2.1

飲中八仙歌

知章騎馬似乘船，
眼花落井水底眠。

汝陽三斗始朝天，
道逢麴車口流涎，
恨不移封向酒泉。

左相日興費萬錢，
飲如長鯨吸百川，
銜杯樂聖稱避賢。

宗之瀟灑美少年，
舉觴白眼望青天，
皎如玉樹臨風前。

蘇晉長齋繡佛前，
醉中往往愛逃禪。

李白一斗詩百篇，
長安市上酒家眠。

天子呼來不上船，
自稱臣是酒中仙。
2.1

Song of Eight Drinking Immortals

He Zhizhang rides his horse as if sailing on a boat, spots in his vision, he falls in a well and slumbers underwater.

Ruyang will go to dawn court only after having three quarts; meeting a mash-cart on the road his mouth drools, he’s upset that he can’t change his fief to Alespring.

The Minister of the Left gets up each day and spends ten thousand cash, he drinks like the long behemoth sucking in a hundred rivers, the cup to his lips, he enjoys the “Sage,” and claims he avoids the “Worthy.”

Cui Zongzhi is carefree, a handsome young man, he lifts his goblet showing the whites of his eyes and gazing at blue Heaven, gleaming like a tree of jade standing in the wind.

Su Jin undergoes long abstention before an embroidered Buddha, but when he’s drunk he always loves to escape Chan restrictions.

Li Bai makes a hundred poems out of one quart of ale, in the marketplace of Chang’an he sleeps in the tavern.

The Son of Heaven called him to come, he wouldn’t get on the boat, he himself declared: “Your subject is an immortal in his ale.”

---

1 Li Jin, the Prince of Ruyang, a good friend of He Zhizhang.
2 A commandery in modern Gansu, whose springs were reputedly sweet as ale.
3 Li Shizhi.
4 “Sage” was a term for a high-grade clear ale; the “worthy” was thick ale.
5 *Ruan Ji.
6 Specifically the restriction against drinking.
張旭三杯草聖傳，
脱帽露頂王公前，
揮毫落紙如雲煙。

焦遂五斗方卓然，
高談雄辨驚四筵。

2.2

高都護驄馬行

安西都護胡青驄，
聲價欻然來向東。
此馬臨陣久無敵，
與人一心成大功。

功成惠養隨所致，
飄飄遠自流沙至。
雄姿未受伏櫪恩，
猛氣猶思戰場利。

腕促蹄高如踣鐵，
交河幾蹴曾冰裂。
五花散作雲滿身，
萬里方看汗流血。
After three cups Zhang Xu is bruited “Draft Script Sage,”
his cap fallen off, with bare head he stands before princes and dukes,
from the brush he wields paper drops like clouds and mist.

Only after five quarts is Jiao Sui really outstanding,
his grand discussions and bold arguments shock everyone at a feast.

*Although this is the only extant example, the “Eight Drinking Immortals”
was said to have been a popular topic for poems of the period.*

### 2.2

**Protector-General Gao’s Dappled Gray: A Ballad**

Anxi’s Protector-General’s Hu dappled gray,\(^1\)
the fame of its worth in a flash came to the east.
In battle ranks this very horse has long been without rival,
of one mind with its master, it achieved great deeds.

Those deeds achieved, it gets special care going with him where he will,
now as wind gusting from afar, it comes from the Drifting Sands.
Its heroic manner has never received the grace of the stable,
a fierce disposition still longing for advantage on the field.

Ankles constricted and hooves high, like trampling iron,
at Cross Rivers it often has stomped cracks in the layered ice.\(^2\)
Its five mane-tufts spread out into clouds all over its body,\(^3\)
after ten thousand leagues then you will see its sweat flow with blood.

---

1 Anxi, literally the “Pacified West,” was one of the major commands in Tang Central Asia.
2 A region in modern Xinjiang.
3 In the Tang the mane of a horse was often tied into five tufts.
長安壯兒不敢騎，
走過掣電傾城知。

青絲絡頭為君老，
何由卻出橫門道。

2.3

冬日洛城北謁玄元皇帝廟

配極玄都閟，
憑高禁籞長。
守祧嚴具禮，
掌節鎮非常。
碧瓦初寒外，
金莖一氣旁。
山河扶繡戶，
日月近雕梁。
The stout lads of Chang’ān dare not ride it—
it runs faster than a lightning bolt as the whole city knows.

If green silk enwraps its head and it grows old for its lord,
what way will it have to go back out the Guang Gate Road?¹

_In 749 Protector-General Gao Xianzhi, one of Xuanzong’s best generals in the Northwestern Command, returned to Chang’ān in victory, after having defeated one of the client principalities of the Tibetans._

**2.3**

On a Winter Day Paying My Respects at the Temple of the Mysterious Primal Emperor North of Luoyang²

For the Pole Star’s counterpart sacrifice, the Dark Capital is closed tight,³
resting on heights, the stockade, forbidding entrance, long. The _tiao_’s keepers are strict in fully maintaining ritual,⁴
the controller of credentials wards off irregularities.
Its sapphire tiles lie outside the first chill,
its golden pillar is beside the One Vapor.⁵
Mountains and river support finely wrought windows,⁶
sun and moon come close to its carved beams.

---

¹ The gate of Chang’ān on the major road to Central Asia.
² The “Mysterious Primal Emperor” was the title given to the deified Laozi in state Daoism.
³ A “counterpart sacrifice” is to the deified ancestor who is counterpart of Heaven. In this case it would be Laozi. The “Dark Capital” was a precinct in Heaven, with its own counterpart in the earthly temple.
⁴ A _tiao_ was a temple for remote ancestors. The Tang royal house claimed descent from Laozi and established Laozi temples for his worship.
⁵ The One Vapor is the primal force of the cosmos.
⁶ “Support” suggests that they are on either side of them.
仙李盤根大，
猗蘭奕葉光。
世家遺舊史，
道德付今王。
畫手看前輩，
吳生遠擅場。
森羅移地軸，
妙絕動宮牆。
五聖聯龍袞，
千官列雁行。
冕旒俱秀發，
旌旆盡飛揚。
翠柏深留景，
紅梨迥得霜。
風箏吹玉柱，
露井凍銀床。
The coiling roots of the immortal plum tree are large,¹
the Splendid Orchid’s huge leaves shed light.²
His family chronicles were left out of that olden history,³
the Way and its Power are entrusted to our current king.⁴
I consider the former generation of master painters,
Master Wu dominates the field by far.⁵
The dense array buds the Earth’s axis,
utter marvels stir on the compound’s walls.
Our Five Sage-Rulers in a line of Dragon Robes,⁶
the thousand officials in lines as wild geese.
Mitres and tassels together stand forth,⁷
banners and pennons all fluttering.
Azure cypresses in their depths retain shadows,
the red pear trees, remote, catch the frost.
Winds blow the jade pegs of the aeolian harp,⁸
an open well’s silver well-work freezes.

¹ This li 李, “plum,” plays on the surname of the royal house, Li. The second level of meaning is: “The coiling root (ancestor) of our immortal Li clan is great.”
² There are two common associations of the “splendid orchid.” It is the title of a zither song and it was the name of the palace hall in which Han Wudi (r. 140–87 BCE) was born. His father Jingdi saw reddish vapors all around the windows. The second association is primary here, with Xuanzong being compared to Emperor Wu. We might want to translate the line as: “In Splendid Orchid Palace the huge leaf sheds light”; that is, Xuanzong bears the same relation to Laozi that leaf bears to root.
³ That is, the “Biography of Laozi,” in the Grand Scribe’s Records. Laozi was not placed in the “family chronicles,” shijia, section, which contained the chapter on Confucius and his disciples. There was an edict of 735 placing the biographies of Laozi and Zhuangzi first in the “Parallel Biographies” section of the Grand Scribe’s Records, ahead of the biography of Bo Yi and Shu Qi.
⁴ This is taken to refer to Xuanzong’s annotation of the Daode jing. Again there is a play on Daode 道德 as both the book and the qualities, “the Way and its Power.”
⁵ That is, Wu Daozi, the most famous artist of the age, best-known for his murals.
⁶ The five Tang rulers before Xuanzong: Gaozu, Taizong, Gaozong, Zhongzong, and Ruizong.
⁷ The “mitre” is the imperial crown. The “tassels,” liu 旒, are the strings with jade that hang at the edge of the crown.
⁸ Although fengzheng 風箏 seems to have often referred to wind-chimes hung from the eaves, the same was done with zithers as aeolian harps. Because of the reference to the jade pegs, the latter seems to be the case here.
故武衛將軍挽歌三首

I

嚴警當寒夜，
前軍落大星。
壯夫思敢決，
哀詔惜精靈。
王者今無戰，
書生已勒銘。
He withdrew, keeping humble in the House of Zhou,\(^1\)
his Classic, transmitted, was received with clasped hands by the Han Emperor.\(^2\)
If “the Spirit of the Valley does not die,”
then in what other land is he nourishing his simplicity?\(^3\)

The Tang imperial house worshipped Laozi, who shared their surname Li, as a remote ancestor, thus combining religious Daoism and dynastic ancestor worship. It should be noted that Luoyang, the Eastern capital, had been visited by the court frequently during Empress Wu’s reign and intermittently in the first part of Xuanzong’s reign. Indeed, Xuanzong had been born in the city. When this poem was written, however, the court had not returned to Luoyang in more than a decade (and, in fact, no Tang emperor was to visit the city ever again).

2.4–6

Bearers’ Songs for the Former General of the Palace Guard

I

Strict curfew on a cold night,
from the vanguard a great star fell.
Stalwart men thought on his decisiveness,
an edict of lament pitied the loss of his soul.
Now the king will do no battle,
men of learning have already carved his inscription.

---

\(^1\) Laozi.
\(^2\) This refers to Heshang Gong presenting the *Daode jing* to Han Wendi (r. 180–157 BCE).
\(^3\) The *Daode jing* has the statement the “the spirit of the valley does not die” (in the interpretation attributed to Xuanzong). Du Fu is here applying that to Laozi himself and speculating on his immortality. It was believed that after leaving the *Daode jing* with the keeper of the barrier pass, Laozi went off to the west, never to return.
封侯意疏闊，
編簡為誰青。

II
舞劍過人絕，
鳴弓射獸能。
銨鋒行愜順，
猛噬失蹻騰。
赤羽千夫膳，
黃河十月冰。
橫行沙漠外，
神速至今稱。

III
哀挽青門去，
新阡絳水遙。
路人紛雨泣，
天意颯風飄。
部曲精仍銳，
匈奴氣不驕。
無由睹雄略，
大樹日蕭蕭。
His hopes to be made a count are remote,
for whom do the bound slips stay green?¹

II
In the sword dance he surpassed others utterly,
skilled in shooting beasts with the twanging bow.
His sharp blade-tip moved with easy obedience,
fierce fangs missed when they pounced.
His crimson feather banners, fine food for a thousand,²
the Yellow River, mid-autumn ice.
He marched boldly beyond the great desert,
his divine swiftness is praised to this day.

III
Lamenting, they bear him out Green Gate,³
new tomb-path, far off by the Jiang’s waters.
People on the road shed tears like rain,
Heaven’s mood, the howl of gusting winds.
The spirit of his cohorts still is sharp,
the temper of the Xiongnu cannot grow proud.
We have no way to observe his heroic plans,
the large tree rustles in the wind every day.⁴

¹ That is, his deeds will be recorded and continuously passed down in the histories, the “green [bamboo] slips.”
² That is, as a commander he provided for his troops.
³ The southeast gate of Chang’an.
⁴ *General’s tree.
贈翰林張四學士

翰林逼華蓋，
鯨力破滄溟。
天上張公子，
宮中漢客星。
賦詩拾翠殿，
佐酒望雲亭。
紫誥仍兼綰，
黃麻似六經。
內分金帶赤，
恩與荔枝青。
無復隨高鳳，
空餘泣聚螢。此生任春草，
垂老獨漂萍。憐憶山陽會，
悲歌在一聽。
**2.7**

Given to Academician Zhang (4) of the Hanlin

The Hanlin is right next to the flowery canopy, a leviathan’s force breaks through the gray seas.

Up in Heaven, our young lord Zhang, in the palace, the wandering star of the Han.

Writing poems in the Hall of Gathering Kingfisher Feathers, attending drinking bouts at the Pavilion for Gazing at Clouds. Purple edicts, continuously adding marks of distinction, on yellow hemp paper, it is like the Six Classics.

Bestowed in the inner palace, a sash of reddish gold, a branch of lychee, still green, given by grace. No more can I go with that high phoenix, all that remains for me is to weep with gathered fireflies.

Let this life go on like the plants of spring, I approach old age as a duckweed adrift alone. If perchance you recall our gathering in Shangyang, may you listen this once to my sad song.

---

1 This is Zhang Ji, the son of the former minister Zhang Yue (663–731) and an imperial son-in-law.
2 The “flowery canopy” is the imperial carriage and hence, the emperor. The Hanlin Academy was located in the Inner Palace.
3 A figure for Zhang Ji’s talent.
4 *Yan Guang.
5 Added badges of office. As Hanlin Academician, Zhang Ji drafted edicts.
6 Yellow hemp paper was adopted for edicts in Xuanzong’s reign. Zhang Ji’s style is like the Six Classics.
7 *Ju Yin.
8 Where famous Wei intellectuals like Xi Kang and Xiang Xiu met as friends.
樂遊園歌

樂遊古園翠森爽，
煙綿碧草萋萋長。
公子華筵勢最高，
秦川對酒平如掌。
長生木瓢示真率，
更調鞍馬狂歡賞。
青春波浪芙蓉園，
白日雷霆夾城仗。
閶闕晴開詄蕩蕩，
曲江翠幕排銀牀。
拂水低徊舞袖翻，
綠雲清切歌聲上。

卻憶年年人醉時，
只今未醉已先悲。
數莖白髮那拋得，
百罰深杯亦不辭。
聖朝亦知賤士醜，
一物自荷皇天慈。
此身飲罷無歸處，
獨立蒼茫自詠詩。
2.8

Song of Leyou Park

The ancient park of Leyou rises up dense and fresh, emerald plants stretch on endlessly, growing tall and thick. For the young gentlemen's splendid feast its position is highest of all, facing our ale are Qin's rivers, flat as the palm of a hand. With ladles of long-life wood we show genuine forthright feelings; then further we joke over "saddled horses," and engage in madcap pleasures.1

With green spring waves and ripples is Lotus Park;2 peals of thunder in daylight, the entourage in the Walled Passageway.3 Heaven's Gates open under clear skies, boundlessly vast, azure tents by the Twisting River, silver placards in lines. Brushing waters, slowly lingering, dancing sleeves soar; through the clouds, piercingly clear, the sound of singing rises.

I think back on the times that I was drunk year after year, nowadays before I get drunk I've already grown sad. These several strands of hair turned white, how can I get rid of them? a hundred forfeits of full cups, and still I don't refuse.4 I also know that in this sagely reign a low scholar is repulsive, when each single creature in its own right receives the grace of Sovereign Heaven.

Finished drinking, this body of mine has nowhere to go, I stand alone in a vast expanse chanting a poem to myself.

Leyou Park was the highest spot in Chang'an, from which one could see the entire city. On the last day of the first lunar month, it became a gathering place to enjoy early spring.

---

1 This was the name of a drinking game.
2 Part of the Qujiang, Twisting River, the great park in the southeastern corner of Chang'an.
3 The walled walkway leading from Xinqing Palace to the Twisting River, reserved for imperial outings.
4 At drinking parties various games were played, and the loser had to pay a “forfeit” of drinking a cup of ale.
2.9

同諸公登慈恩寺塔

高標跨蒼穹，
烈風無時休。

自非曠士懷，
登茲翻百憂。

方知象教力，
登兹翻百憂。

足可追冥搜。
仰穿龍蛇窟，

始出枝撐幽。
七星在北戶，

河漢聲西流。
羲和鞭白日，

少昊行清秋。
秦山忽破碎，

涇渭不可求。
俯視但一氣，

焉能辨皇州。
迴首叫虞舜，

蒼梧雲正愁。
惜哉瑤池飲，

日晏崑崙丘。
2.9

Climbing the Pagoda of Ci’en Temple with Various Gentlemen

Its high crest strides up over the gray vault,
where fierce winds never cease.
Not having the mood of a free and easy man,
4 climbing here brings instead a hundred cares.
Now I understand the force of the Doctrine of Images²
can lead one to pursue investigation of the invisible:
Upward we bored through a dragon or serpent’s hole,
8 and only then emerged from the darkness of beams and struts.
The Seven Stars were right at the northern window,³
the Milky Way’s sound flowed westward.
Xihe whipped the bright sun along,⁴
12 Shaohao set clear autumn in motion.⁵
Qin’s hills were suddenly broken to pieces,
and the Jing and Wei could not be found.⁶
Looking down, I saw only a single vapor everywhere,
16 how could I even make out the royal domain?
I turned my head and cried out to Shun,
but at that moment clouds hung gloomy over Cangwu.⁷
Unfortunate indeed!—the drinking at Alabaster Pool,
20 as the sun grew late over Kunlun Hill.⁸

---

1 Original note: “At the time Gao Shi and Xue Ju had already composed something”時高適、薛據先有作.
2 The Doctrine of Images is Buddhism.
3 The Seven Stars are those of the Northern Dipper.
4 The driver of the sun wagon; she is hastening the day to its end.
5 The “White Emperor” of the West, in charge of autumn.
6 This refers to clouds or mist moving in. The Jing and Wei were rivers near Chang’an.
7 *Cangwu.
8 The peripatetic King Mu of Zhou wandered west to the Kunlun Range, the abode of the Queen Mother of the West. The pair had a famous banquet at Alabaster Pool before he left.
投簡咸華兩縣諸子

黃鵠去不息，
哀鳴何所投。
君看隨陽雁，
各有稻粱謀。

2.10

投簡咸華兩縣諸子

赤縣官曹擁材傑，
軟裘快馬當冰雪。
長安苦寒誰獨悲，
杜陵野老骨欲折。
南山豆苗早荒穢，
青門瓜地新凍裂。
鄉里兒童項領成，
朝廷故舊禮數絕。
自然棄擲與時異，
況乃疏頑臨事拙。
飢臥動即向一旬，
敝衣何啻繫百結。
君不見空牆日色晚，
此老無聲淚垂血。
The brown swan goes off without resting,
mournfully singing, where will it lodge?
But look you at the geese that follow the sunlight!—
each has made plans for its own rice.

We have other versions of poems on this occasion by Gao Shi, Cen Shen (715–770), and Chu Guangxi (707–760). The setting is the larger “Wild Goose Pagoda,” still standing in Xi’an.

2.10

Sending a Note to Various Men in the Two Counties Xian and Hua

Officials of capital counties, outstanding in talents possessed,
soft capes and fleet horses face the ice and snow.
Suffering the cold in Chang’an, who is it mourns alone?—
an old rustic of Duling, his bones about to snap.
My bean sprouts on South Mountain early rotted in the weeds,
my melon patch by Green Gate has recently cracked from freezing.
Those kids of the district have grown fat in the neck,
my old friends in the court have ceased to receive me with courtesy.
They naturally cast off a person out of tune with the times,
even more, someone stubborn and lax, inept at handling things.
I lay down hungry and before I knew it almost ten days have passed,
how could my worn-out clothes hold together with merely a hundred patches?
Haven’t you seen by bare walls sun’s color late in the day,
this old man without a sound shedding tears of blood?

1 Xianyang and Huayuan, two counties near Chang’an.
2 Associating himself with *Tao Qian who: “Planted beans below the south mountain, / the grasses flourished, the bean sprouts few” 种豆南山下，草盛豆苗稀.
3 *Shao Ping.
4 Referring to the lesser local officials. “Growing fat in the neck” refers to oxen that have long not borne a yoke, so that their necks grow fat. That is, youngsters with official posts are not doing anything.
2.11

杜位宅守歲

守歲阿戎家，
椒盤已頌花。
盍簪喧櫪馬，
列炬散林鴉。
四十明朝過，
飛騰暮景斜。
誰能更拘束，
爛醉是生涯。

2.12

敬贈鄭諫議十韻

諫官非不達，
詩義早知名。
破的由來事，
先鋒孰敢爭。
2.11

New Years Eve at Du Wei’s Home

New Years Eve vigil at my Arong’s home,¹ 
bowls of pepper-ale, their flowers already praised.² 
Congregating hatpins cause noise among stabled horses,³ 
4 lines of torches scatter crows in the woods. 
Tomorrow I pass my fortieth year,⁴ 
evening light slants too low for a meteoric rise.⁵ 
Who can continue to stay so constrained? — 
8 utter drunkenness will be the rest of my life.

This poem comes from 751. Du Wei (figured as Arong) was Du Fu’s second cousin and the son-in-law of the Minister Li Linfu. With Li Linfu’s death and posthumous disgrace in the following year, Du Wei was to be exiled to Xinzhou in modern Guangdong (see 10.38).

2.12

Respectfully Presented to Remonstrator Zheng: Ten Couplets

A post of remonstrance is no lack of success, 
your name, long known for understanding the Poems.⁶ 
You have always hit exactly the mark, 
4 who dares compete with you to be foremost?

---

¹ There are many explanations for the use of Arong here. It was the childhood name of several Six Dynasties figures, and seems to have been used generally for younger brothers and nephews. Du Fu seems to be using it in this sense for Du Wei, his more eminent junior. Axian 阿咸 is a variant reading.
² Pepper-ale (using Sichuan pepper flowers) was a New Years custom. In the Jin the wife of Liu Zhen, née Chen, wrote a praise-ode for the pepper flower.
³ The hatpins are metonymy for high officials, and the torches, for their attendants. These are evidently coming to pay their respects.
⁴ This echoes Confucius’s dictum that one should get established in one’s thirties. Du Fu will be entering his fortieth year, by Chinese reckoning, and is still without office.
⁵ That is, it is too late in my life to rise swiftly.
⁶ The Classic of Poetry was strongly associated with reproof.
思飄雲物外，
律中鬼神驚。
毫髮無遺恨，
波瀾獨老成。
野人寧得所，
天意薄浮生。
多病休儒服，
冥搜信客旌。
築居仙綽紗，
旅食歲峥嶸。
使者求顏闔，
諸公厭禿衡。
將期一諾重，
欻使寸心傾。
君見途窮哭，
宜憂阮步兵。

2.13

兵車行

車辚辚，
馬蕭萧，
行人弓箭各在腰。
Your thoughts waft beyond shapes in cloud,¹
getting poetic rules right, gods and spirits are shocked.  
You have not the least lingering regret,
8 the waves of your exposition, uniquely mature.²
How could this man of the wilds find a place?—
Heaven's purposes have been stingy with my life adrift.  
Often sick, done with a scholar’s vestment,
12 I will entrust my traveler’s tracks to seek mysteries.
I will build my dwelling among elusive immortals,
dine as a wayfarer, the years looming precipitous.
An envoy sought out Yan He,³
16 but the various lords disliked Mi Heng.⁴
I would hope for the weight of a single commitment,
it will instantly make this heart devoted.
You see one weeping at a dead end,
20 Infantry Commandant Ruan is right to worry.⁵

2.13
The Army Wagons: A Ballad

Wagons rattling,
horses neighing,
men walking, each with bow and arrows at the waist.

¹ Specifically, poetic conceptions.
² The movement of literary exposition was described as “waves,” shifting with the circumstance.
³ The Zhuangzi tells how the Duke of Lu sought out Yan He, famed for his virtue. This seems to refer to Du Fu having presented his three fu to Xuanzong, after which Xuanzong ordered that he be tested.
⁴ *Mi Heng. This refers to Li Linfu’s intervention in preventing Du Fu from getting a post.
⁵ *Ruan Ji.
耶孃妻子走相送，
塵埃不見咸陽橋。
牽衣頓足攔道哭，
哭聲直上干雲霄。

道傍過者問行人，
行人但云點行頻。
或從十五北防河，
便至四十西營田。
去時里正與裹頭，
歸來頭白還戍邊。
邊庭流血成海水，
武皇開邊意未已。

君不見
漢家山東二百州，
千村萬落生荊杞。
縱有健婦把鋤犁，
禾生隴畝無東西。
況復秦兵耐苦戰，
被驅不異犬與雞。

長者雖有問，
役夫敢申恨。
Moms and dads, wives and children rush along seeing them off,
the dust is such you cannot see the Xianyang Bridge.
Pulling at clothes, stamping feet they block the road weeping,
weeping voices rise straight up against the clouds and high wisps.

Someone passing by the road asks a man on the march,
the man on the march says only: “They’re calling up troops often now.
Some from the age of fifteen are north guarding the River,
then as soon as they reach forty they work military settlements in the west.

When they leave, the village headman gives them turbans;
coming home, their hair is white, and then back to garrison the frontier.

The blood that has flowed on the frontiers could make up an ocean’s waters,
and our Warrior Emperor’s plans to extend the frontier are not yet done.

Haven’t you heard
how in two hundred prefectures East of the Mountains of the House of Han
a thousand villages and ten thousand hamlets grow over with thorns and briars?
Even though there are sturdy wives to hold the hoe and plow,
the grain grows on the field boundary slopes and one can’t tell east from west.
Even worse for troops from Qin who endure the bitterest battles,
they are driven on, no different from dogs and chickens.

Though you sir may pose the question,
does a conscript dare declare his resentment?
且如今年冬，
未休关西卒。
县官急索租，
租税从何出。

信知生男恶，
反是生女好。
生女犹得嫁比邻，
生男埋没随百草。

君不见
青海头，
古来白骨无人收。

新鬼烦冤旧鬼哭，
天阴雨湿声啾啾。
And now in winter this year
they haven’t stopped taking soldiers from West of the Passes;
County officials urgently demand taxes,
but where are the taxes to come from?

I know well to have a boy is bad,
it’s better to have a daughter instead.
If you have a daughter you can still marry her to your neighbor;
if you have a boy he will be buried along with all the plants.

Haven’t you seen
by Kokonor
white bones from ancient times that have never been recovered?
The new ghosts are tormented by their wrongs, the former ghosts just weep,
the skies cloudy, the rain soaks them, their voices moaning.

Although “The Army Wagons” makes reference to the northwestern frontiers, many Chinese critics believe that the indirect object of Du Fu’s protest were the disastrous campaigns in the south against the Nanzhao Kingdom in 751 and after. The historical record describes popular disaffection for the Nanzhao campaigns in terms similar to Du Fu’s. In the northwest the loss of tens of thousands of Tang troops in the Pyrrhic capture of the almost impregnable Stone Fortress (Shibaocheng) from a few hundred Tibetans was a waste—caused by Xuanzong’s insistence—but it did not seriously damage the large armies operating in Central Asia. The war with the Tang’s old ally Nanzhao was initiated through arrogant political ineptness and consummated by military ineptness, with the destruction of two large Tang armies and Nanzhao’s subsequent alliance with Tibet. Du Fu is probably not referring to any single campaign, but to the steady drain on the peasantry caused by immoderate conscription.
2.14–22

前出塞九首

I

戚戚去故里，
悠悠赴交河。
公家有程期，
4 亡命婴禍羅。
君已富土境，
開邊一何多。
棄絕父母恩，
8 吞聲行負戈。

II

出門日已遠，
不受徒旅欺。
骨肉恩豈斷，
4 男兒死無時。
走馬脫轡頭，
手中挑青絲。
捷下萬仞岡，
8 俯身試搴旗。
2.14–22

Going Out the Passes: First Series

I

Fearful and troubled, I leave my hometown
I go far, far away to Cross Rivers.¹
Officialdom has its strict schedules;
derision traps a man in ruin.²
Our lord is already rich in lands,
yet how greatly he extends the frontiers!
Forsaking forever my parents’ love,
voice choked back, I go shouldering a pike.

II

Farther each day from the gate I left,
I won’t take being bullied by comrades.
Of course my love for kin is unbroken,
but a man can die here at any time.
I gallop my horse, bridle removed,
twirling blue silk cords in my hand.
Headlong down hills of a thousand yards,
I crouch low and try to snatch up the banner.³

¹ “Cross Rivers” (Yarkhoto) was on the northwestern frontiers.
² It should be kept in mind that punishment for criminal behavior extended to the family.
³ Taking an enemy banner brought a high reward; here it seems to suggest some sort of cavalry practice.
III
磨刀鳴咽水，
水赤刃傷手。
欲輕腸斷聲，
心緒亂已久。
丈夫誓許國，
憤惋復何有。 功名圖麒麟，
戰骨當速朽。

IV
送徒既有長，
遠戍亦有身。
生死向前去，
不勞吏怒瞋。
路逢相識人，
附書與六親。
哀哉兩決絕，
不復同苦辛。

V
迢迢萬里餘，
領我赴三軍。
III

I sharpened my sword in those sobbing waters,
the water turned red, the blade cut my hand.
I had tried to ignore those heart-breaking sounds,
but the heart’s thoughts have long been in turmoil.¹
When a true man swears to devote his life to the realm,
what place is left for anguish or rage?
Deeds of fame are pictured in the Royal Gallery—²
and the bones left from battle crumble swiftly.

IV

To take troops to the front there is someone in charge,
for duty in far garrisons there are also ourselves.
We go off forward to live or die,
sergeants need not take the trouble to glare.³
On the road I once met someone I knew,
by him I sent a letter home to kin.⁴
It’s a sad thing that we are kept apart
and will never share our hardships again.

V

Into the distance, more than ten thousand miles
we were led till we reached the Grand Army.

¹ The first four lines of this poem play on the anonymous Northern Dynasties *yuefu* “Song of Longtou” 陇頭歌: “In the waters that flow on Longtou / the sounds of unseen sobbing, / I gaze far away to the streams of Qin, / and my heart is ready to break.” 陇頭流水, 嗚聲幽咽, 遙望秦川, 肝腸欲絕.
² The “Royal Gallery” is literally the “Unicorn [Pavilion],” where those who had done exceptional service to the dynasty had their portraits hung.
³ Although translated as “sergeants,” 吏 are the lower civil servants whose task it was to get the conscripts to their destination.
⁴ “Kin” is literally the “six relations”: father, mother, elder and younger brothers, wife, and children.
軍中異苦樂，
主將寧盡聞。
隔河見胡騎，
倏忽數百群。
我始為奴僕，
幾時樹功勛。

挽弓當挽強，
用箭當用長。
射人先射馬，
擒賊先擒王。
殺人亦有限，
列國自有疆。
苟能制侵陵，
豈在多殺傷。

驅馬天欲雪，
軍行入高山。
徑危抱寒石，
指落曾冰間。
已去漢月遠，
何時築城還。
In the army some suffer and others delight—
the Commander surely does not hear all.
Beyond the River I saw Hu cavalry,
in an instant, a band of hundreds.
For the first time now I’ve become a slave—
when will I do those great deeds of glory?

VI

When you pull a bow, make sure it’s a strong one,
make sure that the arrows you use are long ones.
To shoot a man, first shoot the horse,
to capture the foe, first capture their chief.
Yet there are limits to killing men,
the kingdoms have their own borders.
If only we can control their raids,
it does not depend on much killing.

VII

We galloped on, the sky seemed like snow,
the army marched off into high mountains.
The paths were steep, we clung to cold rock,
fingers fell off into piles of ice.
Already gone far from the moon of Han,
when shall we return from building the Wall?
浮雲暮南征，
可望不可攀。

VIII

單于寇我壘，
百里風塵昏。
雄劍四五動，
彼軍為我奔。
虜其名王歸，
繫頸授轅門。
潛身備行列，
一勝何足論。

IX

從軍十年餘，
能無分寸功。
眾人貴苟得，
欲語羞雷同。
中原有鬥爭，
況在狄與戎。
丈夫四海志，
安可辭固窮。
Drifting clouds journey on southward at dusk; we can watch them, we cannot go along.

VIII

The Khan has plundered one of our forts, the dust of war darkens a hundred miles. Manly swords swing just a few times, and their army flees before us.

We go back, their best-known chiefs our prisoners, bound necks are presented to the commander’s gate.

And I hide, only one of the company— one victory alone just doesn’t matter.

IX

I have been with the army for more than ten years, you may guess that I’ve done some insignificant deeds. Most men prize any chance for advantage; I might speak, but feel shame to be like them.

There is fighting now in the heartland, and much more with the frontier tribes. A true man’s concerns are for all the world—

how can I refuse to hold fast in hardship?¹

This series gives the development of a conscript sent to the army in the Northwest. This army remained loyal in the An Lushan Rebellion.

¹ This is the attribute of a “superior man,” junzi 君子, in Analects XV.1: “The superior man holds fast in hardship” 君子固窮.
2.23

送高三十五書記

崆峒小麥熟，
且願休王師。
請公問主將，
焉用窮荒為。
飢鷹未飽肉，
側翅隨人飛。
高生跨鞍馬，
有似幽并兒。
脫身簿尉中，
始與捶楚辭。
借問今何官，
觸熱向武威。
答云一書記，
所愧國士知。
人實不易知，
更須慎其儀。
十年出幕府，
自可持旌麾。
此行既特達，
足以慰所思。
2.23

Seeing Off Secretary Gao Shi (35)

On Mount Kongtong the wheat is ripe,
I wish the king’s army would rest for a while.¹
I pray you ask the commanding general—
what use in going to the far ends of wilds?
The starveling hawk has not had his fill of flesh
and, tilting his wing, flies along after the person.
Mr. Gao makes his saddled horse prance,
looking rather like a lad of You or Bingzhou.²
You escaped clerkship and the post of sheriff,
for the first time leaving the cane and scourge.³
And I ask: “What office do you have now,
that, braving the heat, you head to Wuwei?”⁴
You answer and say: “A secretary’s post—
recognition by a knight of the realm does me too much honor.”⁵
Truly men are not easy to know,
you must keep on taking care in your bearing.
If you stay out in headquarters for ten years,
you yourself can carry a banner.⁶
Since this journey marks singular success,
it can console me in my concerns.

¹ Kongtong was in Gansu, part of the Tang northwestern military command. Earlier
the Tibetans had often raided at harvest time for the grain; but Geshu Han, Gao
Shi’s commander, had stopped the raids. Therefore, as Du Fu sees it, military opera-
tions are no longer necessary.
² Regions famous for their men-at-arms.
³ Administering physical punishments was the responsibility of a sheriff.
⁴ A commandery in modern Gansu.
⁵ Geshu Han.
⁶ That is, Gao can get a position as a regional civil official by virtue of his long service
in the army.
男兒功名遂，
亦在老大時。
常恨結歡淺，
各在天一涯。
又如參與商，
慘慘中腸悲。
驚風吹鴻鵠，
不得相追隨。
黃塵翳沙漠，
念子何當歸。
邊城有餘力，
早寄從軍詩。

2.24

奉留贈集賢院崔于二學士（國輔、休烈）
昭代將垂白，
途窮乃叫閽。
氣衝星象表，
詞感帝王尊。
天老書題目，
春官驗討論。
A man’s fulfillment of deeds and glory
can also come when one is old.
I will always regret that our joys were so brief,
each of us will be past the other’s horizon.
It is also like the stars Shen and Shang,¹
gloomy I feel sorrow at heart.
A blast of wind blows the wild swans,
and they do not get to fly together.
Brown dust veils the desert,
and I brood on when you will return.
Should you have strength left in that frontier fort,
send me an “Army Poem” as soon as you can.

2 Du Fu’s friend, the poet Gao Shi, had captured the attention of Geshu Han, the commander of the Northwestern armies, and had been given a post in his headquarters. Like a number of civil officials whose careers had stagnated, Gao found that serving with the military would indeed be a path to success.

2.24

Respectfully Left to be Presented to the Two Academicians of the Academy of Scholarly Worthies, Cui Guofu and Yu Xiuli

In this glorious reign my hair will soon hang white,
at a dead end I cried out at the palace gates.
My aura struck beyond the constellations,
my lines stirred our exalted emperor.²
The imperial seniors wrote out the topic,³
the spring officers examined my discussion.⁴

¹ Which are never in the sky at the same time, a figure for those parted.
² This refers to Du Fu presenting his three fu to Xuanzong.
³ That is, the ministers Chen Xilie and Li Linfu wrote the questions for Du Fu’s special examination.
⁴ The “spring officers” were those from the Ministry of Rites; they read and judged Du Fu’s answers.
貧交行

倚風遺鶴路，
隨水到龍門。  
竟與蛟螭雜，
空聞燕雀喧。  
青冥猶契闊，
陵厲不飛翻。  
儒術誠難起，
家聲庶已存。  
故山多藥物，
勝概憶桃源。  
欲整還鄉旆，
長懷禁掖垣。  
謬稱三賦在，
難述二公恩。

2.25

貧交行

翻手作雲覆手雨，
紛紛輕薄何須數。
With the winds, I left the yi bird’s course behind,\(^1\)
following the waters I reached Dragon Gate.\(^2\)
In the end I mixed with the hornless dragons,\(^3\)
but helplessly heard the noise of swallows and sparrows.\(^4\)
Still suffering separation from the dark heavens,
I did not wing my way soaring up to the skies.
By a scholar’s arts it is truly hard to rise,
but my family’s good name will perhaps endure.\(^5\)
In my home mountains are many medicinal herbs,
its splendid scenery recalls Peach Blossom Spring.\(^6\)
I will ready my carriage to return to my land,
my thoughts ever on the palace gates.
Your misguided praise of my three \(fu\) remains,\(^7\)
I can’t begin to describe the kindness from you both.

2.25

Friendship in Poverty: A Ballad

With the turn of a hand they make clouds, then turn it back over for rain,\(^8\)
there are droves of the shallow and insincere, why must one count them?

1 Echoing a famous note in *Spring and Autumn Annals* (Xi 16) that “six yi birds flew backwards over the Song capital.” Du Fu interprets this inauspicious sign as due to headwinds; in other words, he encountered adverse winds from the judgment and went backwards rather than advancing.
2 According to legend, a carp that can pass over the rapids at Dragon Gate on the Yellow River turns into a dragon. This was a common figure for passing the examination. Du Fu fails the test.
3 Perhaps suggesting the scholars of the Academy of Scholarly Worthies
4 Lesser men raised objections and prevented him from advancing.
5 Referring to his grandfather Du Shenyan.
6 *Peach Blossom Spring.*
7 Original note: “When I, Fu, presented my three \(fu\) in the examination, these two gentlemen wrongly praised them” 甫獻三大賦出身，二公謬稱述.
8 Turning the hand over is standard phrase for doing something easily. In this context it suggests fickleness and lack of commitment.
君不見
管鮑貧時交，
此道今人棄如土。

2.26
送韋書記赴安西

夫子欻通貴，
雲泥相望懸。
白頭無藉在，
朱綬有哀憐。
書記赴三捷，
公車留二年。
欲浮江海去，
此別意茫然。

2.27
玄都壇歌寄元逸人

故人昔隱東蒙峰，
已佩含景蒼精龍。
故人今居子午谷，
獨在陰崖結茅屋。
Have you not seen
the friendship of Guan and Bao when poor—
people today reject this course as if it were dirt.

2.26
Seeing Secretary Wei Off on His Way to Anxi

You, sir, have instantly been raised to high station,
we are as far apart as cloud and mud.
White-haired I have no one to care for me,
wearing red cords of office, you express sympathy.
The secretary goes off to the three victories,
I have been two years detained by palace Traffic Control.
I will go off and drift on the rivers and seas,
with this parting my thoughts are lost in a daze.

2.27
A Song of the Altar of the Dark Metropolis, Sent to Hermit Yuan

My old friend used to live in seclusion on Meng’s Peak in the east,
he already wore the light-swallowing sword and the green-essence dragon amulet.
My old friend now resides in Ziwu Valley,
where alone on its northern slope he has built a thatched cottage.

1 Guan Zhong lived in poverty, but Bao Shu treated him very well; and when Bao Shu entered the service of the Duke of Qi (d. 643 BCE), he recommended Guan Zhong. Guan Zhong eventually became Duke’s Huan’s chief minister.
2 That is, to the army on campaign.
3 A Han office that oversaw who could go into the palace. That is, Du Fu has been trying to get into the imperial city, but so far has had no luck.
4 These are Daoist paraphernalia by which an adept protects himself.
屋前太古玄都壇，
青石漠漠常風寒。
子規夜啼山竹裂，
8 王母晝下雲旗翻。

知君此計誠長往，
芝草琅玕日應長。
鐵鍊高垂不可攀，
致身福地何蕭爽。

2.28–30

曲江三章章五句

I

曲江蕭條秋氣高，
菱荷枯折隨風濤，
遊子空嗟垂二毛。
白石素沙亦相蕩，
哀鴻獨叫求其曹。

II

即事非今亦非古，
長歌激越捎林莽，
比屋豪華固難數。
Before his cottage is the very ancient Altar of the Dark Metropolis, blue rocks spread far and wide, the constant wind is cold. The cuckoo cries by night, bamboo in the mountains split, the Queen Mother descends in daylight, her cloud banners fluttering.¹

I know that here your plan is truly departure forever, the magic mushrooms and langgan must be growing by the day.² Where the iron chain hangs from on high, it cannot be climbed;³ it will bring you to the Blessed Land so wide open beyond this world!⁴

2.28–30

Three Stanzas on the Twisting River (each stanza has five lines)

I

Dreary is Twisting River, the autumn air is high, water-chestnuts and lotuses wither and snap with the wind-blown waves, the traveler helplessly sighs at gray hair coming on. White rocks and pale sands are also swept along, the mournful swan cries out alone, seeking its own kind.

II

What lies before me is not the present nor is it the ancient past, my long songs swell up and away, grazing forest and wilds, buildings roof to roof, splendor and power, indeed beyond reckoning.⁵

¹ The Queen Mother of the West, an important goddess in Daoist lore.
² Langgan is a semi-precious gem and a tree of the immortals’ world, one that bears a jewel-fruit eaten by the immortals.
³ There were several stories about someone coming upon a long iron chain hanging in Ziwu Valley; at the top of which were one or two tigers crouching. Du Fu, rather, seems to suggest that Yuan can climb that chain to an immortal world, but others cannot.
⁴ A “Blessed Land” was a place inhabited by gods and immortals. There was supposed to be such an area on Mount Zhongnan south of Chang’an.
⁵ These are the aristocratic mansions by the Twisting River.
吾人甘作心似灰，
弟姪何傷淚如雨。

III

自斷此生休問天，
杜曲幸有桑麻田，
故將移住南山邊。
短衣匹馬隨李廣，
看射猛虎終殘年。

2.31

奉贈鮮于京兆二十韻

王國稱多士，
賢良復幾人。
異才應問出，
爽氣必殊倫。
始見張京兆，
宜居漢近臣。
駿騋開道路，
雕鶚離風塵。
侯伯知何算，
文章實致身。
As for one like me, I willingly let my heart be like ash, why should my nephew suffer with tears like rain for me?

III

I have made my decision in this life to cease questioning Heaven’s will, at Duqu I luckily have hemp and mulberry fields,\(^1\) thus I will move to stay by the edge of South Mountain. In short robes on a single horse I’ll follow Li Guang and watch him shoot the fierce tiger, living out my remaining years.\(^2\)

2.31

Respectfully Presented to Xianyu, Governor of the Capital Region:
Twenty Couplets

The king’s domain is known for “many knights,”\(^3\) but how many of these are worthy and good? Rare talents should come forth after long intervals, their vigorous tempers must be of a unique kind. Now I see a “Zhang of the capital,”\(^4\) rightly holding a place among officers near the throne. The Hualiu steed opens the way, hawk and falcon leave the windblown dust. What did the esteem of a count or earl matter?—it was your literary writings that truly brought success.

---

1 A district near Chang’an, the long-standing residence of the Du lineage.
2 *Li Guang.
3 “Many knights” (here using the archaic implication of what would be, in the Tang case, “many gentlemen”) is a phrase from the *Classic of Documents*.
4 Comparing Xianyu Zhongtong to Zhang Chang, who held the same office with distinction in the reign of Han Xuandi.
奮飛超等級，
容易失沈淪。
脫略磻溪釣，
操持郢匠斤。
雲霄今已逼，
台袞更誰親。
鳳穴雛皆好，
龍門客又新。
義聲紛感激，
敗績自逡巡。
途遠欲何向，
天高難重陳。
學詩猶孺子，
鄉賦忝嘉賓。
不得同晁錯，
吁嗟後郗詵。
計疏疑翰墨，
時過憶松筠。
獻納紆皇眷，
中間謁紫宸。
You flew aloft, passing over the usual stages and grades, with ease you forsook where you had been buried. You escaped fishing at Pan Creek, you take in hand the Ying craftsman’s axe. Now you have come right next to the upper clouds, who else is such close friends with a high lord of state? In the phoenix roost the chicks are all fine, the clients at Dragon Gate are also new. I have been much stirred by your reputation for morality, but, having suffered defeat, I hesitate unsure. This road is long, where does it head? — Heaven is high, hard to state my case again. I studied the Poems when I was but a child, in the local presentation I was unworthily made a “guest of the realm.” I did not get to be the same as Chao Cuo, and I sighed that I lagged behind Xi Shen. My plans too lax, I doubted brush and ink, my moment was past, I recalled pine and bamboo. I presented something for acceptance, bent low by imperial regard, introduced, I paid my respects at Zichen Palace.

1 *Taigong.
2 This comes from a story in the Zhuangzi about an artisan of Ying, the old capital of Chu, who wielded his ax with such precision that he could swing it and remove a speck of dust from his friend’s nose. This is a figure of Xianyu Zhongtong’s skill and mastery.
3 Literally: “with the ritual robes (gun) of the Terraces.” The “Three Terraces” were a constellation that corresponded with the “three lords” (sangong), the ministers of state.
4 Xianyu Zhongtong has excellent sons.
5 *Li Ying.
6 “Local presentation” refers to those men recommended to take the examination. “Guests of the realm” refer to the examination candidates.
7 A Western Han figure who was selected by Han Wendi (r. 180–157 BCE) in a court examination.
8 A Western Jin figure who was selected in an examination.
9 I doubted the power to advance by my literary skills.
10 That stay green in winter, hence are steadfast.
11 Referring to his presentation of fu.
且随诸彦集，
方觐薄才伸。
破膽遭前政，
陰謀獨秉鈞。
微生沾忌刻，
萬事益酸辛。
交合丹青地，
恩傾雨露辰。
有儒愁餓死，
早晚報平津。

2.32

白丝行

縫絲須長不須白，
越羅蜀錦金粟尺。
象床玉手亂殷紅，
萬草千花動凝碧。
已悲素質隨時染，
裂下鳴機色相射。
美人細意熨帖平，
裁縫滅盡針線跡。
For a while I followed the assembly of excellent men,¹
then I hoped to have my meager talents expand.
Broken courage, encountering the previous minister,²
secret plots, he alone held the potter’s wheel.³
This humble man was bathed in his dislike and desire to crush me,
all matters became increasingly bitter and sour.
You are in close intercourse with the place of “red and green,”⁴
now his kind grace overflows with rain and dew.
There is a scholar who worries about starving to death,
inform the Count of Pingjin as soon as you can.⁵

Xianyu Zhongtong was the right-hand man of the Minister Yang Guozhong.
After having failed to win a post with his three poetic expositions (fu), Du Fu is
trying to get the support of an important member of Yang Guozhong’s faction.

2.32

White Silk: A Ballad

In reeling silk one needs length, one does not need white color;
for Yue gossamer and Shu brocade use a foot-long ruler marked with
golden grains.
On an ivory loom a marble hand throws dark red into confusion,
myriad plants and a thousand flowers stir their fixed sapphire.⁶
Already sad that the plain fabric is dyed to suit the fashion,
it is ripped and falls from the singing loom shooting rays of color.
A lovely woman, taking great care, irons it flat;
when cut and sewn there will disappear all trace of needle and thread.

¹ Referring to the Academy of Scholarly Worthies, who were to judge Du Fu’s
    responses to topics for composition.
² Li Linfu, whose dislike of Du Fu was said to have been the reason for failing.
³ That is, power in the government.
⁴ A reference to the minister, Yang Guozhong.
⁵ Gongsun Hong, minister in Han Yuandi’s time and enfeoffed as Count of Pingjin,
    was known for his good treatment of clients. Here it stands for Yang Guozhong.
⁶ This seems to describe embroidery or brocade.
春天衣著為君舞，
蛱蝶飛來黃鸝語。
落絮遊絲亦有情，
隨風照日宜輕舉。
香汗輕塵汗顏色，
開新合故置何許。
君不見才士汲引難，
恐懼棄捐忍羁旅。

2.33–42

陪鄭廣文遊何將軍山林十首

I
不識南塘路，
今知第五橋。名園依綠水，
野竹上青霄。谷口舊相得，
濠梁同見招。平生為幽興，
未惜馬蹄遙。
Visiting the Mountain Grove of General He in the Company of Instructor Zheng

Worn as clothes for spring weather, it dances for the lord, then butterflies come flying, and yellow orioles speak. Falling floss and drifting strands also have feeling, catching sunlight as they go with the breeze, it is right that they float up lightly.
Fragrant sweat and light dust sully its complexion; they open the new and pack up the old, to be put away where? Haven’t you seen how hard it is to raise talented men to office?— they fear that they will be tossed away and will have to bear long travels.

2.33–42

Visiting the Mountain Grove of General He in the Company of Instructor Zheng

I

I did not know the road to South Basin, but now I recognize Bridge Five. The famous garden rests along green waters, with wild bamboo rising to blue wisps of cloud. “Valley Mouth” is a longtime friend,¹ we are both invited to the bridge on the Hao.² All my life, for the elation in secluded spots, I have never begrudged letting my horse’s hoofs go far.

¹ Zheng Pu. By shared surname, this refers to Du Fu’s companion Zheng Qian.
² This refers to an anecdote in the “Autumn Floods” chapter of Zhuangzi in which Zhuang Zhou and Hui Shi have a debate on whether one can know if the fish are happy.
II

百頃風潭上，
千章夏木清。
卑枝低結子，
接葉暗巢鶯。
鮮鱒銀絲膾，
香芹碧澗羹。
翻疑柁樓底，
晚飯越中行。

III

萬里戎王子，
何年別月支。
異花開絕域，
滋蔓匝清池。
漢使徒空到，
神農竟不知。
露翻兼雨打，
開坼漸離披。

IV

旁舍連高竹，
疏籬帶晚花。
II

By a breezy pool of a hundred acres,
a thousand stands of summer trees are cool.
The bottom branches bend low with nuts,
the touching leaves hide nesting orioles.
Fresh golden carp, sliced in silver slivers,
fragrant celery in broth from an emerald torrent.
But it makes me feel as if I’m under the rudder cabin
dining late during my travels in Yue.¹

III

“Rong Prince” from ten thousand leagues,²
when did it leave the Yuezhi?³
This strange flower blooms in remote lands,
lush creepers make the circuit of the clear pond.
The Han envoy reached there for nothing,⁴
Shennong never knew of it.⁵
Dew-toppled and rain-beaten,
it splits open and gradually looks bedraggled.

IV

Neighboring cottages stretch to tall bamboo,
a sparse hedge bears late flowers.

¹ Du Fu is referring to his youthful travels in the southeast.
² “Rong Prince” was the name of a Central Asian flower imported to General He’s garden.
³ An anachronistic reference to a people in Central Asia.
⁴ The Han explorer Zhang Qian brought back exotica from Central Asia; evidently Du Fu is suggesting that his enterprise was in vain because it failed to bring back the “Rong Prince.”
⁵ Shennong was a legendary emperor of antiquity and the culture hero associated with agriculture.
碾渦深沒馬，
藤蔓曲藏蛇。
詞賦工無益，
山林跡未賒。
盡捻書籍賣，
來問爾東家。

V
剩水滄江破，
殘山碣石開。
綠垂風折筍，
紅綻雨肥梅。
銀甲彈箏用，
金魚換酒來。
興移無灑掃，
隨意坐莓苔。

VI
風磴吹陰雪，
雲門吼瀑泉。
酒醒思臥簟，
衣冷欲裝綿。
野老來看客，
河魚不取錢。
The millstone whirlpool is deep enough to sink a horse,
4 rattan vines so twisted they could hide snakes.
My skill in poetic expositions brings no gain,
my tracks in mountain forests are not far in the future.¹
I will grab up all my books and sell them
8 and come to call on the home to your east.²

V
A surplus of waters, a gray River used up,
remnant mountain, a Jie Rock appears.³
Green dangling, wind-snapped bamboo shoots;
4 red split, rain-fattened plums.
Silver scales, employed to pluck the zither;⁴
the golden fish exchanged for ale.⁵
When impulse shifts elsewhere, don’t sweep it clear,
8 but as suits us, let us sit on green moss.

VI
His breezy stone steps blow with shadowy snow,
at his cloudy gate roars a cascading stream.
Sobering from ale, we long to lie on the mats,
4 our clothes so cold we want to stuff them with padding.
An old rustic comes to attend the guests
but will take no coin for his river fish.

¹ That is, after failing to get a post, he will soon withdraw to the mountains and live
as a recluse.
² That is, call on General He; the perspective here is that of the “neighboring
cottages.”
³ Jie Rock was a mountain near the shore in the northeast. Evidently General He’s
garden has an artificial mountain.
⁴ Either using scales from General He’s armor as a zither-pick or using fingernails.
⁵ The golden fish is a badge of office.
祗疑淳樸處，
自有一山川。

VII
棘樹寒雲色，
茵藻春藕香。
脆添生菜美，
陰益食單涼。
野鶴清晨出，
山精白日藏。
石林蟠水府，
百里獨蒼蒼。

VIII
憶過楊柳渚，
走馬定昆池。
醉把青荷葉，
狂遺白接䍦。
刺船思郢客，
解水乞吳兒。
坐對秦山晚，
江湖興頗隨。
It just seems a place of simplicity and purity
will inevitably have a mountain and waters.

VII

Jujube tree, cold cloud’s color,
yinchen artemisia, scent of spring lotus.
The latter’s brittleness adds to fresh vegetables’ excellence,
the former’s shade augments cool on the dining cloths.
Wild cranes come out in the clear morning,
hill sprites hide in broad daylight.
Forests of stone coiled round by watery precincts,¹
only gray-green for a hundred leagues.

VIII

I recall passing by the isle of willows,
and galloped my horse by Dingkun Pond.²
Drunk, I took a green lotus leaf,³
and madly left behind my jielì turban.⁴
I long for a fellow from Ying to punt the boat;
in understanding waters, I would beg for a lad of Wu.
Just now we face evening in Qin’s mountains,
and my impulse for the rivers and lakes follows intensely.⁵

¹ Areas of standing rock, either natural or artificial.
² Early in the eighth century the Anle Princess had asked her father Zhongzong to give her the large Kunming Lake for her estate; when the emperor refused, in pique she had Dingkun Pool dug.
³ The lotus leaf is used in place of a cup for drinking.
⁴ The jielì was the kind of turban worn by the famously eccentric and inebriate Jin governor of Xiangyang, *Shan Jian.
⁵ That is, a desire to off to the southeast.
陪鄭廣文遊何將軍山林十首

IX
床上書連屋，
階前樹拂雲。
將軍不好武，
稚子總能文。
醒酒微風入，
聽詩靜夜分。
緇衣掛蘿薜，
涼月白紛紛。

X
幽意忽不愜，
歸期無奈何。
出門流水住，
回首白雲多。
自笑燈前舞，
誰憐醉後歌。
祗應與朋好，
風雨亦來過。
IX

On his couch, books piled to the ceiling,  
before his stairs trees brush the clouds.  
The general is not fond of martial things,  
his children are all good at writing.  
He sobers from ale when the faint breeze enters,  
listening to poems, the still night passes midpoint.  
Thin clothes, the hanging moss,  
cool moon, white diffused everywhere.

X

Thoughts of seclusion are suddenly disquieted—  
the time to go back can’t be helped.  
Leaving his gate, the flowing waters stop,  
I turn my head and white clouds are everywhere.  
I laugh at myself for dancing before the lamp,  
who loves the songs made when drunk?  
I should join with my friend  
and stop by even in a rainstorm.
麗人行

三月三日天氣新，
長安水邊多麗人。
態濃意遠淑且真，
肌理細膩骨肉勻。
繡羅衣裳照暮春，
蹙金孔雀銀麒麟。
頭上何所有，
翠微IEnumerable垂鬢脣。
背後何所見，
珠壓腰衱穩稱身。
就中雲幕椒房親，
賜名大國虢與秦。
紫駝之峰出翠釜，
水精之盤行素鱗。
犀箸厭飫久未下，
鸞刀縷切空紛綸。
黃門飛鞚不動塵，
御廚絡繹送八珍。
簫鼓哀吟感鬼神，
賓從雜遝實要津。
Fair Ladies: A Ballad

On the third day of the third month, the weather is fresh, by the waters of Chang’an are many lovely ladies. Appearance voluptuous, their mood remote, pure and true, their skin’s texture, delicate and glossy, flesh and bones well-matched. Embroidered gossamer gowns shine in the end of spring, peacocks done in gold appliqué, unicorns of silver.

And what do they have on their heads?—

kingfisher-feather fine leaf tiaras dangling in tresses to lips.

And at their backs what do we see?—

pearls encumbering waist aprons, fitted perfectly to the body. Among them are the cloud-like tents, the kin of the Peppered Chambers,¹

those granted title to great states, to Guo and to Qin.²

The purple hump of a camel comes forth from an azure cauldron, and on a platter of crystal pale-white scales go. From surfeit the rhino-horn chopsticks long have not been plied, the threadlike slices of phoenix knives are a-flurry in vain.

The Yellow Gate’s flying bridles do not stir the dust,³ in continuous streams the Royal Kitchen sends along eight precious foods. The mournful droning of pan-pipes and drums stirs the spirits and gods, attendant guests throng around—this is truly the gate to power.

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¹ The emperor’s in-laws.
² These were the titles granted to the sisters of Lady Yang, Xuanzong’s favorite.
³ The imperial eunuchs.
後來鞍馬何逡巡，
當軒下馬入錦茵。
楊花雪落覆白蘋，
青鳥飛去銜紅巾。
炙手可熱勢絕倫，
慎莫近前丞相瞋。

2.44
(See notes)

2.45

九日曲江

綴席茱萸好，
浮舟菡萏衰。
季秋時欲半，
九日意兼悲。
江水清源曲，
荊門此路疑。晚來高興盡，
搖盪菊花期。
A saddled horse comes later—how leisurely it advances!\(^1\)
at the great carriage he gets off the horse and goes in on the brocade mat.
Willow flowers fall like snow covering white water-clover.
a bluebird flies away, a red kerchief in its beak.
Heat that can burn the hands, power beyond all measure—
take care not to come close before the Minister’s angry glare!

*This is a satire of the minister Yang Guozhong on the occasion of a visit to Twisting River Park, with the emperor accompanied by his favorite Lady Yang, Yang Yuhuan (Yang guifei), and her two sisters, the Duchesses of Guo and Qin.*

2.44
(See notes)

2.45

The Double Ninth on the Twisting River

Adorning the mats, the ailanthus is fine,\(^2\)
we drift in a boat, lotuses wither away.
Autumn’s last month, time almost half gone,
the Double Ninth, our mood doubly sad.
River waters, the clear stream bends,
this course seems like that at Jingmen.\(^3\)
With evening our high spirits are spent,
tossed along at this moment of chrysanthemums.

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1 The minister Yang Guozhong, Lady Yang’s relative.
2 On the Double Ninth it was customary to put sprays of ailanthus in one’s hair.
3 *Meng Jia.*