

仲昭



Lü Wen 吕温

Lü Wen was Liu Zongyuan's cousin, one year older than his kinsman. Like Liu, his *junwang* 郡望 – the place where his family was well known – was also the frontier district of Yongji County, in Shanxi, but also like Liu, Lü Wen never actually lived in that area. Born in 771, he was educated in the Luoyang suburbs. Taking the provincial examination there, in 794, he scored at the top of the class. It would, however, be four years before he went to Chang'an to take the highest level imperial exam, because his father was in charge of the tests during that time, raising understandable concerns of “conflict of interest.” Indeed, Lü Wen and his three younger brothers were named after the four important Confucian virtues: *Wen* 温 means “warm” and “mild”; his brother Gong's name 恭 means “respectful”; Jian 俭 means “thrifty”; while Rang 让 means “willing to yield to others what is rightly theirs.” Ezra Pound would have made a good case with the idea of “virtuous rulers,” for the four brothers of the Lü family all became government officials and some at quite high ranks. Lü Wen himself was moderately successful as an official and was promoted by Prime Minister Wang Shuwen, the same powerful man who supported Lü's cousin Liu Zongyuan. In 804, Lü Wen was appointed an emissary to Tibet, where he served for more than a year. When he returned to China, however, Wang Shuwen was out of power. In 808, Lü Wen was demoted and banished to the “barbarian south,” in Daozhou, Hunan Province, even farther south than his cousin Liu Zongyuan. In 810, he was transferred to Hengzhou, still in Hunan, but somewhat closer to home – three hundred kilometers north of Daozhou. He died in Hengzhou in the next year.

The poem translated here was written during his banishment in Daozhou. Southern Hunan is on the north slope of the famous Grand Yu Ridge, which demarcates the southern boundary of the Tang poetic imagination. Daozhou, where Lü Wen was sent, and Yongzhou, to which Liu Zongyuan was banished, were inhabited by minority tribes, regarded as barbarians by the Chinese. That's why Liu Zongyuan felt extremely out of place living there, although he loved the beautiful mountains and rivers. Lü Wen, as his name suggests, was a “mild” fellow and dealt with his frustrating life at Daozhou in a mild way: he set a goose free so it could fly back north to its homeland and thus acquire a temporary relief from homesickness. His lack of “appetite for a roasted friend” seems to prove that humor worked for the poet in distress.

《道州北池放鹅》（《全唐诗》卷371）

我非好鹅癖，尔乏鸣雁姿。
安得免沸鼎，澹然游清池。
见生不忍食，深情固在斯。
能自远飞去，无念稻粱为。

Setting Free a Goose on the Northern Lake

I'm no calligrapher
who sees the neck of a swan
as a graceful model for his brush.

You're no swan,
who honks and lifts its head
with elegant pride.

What I try to achieve
is to help you avoid the roaring fire,
and let you swim quietly
on this clear lake.

My motive is homely, nothing profound –
since I've known you alive,
I've no appetite for a roasted friend.

You of course can fly away
but beware of the trap
covered with a handful of grain.

Lu Tong 卢仝

It is unknown when Lu Tong was born or when exactly he died. Scholars recently abandoned an incorrect earlier consensus that he died in 835; instead, they now tend to agree that he probably lived into his late forties and died either in 812 or 813 (Fu Xuancong, *Tang Caizi Zhuan Jiaojian*. Zhonghua Press, Beijing, 1999, Vol. 2, p. 271). He grew up in central China, near Luoyang in northern Henan. It is said that his family was poor and when he lived in Luoyang all he could afford to rent was a few shabby rooms, with no furniture but with a great heap of books piled to the ceiling. He never took the imperial exam. Instead, he lived an obscure life in the Shaoshi Mountains near Luoyang, or at times within the city itself. Known for his “strange” poetic style, he became friendly with the famous poet Han Yu, whose style contemporaries also regarded as peculiar.

Han Yu wrote several poems about Lu Tong, and the two exchanged poems as letters, a popular practice in their time (the exchange of poetic letters between Bai Juyi and Yuan Zhen itself becoming an important subject for research on Tang poetry). I don’t think Lu Tong was really as poor as claimed, or that he was a scholar-farmer who really worked in the fields, as seems to have been the case with Ding Xianzhi and Zu Yong. Describing his friend’s “poverty,” Han Yu said Lu could afford only two old servants: an elderly woman with no teeth or shoes, and an old man known for his long beard and bare, cap-less head. Han Yu did find it necessary to send Lu some rice from time to time.

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Lu seemed to be a very kind and fair man. He was taken advantage of by local bullies, who threatened his family and tried to steal from him. It happened that Han Yu was the county magistrate of Lu Tong’s town, and when Lu’s servant reported the mistreatment to Han, he made plans to protect his friend by punishing the bullies in the market place, in a manner both public and severe. Lu Tong, however, talked Han out of it by suggesting that those people, though annoying, did not deserve such severe punishment. This kind nature of Lu Tong is best shown in the three poems translated below. In our time, we can more readily appreciate his effort of trying to understand the egrets from the “birdy” perspective and his rather tolerant attitude towards fish, magpies, and apes.

Because he never served the empire, neither *The Book of Tang* nor *The New Book of Tang* has his biography. He is remembered only by his poems and his friendship with a few of his contemporary poets.

《观放鱼歌》（《全唐诗》卷387）

常州贤刺史，从谏议大夫除。
天地好生物，刺史性与天地俱。
见山客，狎鱼鸟。坐山客，北亭湖。
命舟人，驾舫子，漾漾菰蒲。
酒兴引行处，正见渔人鱼。
刺史密会山客意，复念网罗婴无辜。
忽脱身上殷绯袍，尽买罟擣尽有无。
鳣鲡魑魍，涎恶最顽愚。
鱗鲙见幽风，质干稍高流。
时白喷雪鲫鲤[]，此辈肥脆为绝尤。
老鲤变化颇神异，三十六鳞如抹朱。
水苞弘窟有蛟鼉，饵非龙饵唯无鲈。
丛杂百千头，性命悬须臾。
天心应刺史，刺史尽活诸。
一一投深泉，跳脱不复拘。
得水竞腾突，动作诡怪殊。
或透藻而出，或破浪而趋。
或掉尾子子，或奋鬣愉愉。
或如莺掷梭，或如蛇衔珠。
四散渐不见，岛屿徒萦纡。
鸕鶿鸂鶒，喜观争叫呼。
小虾亦相庆，绕岸摇其须。
乃知贪生不独顽痴夫。
可怜百千命，几为中肠菹。
若养圣贤真，大烹龙髓敢惜乎。
苦痛如今人，尽是鱼食鱼。
族类恣饮啖，强力无亲疏。

明明刺史心，不欲与物相欺诬。
岸虫两与命，无意杀此活彼用贼徒。
亦忆清江使，横遭乎余且。
圣神七十钻，不及泥中鳅。
哀哉托非贤，五脏生冤仇。
若当刺史时，圣物保不囚。
不疑且不卜，二子安能谏。
二子倘故谏，吾知心受诛。
礼重一草木，易封称中孚。
又曰钧不纲，又曰远庖厨。
故仁人用心，刺史尽合符。
昔鲁公观棠距箴，
遂被孔子贬而书。
今刺史好生，德洽民心，谁为刺史一褒誉。
刺史自来，德风如草铺。
衣冠兴废礼，百姓减暴租。
豪猾不豪猾，鰥孤不鰥孤。
开古孟渎三十里，四千顷泥坑为膏腴，刺史视之总若无。
讼庭雀噪坐不得，湖上拔茭植芙蕖。
胜业庄中二桑门，时时对坐谈真如。
因说十千天子事，福力当与刺史俱。
天雨曼陀罗花深没膝，四十千真珠璎珞堆高楼。
此中怪特不可会，但慕刺史仁有馀。
刺史敕左右兼小家奴，慎勿背我沉毒钩。
念鱼承奉刺史仁，深僻处，远远游。
刺史官职小，教化未能敷。
第一莫近人，恶人唯口腴。
第一莫出境，四境多网罟。
重伤刺史心，丧尔微贱躯。

Composed upon Watching the Magistrate
Of Chang Prefecture Set Fish Free

Once the Emperor's adviser,
He's now the Magistrate of Chang Prefecture.
Heaven and earth love living things,
the magistrate by nature
reflects the virtue of both.

The magistrate invited me, a wild man from mountains,
to be his guest in the pavilion on the North Lake.
Having ordered his men to load
the boat with sweet rice wine,
he asked them to row the boat along
the bank through wild rice and bulrushes.

Our boat followed our mind
as our mind followed the wine,
which led us by chance to a group of fishermen.
The magistrate saw my color change –
the wine-red drained.
Out of his own blessed heart
that always sides with the innocent and weak,
he took off his purple silk gown
and traded it for all the catch.

Then he set all the fish free –
gross and slimy eels, finless eels
catfish, snakehead and loaches,
the more prestigious trout and bream
mentioned in the *Book of Odes*,
and the best-tasting at all seasons,
including carp, crucian carp
famous for their flesh – fat, crispy, white as snow.

Among these, some ancient carp
are well on their way to metamorphosis,
evolving into some mystical being
shown by their thirty-six red scales.
There's even a white Yangtze crocodile,
but no Perch for the lure was less delicate.

All together there must be hundreds or more
whose life is on that thin line held by the fishermen.
But heaven's love of life has found
its counterpart in the heart of my friend.

As he threw them one after another
into the depth of the boundless lake.
the fish leapt over the lake surface,
free from tangling nets and barbed hooks.
Landing in the water they behave strangely –
they dashed over the waves or swam through reeds,
wagging their tails and fins gracefully,
shaking their whiskers in grateful delight,
like a dragon playing with a shining pearl
or an oriole flying through willow twigs.

Then they disperse under the deep water
disappearing behind isles and slippery rocks.
The wood ducks, wagtails, gulls and grebes
scream and cackle in great happiness.
Tiny shrimp also seem to celebrate
by swimming around the cape, waving their whiskers.

Ah, from them I learned that stupid men
are not the only creatures that value their lives.
Look at these – hundreds of lives –



they almost became meat pulp
in the stomach of foolish men.

If meat can really make humans saints and sages,
I wouldn't hesitate to cook the marrow of the dragon
and offer it to all men foolish or wise.
But upon closer inspection I've found
these men are nothing but fish eating other fish.
Power makes them indifferent to friends or foe
and they're not above eating each other's flesh
or drinking each other's blood to quench their thirst.

I understand the Magistrate's heart –
he doesn't want to cheat or bully people or things.

There is no point in killing a swimming life
to feed another that walks on two legs.
I thus remember the courier of the river god,
captured by a legendary fisherman –
The messenger tried seventy illusionary forms
but couldn't get away better than a loach in mud.

Tragic fate, even the gods can't escape your hands!
All grievances and revenge come from you.
But had the messenger run into the hand of the Magistrate,
his godly virtue would have been soon detected.
He in any form would've been set free.

I have no doubt and have little need
to consult the fortune teller for the god in fish.
I know the fisherman and courier had not lied.
If they had lied damned is my mind!

The Book of Rituals urges us to respect
a single blade of grass and a single sapling tree.

The Book of Changes praises fair and sincere men,
Who cultivate the roots of growing plants.

Confucius laid out more interesting rules –
“If you have to fish, fish with a single hook.
The net should be banned, for it would catch
more than one can eat. If you have to eat meat,
stay away from the butcher and the kitchen.”

The Magistrate's kind heart matches
Those of ancient sages –
In ancient times the Lord of Lu State
indulged himself in shooting fish with bow and arrow
against the advice of his wise councilors.
That's why Confucius reprimanded his Lord
and recorded it in detail in *The Book of History*.
Now the Magistrate loves life.
His virtue comforts the hearts of men,
Who is going to sing his praises?

Our Magistrate comes from a higher plane.
Like wind bending grasses
he bends us all towards virtuous deeds.
Scholars now restore the ancient moral codes
so that common people are free from excessive taxation.
The sly bullies quit bullying,
the widows and orphans taken back into the communities.

He dredged the ancient Meng Waterways for thirty miles.
He turned the mud hole into four thousand hectares of
fertile land.
Under his rule, the court house is deserted.
None presses charges there where sparrows chirp, hop
around.
He also had the reeds pulled up,
lotus planted in their place.



When people went happily about their business
he would go and visit his two Buddhist friends,
discussing the meaning of life by hours.

The Buddhists insisted that the Magistrate's power of
virtue
equals those of ten thousand ancient kings combined.
As they talked the magical petals of wisdom fell
and piled up on the ground as high as the knee.
Forty thousand shining pearls appeared from nowhere
to form a pagoda hundreds of feet high.

I, unable to believe the Buddhist miracles,
would rather admire the Magistrate's kind heart
and what he said to his servant boy:

"Never, behind my back, use the hook for fun."
Upon hearing that I offer a piece of advice for the fish –
the Magistrate rules over but a small prefecture.
His virtue hasn't reformed every man.
So my scaled friends please swim and live quietly
in the remote areas of the lake.
Follow closely these two rules:
first stay away from people
who value their palates more than their virtue.
Secondly you stay within the area under
the guidance of the Magistrate
for outside of it are many nets and hooks.

When they hurt you, they hurt the Magistrate's heart
and take away your precious life.

《白鹭鹭》（《全唐诗》卷387）

刻成片玉白鹭鹭，欲捉纤鳞心自急。
翘足沙头不得时，傍人不知谓闲立。

To a Snowy Egret

As if carved from pieces of jade
You, snowy egret, stand on the sandbar,
for hours and hours
on a single foot – doing what?

The poets admire you for your leisurely life.
Only you know the anxiety
of waiting for the next meal.

《出山作》（《全唐诗》卷389）

出山忘掩山门路，钓竿插在枯桑树。
当时只有鸟窥窬，更亦无人得知处。
家僮若失钓鱼竿，定是猿猴把将去。

Walking Out of the Mountain

Walking out of the mountain I forgot
to close the door to my mountain hut.
I left my fishing rod
in the hollow trunk
of an ancient mulberry tree.

Nobody saw me leave it
but a few mountain magpies.
If my servant boy couldn't find it,
it must have been taken away
by Father Ape.

Yuan Zhen 元稹

Yuan Zhen and Bai Juyi are two of the most important figures in late Tang poetry. They were also best friends and their long-lasting friendship produced touching poems on both sides that have influenced many of pre-modern Chinese and Japanese poets. What interests me from an eco-critical perspective is the ethnic origins of these two friends and the complicated senses of place their origins engendered.

Neither of these two great poets were Han Chinese, “Chinese” in the narrow ethno-linguistic sense. As I will explain in the next note, Bai Juyi’s clan descended from a royal family of a kingdom in the far west of China, a kingdom that disappeared in the stream of time and the sand of the Gobi Desert. Regarding Yuan Zhen, the epitaph on his sister’s tomb-tablet states that their family descended from the imperial family of the Northern Wei (386–534; followed by brief rival successor regimes, Eastern Wei 534–550; Western Wei 535–556). The name of this line of rulers had originally been the Inner Asian Tuoba. After a century of rule, however, in 493, the dynasty relocated its capital from the northern frontier to Luoyang, deep in the interior of China. Three years after that a Chinese surname was adopted: Yuan (see Fu Xuancong ed. *Tang Caizi Zhuan Jiaojian*. Zhonghua Press, Beijing, 1999, vol. 3, p. 22). Yuan Zhen was born in 779 (Fu, p. 25) in Wannian County near Chang-an, the West Capital (or Upper Capital) of the Tang (Fu, p.23). Both the *Old Book of Tang* and the *New Book of Tang*, however, insist that he was from Henan Province rather than Shaanxi Province where Wannian County and West Capital are located. This is because of the interesting concept of “local prestige” *junwang* (郡望), which complicates the idea of place in Chinese culture. *Junwang* literally means the place where the clan or family has made their reputation or fame, or where the family is best known. That is a more important factor in terms of home for the individual than where she or he was actually born and brought up.

Bai Juyi and Yuan Zhen became great friends, in a manner comparable to Wordsworth and Coleridge. There is no evidence they did this because of their ethnic backgrounds, but the concept of *junwang* made their sense of place more flexible than a modern reader in the west can imagine.

When Yuan Zhen was born, his family was already in decline. When he was eight, his father died and the family became poor. His mother, according to history, was both able and intelligent. She took her son’s education into her own hands and, at the age of nine, Yuan Zhen had already become a proficient writer. He passed the imperial examination at the young age of fifteen, though he was not assigned a real position until nine years later. At the age of twenty-four, Yuan became an editor in the Imperial Secretariat. As he climbed the bureaucratic ladder, however, he offended powerful people who had him sent out of the court to be an Imperial Inspector in eastern Sichuan Province. He died in 831 in his office in Wuchang, now in Hubei Province.

《后湖》（《全唐诗》卷 398）

荆有泥汙水，在荆之邑郢。
 郢前水在后，谓之为后湖。
 环湖十馀里，岁积潢与污。
 臭腐鱼鳖死，不植菰与蒲。
 郑公理三载，其理用煦愉。
 岁稔民四至，隘廛亦隘衢。
 公乃署其地，为民先矢谿。
 人人悦自为，我亦不庀徒。
 下里得闻之，各各相俞俞。
 提携翁及孙，捧戴妇与姑。
 壮者负砾石，老亦捽茅刍。
 斤磨片片雪，椎隐连连珠。
 朝餐布庭落，夜宿完户枢。
 邻里近相告，新戚远相呼。
 鬻者自为鬻，酤者自为酤。
 鸡犬丰中市，人民岐下都。
 百年废滯所，一旦奥浩区。
 我实司水土，得为官事无。
 人言贱事贵，贵直不贵谀。
 此实公所小，安用歌袴襦。
 答云潭及广，以至鄂与吴。
 万里尽泽国，居人皆垫濡。
 富者不容盖，贫者不庇躯。
 得不歌此事，以我为楷模。

The Back Lake

Out side the city wall
 of Jing Prefecture in the south
 lies a large muddy pool –
 that locals call the Back Lake.

Five miles around
 dead water has made a pool there for
 years.
 With no wild rice or bulrushes to freshen
 it
 dead turtles and fish float and rot.

During his three-year term
 Lord Zheng united his people
 in a warm and pleasant community

that attracted neighbors from everywhere,
 overcrowding the market and the streets.

The Magistrate started to clean up the
 lake-side
 and posted his plan there for people to
 read:
 “We people should improve our
 circumstances
 by our own efforts. I myself, your
 magistrate,
 will not hire workmen to do my share.”

Working people heard him in the narrow
 lanes

and back streets and started to work
 together.
 Hundreds labored,
 grandfathers and grandchildren alike,
 together with mothers-in-law and
 daughters-in-law.

The strong ones carried rocks and gravel.
 The old and weak transported twigs and
 straw.

Women helped sharpen axes
 which shine like bright snow flakes.
 Children cared for the hammers,
 Lining them up like giant pearls on a
 necklace.

They broke their fast in early morning,
 together, under a giant cloth tent.
 They slept in comfort that night
 under the roof of the new public market,
 completed with large windows and gates.

Excited neighbors tell each other the
 news,
 relatives walked far to inform other
 relatives.
 They came to the new market to trade,
 to share a happy, communal drink.
 Many chickens and dogs made the market
 abundant.
 These thousands almost started a new
 city.



For centuries this place was a sewage
dump.

Now it's been dredged, deepened and
cleansed,

offering a large area for trade,
a sense of place and community.

Under the Magistrate I managed the land
and the lakes.

Writing about it is my pleasant duty.

For lakes are large and many
in the provinces of Chu and Wu.
Extending thousands of miles
these provinces are marshes
where everyone lives in damp dwellings,
even those built on higher ground.
The "rich" here don't have a tight roof,
the poor not even enough shelter to cover
their bodies.

That's why I wrote this song

of how people can improve their
surroundings and life.
People here value action.
In words they value the true.
The Magistrate looks down upon flattery.
Therefore I'm not trying to brag
about his achievements as magistrate.
I record and praise the event,
hold it up as my guiding example
of the work to be done in the country of
lakes.

《生春二十首
(丁酉岁。凡二十章) 其十一》
(《全唐诗》卷410)

何处生春早，春生鸟思中。
鹊巢移旧岁，鸂羽旋高风。
鸿雁惊沙暖，鸳鸯爱水融。
最怜双翡翠，飞入小梅丛。

The Birth of Spring

Where was spring born the earliest?
It was born in the mind of birds –
magpies move out their old nests,
say goodbye to the old year.

Hawks and falcons hover high,
circle above the high wind.

On sandbars wild geese feel
the sudden return of warmth.

Woodducks begin to make love
in smooth water beside melting ice.

I love most the couple of kingfishers
who suddenly leave the river and fly
into plum twigs among tiny buds.