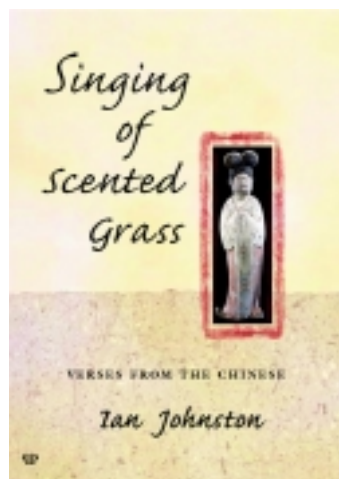


# *Singing of Scented Grass*

VERSES FROM THE CHINESE

translated by Ian Johnston



## **Notes on the Poems**

The following notes refer to the poems translated by Ian Johnston and published in the collection *Singing of Scented Grass verses from the Chinese* (Pardalote Press 2003)

Details of the book and how to order it can be found at the end of these notes.

### **(I) Wang Wei**

The details given in parentheses refer to Zhao Diancheng's *Wang Youcheng Ji Jianzhu* (2 vols), Zhonghua Shuju, Hong Kong, 1972. The numbers are *juan* and page numbers respectively.

**Letter to Pei Di** (18.332): Pei Di was one of Wang Wei's closest friends, with whom he particularly enjoyed the pleasures of retreat. Wang Wei wrote many poems to, or in exchange with, Pei Di.

**Dream of Doubt** (15.281): The Yellow Emperor (Huangdi) was a legendary sage ruler from earliest times while Kong Qiu is Confucius. The dream is a reference to the well-known story from the *Zhuangzi* (chapter 2). Did Zhuang Zhou dream he was a butterfly or did the butterfly dream he was Zhuang Zhou? There is some question about the authorship of this verse.

**Wandering in Spring** (15.276-7): Yunshao together refers to the Yunmen, music associated with the legendary Yellow Emperor and to the Dashao, music associated with Emperor Shun (from 2255BC) – see the *Jin Shu* 23 (3.700). Both Wang Ya and Zhang Zhongsu are considered as possible writers of these verses rather than Wang Wei.

**Presented to Wei Mu the 18<sup>th</sup>** (13.240): The 'kindred spirit' in line 1 is an allusion to Ruan Ji (210-263), a Wei scholar and poet who was one of the 'Seven Worthies of the Bamboo Grove' (see *Jin Shu* 49). The 'Eastern Hills' is a place of retirement associated with Xie An (320-383) of the Eastern Jin period (see *Jin Shu* 79). 'Spring grass' in the final line is an allusion to the 'Zhao Yinshi' from the *Chu Ci* (*Songs of the South*). The earlier poem is a summons to come out of retirement but Wang Wei here uses the allusion to indicate the pleasures of retirement. See Hawkes, *The Songs of the South* pp. 243-246.

**Farewell to Spring** (15.274): As with the previous poem, there is some doubt about authorship. Other possibilities include again Wang Ya and Zhang Zhongsu.

**Written in Light-Hearted Vein on the Great Rock** (14.261): The 'Great Rock' (*panshi*) is a symbol of strength and security. see *Xunzi* 10.14.

**Lacquer Tree Garden** (13.250): These are two verses from the 'Wang River Collection', the first by Wang Wei and the reply by Pei Di. The example is the pre-Qin philosopher Zhuang Zhou (Zhuangzi), noted for his indifference to worldly affairs. He was said to have been appointed at some time as keeper of the Lacquer Tree Garden in the state of Meng - not an onerous position (see *Shi Ji* 63). The pairing of characters at the start of the final line of Wang Wei's verse has several meanings. Zhao Diancheng refers to the story of Yin Zhongwen in the *Jin History* 99 (*Jin Shu* 8.2605). The story is that when Yin Zhongwen arrived at Da Si Ma with a crowd he saw an old

sophora tree. After gazing at it for a long time he sighed and said: 'This tree is lifeless and will not again be revived.'

**Portrait of Cui Xingzong** (13.255): Cui Xingzong is Cui the Ninth, a maternal cousin of Wang Wei.

**The Lady of Xi** (13.252): This short poem on composition contained both an allusion to an ancient story and a current relevance. According to the ancient story, recorded in the *Zuo Zhuan* (Zhuang 14<sup>th</sup> year) the ruler of Chu seized the wife of the ruler of Xi. The lady, although she bore children to her new husband, never spoke to him - see Legge J, *The Chinese Classics* vol 5, pp. 92-93. The current relevance was that the poem was composed at the command of Li Xian, Prince of Ning and half-brother to the Emperor Xuanzong. The former had also acquired a new wife, this time by commercial means, having bought her from a baker. When after a year the Prince asked her if she still thought of her former husband she did not reply. Li Xian then summoned the man. When his wife saw him again her eyes filled with tears. It is said that there were ten or so people present including Wang Wei. Li Xian commanded them all to write a poem on the matter. Wang Wei's was the first to be completed. All agreed that none better could be written. The Prince then returned the lady to her former husband.

**Cormorant Bank** (13.240-241): This is one of the five verses from what is called *Huangfu Yue's Cloudy Ravine – A Miscellany*. Huangfu Yue is included in the list of prime ministers of the Tang period in the *New Tang History* (*Xin Tang Shu* 75). He was the son of Huangfu Xun. According to Zhao Diancheng it is not known whether this is the person referred to here by Wang Wei.

**In Reply to Magistrate Zhang** (7.120): In line 4, I have followed Wang Fuyao's reading of 'ancient grove' as a general reference to a place of seclusion. The fisherman's song in line 8 is an allusion to Qu Yuan's 'The Fisherman' (*Yufu*) –see Hawkes (1985), pp. 206-207.

**An Exchange of Verses with Pei Di** (13.239): In Zhao Diancheng's edition Wang Wei's poem appears first. I have placed Pei Di's poem, entitled 'Lines Offered on Encountering Rain at Wangkou and Recalling Zhongnan Mountain', first. In some editions Wang Wei's response is entitled 'In Reply to Pei Di remembering Zhongnan Mountain'. Zhao has simply 'Reply to Pei Di'. These poems contain the recurring references 'Zhongnan Mountain' and 'white clouds'. Zhongnan Mountain, the principal peak of the Qinling Range, is situated in Shanxi Province south of Xi'an. It was one of the main areas of recreation adjacent to the capital in T'ang times and also a place of Daoist activities. The mountain has had a number of names including Southern Mountain to which there are several references in the *Odes* (Legge J, *The Chinese Classics* (vol 4), pp. 155, 272, 309, 373. According to Legge, Southern Mountain is the same as Niu Hill referred to in *Mencius* VIA.8. Wang Wei spent a period of retreat at Zhongnan Mountain prior to his acquisition of the Wangchuan estate. On 'white clouds' Wagner writes that this image "...occurs at least twenty-four times in Wang Wei's poetry,

and has a vast range of connotations which encompass nearly all of his major thematic concerns." (op cit p. 140) It is an image used by others, most notably Zhuang Zi and Tao Qian.

**Two Verses to Pei Di** (14.265-6, 13.254): These two verses are said to have been written by Wang Wei while he was incarcerated in Puti Monastery (situated near the South Gate of Chang'an) at the time of the An Lushan rebellion (756). The story is that the poems were written on the back of a sutra paper, smuggled out and circulated by a monk Zhiman. They are thought to have helped in clearing the poet of charges of collaboration with the rebels, although the stigma remained to some significant extent. Ningpi Pool was set within the palace grounds. The music is reference to the Imperial Musicians of the Pear Tree Garden who were forced at knifepoint to play for the rebels. The actual title of the first poem, which is longer than the poem itself, is 'Pei Di came to see me in the forbidden quarters of Puti Monastery and told me how the rebels had performed music at Ningpi Pool. When the musicians started to play their tears fell. I then secretly recited this and presented it to Pei Di'. For an account of these events see Wagner, p. 50. The second poem is entitled 'Recited and also presented to Pei Di' and contains allusions to Tao Qian, particularly the 'Peach Blossom Spring (or Source) see Davis, vol 1, pp. 195-201.

**Ban Jieyu – 3 Verses** (13.253): Ban Jieyu was an imperial concubine of the Western Han period who in early life showed exceptional talents. During the reign of Chengdi (31-6BC) she was given an official position but was later replaced in the emperor's affections by Zhao Feiyan. She retired to the Eastern Palace where she composed a *fu* poem to record her sorrow (see *Wen Xuan* 27.340).

**Magnolia Enclosure** (13.244): This is one of the poems from the *Wang River Collection*. The first verse is by Wang Wei, the second by Pei Di.

**Zhongnan Retreat** (3.35): Wang Wei's Wangchuan retreat was at the foot of Zhongnan Mountain - see notes to #8 above.

**Huazi Ridge** (13.242): This is also from the *Wang River Collection*. Again the reply is Pei Di's.

**Given to Pei Di while I was Living in Retirement at Wangchuan** (7.122): Jieyu is the cognomen of Lu Tong, the 'madman of Chu' whom Confucius met on the road – see *Lunyu (Analects)* XVIII.5. 'Five willows' is a reference to the retreat of the famed Jin period poet Tao Qian (Tao Yuanming), whilst line 6 is an allusion to one of his poems.

**In my Mountain Dwelling on an Autumn Night** (7.122-123): This poem alludes to the 'Zhao Yinshi' of the *Chu Ci (Songs of the South)* - see Hawkes, pp. 243-245. Regarding the 'young nobleman', see notes to #8 above.

**On an Autumn Night, Sitting Alone** (9.158): The second watch (line 2) was between 9.00 and 11.00 pm. The making of yellow gold (line 6) is a reference to Daoist alchemy. In the final line 'non-rebirth' is the Buddhist term for the end of the cycles of birth and rebirth.

**Sent to the Chongfan Monk** (6.101-102): It is unlikely that a specific person is being referred to here. Zhao Diancheng provides the relevant geographical information. This is not critical to an understanding of the poem and is therefore not included here.

**In the Hills** (15.271): Robinson (op cit p. 86) notes that whilst this poem did not appear in the poet's original collected works it is characteristic of his writing. He draws attention, as does Zhao Diancheng, to Su Shi's comment on a slightly different version of the same poem inscribed on a painting by Wang Wei entitled 'Mist Rain at Lantian'. Su Shi remarks: "When I savour Wang Wei's poem the picture is in the poem. When I look at the picture the poem is in the picture." Jing stream (line 1) is a reference to the waters of the Jing valley in Jiangsu Province. The waters arise in Lantian county then flow westward for twenty li before emerging from the valley to join with other streams and enter Tai Hu.

**Lament for White Hair** (14.267): In lines 1 and 2 Wang Wei uses two unusual terms for age and youth: *mu chi* for age is found in the biography of Wang Shao in the *Sui History* (*Sui Shu* 69, 3.1610) and *chui tiao* for childhood in the biography of Mao Jie in the *Annals of the Three Kingdoms* (*Wei Zhi* 12, 2.376). I have translated 'Emptiness Gate' literally but it is a general term for Buddhism.

**Thoughts on a Winter Night** (5.83): This poem, written not long before the poet's death, sadly and beautifully evokes the winter of his own life, not only by its immediate imagery but also by its allusions. The first is the reference to the *Odes* ('First Month' – Mao #192) in line 3. The original poem is about the sadness of a kingdom in decline due to its ruler's misguided choice of officials. In the penultimate line there is an allusion to the story of Emperor Wu of Han meeting an official, now old, passed over by three successive emperors for different reasons. Zhao Diancheng (p. 83) gives the story. See also Robinson, p. 139. The dripping in line 2 is that of a water clock (clepsydra).

**Happy that Zu III has come to stay** (7.120-121): Zu III was Zu Yong, a poet, scholar and official from Loyang who was a close friend of Wang Wei in his early years. 'Sharing a robe' (line 7 of Wang Wei's poem) is an indication of close friendship – see *Odes*, Wuyi (Mao #133). 'Call the boy' is also found in Li Bo's poem, 'Bringing in the Wine' (juan 3, vol 1, pp. 231-233).

**Three Poems of Farewell** (3.48, 13.251, 14.263-264): Again there is reference to both Zhongnan Mountain and to 'white clouds'. The second poem may have been written for Zu III (Zu Yong), a friend of the poet in his early years. There are two literary allusions in the first line. The first is to Southern Bank denoting a place of parting – see #8 of the 'Nine Songs' attributed to Qu Yuan and

the *fu* of parting by the 5<sup>th</sup> century poet Jiang Yan in the *Wen Xuan* [16.239]. The second is to 'tears like silk' in a verse by Xiao Yan, the first emperor of the short-lived Liang dynasty in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. In the final line of the third poem I have taken 'the young nobleman' to be a general term – see *Shi Ji* 92 (8.2609).

**Bird Song Stream** (13.240): Like 'Cormorant Bank' (#14 above), this is one of the five verses from *Huangfu Yue's Cloudy Ravine – A Miscellany*.

**Verses Casually Written #3** (5.73): Zhao Diancheng gives the location of Taihang Mountain(s) as thirty two *li* north of Xiuwu Prefecture in Huaizhou. Sun Deng (line 11) was a noted hermit of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD who lived at Sumen Mountain. He did have some association with the 'Seven Worthies of the Bamboo Grove', particularly Ruan Ji - see the *Jin History* 49 (*Jin Shu* 5.1362) and Wagner p. 189, note 23. The final four lines all contain references to earlier works (see Zhao Diancheng p. 73). The terms I have translated as 'stain of desire' and 'stilling of thoughts' are Buddhist terms.

**Verses Casually Written #6** (5.75): The reference in the penultimate line to the poet's *ming* (Wei) and *zi* (Mojie) is that these three characters together form the Chinese name of the Buddhist luminary Vimalakirti. For details of Wang Wei's regard for the early Buddhist see Wagner pp. 121-124.

## (II) Bai Juyi

The references in parentheses are to Gu Xuejie's *Bai Juyi Ji* (4 vols.) Xinhua Shuju, Beijing, 1979.

**Song of Everlasting Sorrow** (vol 1, p. 235): The notes for this extremely popular poem have been kept to a minimum. A detailed historical account of the An Lushan Rebellion may be found in chapters 7 and 8 of the *Cambridge History of China volume 3* edited by Twitchett D, Cambridge University Press, 1979, pp. 353-560. A more nearly contemporary account relating specifically to Bai Juyi's poem is provided by Chen Hong's 'An Account to go with the Song of Everlasting Sorrow' translated in Owen S, *An Anthology of Chinese Literature*, W.W. Norton and Co, New York, 1996, pp. 448-452. The events have a particularly relevance to Wang Wei's life as indicated earlier. The first part of the poem (lines 1-26) recounts the rise of the concubine who came to be known as Yang Guifei. In fact she came to Emperor Xuanzong's harem via that of his son Prince Shou (see Li Shangyin's poem 'Dragon Pool'). Huaqing Pool was in the Huaqing Palace built at the thermal springs near Mount Li, east of Chang'an - see Owen, op cit pp. 452-454 regarding the palace and some other verses about it. Yang Guifei's relatives benefited considerably from her own advancement. Her cousin Yang Guozhong in particular rose to very high office. The second part of the poem (lines 27-43) marks the end of days of dalliance at Black Horse Palace, the flight of the Emperor with his concubine and remaining loyal troops and the demands for her death to which Xuanzong acceded. Her actual mode of death remains uncertain. The songs referred to were

presented to Yang Guifei by the Emperor. The third part of the poem (lines 44-74) records the onward flight of the Emperor to Sichuan Province followed by his return after the overthrow of the rebels. Mawei Slope, the subject of Li Shangyin's two verses of that title in the next section, was the place of her burial. The Pear Garden musicians (line 65) are those referred to in Wang Wei's poem to Pei Di (#7). In part 4 (lines 74-89) she is sought and found by the Daoist priest. Linqiong is in present-day Sichuan. The gate was a palace gate originally in Loyang but is here used to indicate Chang'an. In the final part (lines 90-119) she recalls the places of her earlier life but knows she cannot return.

**Growing Old in Shanyang Palace** (vol 1, p. 59): This poem presents the obverse of the glories of Yang Guifei's life prior to her fall - the life of an imperial concubine chosen but neglected. Shanyang was the name of a palace in Loyang. Bai Juyi's original note records that after the 5<sup>th</sup> year of Tianbao (746) when Yang Guifei became the imperial favourite, the other 'ladies of the rear palace' no longer received favours but remained confined. One such place of confinement was Shanyang Palace. On the title of 'Matron' see Hucker CO (1985), *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*, Stanford University Press, entries #3798, #3810 and #5042. Lü Xiang was a relatively minor early Tang poet who wrote denouncing the annual search for beautiful girls to serve as imperial concubines (see *New Tang History*, 202, pp. 5758-9).

**An Old Man from Xinfeng with a Broken Arm** (vol 1, p 61): Xinfeng was a prefecture near the capital Chang'an in present-day Shanxi Province. The two reign periods referred to are Kaiyuan (713-741) and Tianbao (742-756). Yunnan was (and is) a large province in the far southwest of China. The two ministers were Song Jing (662-737) and Yang Guozhong (died 756), the latter being Yang Guifei's cousin. For details see the *Cambridge History of China*, vol 3, chapters 6 and 7 and chapters 7 and 8 respectively.

**The Red Thread Carpet** (vol 1, p. 78): Pixiang Hall existed in Han times and was associated with Han Cheng Di's favourite concubine Zhao Feiyan. The latter, originally a dancing girl of legendary grace and lightness, displaced from the Emperor's favour Ban Jieyu, the subject of one of Wang Wei's poems in the previous section (#13). In the present verse the reference to Pixiang Hall is in relation to the Tang period.

**On Reading the *Laozi*** (vol 2, p. 716): The work is the first of the two basic Daoist texts - the *Dao De Jing* - which according to legend was a work in 5000 characters written by Lao Dan and given to the Keeper of the Pass before the Sage vanished in the West.

**On Reading the *Zhuangzi*** (vol 2, p. 716): The second chapter of this, the second of the two Daoist works, is entitled 'Discussion on Making All Things Equal'. The author was Zhuang Zhou.

### (III) Li Shangyin

The references in parentheses are to the *Li Shangyin Shige Jijie* (5 vols), edited by Yu Shucheng and Liu Xuecuo, Zhonghua Shuju, Beijing, 1988.

**Willow Branch - Five Verses** (vol 1, p. 99): Preface: 'Yan Terrace' is a group of 4 verses by Li Shangyin - see vol 1, p. 79. 'Splashing our skirts' refers to a ritual observance, which was part of the Purification Festival and was to do with warding off evil spirits. The Poshan censer is a reference to a love song. Verse 2: 'Tanqi' is a form of chess. Verse 3: The reference here is to Shao Ping (3<sup>rd</sup> century BC) who was the Marquis of Dongling. With the fall of the Qin dynasty (206BC) he became a commoner and resorted to selling melons. There is also an allusion to a poem by Ruan Ji of the Jin period.

**Rising Early** (vol 5, p. 1962): The translation follows Feng Hao's rearrangement of line 3, a recurring poetic image.

**Fine Rain** (vol 4, p. 1623): This is the second of two poems with the same title and is a common subject for poetic composition. The reference to the Chu maiden (line 3) is probably to the sixth of the 'Nine Songs' ('Shao Si Ming') - see Hawkes op cit pp. 111-112.

**Spring Rain** (vol 4, p. 1769): There are rather subtle allusions to other poems in this verse but they are of no relevance to meaning. Whether there was a particular recipient intended is unknown.

**Untitled** (vol 4, p. 1467): In the first two lines there are allusions to two well known earlier poems. The first (line 1) is to 'The Nine Songs' and the second (line 2) to Sima Xiangru's 'Song of the Long Gate'. 'Lotus pool' is a standard reference to a place of assignation for lovers. The 'golden toad' (line 3) and the 'jade tiger' (line 4) are decorations on door handles and well pulleys respectively. Lady Jia was the daughter of Jia Chong a Jin period statesman. She fell in love with and married her father's secretary Han Shou. Her father became aware of their love when he smelt an exotic perfume he had given her on the clothes of his minister. He then gave his permission for the marriage. Their son Han Mi later succeeded his grandfather. Fu Fei was the Goddess of the River, said to be the daughter of the legendary Emperor Fu Xi. The reference here is to the wife of the brother of Cao Zhi who is the Prince of Wei, a noted poet. The story is recounted in Cao Zhi's poem 'Goddess of the River'.

**Dragon Pool** (vol 4, p. 1514): The Dragon Pool was situated in an early residence of Xuanzong, which was made into a palace in the second year of his reign (715). The Jie (line 2) were a minority race. It is said that the Emperor was particularly fond of the sound of their drums. Xue Wang was a younger brother of the Emperor and Shou Wang his son by Wu Huifei and the first husband of Yang Yuhuan who became Yang Guifei - see Liu pp. 183-184.

**The Ornamented Zither** (vol 3, p. 1420): Various commentators have interpreted this very complex poem quite differently. Liu (pp. 52-57) gives a detailed outline of the various views. A succinct summary of the numerous allusions is given by Graham pp. 172-173.

**Mawei Slope - 2 Verses** (vol 1, p. 307): These two verses and 'Dragon Pool' concern Xuanzong and Yang Guifei, a recurring theme in this collection. In the first of these two verses the question is simply raised as to whether the Emperor would have gone ahead with the liaison had he had an inkling of the outcome. The interesting point is that the verse is not overtly critical. Details of the location of Mawei Slope are given in note 1, p.308. It was in the prefecture of Xi'an, close to the capital and is the place where Yang Guifei met her death. In Bai Juyi's 'Song of Everlasting Sorrow' the army is said to have halted less than 100 li from the capital. Ji and Yan refer to places where the An Lushan rebellion originated - *Cambridge History of China*, vol 3, op cit, map 12. I have translated the second verse as if spoken by Xuanzong. The 'nine kingdoms' (line 1) refer to the speculations of Zou Yan the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC philosopher of the 'Five Elements School' - see Fung Yulan, vol 1, pp. 159-169. The halting of the six armies refers to the refusal of the troops loyal to the Emperor to proceed unless both Yang Guifei and her cousin Yang Guozhong were put to death. The 'seventh night' (also referred to in Bai Juyi's 'Song of Everlasting Sorrow') looks back to happier times. According to legend the herd boy and the spinning damsel, lovers transported to the heavens and separated by the Milky Way, come together once each year on the seventh day of the seventh lunar month. The story of Mochou (literally 'no sorrow') is of a young woman who married a man from the Lu family. One version of the tale is given in 'The Song of the Beautiful Girl' by Emperor Wu, the founder of the Liang dynasty who reigned from AD 502-549.

**Master Jia** (vol 4, p. 1518): Master Jia was Jia Yi (201-169BC) a precocious talent who had a short and somewhat chequered official career under Han Wen Di. His biography is given in the *Shi Ji* 84 (vol 8, pp. 2491-2504) and translated by Burton Watson in *The Records of the Grand Historian of China*, vol 1, Columbia University Press, 1961, pp. 508-516. The incident in question is recorded on p. 515. 'Leaning together' indicates a high degree of interest by the listener as he sits on his mat during the discussion. Liu (p. 189) takes this poem to be a criticism of the Tang ruling house's interest in mystical practices.

**Northern Qi - Two Verses** (vol 2, p. 539): The events recounted in these two poems pertain to the final stages of the short-lived Northern Qi dynasty and its penultimate ruler Hou Zhu (Gao Wei) - see *Northern History* 8 (*Bei Shi* vol 8, pp. 286-298). In the first verse (line 1) the allusion is to Bao Si - see Giles H, *A Chinese Biographical Dictionary* pp. 619-620 for the story and also the *Odes* Mao #264. Xiao Lian (Feng Shufei) was Gao Wei's favourite concubine. In the second verse (line 1) the reference is to the *Odes*, Mao #56. It is uncertain who the woman concerned was - possibly Zhuang Jiang.

**The Ninth Day** (vol 3, p. 935): There is some uncertainty about dates in this poem. It was probably written in 848 or 849 and refers to the death of the poet's first patron Linghu Chu in 837 or 838. The funeral was at the beginning of 838. Shan Weng (Shan Gong) is a reference to either Shan Tao or his son Shan Jian the former particularly a noted Jin official - see the *Jin History* 43 (*Jin Shu* vol 4, pp. 1223-1230). The 'Han official' is Zhang Qian whilst the 'Chu guest' is Qu Yuan. The 'young lord' is taken as referring to Linghu Chu's son, Linghu Tao, with whom the poet's relationship was less cordial than with the father. In the final line the phoenix refers to Liu Fen and the 'nine-layered gates' to the capital.

**When Rain Sets In** (vol 5, p. 1974): Chinese commentators all remark on the obscurity of the final line. One interpretation is to take it as meaning that thoughts of a return home are inappropriate at this time due to the poet's circumstances.

**Writing my Thoughts** (vol 3, p. 1211): This poem, of uncertain date of composition, is about the poet's own dashed hopes. Yan is in Inner Mongolia, far distant from the capital, which is here signified by Shanglin, a palace garden in Han times. Both Tong River (line 3) and Mount Yulei (line 4) are in Sichuan.

**Night Rain - Sent North** (vol 3, p. 1230): There is some variation in the title, the last character being either \_ ('north') or \_ ('within', 'home', 'wife'). Commentators vary in their interpretations but one view is that it was written (in 848) when the poet was delayed in crossing the Yangzi River. 'Sent north' then refers to the poem being despatched to a friend in the capital. Others consider the title to be 'sent home' or 'sent to my wife'. Bashan is taken as a general term to indicate mountainous country in eastern Sichuan.

### **Night**

**In Late Autumn Wandering Alone by a Bend in the River** (vol 4, p. 1785): Some commentators have taken this to be a lament for a girl here referred to as 'lotus flower.'

**Leyou Plateau** (vol 5, p. 1942): This brief verse captures the ambivalence of the poet's feelings occasioned by the beauty of the sunset viewed from Leyou Plateau. Written during the years between his wife's death and his own early demise, it indicates how his appreciation of the natural beauty is tempered by an awareness of his own and the age's decline. Leyou was a high place southeast of Chang'an where the Han Emperor Xuan Di established a garden and built a temple. There were sweeping views from all sides.

**Moon and Frost** (vol 4, p. 1629): The first line of this poem is reminiscent of Tao Qian's (Tao Yuanming's) poem 'The Ninth Day of the Ninth Month of the Year Chi-yu': "Of the cicada there is no lingering sound, but flocking geese cry among the clouds." (see Davis, op cit vol 1, p. 92) Qing Nu is the Goddess of Frost. Su E is according to legend responsible for stealing the elixir of life from her husband Hou Yi and fleeing with it to the moon.

**After My Deep Sorrow Travelling to Eastern Shu to Take up a Post and at Sanguan Meeting Snow** (vol 3, p. 1115): The deep sorrow alludes to his wife's recent death. The poem was written in 851. The post referred to was Assistant to the Military Commissioner with Liu Zhongying. Jian (line 1) is Jianmen Mountain in Eastern Sichuan. Sanguan was a pass on the road from Shensi to Sichuan.

**Untitled** (vol 4, p. 1467): 'Young Liu' is generally taken to be Liu Che (Emperor Wu of Han). 'Pengshan' is a magical mountain in Daoist mythology.

**Sunrise** (vol 3, p.1206): Written in 853 when the poet had already spent several years in Sichuan. Xi'an pool indicates the capital. Ba is eastern Sichuan. The 'absent one' is the sunlight.

**Presented to Administrator Liu** (vol 2, p. 701): The title varies with 'Fen' being added in some editions following the official designation. The poem is to Li Shangyin's friend Liu Fen, someone to whom he directed a number of poems mostly mourning Liu's early death. Liu Fen was renowned for his outspoken criticism of the powerful eunuchs. This resulted in his exile and, it is claimed, early death. JY Liu outlines his story (op cit pp. 7-8). Yan is a reference to Liu Fen by way of his birthplace whilst the 'Sao guest' refers to Qu Yuan, also a banished official. In lines 5 and 6 the references are to the Han official Jia Yi (see Li Shangyin's poem 'Master Jia') and to the 'madman of Chu', Jie Yu (see Wang Wei's poem 'Given to Pei Di while I was living in retirement at Wangchuan) respectively.

**Peony** (vol 4, p. 1548): This is a highly stylised poem with every line an allusion. The overall intention is to evoke the beauty of the peony flower. Wei Fu-ren (line 1) was Nan Zi, wife of the Prince of Wei in the Spring and Autumn Period. She was renowned for her beauty although, according to Legge (*The Chinese Classics*, vol 1, p. 193) "her lewd character was well known" - see Confucius, *Lun Yu* VI.26. There has been much discussion as to why Confucius visited her. Yue E-jun (line 2) was the younger brother of the King of Chu (or Yue - depending on the source) who was also noted for his great beauty as a young man - see *Shuo Yuan* 11. These two examples are thought to refer to the flower opening and in bud respectively. The initial two characters in lines 3 and 4 are the names of dances. Shi Jia is Shi Chong (died AD300). The story of his using wax for fuel is recounted in the *Shishuo Xinyu*. Xun Ling is Xun Yu (AD161-211) a Wei statesman and adviser to Cao Cao. The story of his 'fragrance' is given in part by Giles p.316. The allusion in the final 2 lines is to the poet Jiang Yan. For the story of his brush see Giles, op cit pp. 136-137.

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