minister during the Eastern Han period, whose residence was often crowded with men seeking his patronage. Those who succeeded in gaining his attention and support were said to have “ascended the dragon gate.”

3 The guests bowing to Li Ying (Li Qi) are those hoping for his support for the official exams which tested one's knowledge of the classics. The *Liji* says that the best student is one who answers questions like a bell that is struck.

自耕自刈食為天
如鹿如麋飲野泉
亦知世上公卿貴
且養丘中草木年

I plow for myself and mow for myself, my food depending on Heaven,
Like a plain deer, like a striped deer, I drink from freshets in the wilds.¹
Indeed I know that in this world the high-born and high-ranking are
honored,

- 20 But in the hills just let me tend to my years that grow like the plants
and trees.

¹ What is rendered as “striped deer” here is the elaphure, Père David’s deer, which is maned and has a black dorsal stripe.

I.7 陶翰

歷代詞人，詩筆雙美者鮮矣。今陶生實為兼之。既多興象，復備風骨。三百年以前，方可論其體裁也。

I.7.1

古塞下曲

進軍飛狐北
窮寇勢將變
日落沙塵昏
4 背河更一戰
駢馬黃金勒
雕弓白羽箭
射殺左賢王
8 歸奏未央殿
欲言塞下事
天子不召見
東出咸陽門
12 哀哀淚如霰

I.7 Tao Han

Of men of letters through the ages, those equally admired for verse and prose have been very rare. At present Mr. Tao is truly a master of both. His poetry has, on the one hand, evocative imagery in abundance, and on the other is replete with vigor in content and structure. From three hundred years past, it is only now that such form and fashion can be properly acknowledged.

I.7.1

An Old-time Air from the Frontier

- The army was advanced north of Fox Volant fortress,¹
 With desperate marauders about to change their tactics.
 As the sun was setting, in a twilight of sand and dust,
 4 Our backs to the river, we fought one more battle:
 The roan horses, with yellow-gold bits in their mouths,
 The carved wood-bows, with white-feathered arrows.
 We aimed at and killed the Worthy King of the Left,
 8 And would return to make report at the Weiyang Palace.²
 We were ready to tell of the events at the frontier,
 But the Son of Heaven would not summon us to audience.
 Going out eastward from Xianyang city's gates,³
 12 Bewailing, bemoaning, our tears come down like sleet.

1 North of Laiyuan in northwestern Hebei, by the Great Wall.

2 The Worthy Kings of Left and Right were second in command only to the ruler of the Xiongnu. Like many poems about the frontier, this poem is set against the historical background of the Han dynasty. The Weiyang Palace was the grandest imperial structure at the capital Chang'an during the Western Han.

3 Xianyang, an old name for Chang'an.

I.7.2

燕歌行

請君留楚調
聽我吟燕歌
家在遼水頭
4 邊風意氣多
出身為漢將
正值戎未和
雪中凌天山
8 冰上度交河
大小百餘戰
封侯竟蹉跎
歸來霸陵下
12 故舊無相過
雄劒委塵匣
空門惟雀羅
玉簪還趙姝
16 瑤琴付齊娥
昔日不為樂
時哉今奈何

I.7.2

Ballad: Song of Yan¹

Please, sir, leave behind that melody from Chu,
And listen while I intone this song of Yan.

My home lay at the head of the Liao waters,²

4 In the border wind I was heady with high spirits.

I went out to make my way as a general of Han,

Owing just then to the west barbarians' unrest.

In the snow I surmounted the Tianshan range,

8 Upon frozen ice crossed over the River Jiao;³

Fighting in battles large or small, more than a hundred,

To be enfeoffed as a noble, but at last missed the right moment.

When returning I had come near again to Baling,⁴

12 There were no past acquaintances whom I encountered.

My sword of valor is consigned to a dusty coffer,

At the deserted gate is now just a sparrow net.

Jade hairpins have been given back to charmers from Zhao,

16 The gem-trimmed zither turned over to a beauty from Qi.

If in bygone days one could not be pleased,

Ah, fortune! what can be done about it today?

1 The old state of Yan in the northeast included the general area around present-day Beijing.

2 The Liao River has two sources, one in Jilin, one in Inner Mongolia, coming together in Liaoning.

3 The "Mountains of Heaven" are on the present-day border between China and Kyrgyzstan. The Jiao River once ran near and gave its name to the now ruined city of Yarkhoto, close to the present-day city of Turpan, Xinjiang.

4 Baling was the tumulus of the Western Han emperor Wen, some ways east of Chang'an. The name is used here as a general reference to the capital region.

I.7.3

贈鄭員外

驄馬拂繡裳

按兵遼水陽

西分雁門騎

4 北逐樓煩王

聞道五軍集

相邀百戰場

風沙暗天起

8 虜陣森已行

儒腹揖諸將

雄謀吞八荒

金門來見謁

12 朱紱生輝光

數載侍御史

稍遷尚書郎

人生志氣立

16 所貴功業昌

何必守章句

終年事蒼黃

同時獻賦客

20 尚在東陵旁

I.7.3

For Auxiliary Director Zheng

- On a pied horse you neaten your fine official dress,
 As men at arms were drawn up north of the Liao River.
 To the west were divided the cavalry at Wildgoose Gate,
 4 While northward was pursued the Loufan king.¹
 I've heard it said that when the five armies gathered,
 They were met on a field of a hundred battles.
 Windblown sand rose up, darkening the sky,
 8 The caitiff deployments were on the march, en masse.
 In scholar's dress you bowed to the several generals,
 Valiantly strategizing to conquer all the eight outlands.
 To the Bronze-horse Gate you came and were announced,²
 12 Your vermilion seal-cord giving off a shining glow.
 For a number of years an Attendant Censor at court,
 Then promoted Gentleman of the Bureau of State Affairs.
 A whole lifetime's spirited ambition established,
 16 What is honored is the glory of your deeds of merit.
 Why need one hold to chapter and verse learning,
 Through all the years in service to such pith and poth? ³
 If at that time, you were a guest proffering a rhapsody,
 20 You might even yet be placed beside Dongling.³

1 Yanmen, or Wildgoose Gate, was a strategic pass near the Great Wall, in the vicinity of present-day Datong, Shanxi. The Loufan were a nomadic tribal people to the north, during the Han dynasty.

2 The Bronze-Horse Gate, in Chang'an during the Western Han dynasty, was a place where aspirants for office gathered in hope of being summoned by a high official or the emperor.

3 Some of the most famous literati during the Western Han began their careers by offering up a rhapsody (*fu*) to the emperor. Dongling refers to Shao Ping 召平, marquis of Dongling, who became a commoner with the fall of the Qin dynasty and thereafter grew melons outside the east gate of Chang'an. The implication in the final four lines is that learning, which Vice-Director Zheng can be presumed to have, does not equal the rewards gained from military prowess which was the basis of Zheng's standing at the capital.

I.7.4

望太華贈盧司倉

作吏到西華

乃觀三峯壯

削成元氣中

4 傑出天河上

如有飛動色

不知青冥狀

巨靈安在哉

8 厥迹猶可望

方此歎行旅

未由飭仙裝

葱隴記星壇

12 明滅數雲障

良友垂真契

宿心所微尚

敢投歸山吟

16 霞徑一相訪

I.7.4

Gazing Afar at Mount Taihua; For Granary Manager Lu

Acting as an official, one comes to Mount Hua of the west,
And beholds the might of its triple peaks.¹

Sheared to completion in the time of the primal *qi*,

4 It emerges most salient into Heaven's River.²

Seeming to have the look of something moving in flight,
But unknown its appearance amidst the blue darkness.

That giant, shaping spirit, where is it today?

8 At least the traces of it can still be seen afar.

Here just now I sigh for the traveling sojourner,

With no way to arrange a transcendent's attire.

In sunrise's glowing gleam I take note of the star altar,³

12 As the light shades and shines, I reckon the barriers of clouds.

You, best of friends, vouchsafe a true bond of good will,

Your long-held feelings are what I most humbly esteem.

I venture to offer this lyric for going back to the mountains,

16 Where, on a dawn-flushed pathway, you might soon come to me.⁴

1 Mount Hua ("Flower Mountain"), near present-day Huayin, Shaanxi, is the westernmost of the five Chinese marchmounts. It has three distinctive and differently named peaks.

2 The time of primal *qi* was the very beginning of the world. Heaven's River is our Milky Way. A myth tells of a giant spirit (line 7) that created Mount Hua as it now looks, by shearing some of its sides as with a paring knife.

3 One of the three peaks is called the summit of the Bright Star 明星, whose altar the poet seems to catch sight of.

4 The poet suggests he has talked himself into retiring in reclusion on Mount Hua.

I.7.5

晚出伊闕寄河南裴中丞

退無宴息資

進無當代策

冉冉時歲暮

4 坐為周南客

前登闕塞門

永眺伊城陌

長川黯已暮

8 千里寒氣白

家本渭水西

異日何所適

秉志師禽回

12 微言祖莊易

一辭林壑間

共繫風塵役

才名忽先進

16 天邑多紛劇

豈念嘉遁時

依依耦沮溺

I.7.5

Going Out from Yique in the Evening; Sent to Assistant Pei of Henan¹

- In withdrawal I have no resources for rest and repose,
 Going forward I have no strategies for the present time.
 Advancing apace the years and seasons draw to a close,
 4 In vain I have been a visitor in the Zhounan domain.²
 Before me I climb the Pylons' border gateway,
 Looking endlessly far, to balked fields past the walls of Yi.³
 The long-running river grows dark, now in the sunset,
 8 And for a thousand leagues the chill air seems more stark.
 My native home was to the west of the Wei River,⁴
 But in different days I made my way just anywhere.
 Holding to ambition, I took Qin and Shang as masters,⁵
 12 For words of subtle meaning, revered the *Zhuangzi* and *Yijing*.
 One alone, I bid farewell to forest and valley gorge,
 With others was tied to duties in the world's windblown dust.
 On ability and reputation quickly I went ahead at first,
 16 But in Heaven's town was too much confusion and moil.⁶
 Could I not now call to mind a time of favorable retreat,
 Gentle and easy, to be a counterpart to Ju and Ni?⁷

1 Yique ("Yi's Pylons") refers to a pass about nine miles south of Luoyang, where the Yi River flows between two mountains across from one another, like pylons. It was thought of as the southernmost entrance to (or exit from) the Luoyang area, hence a figurative gateway (as in line 5) and in the Chunqiu era was called Qesai ("Pylons' border"; also as in line 5). Henan district in Tang times included Luoyang; Mr. Pei is an aide to the district magistrate.

2 Zhounan refers to the area south of and including Luoyang.

3 The "walls of Yi" are Yique's two mountains (the "Pylons")

4 The Wei River in Shaanxi, near Chang'an.

5 Qin is Zhan Qin 展禽, better known as Liuxia Hui 柳下惠, an eminent, early 7th-century BCE minister in the state of Lu. Shang is Lü Shang 呂尚, the famous minister of Kings Wen and Wu at the founding of the Zhou dynasty.

6 "Heaven's town" is Luoyang, being a capital city of the emperor who was considered the Son of Heaven.

7 Ju and Ni are the Chunqiu-era recluses Chang Ju 長沮 and Jie Ni 桀溺, who tilled their own land and were once encountered by Confucius.

I.7.6

贈房侍御（時房公在新安）

志人固不羈

與道常周旋

進則天下仰

4 已之能晏然

褐衣東府召

執簡南臺先

雄義每特立

8 犯顏豈圖全

謫居東南遠

逸氣吟芳荃

適會寥廓趣

12 清波更寅緣

扁舟入五湖

發纜洞庭前

浩蕩臨海曲

16 迢遙濟江壖

徵奇忽忘返

I.7.6

For Attendant Censor Fang (who at this time is in Xin'an)¹

A person of set purpose is surely not to be bridled,
Will always shift through the compass in accord with the Way.
When coming forward, the whole world will look up to him;

4 When done with it, he is able to be at repose.

In homespun garb, you were summoned to the East Administration,
With documents in hand, were placed first at the Southern Tribunal.²
Your forceful opinions regularly set you firmly apart,

8 Even confronting His presence, you never planned to play it safe.
Though degraded to reside now far to the southeast,
With an untroubled air you sing of redolent sweet-flag,³

For a destination likely tending toward the endless expanse,

12 Upon limpid waves that rush ceaselessly, one after another.

On a flat skiff you went into the Five Lakes,

Casting off the hawser before Tai Hu.⁴

Pitched and jostled, you leaned into the bends of the sea,

16 Far and farther off, crossing to the Jiang's empty shore.⁵

Searching out wonders, you quickly gave up thought of returning,

1 Xin'an is in northern Zhejiang. Mr. Fang has been demoted from his previous, high position as an imperial censor at the capital, to an unspecified lower-rank office in the southeast where he has leisure to indulge private pursuits.

2 The East Administration refers to the three main departments of the central government. The Southern Tribunal was another name for the Censorate.

3 Fragrant sweet-flag, or calamus, was a traditional image of a courtier's moral purity.

4 The Five Lakes are variously identified, but always include Lake Tai (Tai Hu) in Zhejiang, and are an old reference for the trackless domain to which someone wishing to withdraw from the world may flee. The archetype of that person is the famous minister Fan Li 范蠡 (see line 19) who, after overseeing in 493 BCE the victory of the king of Yue over the rival state of Wu, went off in a boat to the Five Lakes to live the rest of his life in retirement. The poet pictures Mr. Fang as Fan Li. Another name for Lake Tai is Dongting, which is used in line 14, but replaced by its more normal name in the translation so as not to confuse it with the more famous Dongting Lake in Hunan.

5 That is, the south side of the Jiang, metaphorically empty for being the shore opposite that of the area of the ancient states of Chinese civilization.

遇興將彌年

乃悟范生智

20 足明漁父賢

郡臨新安渚

佳氣此城偏

日夕對層岫

24 雲霞映晴川

閑居變秋色

偃臥含貞堅

倚伏自相化

28 行藏亦推遷

君其振羽翮

歲晏將沖天

- Becoming elated, you would do so for all the years ahead.
 In fact you have realized the insights of Mr. Fan,
 20 Enough to make evident the Fisherman's wisdom.¹
 Your commandery now oversees the isles of Xin'an,
 A pleasing aura is over every side of that city.
 At dusk of day you look across at layered peaks,
 24 As rose-pink pastel clouds glint in the pellucid river.
 Dwelling at ease you follow the changes of autumn's hues,
 Lying back idly, possessed of what is staunch and firm.
 Each thing naturally depends on another in its transformations:
 28 Acting or hiding away, one pushes ahead, then moves aside.
 Sir, may you shake out your wings and pinions,
 So at year's end you will surge up to the sky.²

1 Mr. Fan is Fan Li, see note 4 above. The Fisherman is the figure in the *Chu ci* composition of that name, who advises the banished minister Qu Yuan not to resent his fate but simply to follow its natural flow.

2 That is, to become a transcendent or "immortal" freed forever from the mundane world.

I.7.7

經殺子谷

扶蘇秦帝子

舉代稱其賢

百萬猶在握

4 可爭天下權

束身就一劍

壯志皆棄捐

塞下有遺迹

8 千齡人共傳

踈蕪盡荒草

寂歷空寒煙

到此盡垂淚

12 非我獨潛然

I.7.7

Crossing the Valley of the Killed Son

- Fusu was eldest son of the emperor of Qin,¹
 The entire age praised him for his worthiness.
 A million troops at command lay easily in his grip,
 4 He could have fought for dominance of the whole world.
 But to tie down his person a single sword was sent,
 And all his brave resolve was rejected, thrown aside.
 Here at the border are known his remaining traces,
 8 For a thousand years men have passed down the tale.
 The far-stretching wasteland is nothing but barren weeds,
 Silent and still, empty coldness and haze.
 Arriving at this place, my falling tears are spent,
 12 It is not only I who am as weepy as this.

1 Qin Shihuang's eldest son, Fusu, angered him by giving unwelcome advice and was sent to supervise the armies on the northern border. When the emperor unexpectedly died, the chancellor, chief eunuch, and second son kept the death quiet and sent to Fusu a sword, with a forged decree telling him to commit suicide for opposing the emperor's will. Feeling bound by filial devotion, Fusu did so. The valley where Fusu died is said to have been near to present-day Yulin 榆林, Shaanxi.

I.7.8

乘潮至漁浦作

機舟早乘潮

潮來如風雨

樟亭忽已隱

4 界峯莫及覩

崩騰心為失

浩蕩目無主

厖懼浪始聞

8 漾漾入漁浦

雲景共澄霽

江山相含吐

偉哉造化靈

12 此事從終古

流沫誠足誠

高歌調易苦

頗因忠信全

16 客心猶栩栩

I.7.8

Composed while Carried on the Tidal Bore to Fishers' Cove¹

- My moored boat early was carried on the tidal bore,
 The tide coming on as though a rushing storm.
 Camphor Pavilion is already quickly hidden,
 4 And of Boundary Peak nothing more can be discerned.²
 Pulsing and pounding, my heart is made to quaver,
 Pitched and jostled, my sight has no focus.
 Crashing, colliding, the waves now too are heard,
 8 Lurching, lunging, we come into Fishers' Cove.
 Clouds move off, while sunlight comes out clear,
 River and mountains hold in and force out each other.
 How imposing! the wondrous power of the Fashioner of Changes,
 12 Engaged in this work throughout all ages past.³
 Foam on the running current will truly serve as a warning,
 As a full-voiced song can easily turn to sorrow.
 If one is kept quite whole owing to trust and devotion,
 16 A traveler's feelings should remain happy and light-hearted.

1 Fishers' Cove, southwest of present-day Xiaoshan 蕭山 district, Zhejiang. The tidal bore on the Qiantang 錢塘 (or Zhe 浙) river, which rolls up thunderously from the sea toward Hangzhou, was a famous phenomenon already in medieval times.

2 Camphor Pavilion, from where the poet begins his morning journey, was in Hangzhou. Boundary Peak was southeast of the city.

3 The Fashioner of Changes is the synthesizing and transforming principle of the natural course of the cosmos.

I.7.9

宿天竺寺

松柏亂巖口

山西微徑通

天開一峯見

4 宮闕生虛空

正殿倚霞壁

千樓標石叢

夜來猿鳥靜

8 鐘梵寒雲中

岑翠映湖月

泉聲亂溪風

心超諸境外

12 了與懸解同

明發氣候改

起視長崖東

湖色濃蕩漾

16 海光漸瞳矐

葛仙迹尚在

I.7.9

Passing the Night at the India Monastery¹

- Pine and cypress mix together at the mouth of the bluff,
 West of the mountain a faint footpath goes through.
 There the sky opens and a single peak is seen,
 4 Where halls and portals bring forth pure emptiness.²
 The main basilica is hard by a rose-tinted cliff-face,
 A thousand structures betokened in a mass of rocks.
 During the night gibbons and birds are quiet,
 8 But bell and chanting sound amidst the chilled clouds.
 The summit's blue mist is reflected by lakeside moonlight,
 As the fountain's voice mixes with the streamside breeze.
 With mind running beyond the various sense-realms,
 12 There is utter conformity with "the freeing of the bonds."³
 When dawn brightness breaks out, the atmosphere changes,
 I get up and behold the view east of the long embankment.
 Colors on the lake bob and bounce thickly,
 16 While the great water's sheen gradually grows glimmering.
 Traces of Ge the Transcendent are still present here,

1 Located on the India Peak (Tianzhu feng) of Mt. Lingyin 靈隱山, near Hangzhou, Zhejiang.

2 It opens out to the highest of the surrounding mountains. The "pure emptiness" is the Buddhist truth of *śūnyatā*, the ultimate lack of permanent definition in all phenomena; the phrase may also refer here to the empty sky over the monastery.

3 In Buddhism the sense-realms are the objects of our sight, hearing, taste, etc. The "freeing of the bonds" was spoken of in the *Zhuangzi* as a state of being fully in consonance and compliance with whatever life may offer you.

許氏道猶崇
獨往古來事
20 幽懷期二公

I.7.10

早過臨淮
夜得三渚風
晨過臨淮島
湖中海氣白
4 城上楚雲早
鱗鱗漁浦帆
莽莽蘆洲草
川路日浩蕩
8 怒焉心如擣
且言任倚伏
何暇念枯槁
范子名屢移

And the Way of that Mr. Xu is now even yet esteemed.¹

“Faring alone” is an action known from long ago,²

20 Deeply I yearn for a meeting with those two men.

I.7.10

Passing by Linhuai Early in the Day

At night we caught the wind from the three isles,

At daybreak were passing by Linhuai island.³

Amidst the lake the sea-borne air was stark,

4 Above the city the clouds of Chu came early.

Layered and overlapping, the sails at Fishers’ Cove,

Boundless and blurred, the grasses of a reed-grown islet.⁴

As the river’s course daily pitches and jostles,

8 “Thinking longingly, my heart feels as though pounded.”⁵

Let it be that we trust each thing depends on another,

Why waste time pondering decay and decline?

Master Fan more than once altered his name,

1 Transcendent Ge is Ge Xuan 葛玄 (164–244) who was said to have bequeathed esoteric texts to his grand-nephew Ge Hong 葛洪, which were cited by the latter in his *Baopuzi* 抱朴子. Ge Xuan’s more distant descendant Ge Chaofu 葛巢甫, purveyor of the Lingbao Daoist scriptures, claimed Ge Xuan as an early possessor of those scriptures. Mr. Xu is most likely Xu Hui 許翮 who was closely involved in the 360s with the Shangqing Daoist revelations. It is possible that the reference is instead to Xu Mai 許邁 from an earlier century, who was said to have roamed alone in the mountains until finally growing wings and flying off. The merging of Daoist images of transcendence with the spiritual immanence of Buddhism is not unusual in Tang poetry.

2 One who “fares alone” is said to turn his back on the world and devalue external things.

3 The “three isles” are unidentified, perhaps the three isles of the “immortals” in the Eastern Sea. Linhuai (“Overlooking the Huai River”) was near present-day Xuyi, Jiangsu.

4 For Fishers’ Cove, see poem I.7.8. The reed-grown islet, perhaps a proper name, has not been identified.

5 Quoting from a passage in a *Shijing* poem.

- 12 籐公志常保
古人去已久
此理難復道

I.7.11

- 出蕭關懷古
驅馬擊長劍
行役至蕭關
悠悠五原上
4 永眺關河前
北虜三十萬
此中常控弦
秦城亘宇宙
8 漢帝理旄旃
刁斗鳴不息
羽書日夜傳
五軍計莫就
12 三策議空全
大漠橫萬里

- 12 And Sir Qu always guarded what he had in mind.¹
 Those men of old have been gone a long time now,
 This truth of theirs is impossible to keep speaking of.

I.7.11

Going Out the Xiao Barrier, Thinking of the Past

- Spurring on the horse, tapping the long sword,
 I've journeyed duty-bound to the Xiao Barrier.²
 So dimly far and distant, from atop the Five Uplands,
 4 I peer forever off to the barrier and river ahead.
 The northern caitiffs, in their thirty myriads,
 Just at this place were wont to draw their bowstrings.
 The Qin-dynasty wall has lasted through time and space,
 8 There the emperor of Han arrayed his standards and banners.³
 The troops' cookpot-clappers sounded unceasingly,⁴
 And winged documents were conveyed day and night.
 The five armies laid plans, but none were carried out;
 12 The three strategies in debate were concluded in vain.⁵
 The great desert stretches on for a myriad leagues,

1 Master Fan is Fan Li (see I.7.6, note 4); he was said to have changed his name at least twice after retirement, to keep from being recognized. Sir Qu is Qu Boyu 蘧伯玉, a contemporary of Confucius whom the latter praised for knowing to serve the state when the ruler was virtuous and to withdraw when he was not.

2 The Xiao Barrier was southeast of present-day Guyuan in southern Ningxia. The Five Uplands (line 3) were tablelands in Ningxia, close to one another.

3 The wall is the Great Wall. In 108 BCE the emperor ordered Han troops out the Xiao Barrier to do battle with the Xiongnu who, according to the histories, "drew their bowstrings in the number of thirty myriads" (lines 5–6).

4 Copper pots in which they cooked food in the morning and on which they beat the watch-hours at night.

5 The five armies are those of the Chinese. The three strategies were those of the Zhou, Qin, and Han dynasties in their wars with the Xiongnu. None of them had permanent success against the barbarians.

蕭條絕人煙

孤城當瀚海

16 落日照祁連

愴然苦寒奏

懷哉式微篇

更悲秦樓月

20 夜夜出胡天

- Bleak and barren, with human hearth-smoke cut off.
 A lonely fort faces the shoreless sea of sand,
 16 As the fading sun lights up the Qilian range.¹
 Too laden with distress, to present the song of “Bitter Cold”;
 Heart-sore thoughts! that poem of “How few we’ve become!”²
 Ever more I grieve that the moon for the tower of Qin³
 20 Night after night comes out in the barbarians’ sky.

1 The Qilian mountains form the border between Qinghai and Gansu. The word was also the Xiongnu term for the sky.

2 “Bitter Cold” was the name of a poem that Cao Cao (155–220) wrote about soldiers’ hardships on the northern frontier and which was later used by other poets writing on the same theme. “How few we’ve become” was the refrain of a *Shijing* poem that is a soldiers’ lament for being too long kept on campaign at the frontier and wishing to go home.

3 The “tower of Qin” usually alludes to the tower that the Duke of Qin built in ancient times for his daughter Longyu and her husband Xiaoshi. There they played phoenix songs on the syrxinx, until one day a phoenix came and bore them away. See Additional Notes for comment on the arguably better variant.

I.8 李頎

頎詩發調既清，修辭亦秀。雜歌咸善，玄理最長。至如『送暨道士』云「大道本無我，青春長與君」，又『聽彈胡笳聲』云「幽音變調忽飄灑，長風吹林雨墮瓦。迸泉颯颯飛木末，野鹿呦呦走堂下」足可歎歎，震蕩心神。惜其偉才，只到黃綬。故其論家，往往高於眾作。

I.8.1

謁張果老先生

先生谷神者

甲子焉能計

自說軒轅師

4 于今數千歲

寓遊城郭裏

放浪希夷際

應物雲無心

1 From poem I.8.2 included here.

2 From poem I.8.10 here.

I.8 Li Qi

In Qi's poetry as the lyric tone expressed is pure, the phrasing he crafts is for its part graceful. His unsorted songs are all of them excellent, a deep inner coherence being their great forte. Take, for example, "Seeing Off the Daoist Adept Ji" which says "The Great Dao has at its root no individual 'I,'/ But greening springtime lasts ever with you, sir"¹; and again, "Hearing [Dong] Play a Foreign Reed-pipe's Tune" says "Haunting notes change the mode, suddenly flung wafting onward,/ The long wind blows through the grove, rain is pattering on roof-tiles./ Burbling springs spatter their spray, flying up to the tips of the trees;/ Deer from the wilds mewl yawling, rushing to the foot of the hall"²—which is enough to make one break down in sobs, to shake one's heart and soul. It is a shame that his impressive abilities merely brought him to the yellow seal-cord [of a district constable]. Surely, in one's evaluating of the group, often and again his works are far above the mass of compositions.

I.8.1

Paying Respects to the Venerable Master Zhang Guo

The master is one who is the "valley spirit,"

How can one figure the cycles of your age?³

You claimed yourself to have been Xuanyuan's counselor,⁴

4 Which up to today would be several thousand years.

Having traveled here, to within this city's surrounding walls,

You move at whim and will, between the inaudible and invisible;⁵

Adapting to external things, a cloud without intent,

3 In the *Laozi* it is said that "The valley spirit never dies"; this is associated with the "mysterious female" which is another image for the Dao itself. Emperor Xuanzong once reportedly noted that no one could know precisely the number of sixty-year cycles that the Daoist master Zhang Guo had lived through.

4 Xuanyuan is a name for the mythical Yellow Emperor, who will reappear at the end of this poem.

5 What is inaudible when listened for and invisible when looked for are other descriptions of the Dao in the *Laozi*.

- 8 逢時舟不繫
霞飡斷火粒
野腹兼荷製
白雪淨肌膚
- 12 青松養身世
韜精殊豹隱
鍊質同蟬蛻
忽去不知誰
- 16 偶來寧有契
二儀齊壽考
六合隨休憩
彭聃猶嬰孩
- 20 松期且微細
嘗聞穆天子
更憶漢皇帝
親屈萬乘尊
- 24 將窮四海裔
車徒徧草木
錦帛招談說
八駿空往來

1 Auroral clouds were thought to be the “essence of the sun” and were the fare of transcendent beings. Zhang’s clothing is likewise imaged as made from something natural, the lotus being itself an image of purity.

- 8 Or chancing on the moment, a boat no longer tethered.
 On auroral clouds you sup, giving up cooked grains,
 Your rustic garb concurrently fashioned from lotus leaves.¹
 White snow is the purity of your skin and flesh,
- 12 The evergreen pine as sustaining as your worldly life.
 Your concealed essence, different as the leopard when hidden,
 Refined substance, similar to the cicada sloughing its shell.²
 Suddenly departing, one knows not who you are,
- 16 Unexpectedly arriving, could there be any proof?
 Equal with the Two Principles in advanced longevity,
 You comply with the Six Coordinates in rest and repose.³
 Pengzu and Lao Dan were just like babes in arms,
- 20 Red Pine and An Qi likewise indistinct and unassuming.⁴
 We have heard of the Son of Heaven, Mu,
 And also recall the August Emperor of Han.⁵
 The latter was personally bowed to as honored of a myriad chariots,
- 24 The former roamed to the very ends of the borders of the Four Seas.
 The one's carriage and attendants traversed the world of plants and
 trees,
 And one in silk brocade summoned persons for discussion and
 exhortation.
 Yet, the one's Eight Bayards came and went all in vain,

2 The *Lienüzhuan* tells of a leopard that hid away, not eating, for seven days of misty rain in the mountains, rendering its patterned spots more vividly glossy. The cicada casting off its casing is a favorite image for Daoist transcendence.

3 The Two Principles are Yin and Yang, i.e., the world as complementary sequence in time. The Six Coordinates are the four directions, plus zenith and nadir, i.e., the whole world as space.

4 Pengzu and Lao Dan were legendarily long-lived figures. Red Pine and An Qi were Daoist transcendents who only rarely appeared to humans. Zhang Guo is being implicitly identified with all four individuals.

5 The tenth-century BCE Emperor Mu of Zhou was said to have traveled the whole empire, even to the mythical Mount Kunlun in search of transcendents. Emperor Wu of Han (r. 141–87 BCE), also avid for immortality, is said to have been visited once by the goddess Xi Wang Mu (Queen Mother of the West) and also sent expeditions to find the isles of the immortals in the Eastern Sea, but the islands always seemed to shift or stay out of sight. The two emperors are referred to alternately in the following several couplets.

- 28 三山轉虧蔽
吾君咸至德
玄老欣來詣
受籙金殿開
- 32 清齋玉堂閉
笙歌迎拜首
羽帳崇嚴衛
禁柳垂香爐
- 36 宮花拂仙袂
祈年寶祚廣
致福蒼生惠
何必待龍髯
- 40 鼎成方取濟

- 28 For the other the Three Seamounts were further obscured and
concealed.¹
But the sovereign of ours is replete with utmost virtue,
So you, venerable in the mysteries, are pleased to come in formal visit.
He, receiving Daoist registers, opened the Golden Basilica,
32 For purification and purgation, had the Jade Hall shut.²
To songs of reed-organs a respectfully lowered head was welcomed,
Beneath a plumed canopy the imposing guardian was exalted.
From the restricted willows, incense braziers were hung,
36 And blossoms in the compound were brushed by a transcendent's
sleeve.
Praying for a good year, the precious benediction spreads wide,
To bring on best fortune as benevolence for the common folk.
Why need one wait now for the dragon's whiskers?
40 When the cauldron is finished, success is then won.³

1 Mu's empire-roaming carriage was said to have been pulled by eight incomparable horses. The Three Seamounts are the paradise isles of the immortals.

2 Daoist registers, received from an ordained priest, gave one access to certain divinities and, for an emperor, confirmed his rule. Rituals of purification before this were carried out privately. A specific kind of *zhai* ritual could also be carried out by a priest to protect the health of the emperor and the dynasty.

3 Legend tells that the Yellow Emperor cast a cauldron (signifying the fullness of his virtue) and, when it was finished, a dragon descended by whose whiskers he and seventy members of his household and court climbed up to be borne away. Lower ministers also tried to climb up but only managed to pull out the dragon's whiskers. Here the implication is that, with Zhang Guo's help, the emperor has already completed his symbolic cauldron, so the arrival of a celestial dragon would be superfluous.

I.8.2

送暨道士還玉清觀

仙宮有名籍
度世吳江濱
大道本無我
4 青春長與君
十洲俄已到
至理得而聞
明主降黃屋
8 時人看白雲
空山何窈窕
三秀日氛氲
此道留書客
12 超遙煙駕分

I.8.2

Seeing Off the Daoist Adept Ji, Returning to the Abbey of Jade Clarity

A transcendents' palace holds a roster with your name,
 For crossing beyond this world, on the banks of Wu River.¹
 The Great Dao at its root has no individual "I,"²

- 4 But greening springtime lasts ever with you, sir.
 To the Ten Isles you will ere long have arrived,³
 The utmost truth you will succeed in having heard.
 The enlightened ruler lowered for you his yellow canopy,
 8 And contemporaries see you as a master of white clouds.
 The unpeopled mountains are so deeply secluded,
 Where the thrice-bloomer daily is perfused in fullness.⁴
 At this road, you leave behind this bookish visitor,
 12 Moving off far yonder on a mist-borne carriage, separate.

1 Referring to the Wusong 吴淞 in Jiangsu, which flows northeast from Lake Tai.

2 The term *wuwo* 無我 also recalls the Buddhist doctrine of "no-self" (Sanskrit *anātman*).

3 Like the Three Seamounds (see preceding poem, line 28), the Ten Isles are paradise realms for Daoist transcendents.

4 A "numinous wondergrowth" 靈芝 was said to bloom thrice yearly on certain holy mountains; the poet imagines priest Ji's abbey as being in such a place.

I.8.3

東郊寄萬楚

濩落久無用

隱身甘採薇

仍聞薄宦者

4 還事田家衣

潁水日夜流

故人相見稀

春山不可望

8 黃鳥東南飛

濯足豈長往

一樽聊可依

了然潭上月

12 適我胸中機

在昔同門友

如今出處非

優游白虎殿

16 偃息青瑣闌

且有薦君表

I.8.3

In the East Outskirts; Sent to Wan Chu¹

“Impracticably unserviceable,” for so long without use,
 You have hidden your person away, content to “gather bracken.”²
 Still I hear that one who regards officialdom slightly

- 4 Continues to carry out his work in a farmer’s clothes.
 The waters of the Ying flow on day and night,³
 But old friends see each other only rarely.
 Your springtime mountains cannot be viewed afar,
 8 As the season’s yellow birds fly off to the southeast.
 Yet how can you evermore persist in “washing your feet,”⁴
 Having a single goblet casually to be hoisted?
 So clear is the moonlight upon the tarn,
 12 Soothing the motives in this breast of mine.
 We friends of the same gateway from a time past,
 Are today different in going forth or staying put.
 I take pleasure freely in the White Tiger Hall,
 16 Rest at my ease by the blue-chained portals.⁵
 But if there were a petition now to recommend you, sir,

1 That is, the east suburbs of the capital.

2 The first quotation, from *Zhuangzi*, refers to a gourd that was of such a size and shape the use of which an unimaginative person could not understand. The second quotation refers to the two brothers Bo Yi and Shu Qi at the beginning of the Zhou dynasty, who fled to Mount Shouyang and lived simply, gathering bracken (till they starved), rather than serve him whom they considered a disloyal ruler (see the next poem, visiting their shrine).

3 The Ying was the river by which the legendary recluse Xu You lived, who refused the sage-king Yao’s offer of the empire (see I.5.1, note 4).

4 A carefree fisherman of old, in a song recorded in several texts, said that when the water of the Canglang River was muddy (i.e., when government was questionable), he washed his feet in it, and when it was clear (when government was proper), he washed his capstrings in it. The poet is wondering why Wan Chu persists in staying out of office, when the current emperor is ruling commendably.

5 The White Tiger Hall was in the Han imperial palace, here standing for the Tang palace. Doors engraved with a design of linked circles or chains in blue are those of the inner court. The poet is exaggerating his privileged access.

當看攜手歸
寄書不代面
20 蘭茝空芳菲

I.8.4

登首陽山謁夷齊廟
古人已不見
喬木竟誰過
寂寞首陽山
4 白雲空復多
蒼苔歸地骨
皓首採薇歌
畢命無怨色
8 成仁其若何
我來入遺廟
時候微清和
落日吊山鬼
12 迴風吹女蘿
石門正西豁
引領望黃河
千里一飛鳥

- You would then come home arm-in-arm with me.
 Sending a message does not replace seeing face-to-face,
 20 While eupatory and angelica pointlessly flaunt their fragrance.¹

I.8.4

Climbing Mount Shouyang, Paying Respects at the Shrine to Yi and Qi²

- Those men of old can now no longer be seen,
 Under lofty trees, who comes by here at last?
 Hushed and undisturbed is Shouyang Mountain,
 4 White clouds to no purpose still accumulating.
 Like gray-green lichens they took refuge in the land's bones,
 The hoary-headed ones and their song of gathering bracken.³
 They finished their lives with no appearance of discontent,
 8 In realizing humaneness, what would they have been like?⁴
 As I arrive and enter the shrine that remains,
 The season looks toward a lighter freshness and mildness.
 Fading sunlight grieves with the mountain's spirit,
 12 As the wind whirling up gusts over the lady-vine.⁵
 The gate of stone is set exactly to the openness westward,
 Where I crane my neck to look off toward the Yellow River.
 It's a thousand leagues for a single flight of a bird,

1 The highly fragrant eupatory and angelica traditionally symbolize men of high worth and virtue. Like Wan Chu, they are blooming in the wild to no purpose.

2 Mount Shouyang is in the far southwest corner of Shanxi province. It is where the two brothers Bo Yi and Shu Qi took refuge and ultimately starved to death when they refused to "eat the grain" of the newly founded Zhou dynasty (see preceding poem, note 2).

3 The "land's bones" are the rocks of the landscape. "Gathering bracken" (to eat) was a refrain in the two brothers' song.

4 Confucius is said to have remarked that there was no discontent displayed in the brothers' song and that they "sought humaneness and realized it."

5 "Lady-vine" is beard-lichen.

- 16 孤光東逝波
驅車層城路
惆悵此巖阿

I.8.5

題綦毋潛校書所居

- 常稱掛冠吏
昨日歸滄洲
行客暮帆遠
4 主人庭樹秋
豈伊得天命
但欲為山遊
萬物我何有
8 白雲空自幽
蕭條江海上
日夕見丹丘
生事本魚鳥
12 賞心隨去留
惜哉曠微月
欲濟無輕舟
倏忽令人老
16 相思河水流

- 16 A lone spot of light on the eastward running waves.
 Let us hasten the carriage, on the route to Tiered Walls,¹
 For I'm heartstruck with sorrow at this cliffside nook.

I.8.5

Inscribed at the Dwelling of Qiwu Qian, Collator²

- Always praised, the official who hangs up his hat,
 And yesterday you turned home for Watchet Isles.³
 The traveler's sunset sail is already distant,
- 4 As to our host's courtyard trees autumn comes.
 How can I ever gain Heaven's decree,
 When all I want is to roam in the mountains?
 What among the world's myriad things belongs to me?
- 8 White clouds keep to themselves, just as they are.
 Now be idly at ease, by river- and sea-side,
 Where dawn to dusk is glimpsed Cinnabar Hill.⁴
 Let events of life be at root those of fish or bird,
- 12 And an appreciative heart will go or stay at whim.⁵
 Too bad now! under this vivid slip of a moon,
 Wishing to cross over, there is no light boat to take one.⁶
 In a flash and flicker, one is brought to old age,
- 16 But thoughts of you are as the river water flowing on.

1 Tiered Walls refers to the mythical Mount Kunlun, home of immortals far to the west. Here it might just as well be standing in for Chang'an, the imperial capital.

2 For a selection of Qiwu Qian's poems, see II.13. The position of Collator in one of the court libraries was a low-level position in the official bureaucracy often given to new *jinsbi* graduates, desirable because it allowed one to remain at court for a year or two at the beginning of one's career.

3 The isles in the watchet sea were thought of as havens for Daoist immortals. Here the term suggests taking up reclusion.

4 Another reputed residence of immortals.

5 That is, take life as it comes, with no self-consciously determined goals.

6 This metaphor usually refers to the desire to serve one's ruler.

I.8.6

漁父歌

白頭何老人
 蓑笠蔽其身
 避世常不仕
 4 釣魚清江濱
 浦沙明濯足
 山月靜垂綸
 寓宿湍與瀨
 8 行歌秋復春
 持撈湘岸竹
 爇火蘆洲薪
 綠水飯香稻
 12 青荷包紫鱗
 於中還自樂
 所欲全吾真
 而笑獨醒者
 16 臨流多苦辛

I.8.6

A Fisherman's Song¹

- White-haired, what old fellow is this?
 In straw rain-hat and -cloak covering his person.
 Avoiding the world, never serving in office,
 4 He angles for fish near the clear river's shore.
 By sands of the strand in the light he washes his feet,²
 Under the mountain moon quietly lets down his line.
 Lodging by the rushing billows and shallows,
 8 He sings as he goes, in autumn and then springtime.
 He handles the oars near bamboo on the Xiang's banks,
 Sets ablaze his firewood on the island of the reeds.
 With clear-irid water he cooks sweet-smelling rice,
 12 With green-leaved lotus wraps up his catch's blue-red scales.
 Amidst just this he tends to be pleased for himself,
 For what he desires completes his own true nature.
 And he will just smile at the one who "alone is sober,"
 16 Who stands at the current's brink in so much woe and anguish.³

1 The poem plays off of the *Chu ci* composition called "The Fisherman," in which the wronged minister Qu Yuan complains bitterly to a fisherman about the world's lack of appreciation of his true worth and the unfairness of his being exiled, after which the fisherman blithely advises him to stop being so self-righteous and learn to ride with life's different currents as they come.

2 The fisherman confronting Qu Yuan had sung that when his river's water is muddy (i.e., when good government is lacking), he washes his feet in it, and when it runs clear (with the ruler appreciating honest men), he washes his capstrings (of office) in it.

3 Qu Yuan had lamented to the fisherman that he alone was sober, in a world where everyone else seemed drunk. The fisherman in this poem, like the one that Qu Yuan met, thinks the self-description and proclaimed troubles of such a one are too melodramatic.

I.8.7

古意

男兒事長征

生小幽燕客

賭勝馬蹄下

4 由來輕七尺

殺人莫敢前

鬢如蝟毛磔

黃雲白雪隴底非

8 未得報恩不得歸

遼東小婦年十五

慣彈琵琶解歌舞

今為羌笛出塞聲

12 使我三軍淚如雨

I.8.7

On an Olden Theme

As a callow lad he served on a long-off campaign,

Born and raised an outsider from You and Yan.¹

He risks all for conquest under the horses' hooves,

4 From the first caring little for his body's well-being.

When on the attack, none dares come before him,

The hair on his temples bristling like that of a hedgehog.

As dust-brown clouds and white snow fly down from Mount Long,²

8 He has not gotten to repay his lord's kindness, nor gotten to go home.

In Liaodong is a young wife, her years just ten and five,³

Quite skilled at playing the lute, adept at song and dance.

Giving voice on the nomad flute to "Going Out the Frontier,"

12 She will make the tears of our triple army's men fall like rain.⁴

1 You and Yan are regions in the northeast, from around present-day Beijing to the Liaodong peninsula.

2 Mount Long is Longshan, mountain range on the northwest frontier stretching from northern Shaanxi into Gansu.

3 Liaodong is another name for the old region of Yan.

4 "Going Out the Frontier" was a tune for pipa or zither that spoke sadly of soldiers going out to the border wars. For "triple army," see I.2.1, note 6.

I.8.8

送康洽入京進樂府歌

識子十年何不遇

只愛歡遊兩京路

朝吟左氏嬌女篇

4 夜誦相如美人賦

長安春物舊相宜

小苑葡萄花滿枝

柳色偏濃九華殿

8 鶯聲醉殺五陵兒

曳裾此夜從何所

中貴由來盡相許

白袂春衫仙吏贈

12 烏皮隱几臺郎與

[stanza break]

I.8.8

Seeing Off Kang Xia to the Capital, for Presenting Yuefu Songs¹

I have heard of you for ten years, but why had we not met?
 You are just avid and pleased at traveling the road to the two capitals.
 In the morning intoning Mr. Zuo's "Poem on the Charming Girls,"

4 At night you declaim Xiangru's "Rhapsody on Lovely Women."²

In Chang'an the trappings of springtime will be as fitting as ever;
 In the lesser park, flowers of grape will fill the branches.³
 With the hue of willows especially intense by the Hall of Ninefold
 Splendor,

8 Orioles' songs will completely fuddle the boys by the Five Tumuli.⁴

Trailing skirts on such a night, you come from one place or another,
 As the fine and favored from first to last render their praise thoroughly.
 Your white-sleeved springtime smock is a transcendent clerk's present,
 12 Your black-leather armrest the gift of a high secretary at court.

[stanza break]

1 Kang Xia was a Sogdian musician from Jiuquan 酒泉 in western Gansu, who became famous at the Chinese court for his performances of *yuefu* songs.

2 The famous poets mentioned in this couplet are Zuo Si 左思 (ca. 250–ca. 305) of the Western Jin and Sima Xiangru 司馬相如 of the Western Han. Zuo Si's poem was about his two daughters, Sima Xiangru's about his stern faithfulness in resisting the advances of two lovely women.

3 In Tang Chang'an there was a Befitting Spring Palace 宜春宮, as there had been in the Qin dynasty. There was also a Befitting Spring Park 宜春苑 in the palace complex, as there had been one so named during the Qin and Western Han dynasties (then also called the "lower park" 下苑). These identifications are suggested by the phrasing here.

4 The Ninefold Splendor Hall was an imperial palace near Chang'an during the Later Zhao 後趙 dynasty (319–351), here, mainly by virtue of its impressive name, representing the Tang court. The area around the tumuli of five Western Han emperors, north of Chang'an, is often mentioned in Tang verse as a place where rich young dandies sported.

新詩樂府唱堪愁
 御妓應傳鵠鵲樓
 西上雖因長公主
 16 終須一見曲陽侯

I.8.9

送陳章甫

四月南風大麥黃
 棗花未落桐陰長
 青山朝別暮還見
 4 嘶馬出門思舊鄉
 陳侯立身何坦蕩
 虬鬚虎眉仍大顙
 腹中貯書一萬卷
 8 不肯低頭在草莽
 東門酤酒飲我曹
 心輕萬事如鴻毛
 醉臥不知白日暮
 12 有時空望孤雲高

[stanza break]

1 There was an Ostrich Belvedere in one of Han Wudi's (r. 141–87 BCE) palaces and an Ostrich Tower in Nanjing at Liang Wudi's (r. 502–549) court. Here its name is used for a place where the court's female artistes perform.

- New verses in *yuefu* style you sing for sustaining melancholy,
 Then the emperor's performers carry them on at the Ostrich Tower.¹
 Ascending in the west thanks even to the senior princesses,
 16 In the end you must be seen at once as the Quyang Marquis.²

I.8.9

Seeing Off Chen Zhangfu³

- With the fourth month's south wind the barley turns yellow,
 Jujube flowers not yet fallen, the paulownia's shade grows long.
 The green mountains at morning when we parted, at sunset I see them
 still;
 4 As the whinnying horse goes out the gate, yearning for one's familiar
 home.
 Sir Chen established himself as so "candid and relaxed,"⁴
 With curly beard and tiger eyebrows, also a broad forehead.
 In his belly are stored up writings of ten thousand scrolls,
 8 Unwilling is he to bow his head even in the overgrown wilds.

 By the eastern gate he bought wine for the likes of us to drink,
 At heart holding all the world's matters as light as swan's-down.
 When drunk he lounged back, unaware of the white sun setting,
 12 For sometime gazing vacantly at a lonely cloud up high.
 [stanza break]

2 The Quyang Marquis was Wang Gen 王根, a half-brother of Han Yuandi's (r. 48–33 BCE) empress and uncle of Han Chengdi (r. 33–7 BCE), thus an imperial in-law. During Chengdi's reign he was for a time one of the most powerful persons at Chengdi's court. Here the flattering suggestion seems to be that Kang Xia will find so much favor with the imperial princesses that he may become as honored as Wang Gen was.

3 Chen Zhangfu lived for sometime as a recluse on Mount Song 嵩山, outside Luoyang, before passing a decree exam and being appointed to a post in the Court of Imperial Sacrifices. This poem was written upon his quitting his office and returning to his homeplace.

4 According to Confucius, "the man of noble character is candid and relaxed."

長河浪頭連天黑
 津吏停舟渡不得
 鄭國遊人未及家
 16 洛陽行子空歎息
 聞道故林相識多
 罷官昨日今如何

I.8.10

聽董大彈胡笳聲兼寄語防給事
 蔡女昔造胡笳聲
 一彈一十有八拍
 胡人落淚向邊草
 4 漢使斷腸對歸客
 古戍蒼蒼烽火寒

1 Dong is Dong Tinglan 董庭蘭, a virtuoso zither player who enjoyed for many years the patronage of the official Fang Guan 房琯 (697–763). The poem describes him as playing on his zither a tune traditionally associated with Cai Yan

On the long-running river the wave-crests touch the sky, darkening;
 The guard at the ford halts the boats, the crossing would not be made.
 The traveler from the state of Zheng cannot make it home,

16 While the journeyer from Luoyang heaves a sigh to no avail.

I've heard tell that by your old grove those who know you are many,
 Having given up office just yesterday, what will today be like?

I.8.10

Listening to Dong (Eldest) Play a Nomad Reed-pipe Tune; Sent also
 to Speak of Him with Supervising Secretary Fang¹

Lady Cai in days past created a song of the nomad reed-pipe,
 With each finger-strike, one of eighteen sounded stanzas.

As tears of the outlanders fall, off toward the frontier grasses,

4 The hearts of Han envoys are rent, facing the returning stranger.²

In the grizzled undergrowth of the old fort, the beacon fires are growing
 cold,

蔡琰 (ca. 170–ca. 215), daughter of the great scholar Cai Yong 蔡邕 (133–192), who in 195 was captured by the Southern Xiongnu barbarians and wed to their chieftain. She lived with him in southern Shanxi for twelve years, bearing him two sons, before she was ransomed back to China by the warlord Cao Cao 曹操 (155–220). Three poems telling of her travails were attributed to her, including one song in eighteen stanzas that was said to be written as a zither piece purportedly transcribed from a sorrowful reed-pipe tune of the Xiongnu. It is this, or rather a later version of it, that Dong plays here.

2 The tears are those of the Xiongnu, especially Cai Yan's young sons, who are witnessing her transfer to the protection of the Han-dynasty envoys who have ransomed her repatriation and are themselves overcome with emotion. Having been in foreign territory so long, she is returning to China now as a veritable stranger. This couplet and the next, along with the second and third stanzas, all describe the scenes and feelings suggested by Dong's playing.

大荒陰沉飛雪白
先拂商絃後角羽

8 四郊秋葉驚撼撼

董夫子 通神明
深山竊聽來妖精
言遲更速皆應手

12 將往復旋如有情

空山百鳥散還合
萬里浮雲陰且晴

嘶酸雛雁失群夜
16 斷絕胡兒戀母聲

川為靜其波

鳥亦罷其鳴

烏孫部落家鄉遠

20 邏迤沙塵哀怨生

幽音變調忽飄灑

長風吹林雨墮瓦

迸泉颯颯飛木末

24 野鹿呦呦走堂下

1 The zither has seven strings, each associated with a particular note and mode. *Shang* is identified with autumn and sadness, *jue* with rising expectation, *yu* with steady melancholy. A traditional saying had it that when the first leaf of autumn fell, one suddenly recognized the change of season.

The darkness and gloom of the broad expanse turns white with drifting snow.

At first he has brushed the *shang* string, after that *jue* and *yu*,

8 In the outskirts all around autumn leaves are startled, *shuh-shuh*.¹

Maestro Dong, he communicates with the gods and spirits,
From the deep mountains listening stealthily come even uncanny
wraiths.

The strings speak tardily, then speed up, always responding to hand,

12 Seeming about to go on, now doubling back, as if with their own
feeling—

A hundredfold birds in unpeopled mountains are scattering then
gathering,

Clouds floating across a myriad leagues are darkening then clearing
away,

Squawking sourly, a fledgling wildgoose lost from the flock at night,

16 Cut off and torn away, outland children cry for the mother they love.²

Rivers are made to calm their waves,

Birds too have stilled their calls.

The Wusun tribal settlements are so far from one's land and home,

20 The sands and dust toward Lhasa give rise to such lament and grief.³

Haunting notes change the mode, suddenly flung wafting onward,

The long wind blows through the grove, rain is pattering on roof-tiles.

Bubbling springs spatter their spray, flying up to the tips of the trees;

24 Deer from the wilds mowl yawling, rushing to the foot of the hall.⁴

2 The children here are Cai Yan's foreign-born sons, weeping at their mother's return to China.

3 The references are to imperial nieces of Han Wudi who were married off for diplomatic reasons to chieftains of the Central Asian Wusun tribe and then to the Tang princess Wencheng who was married off by Tang Taizong to the Tibetan ruler in Lhasa.

4 In a *Shijing* poem deer in the wilds that "mowl yawling" symbolize animals contented with their lot. Here they also hurry in appreciation toward the hall where Dong is playing his zither.

[stanza break]

長安城連東掖垣
鳳凰池對青瑣門

才高脫略名與利

28 日夕望君抱琴至

I.8.11

緩歌行

小來託身攀貴遊

傾財破產無所憂

暮擬經過石渠署

4 朝將出入銅龍樓

結交杜陵輕薄子

謂言可生復可死

一沉一浮會有時

8 棄我翻然如脫屣

[stanza break]

[stanza break]

Chang'an's walls connect with the partition of the eastern annex;
The Phoenix Pool faces gates with blue linked-chain design.¹

The height of his genius slights and disdains fame or profit;
28 At dusk of day toward you, sir, he will come bearing his zither.

I.8.11

Ballad: Loose-measured Song

When young I gave myself up to associations with well-to-do idlers,
Squandering riches, wasting our goods, with no concerns at all.
At sunset planning to ride on past the stone-canal galleries,
4 In the morning we would go in and out of bronze-dragon pavilions.²

I was joined in rapport with the negligent carefree sons of Duling,³
Who spoke in one breath of living or again dying together.
Now as if sunken, now afloat, our meetings had their seasons,
8 Then turning round they discarded me, as though casting off a slipper.

[stanza break]

1 The "eastern annex" was the bureaucratic compound in Tang times where the Chancellery was located, and where Fang Guan's office would have been. The Phoenix Pool lay across from the Secretariat, in the counterpart western annex, and was sometimes used as metonymy for the Secretariat. Gates decorated with blue linked-chain design signify those of the bureaucratic offices within the palace grounds.

2 In the Western Han dynasty Stone-Canal was the name of an imperial library; here it stands for the government offices that the young idlers disdain. Doors with bronze-carved dragons refers to the residences of imperial relatives or of nobles.

3 Duling, close to Chang'an, was the home of many aristocratic families.

- 男兒立身須自強
十年閉戶穎水陽
業就功成見明主
12 擊鍾鼎食坐華堂

二八蛾眉梳墮馬
美酒清歌曲房下

文昌宮中賜錦衣
16 長安陌上退朝歸
五侯賓從莫敢視
三省官僚接者希

早知今日讀書是
20 悔作從前狂俠兒

But a youth, to establish himself, must find his own determination,
 So for ten years I closed my door, sunward of the Ying River.¹
 My labors would meet with good success, known to the enlightened
 ruler,

- 12 And “with bells sounding, eating from cauldrons,” I sit in the ornate
 hall.²

Or, a moth-eyebrowed beauty of twice-eight years, hair combed in
 “faltering-horse” style,
 Offers fine wine and sings solo in an out-of-the-way room.

- Or, in the Palace of Cultured Glory I am bestowed a brocade robe,³
 16 On the byways of Chang’an return home after court is finished.
 Of clients and followers of the fivefold nobility none now dare to
 face me,
 Of officials and colleagues in the three bureaus few can receive me.⁴

- Had I known sooner the rightness for today of reading texts,
 20 I’d have deplored to be formerly a callow scapegrace bravo.

1 Near to the poet’s homeplace, southeast of Mount Song 嵩山, Henan. It was also the river in which the ancient recluse Xu You 許由 was said to have washed out his ears after they were polluted with the ancient sage-king Yao’s offer of resigning the government to him.

2 The quoted phrase comes from earlier texts describing a noble’s indulgent enjoyment of luxury.

3 This name of a palace from earlier times was given by Empress Wu in the late seventh century to the official building of the highest state counselors.

4 There were five ranks of nobility in China. There were three bureaus atop the Tang central government, those of the Secretariat, the Chancellery, and State Affairs.

I.8.12

鮫人歌

鮫人潛織水底居
側身上下隨龍魚

輕綃文采不可識

4 夜夜澄波連月色

有時寄宿來城市
海島青冥無極已

泣珠報恩君莫辭

8 今年相見明年期

始知萬族無不有

百尺深泉架戶牖

鳥沒空山誰復望

12 一望雲濤堪白首

I.8.12

Song of the Lamia-Folk¹

The lamia-folk weave while sunk from sight in their underwater dwellings,
 Alongside them, above, or below, they consort with dragons and fish.

4 Their light silk-stuffs of bright-hued design cannot be recognized,
 Night upon night in the lucent waves merged with the color of moonlight.

There are times when they stay over a night in coming to the marketplace,
 From islands in the sea where the deep-blue main is without end or limit.

8 They weep pearls in return for kindness, which you must not decline,²
 Meeting with them this year, you can expect them next year again.

Now you know, of the myriad kinds of beings, all of them do exist,
 Even in pools a hundred feet deep where some frame doors and windows.

12 Birds vanish in unpeopled mountains, and who can view them again?
 When you view them in billows of clouds, you'll have become white-headed.

1 The graph 蛟, often “shark,” is also used, as here, for 蛟 “lamia.” The Chinese lamia, sometimes called a “flood-dragon,” is a dragon that usually symbolizes the destructive aspects of water in river, lake, or pool. The “lamia-folk” were thought of as entities having underwater dwellings and as spinners of the rare and valuable pongee called “lamia-silk” 蛟 (or 蛟) 絲, which was in reality cloth woven from the byssus of the pinna mussel. Their tears were supposed to be pearls.

2 A story from the third-century *Bo wu zhi* 博物志 tells of how a lamia-person, bringing his silk to market, stayed the night at a city-dweller's house and repaid the hospitality by weeping pearl-tears into a bowl.

I.8.13

送盧逸人

洛陽為此別
攜手更何時
不復人間見
4 祇應海上期
青溪入雲木
白首臥茅茨
共惜盧敖去
8 天邊望所思

I.8.14

野老曝背

百歲老翁不種田
唯知曝背樂殘年
有時捫虱獨搔首
4 目送歸鴻籬下眠

I.8.13

Seeing Off Lu, who has Withdrawn from the World¹

It is in Luoyang that we make this parting,

But when shall we be hand-in-hand again?

If you are not seen hence in the mortal realm,

4 It may just need to be a meeting over the sea.²

Where a blue streamlet enters into a grove in the clouds,

White-headed, you'll soon repose in your grass-thatched hut.

We here regret the leave-taking of Lu Ao,³

8 Toward sky's edge gazing after the one we long for.

I.8.14

An Aged Rustic Sunning His Back

The old fellow aged a hundred no longer works the fields,

Now just knows to sun his back and delight in the years still left.

Sometimes he catches hold of a flea or all alone scratches his head,

4 Following the homing swan-geese with his eyes half-awake under the
hedge.

1 He who has withdrawn from the world is literally "an unencumbered person," independent of settled society and especially of official ties. The addressee here has been identified as the reclusive Lu Hong 盧鴻, who spent most of his days on Mount Song 嵩山, near Luoyang, and who did not seek official appointments.

2 Since Lu keeps apart from everyday society, the poet imagines their next meeting must occur on one of the transcendent "isles of immortals" in the Eastern Sea.

3 Lu Ao is said to have been commissioned by the First Emperor of Qin to seek out the "divine transcendents," but he did not return to this world. The like-surnamed Lu of this poem is flatteringly identified with him.

I.9 高適

適性拓落，不拘小節，恥預常科；隱迹博徒，才名自遠。然適詩多胸臆語，兼有氣骨，故朝野通賞其文。至如『燕歌行』等篇，其有奇句；且余所愛者，「未知肝膽向誰是，令人却憶平原君」，吟諷不厭矣。

I.9.1

哭單父梁九少府

開篋淚沾臆
見君前日書
夜臺今寂寞
4 猶是子雲居
疇昔貪靈奇
登臨賦山水
同舟南楚下

1 When this was written, Gao Shi had had little success in public life, having only held briefly a position as a district constable, and was by this time serving as secretary to a military commander on the northeast border. During and after the An Lushan rebellion a few years later, he would attain high status for both his martial and civil abilities. "Inferior fellows" is a paraphrase of the literal "the ilk of gamers."

I.9 Gao Shi

Shi by nature is brash and unreserved, not stuck on the lesser niceties and uncomfortable with paying too much attention to normal social expectations. Although he remains in obscurity among inferior fellows,¹ the fame of his genius has freely spread afar. And yet in his poems there is much speaking from strong, heartfelt emotion, as there are likewise qualities of boldness and vigor in style and structure, with the result that those both within and without the court thoroughly value his writing. Take, for example, such poems as “The Song of Yan”² which contain remarkable lines; and then there are these lines that I love—“Unknown, their gall and daring would tend toward whom?/ It must put one rather in mind of the Lord of Pingyuan”³—which I can never grow tired of reciting.

I.9.1

Weeping for Liang (Nine), District Constable of Danfu⁴

When opening the letterbox, tears fall on my breast,
As I see a writing of yours, sir, from a former day.
But in the Terrace of Night you are now forlorn and alone,

4 In this just the same as where Ziyun resides.⁵

In times past we were avid for sights wondrous and unusual,
Would climb to vantage points and compose about the landscape.
We shared a boat down to southern Chu,

2 Poem I.9.10 in this selection.

3 This couplet is from poem I.9.9.

4 The deceased has been identified as Liang Xia 洽, who took the *jinsshi* degree in 734. He was soon thereafter appointed constable of Danfu district (modern Danxian, Henan), in which position he died before his term of office was up. He was also known as a fine painter of landscapes.

5 The “Terrace of Night” is a kenning for the grave. Ziyun was the byname of the famous scholar Yang Xiong 揚雄 (53 BCE–18 CE) who once felt himself “forlorn and alone,” but *jimo* (MC dzek-mak) may mean “still and silent” here, just as Yang Xiong also is now in his grave.

- 8 望月西江裏
契闊多別離
綢繆到生死
九泉知何在
12 萬事皆如此
晉山徒嵯峨
斯人已冥冥
常時祿且薄
16 沒後家復貧
妻子在遠道
兄弟無一人
十上多苦辛
20 一官恆自哂
青雲將可致
白日忽西盡
唯獨身後名
24 空留無遠近

- 8 Gazed off at the moon on the western Jiang.
 I feel “broken in two” at an even greater separation and parting,
 We who were “fast bound round” unto life or death.¹
 I would wish to know where the nine netherworld springs lie,
 12 As all the myriad matters of the world will end up like this.

- While the hills of Jin indeed loom abruptly above,²
 This person is already lost into the deepest darkness.
 In everyday times his official salary was no more than paltry,
 16 And after he’s gone his family is even more in want.
 Wife and children are on a far-distant road,
 Of brothers older or younger there is not a single one.

- Ten times he sent up petitions but only to much bitterness,
 20 The one office he held he himself always derided.³
 Clouds in the blue he could have reached in the future,
 But the white sun too suddenly vanished in the west.
 Now there is nothing but that afterlife fame
 24 Which remains to no avail, regardless of far or near.

1 The two phrases in quotes come from separate *Shijing* poems that speak of unwanted partings.

2 Liang Xia seems to have been originally from the Jin area.

3 The great counselor Su Qin 蘇秦 of the Warring States era at first sent up petitions ten times to the ruler without being noticed. This became a proverbial saying for not being advanced in officialdom. Liang Xia’s only official appointment was the minor one as constable of Danfu.

I.9.2

宋中遇陳兼

常忝鮑叔義

所期王佐才

如何守苦節

4 獨自無良媒

離別十年內

飄飄千里來

誰知罷官後

8 唯見柴門開

窮巷隱東郭

高堂詠南陔

籬根長花草

12 井口生莓苔

伊昔望霄漢

于今倦蒿萊

男兒須達命

16 且醉手中杯

I.9.2

In Song, Happening On Chen Jian¹

Ever shamed before Bao Shu's right-minded action,
 It is you with "genius to aid a king" that I now meet with.²
 How is it that one should preserve "strict forbearance,"

- 4 When by oneself he has no "effective go-between"?³
 Being separated and apart from me for ten years,
 Blown along, you're here from a myriad leagues away.
 Who would know that after you gave up office,
 8 You'd be seen opening now a brushwood gate?
 At the far end of a lane, hidden by the east outer-wall,
 On a raised dais there you chant of the "South Steps."⁴
 At the base of a hedge blossoming plants are growing,
 12 By the mouth of a well, moss and lichen spread.
 In times past you gazed expectantly at the river in the heavens,⁵
 But now make do with just wormwood and weeds.
 While a boy must try to achieve his fated course of life,
 16 Let us now instead drink full from the cup in our hand.

1 The old state of Song comprised the area of present-day east-central Henan, including the cities of Kaifeng 開封 (formerly Daliang 大梁) and Shangqiu 商丘.

2 Bao Shuya 鮑叔牙 was in the employ of one of the sons of the Duke of Qi 齊 in Warring States times, and Guan Zhong 管仲 served a different son. When Bao's master succeeded to the dukedom, Bao generously urged that Guan be made his minister, which resulted in the duke eventually becoming Overlord of all the feudal states and Guan Zhong becoming one of the most famous ministers of ancient Chinese history. Gao Shi regrets that he is not in a position to do for Chen Jian what Bao Shu did for Guan Zhong. Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (179–104 BCE), official and philosopher in the reign of Han Wudi, was said to have "genius of aid to a king."

3 The *Yijing's* commentary on judgments says that "strict forbearance," i.e., too exacting self-denial, cannot be maintained lastingly. A "goodly go-between" is a traditional metaphor for an influential person who can recommend one for official position.

4 The childhood house of the famous minister Chen Ping 陳平, who assisted greatly in the founding of the Han dynasty, was "at the far end of a lane, backed against the outer city-wall." The "South Steps" song was one of the six lost songs of the *Shijing*, reputedly celebrating the conduct of filial sons.

5 I.e., the Milky Way, here symbolizing far-reaching ambitions.

I.9.3

宋中

梁苑白日暮
 梁山秋草時
 君主不可見
 4 修竹令人悲
 九月桑葉落
 寒風鳴樹枝

I.9.4

九日酬顧少府

簷前白日應可惜
 籬下黃花為誰有
 客子迎霜未授衣
 4 主人得錢肯酤酒
 蘇秦憔悴時多厭

1 The second son of Emperor Wen of the Han dynasty (r. 180–157 BCE), and brother of Emperor Jing (r. 157–141), Liu Wu 劉武 (d. 144), was made King of Liang 梁孝王 in the area of the old state of Song (see I.9.2, note 1), in 168 BCE. There he had a large pleasure park and hunting grounds, Liang Parkland, alternatively called the Park of Tapering Bamboo (see line 4 of the poem) and also Hare Park 兔苑. He (the “sovereign prince” of line 3) was specially known to history for attracting to his court a large gathering of fine scholars and poets. The “hills of Liang” were part of the hunting park.

I.9.3

In Song

Near the Liang Parkland the white sun is setting,
While on Liang's hills autumn grasses have their time.¹

That sovereign prince is no longer to be seen,

4 Now his tapering bamboo makes one heavy of heart.

In the ninth month the mulberry leaves are shedding,

As a cooling breeze sings amid the branches of the trees.

I.9.4

On Double-Ninth Day, to Reciprocate District Constable Gu²

Before the eaves, as the white sun is sure to evoke one's feelings,

Under the hedge, the yellow blossoms now are there for whom?³

A visitor, greeted by frost, has not been given cold-weather clothing,⁴

4 But the host, if he can get cash, is eager to buy him wine.

Su Qin, haggard and careworn, was disregarded at one time;

2 The ninth day of the ninth month was usually called "The Day of Nines" 九日 (as literally in the poem's title) or "Double Yang" 重陽 (since nine was regarded as the fullest *yang* number). It was a day that stirred thoughts of family or friends and had several practices that came to be associated with it (see the next note and also note 2 on the next page).

3 The yellow blossoms are chrysanthemums, which bloom in autumn and are thus symbols of enduring life. Wine infused with chrysanthemum blossoms was a traditional drink to enjoy on the Double Ninth day.

4 A *Shijing* poem that tells of the usual occurrences of the months and seasons says that in the ninth month "cold-weather clothing is given out," and the standard commentary says it is in the ninth month that frost begins to descend.

蔡澤棲遲世看醜
縱使登高只斷腸
8 不如獨坐空掃首

I.9.5

見薛大臂鷹作
寒楚十二月
蒼鷹八十毛
寄言燕雀莫相啁
4 自有雲霄萬里高

I.9.6

酬岑主簿秋夜見贈
舍下蜚亂鳴
居然自蕭索
緬懷高秋興
4 忽枉清夜作
[stanza break]

1 Su Qin and Cai Ze were two of the most famous “traveling persuaders” of the Warring States period. The former used up all his resources and his clothes became threadbare on his first, unsuccessful attempt to gain a position with the

Cai Ze, downcast and discouraged, was seen as ill-formed in his world.¹

Even were one to climb high today, one would simply be undone,²

8 No better off than sitting alone, scratching one's head in vain.

1.9.5

Composed upon Seeing Xue (Eldest) with Goshawk on Arm

In the twelfth month, in wintertime in Chu,

The gray goshawk is plumed but eighty percent,

Yet sends word to swallow and sparrow not to raise a fuss,

4 "I'll still be a myriad *li* higher up in the cloudy empyrean."

1.9.6

To Reciprocate Chief Registrar Cen, Who Presented Me with a Poem
on an Autumn Night

Around the cottage crickets are chirping raucously,

Evidently with their own sad-sorrowing song.

Lost in musing over a mood of high-sky'd autumn,

4 Suddenly I'm humbled by your "clear-night" composition.³

[stanza break]

ruler of the state of Qin. Cai Ze was appraised by a physiognomist as malformed in many respects and not what a minister should look like. However, both eventually became influential ministers of state in their own day. The suggestion is that Gu's current situation will also improve in time.

2 Tradition had it that the practice of climbing a height on the ninth day of the ninth month originated in the advice given by the Daoist adept Fei Changfang to a local farmer to do so, allowing the latter to avoid a sudden disaster that destroyed his home and livestock.

3 The phrase "clear night" was probably used in Registrar Cen's poem.

感物我心勞

涼風生二毛

池空菡萏死

8 月上梧桐高

如何異州縣

復得交才彥

汨沒嗟後時

12 蹉跎恥相見

箕山別來久

魏闕誰不戀

獨有江海心

16 悠悠未嘗倦

With a feeling for nature's things, my heart is troubled;
 In the cooling breeze my hair has gone partly gray.
 As the pond has dried out, lotus-knops are dead,

8 While the moon rises high above the parasol tree.

How is it that from a different prefecture and district,
 I'm able to connect with one this "talented and handsome"?¹
 Submerged in the spate, alas I'm late to the right moment;

12 Having wasted my time, I'm ashamed at meeting with you.

Parted long since from the hermit's Mount Ji,²

Who is it that doesn't long for the grand gates of Wei?³

But solitary and having a heart for the rivers and lakes,

16 Placid and serene, I haven't grown weary of this.

1 In a poem using the names of various prefectures and districts, Shen Yue 沈約 (441–513) spoke of a place overflowing with "talented and handsome" men.

2 Legend had it that the hermit Xu You 許由 refused the sage-king Yao's offer to rule the empire, choosing to remain secluded at Mount Ji, in Henan, alongside the Ying 潁 River.

3 It is said that an ancient prince of Wei who was trying to live the life of a hermit lamented "Though my person is here among the rivers and lakes, my heart is yet beside Wei's grand gates."

I.9.7

送韋參軍

二十解書劍

西遊長安城

舉頭望君門

4 屈指取公卿

國風沖融邁三五

朝廷歡樂彌寰宇

白璧皆言賜近臣

8 布衣不得干明主

歸來洛陽無負郭

東過梁宋非吾土

兔苑為農歲不登

12 雁池垂釣心常苦

世人遇我同眾人

唯君於我情相親

且喜百年有交態

16 未曾一日辭家貧

彈碁擊筑白日晚

縱酒高歌楊柳春

歡娛未盡分散去

I.9.7

Seeing Off Aide-de-Camp Wei

At twenty years, understanding books and swordsmanship,
I traveled west to visit Chang'an city.

There I raised my head to look upon the doors of nobles,

4 Tried to figure out how to achieve their lofty status.¹

The dynastic aura, swelling and surging, equalled the sage-kings of old,²
Joy and happiness from the royal court filled the imperial domain.

But jade circlets of favor were granted only to the nearest vassals,

8 And no one plain-garbed could importune the enlightened ruler.

Returning home to Luoyang, there was no spot near the city-walls,

So eastward I passed on to Liang and Song, but this was not my land.

In what was Hare Park I set to farming, but harvest is never ample;

12 At Wildgoose Pool I dangle a fish-hook, my heart always distressed.³

To men of the world who encounter me I'm the same as everyman;

It is only you, sir, who treats me with a manner as though we are kin.

Being pleased at our friendly accord that is for a hundred years,

16 Not once, for even a day, have you shunned me for my poor means.

While we played at chess, plucked the rustic zither, the white sun
waned,

And indulging in wine we sang loudly the song of "Willowtree
Springtime."⁴

Our joyous delight is yet to be finished, when you must part and go
your way,

1 "Tried to figure out" is literally "crooked my fingers [to count, calculate]," thus parallel to the preceding line's "raised my head."

2 The final words of this line are literally "the Three and the Five," metonymy for the three mythical sovereigns and five fabled emperors 三皇五帝 of old.

3 Hare Park was the celebrated pleasure grounds of the King of Liang in the mid-second century BCE, near present-day Shangqiu 商丘 (see note I.9.3, note 1). Wildgoose Pool was within the park's borders.

4 The "rustic zither" is a five-stringed instrument from early times, played with a bamboo plectrum (compared with the seven-string *qin* 琴, for which a plectrum is not used). "Willowtree Springtime" is the name of a traditional zither tune.

- 20 使我惆悵驚心神
終當不作兒女別
臨歧涕淚沾衣巾

I.9.8

封丘作

- 我本漁樵孟諸野
一生自是悠悠者
乍可狂歌草澤中
4 寧堪作吏風塵下
只言小邑無所為
公門百事皆有期
拜迎長官心欲碎
8 鞭撻黎庶令人悲
悲來向家問妻子
舉家盡笑今如此
生事應須南畝田
12 世情付與東流水

[stanza break]

- 20 Bringing me downcast despair that dismays my heart and spirit.
 But in the end let us not make our parting as that of young boy and
 girl,
 Who soak their clothes with sobbing tears at the branching of the
 road.

I.9.8

Composed at Fengqiu¹

Originally just a fisherman, a woodcutter, from Mengzhu's wilds,²
 My whole life I was simply one who was unconcerned and out of the
 way.

- Sometimes I might have sung crazily among the grassy moors;
 4 How to bear now being an official in the wind-blown dust?³

- True it is that in a small town there is not so much to do,
 The hundred affairs of the public gates all have a defined limit.
 When greeting senior officials with honor, my heart is duly humbled,
 8 But punishing a common fellow by flogging makes me
 conscience-smitten.

- Conscience-struck I'd go home, to ask after wife and children,
 The whole household gives forced smiles that I am like this now.
 For a livelihood one just needs the fields of the southern acres,⁴
 12 And the way of the world to be given up to the river flowing east.
 [stanza break]

1 Fengqiu now, as in Tang times, was north and across the Yellow River from Kaifeng. Gao Shi was district constable there from about 749 to 752.

2 Mengzhu was the name of an old grassland near Shangqiu in eastern Henan, where Gao Shi spent most of his younger years.

3 The "wind-blown dust" is the troublesome world of public life and official service.

4 In the *Shijing* "the southern acres" are often mentioned as a kenning for arable lands.

夢想舊山安在哉
 為銜君命日遲迴
 早知梅福徒為爾
 16 轉憶陶潛歸去來

I.9.9

邯鄲少年行

邯鄲城南遊俠子
 自矜生長邯鄲裏
 千場縱博家仍富
 4 數處報讎身不死

宅中歌笑日紛紛
 門外車馬屯如雲
 未知肝膽向誰是
 8 令人却憶平原君

君不見即今交態薄
 黃金用盡還踈索

[stanza break]

1 Near the end of the Western Han, Mei Fu was constable of Nanchang 南昌 (present-day Yuzhang, Zhejiang). He vainly warned the central government of the usurping influence of the Wang family, particularly Wang Mang who would eventually overthrow the dynasty. Giving up his post and returning to private life at his home in Shouchun 壽春, Anhui, he continued to send memorials to the court,

- Dreaming I think of the hills of old—where are they now?
 As I take in the sovereign's orders, the days stretch out alike.
 I've known long ago of Mei Fu, who did this work all in vain,
 16 And recall even more Tao Qian and his song "Return Home!"¹

I.9.9

Ballad of the Young Men of Handan²

- South of the Handan city-walls are roving young bravos,³
 Who vaunt themselves for being born and bred in Handan.
 On a thousand stages they revel in gaming, but their homes remain
 affluent;
 4 In countless places they avenge wrongdoing, but do not meet their
 death.

- There are songs and smiles in mansions, the days a flurried blur,
 While outside the gates carriages and horses gather like clouds.
 Unknown, their gall and daring would tend toward whom?
 8 It must put one rather in mind of the Lord of Pingyuan.⁴

But haven't you seen: how slight today is the manner of such bonds?
 For when yellow gold is used up, then they separate and slacken.

[stanza break]

but they were ignored. Some stories said he eventually became a Daoist transcendent. Tao Qian's (365–427) famous poem "Return Home!" was composed upon his quitting his post as district magistrate of Pengze 彭澤, Jiangxi.

2 Handan, in southwestern Hebei, had been the capital of the old state of Zhao 趙 and was famous from the Warring States era for fostering intrepid young men.

3 The old tradition of "roving bravos" embraced men who were avid to do deeds of physical courage, especially involving the righting of wrongs or upholding of honor, without regard for their own safety.

4 The Lord of Pingyuan, a prince of Zhao, served as prime minister of two successive kings of Zhao during the first half of the third century. He was known for his gracious treatment of retainers, whom he was said to attract in great numbers.

- 以茲歎息辭舊遊
 12 更於時事無所求
 且與少年飲美酒
 往來射獵西山頭

I.9.10

燕歌行 并序

開元二十六年，客有從元戎出塞而還者，
 作『燕歌行』以示適；感征戍之事，因而
 和焉。

- 漢家煙塵在東北
 漢將辭家破殘賊
 男兒本自重橫行
 4 天子非常賜顏色
 摐金伐鼓下榆關
 旌旆逶迤碣石間
 校尉羽書飛瀚海
 8 單于獵火照狼山

[stanza break]

1 The term *yuanrong* 元戎 for “great war-wagons” comes from a *Shijing* poem, although some commentators take it here as metonymy for the commander-in-chief of the returning soldier’s military expedition.

- Because of this we deeply sigh, in farewell to former associates,
 12 Who even yet have nothing to seek from matters here and now.
 With these young men one might as well just toss back fine wine,
 Coming and going to hunt and give chase on the western mountain.

I.9.10

Ballad: Song of Yan; with Preface

In the twenty-sixth year of the Kaiyuan era (738) there was a visitor returning from having followed “the great war-wagons”¹ out the frontier and who showed me a “Song-Ballad of Yan” that he had composed. Moved by the circumstances of the soldiers on campaign at the border, I wrote this poem matching it.

- Dust and smoke for the House of Han, there in the northeast,
 So a Han general bids farewell to home, to vanquish the savage bandits.
 Young lads have set their aim on bravely marching far over the land,
 4 For the Son of Heaven to bestow on them signs of uncommon favor.

- Beating the drums, striking the halting-bell, on down to Elm Barrier,
 Banners and pennons rippling and waving by Monument Rock.²
 The winged orders of the colonel will fly to the Shoreless Sea,
 8 While the hunting fires of the *chanyu* light up the Wolves’ Mountains.³
 [stanza break]

2 Elm Barrier was by present-day Shanhaiguan 山海關 in extreme eastern Hebei, the eastern terminus of the Great Wall. Monument Rock was a mountain near the coast in eastern Hebei, south of Elm Barrier; but the reference may instead be to an identically named Jieshi, further north beyond the Great Wall, in Liaoning 遼寧, near present-day Yixian 義縣. Drums were beaten to sound the army’s advance, a bell struck to signal a halt.

3 The “Shoreless Sea” was a name for the Gobi Desert. The Wolves’ Mountains were in the extreme northwest of present-day Inner Mongolia. This and the preceding couplet present a panorama of the northern borderlands of the empire, from far northeast to far northwest, where Chinese troops might be sent to fight.

山川蕭條極邊土
胡騎憑陵雜風雨
戰士軍前半死生

12 美人帳下猶歌舞

大漠窮秋塞草腓
孤城落日鬪兵稀
身當恩遇常輕敵

16 力盡關山未解圍

鐵衣遠戍辛勤久
玉筋應啼別離後
少婦城南欲斷腸

20 征人薊北空迴首

邊庭飄颻那可度
絕域蒼茫無所有
殺氣三時作陣雲

24 寒聲一夜傳刁斗

[stanza break]

Mountain and river are bleak and barren at the ends of the borderlands,
 Where the Hun riders in bully boldness fuse into a violent storm.
 Of our soldiers in the forefront of battle, half died, half survived,

12 But lovely girls in the officers' tent continued to dance to songs.

At autumn's end in the great desert the frontier's plants shrivel,
 And in a lone fort with the setting sun the fighting men seem fewer.
 He that has the ruler's encouragement regards the foe lightly,

16 Yet with all force spent, the siege was not lifted by the barrier
 mountains.

The distant guardsmen clothed in armor for long sustain pains and
 travail,

As jade strands of women's tears fall sobbing after parting's separation.¹

The young wife south of the wall will be inwardly torn apart,

20 As the man on campaign to the north of Ji in vain turns his head
 home.²

The border compounds are so far-flown, long-drawn, as to be
 unreachable;

Those sundered regions so boundless, dim-blurred, as to hold nothing
 at all.

In the three seasons of weather for killing battle-array clouds form up,

24 And throughout the nights with chill voice cookpot-smites tell the
 hours.³

[stanza break]

1 The "jade strands" are literally "jade chopsticks" 玉筯, a common metaphor for the tracks of women's tears.

2 In certain *yuefu* poems "south of the [city-]wall" is the usual residence of young women of the commonfolk famed for their beauty. Here the phrase might also mean south of the Great Wall, i.e., back in the Chinese homeland. Ji is short for Jimen 薊門 or Jizhou 薊州, located south of the Great Wall in Hebei, near present-day Changping 昌平.

3 The three seasons favorable to war are spring, summer, and autumn. "Battle-array clouds" are those whose shape resembles military formations and so presage combat. For soldiers on campaign the passage of nighttime was measured out by having the hours marked through the striking of an upturned cookpot.

相看白刃血紛紛
 死節從來豈顧勳
 君不見沙場征戰苦
 28 至今猶憶李將軍

I.9.11

行路難

君不見富家翁
 舊時貧賤誰比數
 一朝金多結豪貴
 4 百事勝人健如虎
 子孫生長滿眼前
 妻能管絃妾能舞
 自矜一朝忽如此
 8 却笑傍人獨愁苦
 東隣少年安所如
 席門窮巷出無車
 有才不肯學干謁
 12 何用年年空讀書

- Just look upon the naked blades, smeared full with blood:
 How can they who die for honor ever expect their fit reward?
 Don't you see, sir, the misery of warfare on those fields of sand?
 28 Yet even till today still we remember the great general Li.¹

I.9.11

Traveling the Road is Hard

- Don't you see, sir, that well-to-do old coot,
 Who used to be poor and wretched, of no account to anyone?
 One day came into so much cash, joined the comfortably privileged,
 4 In a hundred matters now better than others, formidable as a tiger.
 Sons and grandsons growing strong, seen full before his eyes,
 And a wife adept at flute and strings, concubines adept at dance.
 So proud of himself that one day he had become like this,
 8 Laughing now at those around, still so sad and miserable.
 But that neighbor youth to the east, how shall he be getting on?
 Matting hung up at lane's end for a gate, no carriage to go out in.²
 If one has the knack, no need learning to pay calls for favor,
 12 And what use is it year upon year to read books all in vain?

1 The reference is to the Han dynasty general of the second century BCE, Li Guang 李廣, legendarily famous for his successful campaigns against the armies of the Central Asian Xiongnu peoples.

2 The wording of the first half of the line is reminiscent of Chen Ping 陳平 who, coming from poor circumstances, rose to be prime minister under the founding emperor of the Han dynasty; the second half reminds one of Feng Xuan 馮諼, a poor but aspiring courtier of the Warring States period who eventually won his lord's trust.

I.9.12

塞上聞笛

胡人羌笛戍樓間
樓上蕭條明月閑
借問梅花何處落
4 風吹一夜滿關山

I.9.13

營州歌

營州少年愛原野
狐裘蒙茸獵城下
虜酒千杯不醉人
4 胡兒十歲能騎馬

I.9.12

At the Frontier, Hearing a Flute

A nomad flute of the Hu people, heard in the guardsmen's tower,¹
 Upon the tower, barren and bleak, where the luminous moon idles.
 Let me ask: where is it that "prunus blossoms are falling"?²

- 4 Here the wind blows all night long, filling up the barrier mountains.

I.9.13

Song of Yingzhou³

The youths of Yingzhou are so attached to the steppe hinterlands,
 In fox-fur coats fleecy and furred, they hunt beyond the city-walls.⁴
 Of the caitiffs' liquor a thousand cups does not make one drunk,⁵

- 4 But the outland boys at ten years old are expert at riding their horses.

1 Qiang in Tang times was usually a designation for tribes occupying the area around the Turpan basin, here generalized as nomads. Hu was a designation for any non-Chinese group on the northern or northwestern frontiers (in the next poem rendered in line 4 as "outland").

2 "Prunus blossoms are falling" was the name of a Chinese flute-tune, referring to the white blossoms of the *Prunus mume* that often flower and fall, like snowflakes, early in the new year. But there are no such flowers on the northern borderlands, and the soldiers can only think longingly of home.

3 Yingzhou was west of present-day Jinzhou 锦州, Liaoning, north of the Great Wall. Although controlled by the Chinese, its population and that of the surrounding areas in Tang times was largely made up of the "barbarian" Tātābi and Khitan.

4 Or possibly "they hunt beneath the [Great] Wall."

5 The favored liquor of the northern barbarians was kumiss, fermented mare's milk that was lower in alcohol content and less palatable to the Chinese than their own liquor.

I.10 岑參

參詩語奇體峻，意亦奇造。至如「長風吹白茅，野火燒枯桑」，可謂逸矣。又「山風吹空林，颯颯如有人」，宜稱幽致也。

I.10.1

終南雙峰草堂作

斂跡歸山田
 息心謝時輩
 晝還草堂臥
 4 但與雙峰對
 興來恣佳遊
 事恆符勝槩
 著書高窻下
 8 日夕見城內
 曩為世人誤
 遂負平生愛
 久與林壑辭

I.10 Cen Shen

Cen's poetry is singular in expression and overpassing in style, with intentions that are likewise singularly fashioned. Take, for example, "A long wind gusts up the white-tuft thatch-grass,/ An untamed fire burns off the dried-up mulberry,"¹ which we may see is unconventionally out of the norm. Or again: "The mountain wind blowing through the deserted grove,/ Blustering, buffeting, as though someone were there,"² which is rightly considered effective in its subtlety.

I.10.1

Composed at the Twin-Peaks Thatched Hut in the Zhongnan Mountains³

- Collecting up my traces, homeward to mountain fields,
 Settling my heart, I've quit the society of my time,
 Going back in daylight to laze at the thatched hut,
 4 Where I only see the twin peaks across from me.
 When the mood strikes, I just indulge in fine rambles,
 Content with affairs, tallying with the surpassing scene.
 Or I compose writings under the lofty window,
 8 From day till dusk looking down onto the city.
 In the past I went wrong to be a man of the world,
 Having turned away from my inborn predilections.⁴
 Too long I had bid farewell to grove and vale,

1 白茅 is cogongrass (*Imperata cylindrica*), often used for thatching roofs; in spring-time it shows white-tufted racemes in the wild, hence the name, but the season in the poem is autumn. The couplet is from the poem "Arriving at Daliang, I Send this Back to my Kuangcheng Host" 至大梁却寄匡城主人, not included in Yin Fan's selection here.

2 From the poem "Mountain Journey in Later Autumn" 暮秋山行, also not included here.

3 The Zhongnan mountains lay just south of Chang'an, the middle section of the Qinling 秦嶺 range, and a favorite place of retreat for out-of-favor or would-be office-holders.

4 It is possible to read this passively, "... was led wrongly by the men of the world."

- 12 及來杉松大
偶茲近精廬
數預名僧會
有時逐樵漁
- 16 盡日不冠帶
崖口上新月
石門破蒼藹
色向羣木深
- 20 光搖一潭碎
綿懷鄭生谷
頗憶嚴子瀨
勝時猶可追
- 24 斯人邈千載

- 12 Until coming back to the majesty of pine and cypress.¹
 It happens this place is near an abode of concentration,²
 Where often I join in a gathering of notable monks.
 Other times I follow after woodcutter or fisherman,
 16 Throughout a whole day being uncapped and unsashed.
 From the mouth of the bluffs the moon rises afresh,
 And Stone Gate bursts through the silvery cloud-haze.³
 A coloring is shed over the massed trees, deepening;
 20 The light trembles on a lone pool, splintered.
 This brings an abiding reminder of Mr. Zheng's valley,
 And even calls to mind Master Yan's shallows.⁴
 Their superior acts might still be aspired to,
 24 But such persons now are a thousand years remote.⁵

1 For the sake of rhyme, 大 here must be read as *tai* 太 = 泰.

2 An "abode of concentration" is a Buddhist monastery.

3 This is a "refreshed" or "renewed" full moon that sheds its light over the scene in lines 19–20, not a "new moon" which would barely be seen in the west as the merest sliver, if that, before setting shortly after the sun. Line 15 refers to the Valley of the Stone Trionyx Bluffs 石鰲崖谷, one of the highest valleys of the Zhongnan range. Line 16's Stone Gate Valley was in the eastern part of the range; here its walls are pictured as striking against the clouds.

4 The scenes described in lines 19 and 20 make the poet think of another valley and pool, associated with two famous recluses of the past. Zheng's valley, near present-day Liquan 禮泉, north of the capital, was where Zheng Pu 鄭樸 (by-name Zizhen 子真) dwelt, a recluse who refused an invitation to court near the end of the Western Han dynasty. Yan's shallows, a stretch of the Seven-League Rapids 七里灘 were in Kuaiji 會稽, Zhejiang, named for Yan Guang 嚴光 (by-name Ziling 子陵), a recluse who lived at the beginning of the Eastern Han and chose to live simply in that area.

5 Or "This person (i.e., I) is a thousand years remote from them."

I.10.2

終南雲際精舍，尋法澄上人不遇，歸高冠東
潭石淙望秦嶺微雨作，貽友人

昨夜雲際宿

適從西峯迴

不見林中僧

4 微雨潭上來

諸峯皆晴翠

秦嶺獨不開

石鼓有時鳴

8 秦王安在哉

水漲斷山口

吼沫相喧豗

噴壁四時雨

12 傍村終日雷

北瞻長安道

I.10.2

After Looking for but not Finding His Eminence Facheng at His
Clouds-Edge Retreat in the Zhongnan Mountains; Composed in the
Light Rain of the Rocky Confluence By the Tarn in the East of High-
Hat Valley on My Way Home and Gazing Afar toward the Qinling
Range; Dedicated to a Friend¹

- Last night I stayed over at the Clouds-Edge,
Just now am coming back from that westward peak.
There I had not seen the monk amidst the grove,
4 And now to a light rain beside this tarn I've come.
All the surrounding peaks, bright green in the fair sky,²
While the Qinling range alone does not show itself.
At certain times here a stone drum sounds,
8 But wherever now is that Prince of Qin?³
The waters converge, battering at the mountain's mouth,
With bellowing spume, together in a deafening din.
Spurting against the rockface, a rain in all four seasons,
12 As in the nearby village there is thunder all day long.
Northward one looks out at the road to Chang'an,

1 Clouds-Edge was a Zhongnan peak where there was the monastery at which Facheng (otherwise unknown today) resided. "His (or Your) Eminence" is an honorific for a Buddhist monk. The other places mentioned in the title were also in the Zhongnan mountains and occur in other poems by Cen Shen, but their exact locations are not known now. The Qinling range, toward which the poet gazes, stretches further west than the Zhongnan section.

2 The seeming contradiction of rain and fair sky will be resolved in lines 11–12, when we realize that the "light rain" is actually the spray from the converging waters, seeming to suggest it is raining all year long.

3 There were several Stone Drum rock formations in different places in China; non-man-made sounds emitted by them were considered an omen of war. The sound of the "stone drum" heard sometimes in the vicinity where the poet is now makes him wish for the presence of Tang Taizong 唐太宗 (r. 626–649), who was responsible as the Prince of Qin for success in the most important battles leading to the Tang dynasty's establishment, before becoming the Tang's second emperor. But the sound of this "stone drum," too, is likely not what it first seems, but rather the sound of the next couplet's churning waters beating against the rocky banks.

日夕生塵埃
 若訪張仲蔚
 16 衡門應蒿萊

I.10.3

戲題關門
 來亦一布衣
 去亦一布衣
 羞見關城吏
 4 還從舊路歸

I.10.4

觀釣翁
 扁舟滄浪叟
 心與滄浪清
 不自道鄉里
 4 無人知姓名

[stanza break]

1 Zhang Zhongwei, a recluse from the Eastern Han whose residence was said to be “amid weeds and wormwood,” here becomes the poet’s assumed identity *vis-à-vis* the friend to whom the poem is sent. A “crossbeam gate,” a few slats of wood placed across a doorway, was traditionally that of a poor hermit.

- Which from day to dusk throws up dust and grime.
 And should you ever wish to call on Zhang Zhongwei,¹
 16 By a crossbeam gate he'll answer amid weeds and wormwood.

I.10.3

Inscribed in Jest on the Barrier Gate

- In my coming, just one plain-clothed person,
 As in my going, just one plain-clothed person.
 Shamefaced to see the officer at the barrier station,
 4 Now that I've returned home along the old road.²

I.10.4

Observing an Old Fisher-Fellow

- A flatboat, with a Canglang old-timer,
 His heart, with the Canglang, runs clear.³
 He can't tell for himself what his homeplace is,
 4 No one knows his family- or personal-name.
 [stanza break]

2 A safe-conduct pass was usually required to enter or exit a strategic pass protected by a barrier. A certain Han-dynasty figure leaving home to seek his fortune told the gate-officer he did not need a passport because when he came back it would be as a high-ranking official. The poet here is embarrassed to be returning home (probably at the Tong Barrier 潼關 east of Chang'an) as the simple commoner he was when he left.

3 The Canglang River is a proverbially ideal location for the committed recluse. In "The Fisherman" section of the *Chuci* anthology, a carefree fisherman, addressing the dissatisfied and exiled official, Qu Yuan, chants this poem: "When the Canglang's waters are clear, I wash my capstrings in it;/ When the Canglang's waters are muddy, I wash my feet in it."

朝從灘上飯

暮向蘆中宿

歌竟還復歌

8 手持一竿竹

竿頭釣絲長丈餘

鼓棹乘流無定居

世人那得解深意

12 此翁取適非取魚

I.10.5

莪葵花歌

昨日一花開

今日一花開

今日花正好

4 昨日花已老

人生不得長少年

莫惜床頭沽酒錢

請君有錢向酒家

8 君不見莪葵花

In the morning he takes his meal alongside the rapids,
 At sunset he'll pass the night amidst the reeds.
 When his song is done, he sings it yet again,

8 While holding in hand a rod made of bamboo.

From the rod's head hangs his line ten feet and longer,
 Drumming on the oars, taking the current, he's without a fixed abode.
 However can the men of the world understand his deepest aim?

12 It's contentment the old codger is after, it's not that he's after fish.

I.10.5

Hollyhock Blossom Song¹

Yesterday one blossom came open,
 Then today one blossom came open.

Today's blossom just now is lovely,

4 But yesterday's blossom has already aged.

Man's life can't possibly prolong the years of youth,
 Don't grudge bartering for wine with the cash at hand.²

Please, sir, if you have the cash, go on to the wineshop;

8 Don't you see, sir, those blossoms of the hollyhock?

1 The hollyhock (*Althaea rosea*) is a tall-stalked plant with large, showy blossoms that fade quickly; also called *Shukui* 蜀葵, "mallow of Shu."

2 "At hand" is literally "at the bedside."

I.10.6

偃師東與韓搏同訪景雲暉上人即事

山陰老僧解楞伽

潁陽歸客遠相過

煙深草濕昨夜雨

4 雨後秋風度漕河

空山終日塵事少

平郊遠見行人小

尚書磧上黃昏鐘

8 別駕渡頭一歸鳥

I.10.7

春夢

洞房昨夜春風起

遙憶美人湘江水

枕上片時春夢中

4 行盡江南數千里

1 Yanshi, known by the same name today, was about twenty miles east of Luoyang. The Jingyun (“Auspicious Clouds”) monastery was at Mount Song 嵩山, south-east of Yanshi. No details are known about Han Zun or the monk Hui. “His (or Your) Eminence” is an honorific for a Buddhist monk.

2 The north side of a mountain is the shadeward side. The *Laṅkāvatāra* was an important Mahāyāna sutra in medieval China, with at least three translations

I.10.6

East of Yanshi I Paid a Visit with Han Zun to His Eminence Hui at
Jingyun Monastery; This on the Spur of a Moment¹

Shadeward of the mountain, the monk expounds the *Laṅkā* sutra,
Sunward of the Ying, this returning traveler has stopped by.²
The mist is deep, the plants are wet, from yesterday's rain;

4 After the rain, autumn's breeze is crossing the river-for-transport.³

In the empty mountain all day long dusty affairs are few,⁴
Across the level moors journeyers far off look small.
From above the Magistracy President's Sandbank, a bell in the yellow
dusk;

8 At the head of the Administrative Aide's Ferry, a single homing bird.⁵

I.10.7

Springtime Dream

In my closed bedchamber last night a springtime breeze arose,
Making me recall from afar a fair maid by the Xiang River's waters.
For a wisp of a moment on the pillow, within a springtime dream,

4 I had traveled all the way to the Southland, several thousand miles.

into Chinese available by the eighth century. The north side of a river (here the Ying River) is the sunward side. "Sunward of the Ying" translates the place-name Yingyang, near present-day Dengfeng county 登封縣, home of Cen Shen to which he is now returning, also where the ancient recluse Xu You resided, who refused sage-king Yao's offer of the empire.

3 The "river-for-transport" is part of the official canal system that sent grain and other staples from the Jiangnan region north to the eastern capital Luoyang and further west to Chang'an.

4 "Dusty affairs" are those of the everyday world.

5 The sandbank and ferry-point mentioned in this couplet have not been identified. The bell that sounds is that of the monastery.

Book II

卷二