

仲

昭



## Li Shen 李绅

Li Shen's ancestors built the family reputation in what is now Hebei Province, in northern China, but his great-grandfather moved to Bozhou, in the northwest corner of modern Anhui Province, on the south bank of River Wo. His father served as county magistrate in three counties in Jiangsu Province, southeast of the Yangtze. One of the counties was Wuxi, where Li Shen was born and raised, from 772 until 806, the year he took and passed the imperial examination. Although he was appointed assistant professor in the imperial academy immediately after the exam, he had no interest teaching in the capital and returned east to his home in Wuxi. For the group of seven poems he wrote (one of them, "Kingfisher Cove," is translated here) he wrote a preface in which he states that he had lived in Meili Village in Wuxi County for forty years. However, staying at home didn't guarantee a peaceful life. A general in charge of safe-guarding the coastal region liked Li Shen's literary talent and invited him to serve as his secretary. Li accepted the invitation but in the year after, 807, the general decided to rebel against the empire and ordered Li Shen to draft a declaration of his intent. Li Shen pretended to be so nervous that his hand shook and wasted sheets of paper without being able to write one word. The general in rage threatened to behead him. In response, Li said that he was raised in a scholar's family and was too frightened by military trumpets and the gongs to think clearly – he'd rather die than suffer from fear and shock like this. Somehow the general didn't carry out his threat, but arranged for another secretary to draft the document. After that narrow escape, Li Shen was appreciated by the emperor for his loyalty to the central government and refusal to follow the rebels. His career as a bureaucrat now began an upward swing and he eventually became the prime minister in 842. Readers may find it reassuring to learn that this prime minister seemed to have firsthand knowledge of the hardship that common peasants have experienced. He died in 846.

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《过梅里七首家…今敝庐数堵犹存今列题  
于后。翡翠坞》

(《全唐诗》卷481)

翡翠飞飞绕莲坞，一啄嘉鱼一鸣舞。  
莲茎触散莲叶欹，露滴珠光似还浦。  
虞人掠水轻浮弋，翡翠惊飞飞不息。  
直上层空翠影高，还向云间双比翼。  
弹射莫及弋不得，日暮虞人空叹息。

### Seven Poems about My Old Home Where Only Walls Stand Now

#### No. 6 – Kingfisher Cove

Two kingfishers, a couple,  
wheel over the lotus cove.  
One fishes, the other dances and sings,  
scattering lotus stems,  
knocking leaves slant –  
water flows down the leaves  
like shining pearls rolling  
into the ocean.

The fishery warden,  
armed with bow, with arrows  
set to tightened string,  
rows stealthily over the water,  
frightens the birds.

They fly away fast,  
never looking back  
their green backs barely visible  
high among the clouds,  
soaring wing to wing.

They are far beyond  
the warden's arrows and slingshots.  
He looks up,  
sighs in vain until sunset.

《古风二首 其一》

(《全唐诗》卷483)

春种一粒粟，秋成万颗子。  
四海无闲田，农夫犹饿死。

Two Songs in Ancient Style

No. 1

One seed  
planted timely in spring  
renders a harvest of ten thousand grain  
in fall.

Over the four seas  
not a single acre is left fallow.

Why is it then, one asks,  
that peasants should die  
of starvation?

《其二》

锄禾日当午，汗滴禾下土。  
谁知盘中餐，粒粒皆辛苦。

No. 2

Hoeing the weeds  
from dawn till noon,  
I water the land  
with large drops of sweat.

Does anyone know  
that each grain of rice  
in his bowl is a drop  
of my hard working sweat?

## Bao Rong 鲍溶

Little is known about Bao Rong except that he was friendly with fellow poets Han Yu, Meng Jiao, Xu Hun, Liu Deren, and, especially, Li Yi (all but Liu Deren are included in this collection). Bao Rong passed the imperial examination in 810; after that he served in a number of low-rank posts, traveling in service far and wide across China, including the Gobi Desert on the western frontier. His best friend, Li Yi, for a time shared his fate, at first making little progress in officialdom and serving at low ranks. Later in life, however, Li Yi became a minister in an important department. Their friendship, however, remained the same. In one poem to Li Yi, Bao Rong mocked himself, jokingly warning Li Yi that the clouds that clung to Bao the “mountain man” might contaminate the embroidered uniform of the high official Li. The two friends got a good laugh out of the poem and drank more wine to celebrate this rare happy hour in their life. Late in his life, Bao Rong served in Sichuan and there he died. The poets Xu Hun and Liu Deren wrote verse to commemorate Bao Rong as talented poet and obscure bureaucrat.

### 《巢乌行》（《全唐诗》485）

乌生儿子林萧条，雄乌求食雌守巢。  
夜愁风雨巢倾覆，常见一乌巢下宿。  
日长雏饥雄未回，雌乌下巢去哀哀。  
野田春尽少遗谷，寻食不得饥飞来。  
黄雀亦引数青雀，雀飞未远乌惊落。  
既分青雀啖尔雏，尔雏虽长心何如。  
将飞不飞犹未忍，古瑟写哀哀不尽。  
杀生养生复养生，呜呜啧啧何时平。

### Nesting Crows

Among a few bleak trees  
crows build their nest  
to raise a family – a handful of chicks.

The male flies out to search for food.  
The female stays to watch her chicks.  
Afraid her nest might fall in a stormy  
night  
she stays beneath the tree of her nest.

The days are long, chicks forever hungry,  
father not in sight.  
The mother has to leave the nest with sad,  
sad croaks  
to comb the field for food.

At spring's end the fields are bare of grain.  
The mother flies back home. By chance  
she sees a mother oriole a few feet  
away from oriole chicks.  
The mother crow in surprise snatches...

Oh, crow, crow!  
You feed your chicks with oriole chicks  
But how do you feel in the bottom of your  
heart?

I see the crow fly in a circle  
as if in regret she hesitates.

My ancient harp plays sad music.  
Sadness does not end on harp strings.

We kill life to raise life.  
That life does the same.

We cry and weep, weep and cry!  
How can we end the sadness of life?



《宿青牛谷梁炼师仙居》

（《全唐诗》卷487）

随云步入青牛谷，青牛道士留我宿。  
可怜夜久月中行，惟有坛边一枝竹。

**Staying Overnight in Daoist Liang's Hut In the Black Ox Valley**

Following the clouds, my steps  
take me into Black Ox Valley,  
where Master Black Ox offers me  
a bed for the moon-lit night.

Far into the long night  
I walk around his dwelling.  
All I see is a single bamboo  
beside the incense altar.

## *Shi Jianwu* 施肩吾

Often mistaken as a native of Hongzhou (now Nanchang of Jiangxi Province), Shi Jianwu was actually born and raised in Huzhou, Zhejiang Province. He spent most of his earlier years in Zhejiang, visiting famous mountains such as Siming and Tiantai, and lakes such as Taihu and Mirror Lake (see note to He Zhizhang). He passed the examination in 821 but he didn't wait for the appointment in a governmental position; instead, like Li Shen, he left the capital immediately and returned home in the southeast. Unlike Li Shen, he didn't join the service of any powerful general, but went to Jiangxi, the adjacent province west of Zhejiang, where he became a Daoist monk on the West Mountain of Hongzhou. That's why his birth place was mistaken for Hongzhou. He was obviously well received there and soon he felt confident enough to regard himself as the thirteenth Daoist saint who achieved the true Dao and became immortal. Because he gave up the officialdom so resolutely, little is known about him in the official history, not even the years in which he was born and died. Perhaps this is a sign of his "true immortality": his poetry lives in the Chinese imagination, and it is refreshing to learn from his poems that in his time there were still tigers in Nanchang, which is now a city of five million.

### 《谪山中叟》（《全唐诗》卷494）

老人今年八十几，口中零落残牙齿。  
天阴伛偻带嗽行，犹向岩前种松子。

### Teasing an Old Man on the Mountain

Old man, old man, late in your eighties,  
few teeth remain in your depressed mouth.  
On a cloudy day, bent by rheumatism, you  
cough and go to the front of the cliff  
to plant a few pine seeds.

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### 《山中玩白鹿》（《全唐诗》卷494）

绕洞寻花日易销，人间无路得相招。  
呦呦白鹿毛如雪，踏我桃花过石桥。

### Encountering a White Deer on the Mountain

The roads in the human world no longer  
appeal to me.  
I hike through gorges and caves in idle  
search  
of blooming trees to pass my days with  
ease.

Then I hear a deer's bell voice,  
see his hair white as snow.  
He steps over my fallen peach petals  
to cross the rock bridge.

《日晚归山词》（《全唐诗》卷494）

虎迹新逢雨后泥，无人家处洞边溪。  
独行归客晚山里，赖有鹧鸪临路岐。

**Late in the Evening, Returning to My Mountain Dwelling**

Late in the evening,  
I, a lone traveler,  
walk up the mountain  
heading for my cave dwelling  
by the creek,  
miles away from human neighbors.

Then I'm taken aback  
by fresh tiger tracks  
in the muddy path after the rain.

What good fortune! I have the partridge\*  
to guide my way.

\*In Chinese mythology, the partridge's cry sounds like a sentence in human language: "Don't go, brother, don't go." Therefore, the poet might be advised by the bird not to go down the trail of tiger tracks.

## Zhang Hu 张祜

Though known as a Zhang from Nanyang, Henan Province, Zhang Hu was actually born south of the Yangtze in the famous city of Suzhou. He of course looked at Suzhou as his home and had strong feelings for the mountains and lakes in the southeast part of China. *Tang Caizi Zhuan* mistakenly states that because of his proud personality he never took the examinations that might have enabled him to find a position in the officialdom (Xin Wenfang, *Tang Caizi Zhuan*. Shanghai, the Press of Classic Literature, 1957, p. 107). The truth is that Zhang did want to take the exams, though was perhaps overconfident about his literary talent and his chance of scoring at the top in the local examinations which were the first step for the national exams at Chang'an. It happened that the official in charge of the local exam taken by Zhang Hu was the famous poet Bai Juyi, who did consider him as one of the two candidates. In the end, however, Bai Juyi favored the other candidate. Zhang Hu now lost appetite for any further efforts in that matter.

He did, however, still wish to enter the bureaucracy, an ambition he now pursued in a different manner, sending his poems through powerful friends to the emperor, who became interested enough to ask his courtiers about Zhang Hu's talent. This time it was Bai Juyi's best friend, Yuan Zhen, who unwittingly helped frustrate Zhang's effort to enter the court (Fu Xuancong, *Tang Caizi Zhuan Jiaojian*. Beijing, Zhonghua Press, 1999, p. 170). In Yuan Zhen's view, though Zhang's poetic style was exquisite, it was not "manly" enough, and would not help the emperor's effort to stir up the spirit of his subjects whose confidence was already dampened by the upheavals and wars that plagued the empire. This was the last straw. From this point on, Zhang Hu satisfied himself with the reputation of *chushi* 处士 (a gentleman who chooses to stay at home rather than serve in the court). He never, however, ceased to connect with powerful people, such as Pei Du, Li Deyu, and Li Shen, all poets who eventually rose to be prime minister. The second poem translated here shows that Yuan Zhen's criticism of Zhang Hu's poetic style was wrong. Although Zhang Hu had a sharp eye for the details in a peasant's life and spoke in the voice of a girl, that did not make him "unmanly." His brave exposure of governmental encroachment on private land reminds readers of Li Shen's critique of the state of the country: no land is laid in fallow but peasants still die of starvation. In the first poem, if we read the tree as a symbol of people and the grass as the court and its expanding road system, we know that Zhang Hu was one of the poets who considered environmental justice as a part of the overall harmony under the heaven.

It was unknown when he was born. He died in 853.



《树中草》（《全唐诗》卷544）

青青树中草，托根非不危。  
草生树却死，荣枯君可知。

Grasses in a Dead Tree Trunk

The grasses grow green in a hollow tree.  
They've sent down their roots  
at a high and dangerous place.

From them one can learn the secret  
of what's going to prosper  
and what's going to wither –

as the tree slowly dies  
the grasses grow greener.

《读曲歌五首 其五》  
（《全唐诗》卷511）

郎去摘黄瓜，郎来收赤枣。  
郎耕种麻地，今作西舍道。

A Song

My young man went to gather cucumbers

My young man came to collect red dates

he also tilled the field and planted hemp

where he worked has become

roadway to my neighbor in the west.

## *Xu Hun* 许浑

Xu Hun's year of birth was estimated by Wen Yiduo to be 791 (quoted in Fu Xuancong, ed., *Tang Caizi Zhuan Jiao Jian*. Beijing, Zhonghua Press, 1999, Vol. 3, p. 234). His great-grandfather six generations back had been a prime minister who lived in Chang'an. But Xu Hun himself probably lived near Luoyang during childhood and then moved to the region around Dongting Lake in what is now Hubei and Hunan Provinces. He loved the lake area so much that when he sojourned for three years further upstream on the Yangtze in the famous Three Gorges area in what is now Greater Chongqing City, he missed the lake area as if it were his home. Probably it was in the Three Gorges (the Wizard Gorge is one of the Three) that he adopted a pet monkey. When he finally got back to the lake area, he empathized with his new companion: perhaps the monkey missed its home in the Wizard Gorge as much as he had missed the lake district when he was in the Gorges, and as a young man in his late twenties with no clear future in sight, had felt like "a fish in a tank or a bird in a cage" (quoted in Fu Xuancong, ed., p. 234). With the monkey actually on a chain, he had no choice but let it go to trace its way up the Yangtze back to its own home.

When he finally passed the imperial examination in 833, after several tries, he was already a middle-aged man. He was appointed the year after to the position of assistant director in the Bureau of Forestry and Crafts (*Yubu* 虞部), which had charge over hunting and the gathering of food in mountains and forests. He went on to serve in various positions all over China, including magistrate of a county in the mid-Yangtze region, an imperial inspector traveling through Shanxi, Henan, Guangxi, and Guangdong Provinces, and finally from the age of 68 governorships in Zhejiang and Jiangxi Provinces. Many of his poems celebrate leisure days in the countryside, but a close look at his life shows that the only leisurely days he had after he passed the examination came when he excused himself from his first appointments, and during a couple of years he spent on sick leave in Danyang County, Jiangsu. As an inspector, he traveled extensively and loved best the mountains in Zhejiang Province on the southeast coast.

We don't know when he died.

《放猿》（《全唐诗》卷529）

殷勤解金锁，昨夜雨凄凄。  
山浅忆巫峡，水寒思建溪。  
远寻红树宿，深向白云啼。  
好觅来时路，烟萝莫共迷。

**Releasing a Monkey**

The rain last night – sad and sad –  
kept me awake. Early this morning  
I unlocked the gold chain around your neck,  
offered you my heart-felt goodwill.

These mountains are not too far  
for you to remember your way,  
that leads back home near the Wu Gorge.\*  
At least the cold water of this river  
should lead you to your familiar Creek.

For shelter you may want to try  
the remote trees of red leaves.  
For companionship you should holler  
into the depth of white clouds.

Re-trace your steps with caution.  
Try not to lose yourself  
in the mist among phantom vines  
in the manner I lost mine.

\* Wu 巫 means “wizard” in Chinese.

## *Li Shangyin* 李商隐

Li Shangyin was a good friend of Bai Juyi 白居易, although their poetic styles were quite different. Bai Juyi and his friend Yuan Zhen 元稹 tried to promote a simple style that could be understood by common, working people, allegedly including an elderly female servant of Bai. Li Shangyin, however, developed an exquisite style rich in literary allusion that only the well-educated elite could have understood and appreciated. Yet interestingly, Bai Juyi in his old age admired Li Shangyin's style so much that, as legend has it, he even said something to the effect that after death he hoped to be reincarnated as a son to Li Shangyin, who was forty-one years his junior. Li Shangyin, in return, did name his first born "Senior Bai" (Fu Xuancong, ed., *Tang Caizi Zhuan Jiaojian*. Beijing, Zhonghua Press, 1999, Vol.3, p. 279).

Although Li Shangyin is known for his more ambiguous love poems, because of his extensive travel experience, his few nature poems are genuine, plain, and pleasant. In the two "nature" poems selected here, Li was deliberately simple and, almost, free from literary allusions, except the reference to the gull, which is so well known that it is hardly ambiguous. The gull, as also mentioned in Wang Wei's 王维 poem "Composed in My Cottage Near Wangchuan Village after Days of Rain," comes from the "Yellow Emperor" chapter 黄帝篇 of the Daoist text *Liezi* 列子: a boy is on familiar terms with the gulls on the beach and plays with them like close companions. When his father learns about it, he asks the son to catch a sea-gull and bring it home, for the father wants to taste the meat. Being a dutiful son, the boy goes back to the beach the next day with his father's plan in mind. However, the gulls are so sensitive and intelligent that they know that this boy has a different mind now; so they are on guard against the boy and refuse to come close to him. In Wang Wei's poem, the poet complains that he is already wild – and thereby honest – yet why should the gull stay suspicious about him; in Li's poem, the poet is happy for the gulls flying around him seem to testify that he is truly one with the wild.

Li Shangyin was born in the year 813 to a cadet branch of the imperial family of Tang that had over time fallen into genteel poverty. Originally inhabitants of Qinyang, Henan Province, Li Shangyin's grandfather and his immediate family had moved about a hundred kilometers southeast to what is now Zhengzhou, in eastern Henan. Li Shangyin was exceptionally talented. In his teenage years he was already known as a prolific writer. Unlike many Tang poets, Li Shangyin didn't take the imperial exam but was recommended into the officialdom by a powerful bureaucrat. He served in different areas of China, traveling as far as Xunzhou, now known as Longchuan County in northern Guangdong Province, and Guizhou, now Guilin, in what is now northern Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region.



《自喜》《全唐诗》卷539)

自喜蜗牛舍，兼容燕子巢。  
绿筠遗粉箨，红药绽香苞。  
虎过遥知阱，鱼来且佐庖。  
慢行成酩酊，邻壁有松醪。

Self-Happiness

In the way the snail loves  
its tiny shell house,  
I love my little hut  
and share it with swallows.

By my front gate, green  
bamboos shed their fading leaves  
when the herbaceous peony  
emits fragrance from petals.

The tigers already know my traps.  
They walk around my gaping fence.  
I'm grateful to the biting fish  
for offering me an additional dish.

My neighbor brews a special rice wine  
seasoned with pine seeds.  
We stroll together, our steps shaky,  
after drinking – too much.

《赠田叟》（《全唐诗》卷541）

荷筱衰翁似有情，相逢携手绕村行。  
烧畲晓映远山色，伐树暝传深谷声。  
鸥鸟忘机翻浹洽，交亲得路味平生。  
抚躬地道诚感激，在野无贤心自惊。

For the Old Man in the Field

A sickly old man,  
shouldering a hoe,  
seemed to feel sorry for me –  
when I asked for directions,  
he simply took my hand,  
walked me around the ville.

The flame and smoke  
from the burning fields in the  
morning  
tinted the far hills purple.

The dark valley echoed  
the chopper's axe deep in the  
woods.

Gulls and magpies forgot  
we were plotting men.  
They wheeled around us  
in familiar ease.

Doubly rewarded with directions  
and a friend  
I bowed with gratitude and a  
pleasant surprise –  
such a good man!  
In such a wild place!

## Ma Dai 马戴

Like his good friend Jia Dao, Ma Dai was from a rather obscure background. It is only in recent research that scholars have figured out that he was probably from Yanzhou, now in Shandong Province, less than two hundred kilometers from the coast (Fu Xuancong, ed., *Tang Caizi Zhuan Jiaojian*. Beijing, Zhonghua Press, 1999, Vol. 3, pp. 335–36). It is still unknown when he was born, but historical records do show that he passed the imperial examination in 840. After that, he served as confidential secretary on the staffs of several military headquarters. The rank was low but responsibility was high. His outspoken personality offended one superior and he was thus demoted to the position of county sheriff. Jia Dao was well known as being poor, and perhaps because of his close friendship with him, Ma Dai was understood to be poor as well. Ma had, however, traveled far and wide – east to the coast of Jiangsu, west to the mountains of Sichuan, north to the frontier and south to the southern bank of Dongting Lake – with a mobility not available to the truly impoverished. However he was close to poor working people and understood their happiness and hardship, as shown in the two poems translated here. He probably died in 867.

### 《过野叟居》（《全唐诗》卷555）

野人闲种树，树老野人前。  
居止白云内，渔樵沧海边。  
呼儿采山药，放犊饮溪泉。  
自着养生论，无烦忧暮年。

### Passing a “Wild” Man’s Dwelling

A wild man in leisure time plants a wild tree.  
It grows old before the planter seems to age.

He lives and travels in mountains among white clouds,  
fishing, chopping firewood by the boundless sea.

Hollering his four sons to harvest mountain herbs,  
he leads the calves to drink from the creek.

The author of a book on longevity,  
he has no worries about his own age.

《路傍树》（《全唐诗》卷556）

古树何人种，清阴减昔时。  
莓苔根半露，风雨节偏危。  
虫蠹心将穴，蝉催叶向衰。  
樵童不须翦，聊起邵公思。

**The Tree by the Road**

Who planted this ancient tree,  
in what ancient time?

Its pleasant shade has dwindled,  
its roots half-covered by fungi.  
In the slightest storm it may topple,  
its leaves eaten by cicadas,  
its trunk hollowed by worms.

Oh, please, woodchoppers, leave it alone –  
it reminds me of the ancient sage  
who sold watermelons under an old tree,  
declining the king's invitations to serve in the court.

## Li Qunyu 李群玉

Li Qunyu was from a humble clan on the banks of the Fengshui River in the northwest of Hunan Province. He had a studio on a sandbar midstream in the river, and he named the sandbar “Sleeping Immortal Island” and his atelier “Water Bamboo Studio.” Though not famous, neither was his family truly poor for he could afford not to bother trying the exams and instead enjoyed an artistic life on the sandbar, writing poetry and listening to his talented servant play the reed pipe. In one of his poems he celebrated his leisurely lifestyle of “falling drunk everyday in the immortal boat over the blue waves” of the Fengshui River. This river originates in the famous tourist hotspot Zhangjiajie – with its spectacular quartzite sandstone pillars – and flows hundreds of miles eastward into Dongting Lake. However, its water is no longer blue, but sort of brown, for the paper mills in Jinshi City on its bank have polluted it severely.

Li Qunyu was probably born in 811 (Fu Xuancong, ed., *Tang Caizi Zhuan*. Beijing, Zhonghua Press, 1999, Vol. 3. p. 390). For forty years he lived his gentleman’s life on the sandbar until Prime Minister Linghu Tao – the one who used Wen Tingyun’s lyrics as his own (see note to Wen Tingyun) – recommended him to the emperor. The emperor admired Li Qunyu’s talent and offered him a job as an editor in the imperial academy. His naivety and outspoken honesty made the job difficult, however, and he missed his old life back on the sandbar. His poem about the cranes losing their freedom for a handful of grain is both a faithful description of the two cranes in the garden of Lord Cui and a metaphor of his life working for the empire. He died in 861, not many years after he was introduced into the court.

### 《乌夜号》（《全唐诗》卷568）

层波隔梦渚，一望青枫林。  
有鸟在其间，达晓自悲吟。  
是时月黑天，四野烟雨深。  
如闻生离哭，其声痛人心。  
悄悄夜正长，空山响哀音。  
远客不可听，坐愁华发侵。  
既非蜀帝魂，恐是桓山禽。  
四子各分散，母声犹至今。

### The Night Song of a Crow

Behind the tossing waves  
on the dreamy sandbar  
in the blurred greenness of a young maple  
grove  
croaks a lonely crow  
from night till dawn  
in the saddest of tones  
  
With the moon behind clouds the  
darkness is complete  
Drenched by a drizzle the whole world is  
chilly  
The bird’s song depresses my heart  
as a mother’s moan  
when she has to let go of her child

In this long and quiet night  
listening to the mountains echo the crow  
the traveler plucks his first white hair  
  
This is not the legendary cuckoo  
supposedly the reincarnation of Emperor  
Shu’s soul  
it must be the bird about which Confucius’  
disciple  
told the master  
  
with her four chicks gone,  
the mother bird cries all year round



《失鹤》（《全唐诗》卷569）

瑶台烟雾外，一去不回心。  
清海蓬壶远，秋风碧落深。  
堕翎留片雪，雅操入孤琴。  
岂是笼中物，云萝莫更寻。

To My Lost Crane

Behind the clouds,  
beyond the ocean islands,  
you disappear without a backward glance.

Among the mountains of immortality  
on the other side of the ocean  
you soar high above the rising autumn  
winds  
in the boundless azure sky.

You drop off a single feather –  
a snow flake of memory.

I try to recapture  
Your graceful moves  
on the strings of my harp.

I realize how futile it is  
to search for you in the air.

You were born to be free  
in clouds, among cypress trees.  
You're not a pet bird  
locked in a bamboo cage.

《池州封员外郡斋双鹤丹顶霜翎仙态浮旷  
罢政之日因呈此章》  
（《全唐诗》卷569）

潇洒二白鹤，对之高兴清。  
寒溪侣云水，朱阁伴琴笙。  
顾慕稻粱惠，超遥江海情。  
应携帝乡去，仙阙看飞鸣。

Written for the Two Cranes in Mr. Feng's Garden

Graceful creatures! You make my heart pure.

I sail down the cold river to seek company of clouds.  
I play my harp and pipe for you in a scarlet pavilion.

Far above the temptation of a handful of grain,  
your heart circles over rivers and oceans.

I should take you to the palace  
of gods  
to watch you fly  
to hear you trumpet  
there.

## *Jia Dao* 贾岛

Jia Dao's family seems never to have made any fame for themselves before this poor poet was born in 779 in the town of Fanyang, now Dingxing County, about eighty kilometers southwest of Beijing. For a time Jia Dao was a Buddhist monk, though there are conflicting sources about when he became one, and whether he did so before or after his many failed attempts at the imperial examination. My own educated guess is that it was both, for I think he went to the monastery not out of religious devotion, but under the pressure of poverty, as did his younger brother. He didn't seem to like the rules that guided the a monk's life, however, one of which was that no monks should be outside their temple after mid-day. Two lines from a complaint he wrote in 810 have survived:

The cows and sheep return their home at sunset,  
I can't even compare with the beasts.

(quoted in Fu Xuancong, ed., *Tang Caizi Zhuan Jiaojian*. Beijing, Zhonghua Press, 1999, Vol. 2. p. 318. Translation mine)

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Failing the imperial exams on multiple occasions over the course of a decade seems to have made Jia Dao slightly insane. He would not greet anybody at the examination hall, but talked to himself so loudly that the supervisors had to reject him, and list him as one of the ten bad students of the year. A story goes that one day, later in Jia's life, he was chanting his own lines to himself in the bell tower of a temple, when the emperor came in disguise and picked up his poetry collection. Jia Dao first glared at the emperor and then waved his arms about, shouting: "how can a young man like you understand [my poetry]?" Embarrassed, the emperor walked downstairs and returned to the palace. When afterward Jia Dao was informed that the "young man" might be the emperor and knowing that the emperor often walked around the capital city in disguise, Jia Dao was so scared that he went to the palace and knelt at the gate for a long time. When the emperor heard of it, he "punished" Jia Dao by offering him a low rank position of county secretary in Changjian County, Sichuan. Three years later, he was slightly promoted to be the official in charge of the imperial silos in Puzhou, eastern Sichuan. He died in the winter of the year of his promotion, 840. When he died, there was not even a single coin in his home; he left behind only an ancient harp and a sickly donkey. What kind of soul in such poverty can still love the cicadas, egrets, and cranes with such caring sympathy?

《病蝉》（《全唐诗》卷573）

病蝉飞不得，向我掌中行。  
拆翼犹能薄，酸吟尚极清。  
露华凝在腹，尘点误侵睛。  
黄雀并鸂鸟，俱怀害尔情。

**A Sickly Cicada**

Have you lost your wings, sickly cicada?  
Is that why you crawl onto my hand?

Your wings, though broken,  
still look like a shiny film.

Your chant, hoarse as it is,  
still has that extreme, pure tone.

The dew drops you drink, the petals you chew,  
have been distilled  
into a fragrance inside you.

The dust in your pupil, blinding you,  
is there by mistake.

If you hadn't lost your vision,  
you should have known  
that pretty orioles and fierce hawks  
are born to harm you.

《崔卿池上双白鹭》

(《全唐诗》卷574)

鹭雏相逐出深笼，顶各有丝茎数同。  
洒石多霜移足冷，隔城远树挂巢空。  
其如尽在滩声外，何似双飞浦色中。  
见此池潭卿自凿，清泠太液底潜通。

Written for the Egret Couple on the Pond of Lord Cui

The young pair of egrets  
push one another  
out of a deep cage.

Silvery feathers, threads of silk, hang  
from their heads, exactly the same number.

Stepping on the frost-covered rocks,  
do you feel the cold?

Looking over the skyline,  
do you see your old empty nest?

If your thought of home  
is blocked by the splashing shallows,  
if your dream of flying wing to wing  
disappears behind the sunset over the remote bay,  
you may want to try this pond  
dug by His Lordship himself.

Its water is connected with the Lake of the Jade Emperor\*  
through invisible channels.

\*The Jade Emperor is the Supreme God in Daoism.



《崔卿池上鹤》（《全唐诗》卷574）

月中时叫叶纷纷，不异洞庭霜夜闻。  
翎羽如今从放长，犹能飞起向孤云。

**Written for the Cranes on the Pond of Lord Cui**

Your pure trumpets,  
cool as the falling leaves in moonshine,  
sound exactly the same to me  
as when I heard it in the frosty night  
over the thousand-mile Lake of Dongting.

If they let loose  
the string that ties the feathers in your wings,  
you can still fly high  
above that lonely cloud.

## *Wen Tingyun* 温庭筠

Wen Tingyun is a complex character. He was born into the upper class in 801 and died in 866. In the years before his death, he was a teaching assistant in the imperial academy in charge of examinations. Thinking several of the essays in the exams to be excellent, however, he breached the rules and posted them in public, thereby offending his superior who now had him demoted to the position of county sheriff in Fangcheng County, in the south of what is now Henan Province. He died there before the year came to its end.

His grandfather was Prime Minister Wen Yanbo, who had served the emperor Taizong (r. 626-649), the most famous of the Tang monarchs. For his service, the Prime Minister was offered a fief in Bingzhou, now Taiyuan. His grandson, Wen Tingyun, however, was born and raised in the suburbs of Chang'an, in Hu County, and had hardly ever been to his supposed homeland in Taiyuan on the other side of the Yellow River. A social opposite to Jia Dao, the poor monk and poet, Wen Tingyun associated with the children of the rich and powerful, and did all the things that rich and spoiled boys do. But Wen Tingyun was smart, a “natural” musician who blew on anything with holes and strummed anything with strings, making beautiful music with all of them. He also was quick in creating verses that went well with the music, and then went on to become popular among singsong girls. One of his friends and fellow bad boys was Linghu Hao, whose father happened to be Prime Minister Linghu Tao. Lord Linghu liked Wen Tingyun's poetic talent and treated him well, allowing him to live in the Prime Minister's Mansion. But he used the boy: when Lord Linghu learned that the emperor favored a certain style of lyrics, he would ask Wen Tingyun to write verses for the music and then presented these as his own work. He had from the start informed Wen Tingyun of his plan, telling him to keep it a secret. Unwilling to comply, Wen almost immediately shared the news with his friends. Offended, the prime minister kicked the youth out of the house. Still, people didn't seem to mind Wen Tingyun's bad reputation and the crown prince now invited him to stay with him in the East Palace (the traditional residence of the heir apparent in China). He stayed with the prince for two years – 837 and 838 – leaving shortly before the prince's sudden death, which was probably murder.

Wen Tingyun now finally felt that he should live on his own and in 839 he took the local examination, the necessary first step to taking the imperial examination and entering officialdom. Though not outstanding, his score sufficed to qualify him for the national exam, but he fell ill and was forced to stay for two years in his hometown, Hu County, near the capital. He later took several tries at the imperial examination, but never passed it. In 855, already in his mid-fifties, he was accused of unruly behavior during the examination and was penalized by being relegated to the position of county sheriff in Sui County, in what is now northern Hubei. From there he wandered west to Xiangyang, where he spent four years with powerful friends. He subsequently traveled east to Jiangsu, before finally returning to the capital. At the age of 65, he was recommended to the position of teaching assistant in the imperial academy. He died the next year. Reading the two poems translated here, it is hard to connect the peaceful voice and beautiful imagery with the life of a bad-boy poet.

《过分水岭》（《全唐诗》卷579）

溪水无情似有情，入山三日得同行。  
岭头便是分头处，惜别潺湲一夜声。

**Passing the Grand Divide**

Water in the creek, you seem to have  
Feelings – in truth you have not.

For three days you follow me on this mountain.  
Tonight your gurgling sound's so sad,  
as if you know that over that ridge  
you'll have to go your way  
and I mine.

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《早秋山居》（《全唐诗》卷582）

山近觉寒早，草堂霜气晴。  
树凋窗有日，池满水无声。  
果落见猿过，叶干闻鹿行。  
素琴机虑静，空伴夜泉清。

**Early Fall, in My Mountain Cottage**

I live close to the mountain and feel  
the cold days come early.

The frost on my thatched roof  
presages another fine day.

Leaves falling off,  
sunshine pours in through the window.

Out there, the autumn tarn is filled to the  
brim,  
still and quiet.

Monkeys pass in groups,  
picking up windfalls before my eyes.

When dry leaves rustle,  
I know the deer are strolling through.

At night I play my harp with a quiet mind  
to match the pure sounds of the gurgling  
stream.

## *Pi Rixiu* 皮日休

One of Pi Rixiu's ancestors had been governor of Xiangyang prefecture in northern Hubei Province. Therefore, he was always regarded by his contemporaries as hailing from Xiangyang, though he was in fact actually born in Jingling, in southern Hubei, in 840. And there he spent most of his life. He went back to the Xiangyang area only occasionally to live as a recluse in Mount Lumen, working his garden and growing vegetables. That's probably why his poems reveal a degree of familiarity with farm work. In 863, when he was twenty-three, he left a stint on Mount Lumen to make a grand tour. First he headed south, going all the way to the region south of Dongting Lake, in what is now Hunan Province. Then he turned east, into Jiangxi Province, then back north to the bank of the Yangtze, where he hiked Mount Lushan. From there he went further east into what is now Anhui Province, hiking Mount Tianzhu (Heaven's Pillar) and Mount Huo. The tour ended in the eastern Shou County where his family owned a country house.

He failed the imperial examination in 866, but passed it the next year. In 868 he left the capital for a second grand tour. This one began with Mount Hua, eighty kilometers east of the capital Chang'an, when on to the Nüji Mountains in Henan Province, and then to the Shaoshi Mountains, where the famous Shaolin Temple is located. Eventually he went southeast to Jiangsu, where he took up official work as secretary in the staff of the governor of Suzhou Prefecture. There he met his best friend, Lu Guimeng, with whom he exchanged scores of poems. The poems translated here are mostly chosen from these exchanges.

Pi Rixiu lived in the gasping years of a dying empire, when peasant rebellions occurred one after another. Caught up in one of these, which swept the lower reaches of the Yangtze before finally turning north to occupy the capital city of Chang'an, Pi Rixiu was made "Grand Scholar" of the new "Grand Qi" dynasty of the rebel leader Huang Chao 黃巢. When forced to make some auspicious statement out of Huang's name, he said something offensive and was killed. He was forty years old.



《正乐府十篇。橡媪叹》

(《全唐诗》卷603)

秋深橡子熟，散落榛芜冈。  
伛偻黄发媪，拾之践晨霜。  
移时始盈掬，尽日方满筐。  
几曝复几蒸，用作三冬粮。  
山前有熟稻，紫穗袭人香。  
细获又精舂，粒粒如玉珰。  
持之纳于官，私室无仓箱。  
如何一石余，只作五斗量。  
狡吏不畏刑，贪官不避赃。  
农时作私债，农毕归官仓。  
自冬及于春，橡实诳饥肠。  
吾闻田成子，诈仁犹自王。  
吁嗟逢橡媪，不觉泪沾裳。

**A Sigh for an Acorn-Collecting Woman**

The acorns ripen late in autumn hills.  
They fall and scatter in prickly bushes and  
weeds.

A hunchback woman of yellow hair  
ascends the hill before the rising sun  
to search for acorns on the frosty ground.  
It takes her hours to collect a handful,  
a full day to fill her bamboo basket.  
Three times she dries them under the mid-  
day sun.

Three times she steams them for winter  
food.

The rice fields downhill are sweet and  
ripe  
with purple ears attracting passers-by.  
Peasants harvest them with the greatest  
care,  
husk with mortar and pestle, and transport  
the grains of rice, millions of shiny studs  
of jade,  
to the tax collector's warehouse – gaping  
deep.

All the rice they'll give, not a grain to  
keep at home.

They wonder why a bushel they bring  
becomes

“half a bushel” in the official measuring  
box.

In season the tax officers use the grain as  
loans.

After season they return the rice to the  
warehouse.

Sly lower officials aren't afraid of  
punishment.

Their greedy superiors never refuse  
handsome bribes.

Yet the peasants, like the woman on the  
hill,  
stuff acorns in their growling stomach  
from winter to spring and spring to  
summer.

In ancient books I've read about  
hypocrites  
who built kingdoms upon their phony  
kindness.

But now even the phony kindness has  
disappeared.

The only thing that I can do is to sigh  
and shed tears for the woman on the hill  
until the front of my coat is soaking wet.

《奉和鲁望渔具十五咏·叉鱼》  
(《全唐诗》卷611)

列炬春溪口，平潭如不流。  
照见游泳鱼，一一如清昼。  
中目碎琼碧，毁鳞殷组绣。  
乐此何太荒，居然愧川后。

**On Fishing with Harpoons**

At the confluence of the spring creeks  
the water seems to stand still.

Rows of fishermen hold torches there  
to turn the night into a shining day  
to reveal swimming fish in the pure  
stream.

They stab the fish eye with sharp iron,  
the fish head exploding like  
a shattering piece of jade.  
Its blood dyes the scales  
into red patterns of embroidery.

A flowing river reminds Confucius  
how life runs away like water.  
What do I see at this river!  
How absurd it is to take pleasure in this?

《奉和鲁望渔具十五咏·射鱼》  
(《全唐诗》卷611)

注矢寂不动，澄潭晴转烘。  
下窥见鱼乐，恍若翔在空。  
惊羽决凝碧，伤鳞浮殷红。  
堪将指杯术，授与太湖公。

**On Shooting Fish with Bow and Arrow**

The fisher, silent and motionless keeps  
his eyes on the arrow across the bow.

He feels the heat reflected from the lake  
that shimmers under the scorching sun.

He sees the underwater world in peace,  
a world inhabited by fishes, free  
and happy as the birds that soar.

Then he lets the arrow loose –  
a feather shatters the green water  
with shocking speed, scattering scales  
like snowflakes, tainting the water red.

On seeing this I can't help but wonder –  
what would Tai the famous chef say  
if he knew how they shot the fish here.

《奉和鲁望樵人十咏。樵溪》  
(《全唐诗》卷 611)

何时有此溪，应便生幽木。  
橡实养山禽，藤花蒙涧鹿。  
不止产蒸薪，愿当歌棫朴。  
君知天意无，以此安吾族。

**The Woodchopper's Creek**

When the creek began to flow  
trees emerged along its course.

Acorns fell to feed the birds,  
vines providing a home to deer.

Forests offered more than fuel for fire.  
Let's sing the praises of temple beams.

Now you know it's heaven's will  
that my clan live here forever in peace.

《奉和鲁望樵人十咏。樵家》  
(《全唐诗》卷 611)

空山最深处，太古两三家。  
云萝共夙世，猿鸟同生涯。  
衣服濯春泉，盘餐烹野花。  
居兹老复老，不解叹年华。

**To the Woodchoppers**

In the deepest of empty mountains, two or three  
humble families have lived since ancient times.

They share a world of clouds and dreams  
with generations of monkeys and birds.

They wash their clothes in fresh and placid spring,  
prepare their meals with wild flowers and herbs.

Many grew old here and many more have passed,  
yet those alive never worry about death  
or ever sigh for the passing of days.

《奉和鲁望樵人十咏。樵歌》（《全唐诗》卷 611）

此曲太古音，由来无管奏。多云采樵乐，或说林泉候。  
一唱凝闲云，再谣悲顾兽。若遇采诗人，无辞收鄙陋。

### A Woodchopper's Song

This song is said to be from ancient times.  
It never was accompanied by a flute.  
It sings the happy life of the chopper  
and the mild climate along the river in trees.

Sing it once you may slow down the floating clouds.  
Sing it twice the beasts turn their heads toward you – sad faces.  
Today you sing it to me the poetry collector.  
How can I ignore such songs from the wild?



《西塞山泊渔家》

(《全唐诗》卷 613)

白纶巾下发如丝，静倚枫根坐钓矶。  
中妇桑村挑叶去，小儿沙市买蓑归。  
雨来莼菜流船滑，春后鲈鱼坠钓肥。  
西塞山前终日客，隔波相羨尽依依。

**Mooring My Boat By a Fisherman's House Near the West Fortress Hill**

Beneath your white silk cap your hair  
is white and shiny as the silk.

You lean against the maple roots  
and watch your line without care.

Your middle daughter-in-law is selecting leaves  
from the best mulberry trees around the house.

Your youngest son has returned with a bulrush cape  
he purchased from the market by the sandy beach.

After the rain the water-shield\*  
floats by the boats,  
so slippery  
and smooth, a delicious match  
for  
the fat perch that weighs down your rod.

I, a sojourner by the West Fortress Hill,  
observe and admire you all day long,  
from the other side of the rippling bay.

\*A plant that grows in water, the leaves of which are edible, with a slippery  
and starchy texture.

## Lu Guimeng 陆龟蒙

Lu Guimeng's great-great-grandfather seven generations back was a powerful courtier, but by the time of Lu Guimeng himself the family had sunk into obscurity in Suzhou, down in southeastern China. It is unknown when he was born, but judging from the way he and his friend Pi Rixiu addressed each other, I have reason to believe that he was slightly younger than Pi Rixiu, who was born in 840. Under the pressure of supporting his mother and family, in the year 865 Lu started clerical work for Lu Yong, a distant relative then serving as governor in Muzhou, now Chun'an County in Zhejiang Province, over three hundred kilometers southwest of Lu Guimeng's home. It was a long distance back then and quite a commitment for a young man. Yet, he was not that poor for his family owned a farm of about fifty acres (three hundred *mu*), with a dozen farmhands and ten water buffalos. The farm and a thirty-room compound were located in Songjiang, now a district in Shanghai. He also had a tea garden in Yixing, and a library of ten thousand volumes. That's probably why during his travels he could afford not to receive some government officials who admired his poetic talent but whose personalities didn't appeal to him.

Lu Guimeng passed the local examination in 868 but was unable to take the national examination because of the rebellion led by Pang Xun, a frontier soldier who had been recruited to guard the southwestern frontier. Pang's rebellion swept through southern China, making traveling dangerous. Upon the recommendation of his best friend, Pi Rixiu, Lu took up work as staff member for the governor of Suzhou from 869 to 871. In 875, Lu Guimeng joined the staff of Zhang Tuan in Luzhou, now Hefei City in Anhui Province. When Zhang was in the next year transferred to Suzhou, Lu gladly followed his employer to work in his hometown. Re-united with his family and his best friend Pi Rixiu, Lu Guimeng was happy for awhile. But then, with the encouragement of Pi Rixiu, Lu was tempted to try the examination again. However, fate seems to have decided that he would not take it anyway. Another peasant rebellion, this one led by Wang Xianzhi, now advanced rapidly from Hunan Province to Jiangxi, then through Anhui, Hubei, Henan, and all the way to the gates of Chang'an. Lu Guimeng thus returned to his old life of part poet, part clerk and part farmer.

In Lu Guimeng's poems we can see familiarity with the life of the peasant. He actually worked in the field. Although he hired a dozen farmhands to work with him, his land was situated at a low-lying bend of the Yangtze and was often flooded. When the floods came, he wrote, the field and the river became one. So he had to work, shovel in hand, side by side with his men to save the crops. When his scholar friends laughed at him for laboring alongside servants, he would blame them for not following the examples set up by legendary leaders such as the Yellow Emperor (Huangdi 黄帝) or the Great Yu 大禹. As both experienced farmer and thoughtful intellectual, Lu wrote in depth about the evolution of the Chinese plow in his book *The Classic of Plows (Leisi Jing 耒耜经)*. With anachronistic application of Pierre Macherey's Marxist theory of literary production to the writing of *Classic of Plows*, one may argue that the book is a product of the development of means of production under the pressure of changing times. The numerous rebellions and uprisings of this period, and the wars they set off, had devastated the northern and central areas of China. The center of agricultural production thus moved from central China to the densely populated area south of the Yangtze and farming techniques consequently became more focused on methods to increase the productivity of every square foot of the land. As a farmer in a flood zone, Lu needed the changing techniques and technology for his survival; as an intellectual, he needed to communicate them to other farmers so as to work together with a changing economy that made necessary the intensive farming he practiced on his own farm.

In addition to traditional farming, Lu paid close attention to fish-farming. He was the first in Chinese history to advocate active “planting” of fish, while also strongly objecting to the practice of fishing with poison. These were reflected in the fifteen pairs of poems on fishing he and Pi exchanged. I translate three from Lu below – and two from Pi, just above – to offer a sampling of the two closely connected but subtly different minds.

Never physically strong, Lu became seriously ill in 879. He died in 882.

《渔具诗·叉鱼》（《全唐诗》卷 620）

春溪正含绿，良夜才参半。  
持矛若羽轻，列烛如星烂。  
伤鳞跳密藻，碎首沈遥岸。  
尽族染东流，傍人作佳玩。

**On Fishing with Harpoons**

At midnight the creek flows by quietly,  
reflecting the spring verdure on the banks.

Men come with feather-light spears and harpoons,  
their torches outshining the Silver River in the sky.

Fish jump, scales fly, out of the waterweeds.  
Shattered heads and chopped-off tails  
sink down to the river's bottom.

Spectators, as if watching a fun game,  
witness the extinction of aquatic families and clans.

《渔具诗.射鱼》（《全唐诗》卷 620）

弯弓注碧浔，掉尾行凉沚。  
青枫下晚照，正在澄明里。  
攄弦断荷扇，溅血殷菱蕊。  
若使禽荒闻，移之暴雨水。

**On Shooting Fish with Bow and Arrow**

Behind the green maples  
the sun,  
almost setting,  
lights up the clear lake –  
such shiny water!

With trembling vibration the arrow  
pierces through a round lotus leaf,  
splattering blood and painting  
the tiny white petals of the water-chestnut  
red.

Wagging their tails as if merry  
the fish circle around the sandbar.

If the hunters on the steppes  
hear of this fisherman,  
will they move down here  
to the misty waterside?

A man bends his bow to the shape of a  
full moon,  
stares deep into the flowing green.

《渔具诗.药鱼》（《全唐诗》卷 620）

香饵缀金钩，日中悬者几。  
盈川是毒流，细大同时死。  
不唯空饲犬，便可将貽蚁。  
苟负竭泽心，其它尽如此。

**On Fishing with Poison**

They used to fish with lines and golden hooks  
that hung in water wrapped in sweetened baits.  
From morning to noon they sat on shady banks,  
but how many fish can they catch like that?

Now they turn the whole river into a poison stream  
to kill the fish, big or small, all at once.

They feed the fish to dogs afterward  
with enough left-over for the crawling ants.

Why is “taking all now” the way  
of all trades in the world of today?



《樵人十咏。樵溪》  
(《全唐诗》卷 620)

山高溪且深，苍苍但群木。  
抽条欲千尺，众亦疑朴樕。  
一朝蒙翦伐，万古辞林麓。  
若遇燎玄穹，微烟出云族。

**The Woodchopper's Creek**

Mountain high  
creek deep  
forest green  
with towering trees  
millions of lower bushes.

Once you chop these giants down  
they leave their mountain home forever  
You make fire with them at night  
They disappear in a small puff of smoke

《樵人十咏。樵家》(《全唐诗》卷 620)

草木黄落时，比邻见相喜。  
门当清涧尽，屋在寒云里。  
山棚日才下，野灶烟初起。  
所谓顺天民，唐尧亦如此。

**To the Woodchoppers**

You build your houses  
in piles of cold clouds.

Your gates open to  
the pure mountain stream.

Your hearts warm up  
when you see your neighbors come  
through crisp yellow leaves.

As soon as the sun sets behind the hills,  
cooking smoke come up in columns  
through the cracked roofs  
of your mountain huts.

Your lifestyle follows nature  
as described of the Golden Age.

《鹤媒歌》（《全唐诗》卷 621）

偶系渔舟汀树枝，因看射鸟令人悲。  
盘空野鹤忽然下，背翳见媒心不疑。  
媒闲静立如无事，清唳时时入遥吹。  
裴回未忍过南塘，且应同声就同类。  
梳翎宛若相逢喜，只怕才来又惊起。  
窥鳞啄藻乍低昂，立定当胸流一矢。  
媒欢舞跃势离披，似谄功能邀弩儿。  
云飞水宿各自物，妒侣害群犹尔为。  
而况世间有名利，外头笑语中猜忌。  
君不见荒陂野鹤陷良媒，  
同类同声真可畏。

The Live Crane Decoy

I tied my fishing boat on an island tree,  
to witness by chance a hunting tragedy.  
A crane was shot in an eerie way  
that saddened me and all who saw how it  
died.

A crane decoy stood on a sand bar  
sending peaceful honks into clouds.

A wild crane attracted by the decoy on  
land  
had no suspicion of any harm.

He circled above the isle,  
changed his mind of flying further south.

He honked back to the crane on sand  
ready to land near a fellow bird.

The decoy combed his feathers clean  
to welcome a friend or guest.  
Unwilling to lose a companion, he  
worked  
with utmost grace –  
in leisure searching for a fish  
or pecking at the floating weeds.

All seemed natural, all was calm, the  
crane  
from the clouds landed for a rest.

A sudden arrow from the bushes pierced  
him through his white, exposed chest.

The decoy flapped his wings and danced a  
merry dance,  
as if pleased with his service to the  
hunting boy.

Oh, cranes! Flying over the clouds and  
sleeping on lake,  
you are certainly free and lofty creatures.  
Yet some of you hate your fellows and  
hurt your own kind.

In the human world there are fame and  
wealth  
for which men smile and smile but plot  
against  
their friends. I know the greatest danger  
comes  
from our kind that speaks our tongue,  
just as the crane decoy who tricked his  
fellow birds.

《偶掇野蔬寄裘美有作》  
(《全唐诗》卷 624)

野园烟里自幽寻，嫩甲香蕤引渐深。  
行歇每依鸦舅影，挑频时见鼠姑心。  
凌风蒿彩初携笼，带露虚疏或贮襟。  
欲助春盘还爱否，不妨萧洒似家林。

Written while Picking Herbal Leaves  
For My Friend Pi Rixiu

Through thin mist, around my wild  
garden  
I search in deeper shades.  
Small tender leaves and sweet petals lead  
me on.

I walk and rest under the Crow's Uncle –  
the shady tallow tree.  
I separate and pick at the heart of the  
Mouse's Aunt –  
the peony flower.

In the colorful breeze I fill the bamboo  
basket.  
I stretch out the skirt of my jacket to hold  
more dewy leaves. Enjoy them my friend,  
as if they come  
from your own wild woods. I hope they  
will  
add more flavor to your meals in spring.

《奉和夏初裘美见访题小斋次韵》  
(《全唐诗》卷 625)

四邻多是老农家，百树鸡桑半顷麻。  
尽趁清明修网架，每和烟雨掉繰车。  
啼鸾偶坐身藏叶，饷妇归来鬓有花。  
不是对君吟复醉，更将何事送年华。

In Response to the Poem Written by My Friend Pi Rixiu  
When He Visited My Humble Hut

You've met my neighbors, peasants for generations.  
Together we raise a hundred chickens, grow  
a hundred mulberry trees, half an acre hemp.

In fine weather we fix the vine racks.  
In misty rains we reel silk from boiled cocoons.

The warbling orioles sit behind shady leaves.  
Our daughters-in-law walk under them,  
delivering lunch to the field, with wild flowers  
in their hair. What else can I do with my life?  
Write poetry, drink wine with you, my friend.

《新秋杂题六首。吟》  
(《全唐诗》卷 629)

忆山摇膝石上晚，怀古掉头溪畔凉。  
有时得句一声发，惊起鹭鸶和夕阳。

Poetry Chanting

Sitting on a rock in evening ease,  
I reminisce about my mountain home.  
Walking along the cooling creek  
I reflect upon events of the past.

I sometimes find an expression of  
thoughts,  
chant my lines out loud.

Does my voice make the egrets fly  
or the setting sun jump?

《新秋杂题六首。食》  
(《全唐诗》卷 629)

日午空斋带睡痕，水蔬山药荐盘飧。  
林乌信我无机事，长到而今下石盆。

Lunch

Getting up at noon,  
my face crinkled from the pillow-press,  
I start my lunch of yam and water-chestnuts.

The crows have always trusted me – a mindless man.

Today they descend  
from the top of the tree  
to peck from my stone plate.