偶題

文章千古事，
得失寸心知。
作者皆殊列，
名声豈浪垂。
騷人嗟不見，
漢道盛於斯。
前輩飛騰入，
餘波綺麗為。
後賢兼舊制，
歷代各清規。
法自儒家有，
心從弱歲疲。
永懷江左逸，
多病鄴中奇。
騄驥皆良馬，
騏驎帶好兒。
車輪徒已斲，
堂構惜仍虧。
A Chance Topic

18.1

A Chance Topic

Literary works are matters of all time, failure and success are known in the speck of mind.\(^1\) Writers are all of different classes, but their fame was never haphazardly passed down. When the Sao poet was, alas, no longer to be seen, then the way of the Han flourished.\(^2\) The earlier generations succeeded by mounting in flight, the lingering waves did it with intricate beauty.\(^3\) Later worthies combined normative precedents, each offered a clear model through successive ages. The discipline I have comes from a scholar’s household, the mind, grown weary in this since younger years. I have ever cared for the freedom of the Southeasterners,\(^4\) and often felt discomfited by the novelty of those at Ye.\(^5\) All were fine horses, Luji’s,\(^6\) unicorns bringing along fine juniors. Though the carriage wheel in vain has already been cut,\(^7\) I am sorry that the structure of the hall is still incomplete.\(^8\)

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1 “Mind,” *xin* 心, the seat of consciousness, is described as a “square inch,” translated here as “speck.”
2 This suggests that, after Qu Yuan, the poet of the “Li sao,” was gone, Han poetry (referring to *fu*, “poetic exposition”) flourished by developing from that precedent.
3 This refers to the vigor of poetry in the second and third centuries, and the delicacy of poetry of the late fifth and sixth centuries.
4 Poets of the pre-T’ang.
5 The poets of the Jian’an.
6 Luji was the name of a fine steed, significantly used by Cao Pi in the “Lun wen” as a figure for the Seven Masters.
7 This is a term for mastery of an art, referring to the *Zhuangzi* story of Wheelwright Bian, the consummate craftsman of cutting wheels, who told Duke Huan of Qi that he could not pass his skill onto his son.
8 From the *Classic of Documents*, referring to a successor’s inability to carry through an enterprise initiated by his predecessor.
偶題

漫作潛夫論，
虚傳幼婦碑。
緣情慰漂蕩，
抱疾屢遷移。
經濟慚長策，
飛棲假一枝。
塵沙傍蜂蠆，
江峽繞蛟螭。
蕭瑟唐虞遠，
聯翩楚漢危。
聖朝兼盜賊，
異俗更喧卑。
鬱鬱星辰劍，
蒼蒼雲雨池。
兩都開幕府，
萬宇插軍麾。
南海殘銅柱，
東風避月支。
音書恨鳥鶴，
號怒怪熊罷。
Uselessly I write “Discourse of One Who Sinks From Sight,”¹
for nothing I pass on the “Stele of the Young Wife.”²
“What follows from feeling” consoles me, swept along,³
bearing my sickness, I often change place.
Ashamed to lack good plans for making government work,
I avail myself of a single branch, to roost in my flight.
Dust and sand edged by bees and scorpions,
river and gorges swarm with krakens and dragons.
Blear and dreary, Tang and Yu are far,⁴
one after another, Chu and Han perilous.⁵
Our sage reign, together with brigands,
strange customs, still more raucous and vile.
Swelling aura, that sword among the stars,⁶
dark and gray, the pool with clouds and rain.⁷
In both capitals military headquarters have been set up,
in myriad regions command banners have been planted.
By the South Sea there remains the bronze column,⁸
the east wind evades the Yuezhi.⁹
For letters and news, I resent the magpie,¹⁰
I hate the bears, howling in rage.

¹ A treatise by the Eastern Han writer Wang Fu, here apparently referring to Du Fu’s own work, writing in isolation and out of office.
² This stele was composed by the Eastern Han writer Handan Chun. Cai Yong wrote a cryptic distich on the back, a riddle for “superb diction.”
³ “What follows from feeling” was Lu Ji’s definition of poetry.
⁴ Sage-kings referring to good government.
⁵ Referring to the struggles after the fall of Qin and by extension, contemporary political turmoil.
⁶ *Sword dragon.
⁷ This may refer to a statement by Zhou Yu, the Wu general of the Three Kingdoms “When the dragon achieves clouds and rain, it is at last not just a creature in a pool.” This is variously understood as a reference to Du Fu himself not yet having come into his own, or to rebels who have already risen.
⁸ *Ma Yuan.
⁹ The Yuezhi were a Central Asian people of the Han times and here refer to the Tibetans. This may suggest the emperor’s flight from the capital when the Tibetans invaded.
¹⁰ The magpie is supposed to bring good news.
君不見簡蘇徯
稼穡分詩興，
柴荊學土宜。
故山迷白閣，
秋水憶黃陂。
不敢要佳句，
愁來賦別離。

君不見簡蘇徯
君不見道邊廢棄池，
君不見前者摧折桐。
百年死樹中琴瑟，
一斛舊水藏蛟龍。
丈夫蓋棺事始定，
君今幸未成老翁，
何恨憔悴在山中。

君不見簡蘇徯
深山窮谷不可處，
霹靂魍魎兼狂風。
Sowing and reaping divides time with inspiration for poems,
amid bramble and brushwood, I follow what is appropriate for the land.
Of home mountains, White Tower eludes me,
for autumn waters, I recall Huang Bank.¹
I dare not demand fine lines,
but when sorrow comes, I write on separation.

18.2

“Haven’t You Seen?”: A Note to Su Xi

Haven’t you seen by the roadside an abandoned pond?—
haven’t you seen from once before a broken tung tree?
The tree dead for a hundred years can serve for a zither,
this single gallon of old water hides dragons.
When a real man is in his coffin only then is the reckoning settled,
and you now are fortunate not yet to be an old man,
what resentment makes you look so worn down here in the mountains?
Deep in the mountains, in dreary valleys you cannot stay—
peals of thunder, goblins, together with wild winds.

¹ Both are in the Chang’an area.
18.3

贈蘇四徯

異縣昔同遊，
各云厭轉蓬。
別離已五年，
尚在行李中。
戎馬日衰息，
乘輿安九重。
有才何棲棲，
將老委所窮。
為郎未為賤，
其奈疾病攻。
子何面黧黑，
不得豁心胸。
巴蜀倦剽劫，
下愚成土風。
幽薊已削平，
荒徼尚彎弓。
斯人脫身來，
豈非吾道東。
乾坤雖寬大，
所適裝囊空。
18.3

Presented to Su Xi

Long ago we once roamed together in another county, each weary of being dandelion puffs tossed turning along. Five years have passed since we parted, and we still are in the midst of travels. War-horses diminish from day to day, the imperial coach is secure in the nine-tiered palace. You have talent, but how restless and ill at ease you are!—

I am getting old, resigned to being impoverished. Being a Court Gentleman is not low status, but how can I escape being attacked by sickness? Why is your face so darkened?—
you can’t get your heart to relax.
You were sick of riot and plunder in Ba and Shu, the worst stupidity became local custom. The areas of You and Ji have been pacified,¹ but on those wild frontiers they are still drawing bows. This man escaped and came here it can only be that his way goes east.² As vast and wide as the universe is, wherever I go, my luggage and purse are empty.

---

¹ The rebellious northeastern commands.
² Zheng Xuan came to Chang’an to study with Ma Rong and returned east when he completed his studies, at which Ma Rong said: “My way is going east”; i.e. his learning. This may suggest that Su Xi is taking Du Fu’s poems.
肉食哂菜色，
少壯欺老翁。
況乃主客間，
古來偏側同。
君今下荊揚，
獨帆如飛鴻。
二州豪俠場，
人馬皆自雄。
一請甘饑寒，
再請甘養蒙。

18.4

別蘇徯

故人有遊子，
棄擲傍天隅。
他日憐才命，
居然屈壯圖。
十年猶塌翼，
絕倒為驚吁。
消渴今如在，
提攜愧老夫。
豈知台閣舊，
先拂鳳凰雛。
Meat-eaters sneer at a vegetarian complexion,
the young and vigorous maltreat an old man.
Even more in the relation between native and stranger,
from ancient times there has always been discomfort in closeness.
Now you are going downstream to Jing and Yang,
your lone sail like a swan in flight.
Those two prefectures are a world of bullying men-at-arms,
both men and horses are basically fierce.
First, I pray that you accept hunger and cold;
second, I pray that you accept self-cultivation in ignorance.

18.4

Parting from Su Xi

Among my old friends is a wanderer,
cast off, keeping close to Heaven’s edge.
In other days I was moved by the fate of such talent,
now, at last, his bold plans have been humbled.
After ten years, still with drooping wings,
I give a startled sigh for him, overcome with admiration.
As my diabetes is now still with me,
my incapacity to help embarrasses this old fellow.
How could I have known that old associates in the Secretariat
would first lend a hand to this phoenix chick?

1 Original note: “On his way to the headquarters of the Hu’nan Army” 赴湖南幕.
2 Su Xi. This refers to his appointment in the Hu’nan Army.
李潮八分小篆歌

得實翻蒼竹，
棲枝把翠梧。
北辰當宇宙，
南嶽據江湖。
國帶風塵色，
兵張虎豹符。
數論封內事，
揮發府中趨。
贈爾秦人策，
莫鞭轅下駒。

18.5

李潮八分小篆歌

蒼頡鳥跡既茫昧，
字體變化如浮雲。
陳倉石鼓又已訛，
大小二篆生八分。
秦有李斯漢蔡邕，
中間作者絕不聞。
Getting its fruit, he sways the gray-green bamboo;
roosting on a branch, he clasps the azure tung tree.
The Pole Star faces the universe,
the Southern Peak controls the river and lakes.
This domain carries the look of the dust of war,
the troops display tiger and leopard tallies.¹
You will often discuss issues of your jurisdiction,
and make your case as you rush about at headquarters.
I give you that riding crop of the man of Qin,
but let no one whip the colt in the yoke.²

18.5

Song For Li Chao’s Bafen Small Seal Script

Cang Jie’s “bird tracks” have grown obscure and remote,³
the forms of characters have transformed like drifting clouds.
Even the Stone Drums at Chencang had changed from the standard,⁴
after the seal scripts, large and small, the bafen was born.
In Qin there was Li Si, in the Han there was Cai Yong,⁵
between those two, practitioners are not heard of at all.⁶

1 Signs of their legitimate authority.
2 This combines two allusions. In the first, the capable Shi Hui, working in Qin, was being tricked into returning to his native Jin. Rao Zhao of Qin saw through the ruse, and presented the departing Shi Hui with a riding crop (also “stratagem”), presumably to tell him that this was a trick. Presumably Du Fu is suggesting that Su Xi is being lured back into service. The “colt in the yoke” was a figure for the still inexperienced young person, unused to his task.
3 Cang Jie was credited with the invention of writing, based on observing bird tracks.
4 The “Stone Drums” were dolmens inscribed with poems of the Eastern Zhou, rediscovered in the Tang.
5 Li Si, the minister of Qin, was credited with the script of the Qin inscriptions. Cai Yong was a noted literary figure and calligrapher of the second century AD.
6 That is, there were no noteworthy calligraphers of seal script forms between Li Si and Cai Yong.
嶧山之碑野火焚，
棗木傳刻肥失真。
苦縣光和尚骨立，
書貴瘦硬方通神。
惜哉李蔡不復得，
吾甥李潮下筆親。
尚書韓擇木，
騎曹蔡有鄰。
開元已來數八分，
潮也奄有二子成三人。

況潮小篆逼秦相，
快劍長戟森相向。
八分一字直百金，
蛟龍盤拏肉屈強。
吳郡張顛誇草書，
草書非古空雄壯。
豈如吾甥不流宕，
丞相中郎丈人行。

巴東逢李潮，
逾月求我歌。
我今衰老才力薄，
潮乎潮乎奈汝何。
The stele on Mount Yi has been burned by wildfires,¹
carvings on date-wood are passed around, but they are fat and miss the
genuine.²
The Guanghe reign stele at Ku County still stands bony,³
in this script the gaunt and hard are best, only then is the spirit
conveyed.
Too bad, but works of Li Si and Cai Yong are no longer to be had,
yet my nephew Li Chao is their close kin when using the brush.
There is Han Zemu of the Secretariat,
and Cai Youlin of the Horse Guard—
reckoning bafen since the Kaiyuan reign,
Chao completes the full count, those two plus him make three.
Moreover, Chao’s small seal script approaches the Qin minister’s
closely,⁴
sharp swords and linked pikes face each other in dense array.
A single character of his bafen is worth a hundred in silver,
krakens and dragons coil and clasp, their flesh tough and hard.
Crazy Zhang of Wu vaunted his draft script,⁵
but draft script is not ancient and shows its boldness in vain.
How can it compare to my nephew’s manner, not wild and
unrestrained,
with the Minister and Court Gentleman he belongs among
the grown-ups.⁶
East of Ba I met Li Chao,
for more than a month he asked a song of me.
I now am aging and getting frail, my talents are weak,
Chao, O Chao! What can I do for you?

---
¹ This was one of the inscriptions of the First Emperor, the script attributed to Li Si.
² Date-wood was used to reproduce calligraphy. Here however the strokes are too
wide (“fat”).
³ This was a stele inscription for Laozi by Cai Yong in the late second century.
⁴ That is, his script is close to that of Li Si.
⁵ The famous eighth-century calligrapher Zhang Xu.
⁶ The “Minister” is Li Si; the “Court Gentleman” is Cai Yong. The point is that
Li Chao is of their stature in mature control.
峡口二首

I

峡口大江間，
西南控百蠻。
城欹連粉堞，
岸斷更青山。
開闢多天險，
防隅一水關。
亂離聞鼓角，
秋氣動衰顏。

II

時清關失險，
世亂戟如林。
去矣英雄事，
荒哉割據心。
蘆花留客晚，
楓樹坐猿深。
疲苶煩親故，
諸侯數賜金。
18.6–7

The Mouth of the Gorges

I

The Gorge’s mouth on the Great River
controls all the Mon folk to the southwest.
The wall aslant, stretching with whitewashed battlements,
4 where the shore breaks off, even more green mountains.
Since creation, much natural fastness
has guarded against the unforeseen, a single river barrier.
Separated by troubled times, I hear bugle and drum,
8 the autumn atmosphere stirs my aging complexion.

II

When the times are clear, the barrier loses its fastness,
an age of turmoil, pikes are like a forest.
Gone indeed are the acts of heroes,
4 rash and wild, minds that wanted to carve out a territory.
Late, when the reed flowers detain the wayfarer,
deep, where the maple trees are seats for gibbons.
Worn and weary, I trouble old friends,1
8 the domain’s lord often presents me with gold.2

---

1 Original note: “My patron, Vice-Censor Bo often allots me a monthly stipend” 主人柏中丞頻分月俸. This is the loyalist general in command at Kuizhou, Bo Maolin.
2 Again, this is Bo Maolin, here dignified by the resonant term zhuhou 諸侯, originally referring to the lords of the domains in the Eastern Zhou.
18.8

南極

南極青山眾，
西江白谷分。
古城疏落木，
charg 密寒雲。
歲月蛇常見，
風飆虎或聞。
近身皆鳥道，
殊俗自人群。
睥睨登哀柝，
蝥弧照夕曛。
亂離多醉尉，
愁殺李將軍。

18.9

瞿塘兩崖

三峽傳何處，
雙崖壯此門。
入天猶石色，
穿水忽雲根。
18.8

The Southern Limit

Southern limit, crowds of green mountains,\(^1\)
the western reaches of the river, divided by White Valley.
This ancient city, trees sparse and leaf-stripped,
\(^4\) a fortress in leaves and weeds, cold clouds thick over it.
Through months and years, snakes are always seen,
in blasts of wind, tigers are sometimes heard.
All roads close to me are but for birds,
different customs, the people form a close-knit group.
From the parapets rise the mournful sound of clappers,
His Lordship’s battleflags catch the evening sunshine.
In times of turmoil, many drunk sheriffs—
\(^12\) it makes General Li terribly sad.\(^2\)

18.9

The Paired Slopes of Qutang Gorge

By tradition which places are indeed the “Three Gorges?” — \(^3\)
but the paired slopes make this gate mighty.
Up into the heavens, still the color of rock,
\(^4\) piercing into waters, suddenly roots of cloud.\(^4\)

---

\(^1\) Du Fu is, hyperbolically, referring to Kuizhou as the farthest south. The Southern Limit is also the name of an asterism, also known as the Old Man Star.

\(^2\) *Li Guang. Later the term “drunk sheriff” was applied generally to minor officials and clerks who took advantage of their authority to lord it over those who should be their superiors.

\(^3\) The “Three Gorges” are variously identified.

\(^4\) “Roots of cloud” is the rock of the mountain.
瞿塘懷古

猱玃須髯古，
蛟龍窟宅尊。
羲和冬馭近，
愁畏日車翻。

18.10

瞿塘懷古

西南萬壑注，
勍敵兩崖開。
地與山根裂，
江從月窟來。
削成當白帝，
空曲隱陽臺。
疏鑿功雖美，
陶鈞力大哉。

18.11

夜宿西閣曉呈元二十一曹長

城暗更籌急，
樓高雨雪微。
稍通綃幕霽，
遠帶玉繩稀。
Gibbon-apes, their beards and whiskers ancient,¹
dragons, their cave-lairs exalted.
In winter Xihe drives close,²
8 I worry, fearing the sun-carriage will be overturned.

18.10
Meditation on the Past at the Qutang Gorge

From the southwest thousands of ravines spill out,
doughty opponents, the two cliffs open.
The land splits with the roots of the mountains,
and the River comes from the Cave of the Moon.³
Formed sheared off, facing White Emperor Mountain,
its deserted bends hide the Terrace of Light.⁴
Though the deed in cutting it through was admirable,⁵
8 the power of the Potter’s Wheel is great indeed!⁶

18.11
Dawn After Spending the Night in West Tower, To Bureau Director
Yuan (21)

The city wall is dark, the marker of the hour speeds,
high in an upper storey the falling snow gets lighter.
Gradually the sky through the silk drapes clears,
and in the distance stars around the Jade Rope grow sparse.⁷

¹ This is the large jue gibbon, by legend the metamorphosis of an ordinary gibbon
that had lived five-hundred years.
² Xi He was the driver of the sun-carriage.
³ Where the moon sets, here the remote west.
⁴ On Mount Wu.
⁵ The deed of Great Yu, cutting the channel of the Yangzi through the mountains.
⁶ The Potter’s Wheel represents the forces of creation.
⁷ The Jade Rope is a constellation.
門鵲晨光起，
橋烏宿處飛。
寒江流甚細，
有意待人歸。

18.12

西閣口號呈元二十一

山木抱雲稠，
寒江繞上頭。
雪崖纔變石，
風幔不依樓。
社稷堪流涕，
安危在運籌。
看君話王室，
感動幾銷憂。

18.13

閣夜

歲暮陰陽催短景，
天涯霜雪霽寒宵。
五更鼓角聲悲壯，
三峽星河影動搖。
Extempore on West Tower: Presented to Yuan (21)

Magpies on the gate rise with the morning light,
crows on masts fly off from where they spent the night.
The cold river flows quite imperceptibly,
with purpose, awaiting someone to go home.

18.12

Mountain trees, densely enfolded by clouds,
the cold river circles the heights.
Slopes of snow have just changed to rock,
wind-blown curtains don’t rest against the building.
Altars of Earth and Grain can bring tears to be shed,
safety depends on the plans they devise.
But watching you talk of the royal house
so moves me it almost melts cares away.

18.13

Night in the Tower

Year’s end, Shadow and Light hasten the shortening daylight,
ends of the earth, frost and snow clear up in the cold night.
Bugle and drum of the fifth watch, their sound mournfully resolute,
in the Three Gorges the River of Stars, reflections stirring and shaking.

1 “Shadow and Light” are Yin and Yang, visible in the changing dayspan.
2 This may be an omen for impending warfare.
瀼西寒望

野哭几家闻战伐，
夷歌是处起渔樵。
臥龙跃马终黄土，
人事音书漫寂寥。

18.14

瀼西寒望

水色含群动，
朝光切太虚。
年侵频怅望，
兴远一萧疏。
猿挂时相学，
鸥行炯自如。
瞿塘春欲至，
定卜瀼西居。

18.15

西阁曝日

凛冽倦玄冬，
负暄嗜飞阁。
羲和流德泽，
顓頊愧倚薄。
Weeping in wilderness from several households, hearing of battles, barbarian songs everywhere arise from fishermen and wood-gatherers. “Sleeping Dragon,” “Leaping Horse,” in the end, brown dirt,\(^1\) all word of human affairs is lost in the vast silence.

### 18.14

**A View of the Cold at Rangxi**\(^2\)

The waters’ colors contain all creatures that move, dawn’s light cuts into the great void.  
Years steal upon me, I often gaze in sorrow,  
my impulse to go far is entirely bleak now.  
Gibbons hang, sometimes imitating each other,  
gulls form lines, sparkling and self-absorbed.  
Spring will soon come to the Qutang Gorge and I have decided to site my dwelling at Rangxi.

### 18.15

**Sunning Myself at West Tower**

I am sick of late winter’s biting cold,  I adore this soaring tower for sunning myself.  
Xihe lets her generous grace flow;\(^3\)  
Zhuan Xu is too ashamed to draw close.\(^4\)

---

1. Sleeping Dragon is *Zhuge Liang, the minister of Shu. Leaping Horse is Gongsun Shu, who made his horse leap and proclaimed himself emperor as the Wang Mang usurpation was collapsing.  
2. “Rang” 浪 was the local term for the estuary of a tributary flowing into the Yangzi. Rangxi is literally “West of the Rang,” where Du Fu moved his lodgings.  
3. Xihe is the carriage-driver of the sun.  
4. Zhuan Xu is the god of winter.
毛髮具自私，
肌膚潛沃若。
太陽信深仁，
衰氣欻有託。
欹傾煩注眼，
容易收病腳。
流離木杪猿，
翩躚山顛鶴。
朋知苦聚散，
哀樂日已作。
即事會賦詩，
人生忽如昨。
古來遭喪亂，
賢聖盡蕭索。
All my hairs together feel selfish pleasure,
skin and flesh are invisibly enriched.
The sun shows deep humaneness indeed,
my failing energy suddenly has something to trust in.
I leaned to the side, bothered by fixing my eyes on it,
now I feel easy, drawing back my sick feet.
Nimble are the gibbons in the treetops,
I suffer when friends and acquaintances go their ways,
sorrows and joys occur more often with each passing day.
Sometimes I write poems on what’s before me—
in human life things are too suddenly past.
Since ancient days, meeting destruction and turmoil,
sages and worthy men have all felt depressed.
Why, as I enter my twilight years,
does heart’s strength for worrying about the times weaken?

18.16–17
Not Leaving West Tower

I
River willows sprout untimely,
river flowers often show their colors in the cold.
地偏应有瘴，
4 臧近已含春。
失学从愚子，
无家任老身。
不知西阁意，
8 肯别定留人。

II

西阁从人别，
人今亦故亭。
江云飘素练，
4 石壁断空青。
滄海先迎日，
银河倒列星。
平生耽胜事，
8 吁骇始初经。

18.18

缚鸡行

小奴缚鸡向市卖，
鸡被缚急相喧争。
家中厌鸡食虫蚁，
4 不知鸡卖还遭烹。
In a place so remote there should be pestilential fog,
the La festival nears, and already spring is in the background.¹
I let my foolish son miss his studies,
so what if this old body has no home?
I know not west tower’s intentions—
is it willing to part, or determined to keep me?

II
West tower would let me leave,
but here I am now again in this old pavilion.
River clouds toss their white silk,
rocky cliffs break the sky’s blue.
The gray sea is first to greet the sun,
while the Silver River here inverts its stars in reflection.
All my life I’ve been avid for fine scenery,
with a shocked sigh, now for the first time I experience it.

18.18
Ballad of Binding a Chicken
My young slave bound up a chicken and headed to sell it at market,
the chicken was bound tightly and struggled and squawked at him.
My household was tired of the chicken eating up bugs and ants,
but did not reflect that the chicken, once sold, would then get boiled.

¹ The eighth day of the twelfth month.
小至

蟲雞於人何厚薄，
吾叱奴人解其縛。
雞蟲得失無了時，
注目寒江倚山閣。

18.19

小至

天時人事日相催，
冬至陽生春又來。
刺繡五紋添弱線，
吹葭六琯動浮灰。
岸容待臘將舒柳，
山意衝寒欲放梅。
雲物不殊鄉國異，
教兒且覆掌中杯。

18.20

寄柏學士林居

自胡之反持干戈，
天下學士亦奔波。
歎彼幽棲載典籍，
蕭然暴露依山阿。
In human relations to chickens and bugs no treatment is kind or cruel, but I shouted at the slave to untie its bonds. Whether chickens or bugs get the better deal is something that never will end.

8 I fix my eyes on the cold river, leaning against a tower in the hills.

18.19

The Little Solstice

Heaven’s seasons and men’s affairs daily hurry each other on, with winter solstice the Yang appears, and spring is coming again. To embroidery in five-colored patterns, a slender thread is added, blowing on the cane of the six pipes the drifting ash stirs. The slope’s countenance awaits the La festival with willows about to unfurl, the mood in the mountains dashes against the cold with plums ready to bloom. Shapes in the clouds are no different, yet this land is not my own, 8 I let my son for the while drink down the cup in his hand.

18.20

To the Scholar Bo, Living in the Woods

Ever since the Hu revolted, grabbing shield and pike, scholars over all the world fled in flooding waves. I sigh how he roosts in seclusion having brought his books, dreary, exposed to the elements, he stays in a mountain bend.

---

1 This was a day close to the winter solstice, though whether immediately preceding or immediately following is a matter of debate.

2 This is taken to refer to palace ladies who, as the daylight gets longer after winter solstice, have time to work an additional thread in their embroidery.

3 This refers to the correlation between music and the season. Six yang-mode pipes were filled with reed ash, and at the various seasonal junctures (festivals), the ash would swell so that it would blow off in the wind. At the winter solstice the first pipe released its ash.
青山万里静散地，
白雨一洗空垂萝。
乱代飘零余到此，
古人成败子如何。

荆扬春冬异风土，
巫峡日夜多云雨。
赤叶楓林百舌鸣，
黄泥野岸天鸡舞。

盗贼纵横甚密邇，
形神寂寞甘辛苦。
几时高议排金门，
各使蒼生有环堵。

鸣呼房魏不復见，
秦王学士时难羡。
青襟胄子困泥塗，
白马将军若雷电。

千载少似朱雲人，
至今折檻空嶙峋。
Ten thousand leagues of green mountains, a land of serene ease, washed all over by downpours, the hanging moss just dangles down. Tossed about in an age of turmoil, I have reached this place, given the successes and failures of the ancients, where do you stand?

Winters and springs in Jing and Yang are a different clime from home, in the Wu Gorges day and night there are often clouds and rain. Maple forests with crimson leaves, the shrike cries out, in the yellow mud of a wilderness shore the pheasant dances. Rebels and bandits are in every direction, ever so close by, your body and spirit are silent, you gladly accept bitter hardship. When will your debates based on high principle open the golden gates and bring each of the common folk to live in houses with four walls?¹

18.21

The Broken Railing: A Ballad²

Alas that Fang Xuanling and Wei Zheng are no more to be seen,³ the Prince of Qin’s Academicians are now hard to hope for.⁴ The Scions with their green lapels are stuck on muddy roads,⁵ while white-horsed generals are like thunder and lightning.

After a thousand years few can match a man like Zhu Yun, even today that broken railing juts up high in vain.

---

¹ That is, to live in peace and security.
² *Zhu Yun.
³ Famous advisors of Tang Taizong.
⁴ Taizong was Prince of Qin before taking the throne.
⁵ The Scions are the students in the National Academy. Green lapels is the mark of a student.
覽柏中丞兼子姪數人除官制詞因述父子兄弟四美載歌絲綸

婁公不語宋公語，
尚憶先皇容直臣。

紛然喪亂際，
見此忠孝門。
蜀中寇亦甚，
柏氏功彌存。
Lord Lou did not speak, Lord Song did,¹
we still recall how the former emperor took officials who were direct.

Bo Maolin 柏茂琳 was then the commandant in Kuizhou. We don’t really
know much about him and his family, but the family clearly had a military
background and had actively supported government forces in quelling
one of the rebellions in Sichuan. He seems to have had kinship ties with
Wei Boyu, the Military Commissioner of Jingnan. Bo Maolin provided
Du Fu with an allowance, which was certainly one reason Du Fu stayed
in Kuizhou; in turn Du Fu composed at least one petition to the throne for
him, wrote poems in his honor, and was brought to banquets entertaining
passing dignitaries. We can be reasonably certain that Bo Maolin was
wanting in the cultural graces that were essential in the imperial system;
and Du Fu, a former official in the court and still with an honorary office,
was a useful ornament to Bo’s government. Kuizhou was a key city in the
Yangzi transport system, and the imperial government was generous in
bestowing civil titles on key military figures. In the following poem Du Fu
celebrates an edict awarding Bo Maolin and his family members the title
of Vice Censor in Chief, a title commonly awarded to military figures.

18.22
Perusing the Edict that Bestows Office on Vice Censor in Chief Bo and
His Son and Nephews, I Give an Account of the Excellence of the Bos
in a Song on Reeling Silk [the Edict]²

At this time of turmoil and destruction everywhere
appears this loyal and filial household.
In Shu the brigands are so terrible
that the merits of the Bo family endure even more.

¹ Lord Lou is Lou Shide, Empress Wu’s minister; Song Jing was Xuanzong’s famous
minister.
² Reeling silk was a conventional reference to an imperial edict from a passage in Li
ji: “The king’s words are like silken threads; when they go forth it is like reeling
them out.”
深誠補王室，
戮力自元昆。

三止錦江沸，
獨清玉壘昏。

高名入竹帛，
新渥照乾坤。

子弟先卒伍，
芝蘭疊珪璠。

同心注師律，
灑血在戎軒。

絹繡實具載，
紱冕已殊恩。

奉公舉骨肉，
誅叛經寒溫。

金甲雪猶凍，
朱旗塵不翻。

每聞戰場說，
欻激懦氣奔。

聖主國多盜，
賢臣官則尊。

方當節鉞用，
必絕祲沴根。

吾病日迴首，
雲台誰再論。
With perfect sincerity they aid the royal house,
combining their strength through the elder brother.¹
Often he stopped the Brocade River from boiling over,²
alone he cleared away the darkness at Jade Fort Mountain.
His lofty name has been put on silk and bamboo,³
this grace newly received shines in the universe.
The younger family members first came up through the ranks,
spirit-mushroom and orchid, fine jade in piles.
Of like mind, they paid attention to military rules,
they shed blood in the campaign wagons.
The facts are all contained in the edict,
with ribbons and caps, they have received unusual favor.
Acting for the public weal, he recommended his flesh and blood,
in punishing the rebels they had been through heat and cold.
Snows still froze on their metal armor,
the red banners could not flap from the dust.
Whenever I hear these stories of the battlefield,
they immediately stir my timorous spirit to flee.
Our sage ruler has many bandits in the domains,
so the posts of these worthy officers are exalted.
Whenever the tally and ax are employed,⁴
one must cut away the root of the evil vapors.
I am sick, and daily turn my head——
who again will consider me on Cloud Terrace?⁵

¹ Bo Maolin, Du Fu’s patron, the Commander at Kuizhou.
² ‘That is, he quelled uprisings in Shu.
³ ‘The historical record through the edict of appointment.
⁴ ‘The signs of military authority.
⁵ Where the merits of officials are judged.
作歌挹盛事，
推毂期孤骞。

18.23

覽鏡呈柏中丞

渭水流關內，
終南在日邊。
膽銷豺虎窟，
淚入犬羊天。
起晚堪從事，
行遲更覺仙。
鏡中衰謝色，
萬一故人憐。

18.24–25

陪柏中丞觀宴將士二首

I

極樂三軍士，
誰知百戰場。
無私齊縝饌，
久坐密金章。
To make this song I have drawn from their glory, 
their wheel-hubs pushed, I expect they will soar uniquely.¹

18.23
Looking in a Mirror: Presented to Vice Censor in Chief Bo

The Wei River flows Inside-the-Passes,  
Mount Zhongnan is there beside the sun.²  
My courage melted in the lairs of jackals and tigers,  
my tears entered the skies of dogs and sheep.³  
I get up so late, can I carry out tasks?—  
I walk so slowly, can I still feel like an immortal?  
This aging complexion in the mirror—  
may, by some chance, my old friend pity it.

18.24–25
Accompanying Vice Censor in Chief Bo in Reviewing and Feasting the Officers and Troops

I

At the height of merriment, troops of the Grand Army,  
who would have known they were on a hundred battlefields?  
Dainty viands are distributed equally, without personal favor,  
I sit long, close to the golden badge.⁴

---
¹ Pushing the wheel hubs is to take on military command.
² Near the emperor.
³ Non-Han peoples around Kuizhou, or referring to the Tibetan incursion.
⁴ That is, close to General Bo.
醉客霑鸚鵡，
佳人指鳳凰。
幾時來翠節，
特地引紅妝。

繡段裝簾額，
金花帖鼓腰。
一夫先舞劍，
百戲後歌鐏。
江樹城孤遠，
雲臺使寂寥。
漢朝頻選將，
應拜霍嫖姚。

奉送蜀州柏二別駕將中丞命赴江陵起居衛尚書太夫人因示從弟行軍司馬位

中丞問俗畫熊頻，
愛弟傳書彩鵲新。
遷轉五州防禦使，
起居八座太夫人。
Drunken guests, the parrot ale-mugs sloshing,
fair women finger the phoenix zither.
When will they bring the kingfisher standards?—
you will especially bring forth a rouged beauty.

II

Pieces of brocade decorate the eaves,
golden flowers are pasted on the waists of drums.
One fellow first does a sword dance,
after a hundred sports, they sing to the tapping ladle.
River trees, the city alone and remote,
from Cloud Terrace the envoy in empty silence.
The Han court often selects generals;
I’m sure you will be appointed “Fleet Huo.”

18.26

Respectfully Seeing Off Administrative Aide Bo (2), Who Is Accompanying the Vice Censor in Chief to Jiangling to Enquire After Her Ladyship, the Mother of Minister Wei, Whereby I Ask Word Be Given to My Cousin Adjutant Du Wei

The Vice-Censor asks after the people, the painted bear often seen,
his dear younger brother carries a letter, the bright-colored cormorant prow is fresh.
The first has been promoted to Defense Commissioner of five prefectures,
the second will enquire after the Minister’s Ladyship mother.

---

1 An envoy from court, recognizing Bo Maolin’s merit.
2 The ladle was used to ring the watches in camp.
3 ‘That is, there is no envoy from the court.
4 Huo Qubing, one of Han Wudi’s most famous generals.
5 In the Han the high lords of state and the great nobility traveled with a bear painted on their carriage; this refers to Bo Maolin.
6 Synecdoche for the boat.
楚宮臘送荊門水，
白帝雲偷碧海春。
與報惠連詩不惜，
知吾斑鬢總如銀。

18.27

送鮮于萬州遷巴州

京兆先時傑，
琳琅照一門。
朝廷偏注意，
接近與名藩。
祖帳排舟數，
寒江觸石喧。
看君妙為政，
他日有殊恩。

18.28

奉送十七舅下邵桂

絕域三冬暮，
浮生一病身。
感深辭舅氏，
別後見何人。
La festival drums from the Chu palace send him off to Jingmen’s waters,
clouds of White Emperor Castle steal the spring of the emerald seas.
Please tell my Huilian not to begrudge me a poem,¹
he knows that my graying locks are now all like silver.

18.27

Seeing Off Xianyu Gui of Wanzhou on His Transfer to Bazhou

In previous times someone outstanding in the capital,²
and this fine jade adds luster to that single household.
The court gave particular attention to you
and gave you a famous march-domain nearby.
By the parting tent the boats are arranged close together,
the cold river roared, dashing against rocks.
When they look on the excellence of your governance
someday you will enjoy unique favor.

18.28

Respectfully Sending My Seventeenth Maternal Uncle Down to Shaozhou and Guizhou

This farthest frontier, the end of winter’s third month,
life adrift, a single sick body.
Deeply stirred, I take leave of my uncle,
whom will I see after we part?

¹ Du Fu is referring to Du Wei as Xie Huilian, Xie Lingyun’s cousin.
² Xianyu Gui’s father Xianyu Zhongtong had been metropolitan governor of the capital.
緬緬蒼梧帝，
推遷孟母鄰。
昏昏阻雲水，
側望苦傷神。

18.29

荊南兵馬使太常卿趙公大食刀歌

太常樓船聲嗷嘈，
問兵刮寇趨下牢。
牧出令奔飛百艘，
猛蛟突獸紛騰逃。
白帝寒城駐錦袍，
玄冬示我胡國刀。
壯士短衣頭虎毛，
憑軒拔鞘天為高。
翻風轉日木怒號，
冰翼雪淡傷哀猱。
鐫錯碧甖鸊鷉膏，
鋩鍔已瑩虗秋濤。
鬼物撇捩辭坑壕，
蒼水使者捫赤條，
龍伯國人罷釣鼇。
Faint in the distance, the emperor at Cangwu,\(^1\) constantly shifting, Mengzi’s mother’s neighbors.\(^2\) Blurred, blocked by water and clouds,
8 I lean gazing, terribly wounded in spirit.

18.29

A Song For the Arab Sword of Lord Commander Zhao of Jingnan, Chamberlain For Ceremonials

On the Chamberlain’s towered galley voices are in an uproar—leading troops to wipe out rebels, they are rushing to Xialao. The governor appears, magistrates rush, a hundred skiffs sent flying,
4 fierce krakens and pouncing beasts in droves bound off in flight.
At White Emperor’s cold fortress he halts his brocade gown, in black winter he shows to me a sword from a Hu kingdom.
A stout soldier in short clothes, a tiger-pelt on his head,
8 leans on the railing, draws it from scabbard, because of it Heaven rises higher.
It turns the wind, makes the sun bend away, trees howl in rage, ice wings, snow roils, it wounds the mournful monkeys.
An emerald jar with metal inlay for grebe fat,\(^3\) the blade-tip is already glistening in formless autumn billows.
Demons scamper off fleeing leaving the moats, the Envoy of Gray Waters strokes his red sword-tassels,\(^4\) the giant of Longbo ceases to fish for huge tortoises.\(^5\)

---

1 *Cangwu.
2 Mencius’s mother moved three times because of the neighborhood. Du Fu’s uncle may be taking his mother with him.
3 Grebe fat was used to oil swords to protect them.
4 In a story in *Soushen ji* someone crossing a river at night saw a huge figure with a sword, who claimed to be the Envoy of Gray Waters. Here the Envoy realizes his sword is no match for the Arab sword.
5 In the *Liezi* there was a giant of the kingdom of Longbo who caught six giant tortoises.
芮公迴首顏色勞，
分閫救世用賢豪。

趙公玉立高歌起，
攬環結佩相終始。

萬歲持之護天子，
得君亂絲與君理。
蜀江如線針如水，
荊岑彈丸心未已。

賊臣惡子休干紀，
魑魅魍魎徒為耳。
妖腰亂領敢欣喜，
用之不高亦不庳，
不似長劍須天倚。

吁嗟光祿英雄弭，
大食寶刀聊可比。
丹青宛轉麒麟裏，
光芒六合無泥滓。
The Duke of Rui turned his head, his countenance was troubled,\(^1\)
taking a command to rescue the age he employed someone worthy and
bold.\(^2\)

Lord Zhao stands like jade, a loud song rose from him,
grasping its ring, he tied it to his sash, it stays with him always.

He will hold it for ten thousand years to protect the Son of Heaven,
he received tangled strands from his lord and put them in order for
him,\(^3\)

Shu’s river seems to him like thread, its waters, like a needle,
His mind never stops thinking Jing’s peaks are like a pellet shot.

Bandit officials and evil fellows cease to offend the laws,
goblins and trolls are helpless to act.
Waists of demons, rebels’ necks, dare they rejoice?—\(^4\)
he employs the sword not too high and also not too low,

it’s not like one of those long broadswords that must rest against
Heaven.\(^5\)

Ah, with the Master of Court Entertainments’ horn-bow of a hero,
we might make comparison with this precious Arabian sword.
Your painting will undulate in Unicorn Gallery,\(^6\)
rays of flashing light in all directions with no mud and mire.

As with some of the other military officers, Commander Zhao is addressed
by his honorary civil office, Chamberlain for Ceremonials.

\(^1\) Wei Boyu.
\(^2\) That is, Wei Boyu has commissioned Commander Zhao on this mission.
\(^3\) This refers to a story attributed to the *History of the Latter Han* in which Han
Zhangdi gave Fang Chu a ball of tangled strands and asked Fang Chu to untangle
it. Fang took out a sword and cut it into three parts.
\(^4\) That is, rebel leaders.
\(^5\) This is a hyperbolic sword that was the figure for the emperor’s rule. Zhang’s sword
is functional.
\(^6\) Where the portraits of officials of exceptional merit were kept.
王兵馬使二角鷹

悲臺蕭瑟石巖巒，
哀壑杈枒浩呼洵。
中有萬里之長江，
迴風滔日孤光動。

角鷹翻倒壯士臂，
將軍玉帳軒翠氣。
二鷹猛腦條徐墜，
目如愁胡視天地。
杉雞竹兔不自惜，
溪虎野羊俱辟易。

鞲上鋒棱十二翮，
將軍勇銳與之敵。
將軍樹勳起安西，
崑崙虞泉入馬蹄。
白羽曾肉三狻猊，
敢決豈不與之齊。

荊南芮公得將軍，
亦如角鷹下朔雲。
18.30

Commander Wang’s Two Tufted Hawks

A dreary terrace in the whistling wind, rocks looming massive, a mournful ravine with forking trees, its wild shouts clamorous. In its midst there is the long river of ten thousand leagues where whirling winds flood over the sun whose lonely beams stir.

The horned hawks hang upside-down on the strong warriors’ arms, from the general’s jade tent azure vapor rises aloft. From the two hawks’ fierce skulls the hood-straps have slowly fallen, and eyes like sorrowing Hu look around at Heaven and Earth. The fir-hen and the hare in bamboo do not spare themselves, tiger in the creek-bed and wild rams all withdraw.

Sharp points upon the hawk’s gauntlet, its twelve pinions, the General’s undaunted mettle is their rival.

In establishing merit the general started in Anxi,1 the Kunlun Range and Yu Stream have been entered by his horse’s hooves.2 His white fletches have bit into the flesh of three suanni lions,3 in daring resolve how could he not be the equal of these?

The Duke of Rui in Jingnan obtained the General,4 who was also like these tufted hawks descending from Northland clouds.

---

1 The Tang conquests in Central Asia.
2 The Kunlun Range was in Central Asia, and Yu Stream was the legendary place where the sun sets.
3 The suanni was a mythical beast that supposedly ate tigers and leopards. It is sometimes identified with the lion.
4 Wei Boyu.
見王監兵馬使說近山有白黑二鷹羅者久取竟未能得王以為毛骨有異他鷹

惡鳥飛飛啄金屋，
安得爾輩開其群，
驅出六合梟鸞分。

18.31–32

見王監兵馬使說近山有白黑二鷹羅者久取竟未能得王以為毛骨有異他鷹恐臘後春生鸛飛避暖勁翮思秋之甚眇不可見請余賦詩

I

雲飛玉立盡清秋，
不惜奇毛恣遠遊。
在野只教心力破，
千人何事網羅求。
一生自獵知無敵，
百中爭能恥下鞲。
鵬礙九天須卻避，
兔藏三穴莫深憂。
Evil birds keep flying and peck the gilded roof,¹
how can we get the likes of you to disperse their flocks,
and drive them beyond the six bounds of the world, distinguishing owl
and phoenix?

18.31–32

Commander Wang Told Me That In the Mountains Nearby There
Were Two Hawks, One White and One Black: A Fowler Had Long
Tried to Take Them but in the End Hadn’t Been Able to Do So. Wang
Considered Their Feathers and Build to Have Something Different
from Other Hawks, and He Was Afraid that as Spring Arrived after
the Last Month of Winter, They Would Fly Off to Avoid the Warm
Weather. Their Strong Wings Long Intensely for Autumn, so Faint in
the Distance They Cannot be Seen. He Asked Me to Write Poems.

I

A cloud in flight, jade when standing, entirely clear autumn,
not begrudging its rare down, it lets itself go in far travels
Out in the wilds it made men’s minds waste all their efforts,
and why was that it a thousand men were after it with nets?
All its life it hunted on its own knowing it had no rival,
always striking its mark, how could it endure the shame of coming
down to the gauntlet?
The Peng bird blocks the nine-tiered heavens but must turn away to
avoid it,²
though the rabbit be hidden in one of its three burrows, it need not
deeply worry.

¹ A figure for evil threats to the court.
² Once a king of Chu was hunting with a hawk just given to him. A bird was seen
high in the sky and the hawk flew straight up, followed by a rain of feathers and
blood. When the bird was found, its wingspan was several dozen leagues, and it was
recognized as a baby Peng bird (the fully grown Peng has wings that stretch from
one horizon to the other).
II

黑鷹不省人間有，
度海疑從北極來。
正翮撲風超紫塞，
立冬幾夜宿陽台。
虞羅自各虛施巧，
春雁同歸必見猜。
萬里寒空秈一日，
金眸玉爪不凡材。

玉腕騮

聞說荊南馬，
尚書玉腕騮。
頓駭飄赤汗，
跋䠂顧長楸。
胡虜三年入，
乾坤一戰收。
舉鞭如有問，
欲伴習池遊。
II

I’ve never known that black hawks are found in the mortal world, crossing the ocean, it seems to have come from the farthest north. Straightening its wings to catch the wind, it crossed beyond the Purple Frontier,

at the onset of winter how many nights has it spent on the Terrace of Light?¹

Each one of the fowler’s nets is skillfully set in vain, going back with the wild geese in spring it will surely get wary looks. Ten thousand leagues of cold sky crossed in only one day, its golden eyes and jadelike talons are no ordinary stuff.

18.33

Jade-Ankle Roan²

Of the horses I’ve heard of from Jingnan there’s the Minister’s Jade-Ankle Roan. At a gallop it sprinkles red sweat, chomping at the bit, it looks to the tall catalpas. For three years it went into the Hu barbarians,³ Heaven and Earth, recovered in a single battle. If, lifting the riding crop, you asked it, it would like to accompany him on a visit to the Xi’s pool.⁴

¹ Wu Mountain.
² Original note: “The horse of Lord Wei [Boyu], Military Commissioner of Jiangling” 江陵節度衛公馬也.
³ This refers to Wei Boyu’s three successful campaigns in 759, 761, and 763.
⁴ This refers to the excursions of *Shan Jian, commander at Xiangyang in the Eastern Jin, to the famous pool of the Xi family.
醉為馬所墜諸公攜酒相看

甫也諸侯老賓客，
罷酒酣歌拓金戟。
騎馬忽憶少年時，
散蹄迸落瞿塘石。
白帝城門水雲外，
低身直下八千尺。
粉堞電轉紫游韁，
東得平岡出天壁。
江村野堂爭入眼，
垂鞭驂驛凌紫陌。
向來皓首驚萬人，
自倚紅顏能騎射。
安知決臆追風足，
朱汗騕驁猶噴玉。
不虞一蹶終損傷，
人生快意多所辱。
職當憂戚伏衾枕，
況乃遲暮加煩促。
朋知來問腆我顏，
杖藜強起依僮僕。
Having Been Thrown from My Horse While Drunk, Various Gentlemen Come to Visit Me Bringing Ale

I, Du Fu, am an old guest of a lord of high rank; done with my ale, I sang tipsily, and hefted a gilded pike. At once I recalled riding my horse, how it used to be when young; I let hooves run free, kicking down rocks of Qutang Gorge. White Emperor Castle's gates lie high, up beyond river and cloud, I hunkered over, went right downslope, eight thousand feet. White battlements flashed like lightning with my trailing purple reins; eastward I reached the plateau coming out from a cliff reaching to Heaven. River villages, wilderness halls came rushing to my eyes, riding whip dangling, bit hanging loose, I sped over purple lanes. This white-haired old man instantly shocked people by the thousands, trusting in skills of my youth to ride a horse and shoot. Could I have known that those wind-chasing feet set free to follow their will, the bloody sweat and headlong gallop like spurting jade, would unexpectedly stumble at last, and I would end up hurt?— when you do what you want in life, humiliation usually follows. Then I was utterly miserable, confined to pillow and sheets; worse still, old age added to my vexation. When my friends came to ask after me, I hardened my face; I forced myself up on my cane, leaning upon my servant.
語盡還成開口笑，
提攜別掃清溪曲。
酒肉如山又一時，
初筵哀絲動豪竹。
共指西日不相貸，
喧呼且覆杯中渌。
何必走馬來為問，
君不見
嵇康養生被殺戮。

18.35–36
覆舟二首

巫嶪盤渦曉，
黔陽貢物秋。
丹砂同隕石，
翠羽共沈舟。
衞使空斜景，
龍宮閟積流。
篙工幸不溺，
俄頃逐輕鷗。
After we spoke, we then broke into open-mouthed laughter, helping me along, we cleared a new spot by the clear creek’s bend. Meat and ale came heaped like mountains yet another time, the moving strings at the party’s start stirred brash music of flutes. We gestured all to the sun in the west, it spares no man, we shouted and hooted, tipped upside-down the green ale in the cup. Why need you come galloping your horses to express your concern?—have you not seen how Xi Kang took such care of his life and at last was executed?¹

18.35–36
Capsized Boat

I

A dawn of whirlpools in the Wu Gorges, autumn for sending tribute items from Qianyang. The cinnabar pebbles were like falling meteors, kingfisher feathers joined the sunken boat. The envoy on his mission, gone in the slanting sunlight, the dragon palace, closed tight under massed currents. Fortunately the boatman did not drown, in an instant he goes off with the light gulls.

¹ *Xi Kang was a third-century recluse interested in various techniques for prolonging life and author of a “Treatise on Nurturing Life,” *Yangsheng lu* 養生論. The most elementary precaution was to stay out of the troubled politics of the era. He unfortunately failed in this, running afoul of the powerful Sima family, and was finally executed.*
送李功曹之荆州充郑侍御判官重赠

II

竹宫时望拜，
桂馆或求仙。
姹女凌波日，
神光照夜年。
徒闻斩蛟剑，
无复爨犀船。
使者随秋色，
迢迢独上天。

18.37

送李功曹之荆州充郑侍御判官重赠

曾闻宋玉宅，
每欲到荆州。
此地生涯晚，
遥悲水国秋。
孤城一柱观，
落日九江流。
使者虽光彩，
青枫远自愁。
II

Sometimes gazing and bowing in the Bamboo Compound; or in Cassia Lodge seeking the immortals.¹
The day when the Beauty crossed over the waves,² the year when the spirit rays lit up the night.
But in vain we hear of the kraken-cleaving sword,³ the boat that burned rhino-horn is no more.⁴
The envoy goes off with autumn’s colors,
in the far distance he rises to Heaven alone.

18.37

Seeing Off Li of Personnel Evaluation On His Way to Jingzhou to Serve As Administrative Assistant to Vice Censor in Chief Zheng, a Second Poem for Him

I have heard of Song Yu’s dwelling there⁵ and have always wanted to go to Jingzhou.
Here in this place, late in life’s course,
I am saddened by autumn in that distant watery land.
The lone city has One Pillar Lodge,⁶ the sun sets on the current of Nine Rivers.
Though this is a glory for you on your mission,
green maples stretching far bring a sadness on their own.

¹ Both the “Bamboo Compound” and the “Cassia Lodge” were associated with Han court worship of the gods.
² ”The Beauty” was an alchemic kenning for mercury, whose behavior was described in terms of the goddess.
³ In antiquity one Ci Fei obtained a rare sword; and when crossing the Yangzi, he killed a pair of dragons threatening to capsize the boat.
⁴ In the Jin, Wen Qiao was mooring by Ox Isle. Having heard there were many water monsters in the Yangzi, he burned rhinoceros horn, which revealed them. Angry because they had been exposed, the water monsters caused his death.
⁵ *Song Yu.
⁶ Site of Jingzhou.
送王十六判官

客下荆南尽，
君今复入舟。
买薪犹白帝，
鸣橹已沙头。
衡霍生春早，
潇湘共海浮。
荒林庾信宅，
为仗主人留。

别崔潩因寄薛据孟云卿

志士惜妄动，
知深难固辞。
如何久磨砺，
但取不磷缁。
夙夜听忧主，
飞腾急济时。
荆州过薛孟，
为报欲论诗。
18.38

Seeing Off Administrative Assistant Wang (16)

The travelers have all gone down to Jingnan, and now you too get on a boat. I’ll still be buying firewood at White Emperor Castle while your creaking sweep will already be at Sandside. Spring comes early to Mount Heng, the Xiao and Xiang float together with the lake. Yu Xin’s house is in the wild woods,¹ I’ll depend on the owner to keep it for me.

1  This is the house that supposedly belonged to Song Yu, purchased later by Yu Xin.

18.39

Parting From Cui Yi, and Sent to Xue Ju and Meng Yunqing²

A scholar with aims is careful to avoid incautious actions, but hard to stubbornly refuse one who knows you well.³ How is it that one who has honed his virtue so can manage merely to avoid getting besmirched? Day and night I have listened to your worries about our ruler, leaping into action, you rush to save the age. At Jingzhou stop by Xue and Meng and tell them for me that I would like to discuss poetry.

2  Original note: “My brother-in-law Yi is going to a post in the Hu’nan headquarters” 内弟潩赴湖南幕職.

3  That is, he cannot refuse the invitation from the commander at the Hu’nan headquarters.
18.40

寄杜位

寒日經簷短，
窮猿失木悲。 
峡中為客恨，
江上憶君時。 
天地身何往，
風塵病敢辭。 
封書兩行淚，
霑灑裛新詩。 

18.41

立春

春日春盤細生菜，
忽憶兩京梅發時。 
盤出高門行白玉，
菜傳纖手送青絲。 
巫峽寒江那對眼，
杜陵遠客不勝悲。 
此身未知歸定處，
呼兒覓紙一題詩。
18.40
Sent to Du Wei

The winter sun makes a short course passing the eaves, 
desperate gibbons grieve, losing their trees. 
In the gorges, resentment at being a sojourner, 
by the river, moments I recall you. 
Between Heaven and Earth where will I go? 
in the dust of war, can I refuse to be ill? 
On the sealed letter two streams of tears, 
dripping, they soak my recent poems.

18.41
Beginning of Spring

For spring’s first day, “spring plates” with slender shoots, 
at once I recall the two capitals, the time when plums come out. 
Plates went forth from noble gates bringing that white jade, 
the foods were carried by dainty hands bringing threads of green. 
The Wu Gorges, the cold river—how can I bear to face them? 
The far wayfarer from Duling feels unbearable sorrow. 
Since this body does not know where to go to rest, 
I call to the lad to find paper and I write a poem.

1 Original note: “Recently Wei and I were together at the headquarters of the late Minister Yan Wu”.
2 “Spring plates” refers to the custom by which the ruler presented his ministers with an array of early vegetable sprouts. These were also exchanged among family and friends.
18.42

江梅

梅蕊臘前破，
梅花年後多。
絕知春意好，
最奈客愁何。
雪樹元同色，
江風亦自波。
故園不可見，
巫岫鬱嵯峨。

18.43

庭草

楚草經寒碧，
庭春入眼濃。
舊低收葉舉，
新掩卷牙重。
步履宜輕過，
開筵得屢供。
看花隨節序，
不敢強為容。
18.42

River Plum

The plum buds break open before the La festival, even more plum blossoms come after the year changes. I know full well that spring’s intentions are good, but most of all, I can’t help a sojourner’s sadness. The snow-like trees are essentially the same color, the river wind here too raises waves. But I cannot see the gardens of home— Mount Wu’s peaks swell up towering.

18.43

Plants in the Yard

Chu’s plants are green throughout winter, but when the yard turns spring, richer colors enter the eyes. Formerly low, the gathered leaves lift, newly covered, the curling sprouts form layers. It is fitting that my walking shoes pass by, at banquets one is often repeatedly provided.¹ One views flowers in their seasonal sequence, I dare not force them to show off.

¹ That is, the plants offer a soft base on which to spread banquet mats.
愁

江草日日喚愁生，
巫峽泠泠非世情。
盤舟驚浴底心性，
獨樹花發自分明。
十年戎馬暗萬國，
異域賓客老孤城。
渭水秦山得見否，
人今罷病虎縱橫。

王十五前閣會

楚岸收新雨，
春臺引細風。
情人來石上，
鮮膾出江中。
鄰舍煩書札，
肩輿強老翁。
病身虛俊味，
何幸饑兒童。
Melancholy

Day by day the River plants call forth melancholy, the Wu Gorges are cold and clear, not the mood of the common world. In whirling eddies egrets bathe, what kind of natures have they?—
on a single tree the flowers bloom, quite clear to behold.
For ten years war-horses have darkened the thousands of domains, a guest here in a strange realm, I age in this lonely city. Will I ever get to see the Wei's waters or the hills of Qin?—
the person now is worn and sick, and tigers roam wherever they please.

A Gathering at Wang's (15) Front Pavilion

On Chu shores the recent rain draws off, the spring terrace brings in a light breeze. This dear man comes up on the stone, with fresh sashimi, just out of the river. He troubles himself to write to his neighbors, and sends a palanquin to compel this old man. For my sick body these fine treats are in vain, but what luck to have my boy eat his fill!

1 Original note: “Making myself write in the Wu style for sport” 強戲為吳體.
崔評事弟許相迎不到應慮老夫見泥雨怯出
必愆佳期走筆戲簡

江閣要賓許馬迎，
午時起坐自天明。
浮雲不負青春色，
細雨何孤白帝城。
身過花間露濕好，
醉於馬上往來輕。
虛疑皓首衝泥怯，
實少銀鞍傍險行。

遣悶戲呈路十九曹長

江浦雷聲喧昨夜，
春城雨色動微寒。
黃鸝並坐交愁濕，
白鷺群飛大劇乾。
晚節漸於詩律細，
誰家數去酒杯寬。
惟君最愛清狂客，
百遍相過意未闌。
18.46

My Cousin Case Reviewer Cui Promised to Send Someone to Get Me, But No One Came. He Must Have Considered that an Old Fellow like Me Would be Afraid to Go out on Seeing the Rain and Mud and Would Miss the Agreed Upon Time. I Dashed this Off as a Playful Note.

A guest was invited from this tower by the river, he promised to send a horse to fetch me, by noon I had been getting up and down ever since daybreak. The drifting clouds did not let down the colors of green spring, how could the fine rain disappoint White Emperor Castle? When a person goes among the flowers, to get wet is just fine, when drunk on horseback, one comes and goes unconcerned. For nothing you suspected my hoary head feared running into mud, or in fact you were short a silver saddle to accompany my hazardous going.

18.47

Getting Rid of the Blues, Playfully Shown to Vice-Director Lu (19)

On the riverbank the sound of thunder roared last night, the look of rain in the springtime city stirred a faint chill. Yellow orioles sit side by side mutually distressed at the damp, white egrets fly in flocks to get dry quickly. In my later phase I gradually get more precise with poetry’s rules, to whose home do I often go for the ease of the ale-cup? But the one you love the most is this fellow who acts mad, visiting him a hundred times your interest never wanes.
晝夢

二月饒睡昏昏然，
不獨夜短晝分眠。
桃花氣暖眼自醉，
春渚日落夢相牽。
故鄉門巷荊棘底，
中原君臣豺虎邊。
安得務農息戰鬬，
普天無吏橫索錢。

暮春

臥病擁塞在峽中，
瀟湘洞庭虛映空。
楚天不斷四時雨，
巫峽常吹千里風。
沙上草閣柳新闇，
城邊野池蓮欲紅。
暮春鴛鷺立洲渚，
挾子翻飛還一叢。
Dreaming in Daytime

In the second month plenty of sleep, as blurry as in a fog,
not only because the nights grow shorter that I sleep during the day.
Atmosphere of peach blossoms warm, my eyes become groggy,
when the sun sets by springtime isles, dreams pull at me.
Gate and lanes of my homeland are under the briars and thorns,
the Central Plain’s lord and courtiers, jackals and tigers nearby.
How can we get devotion to farm work and cessation of battles?—
all over the world no local clerks gouging out cash.

End of Spring

Lying sick, obstructed and thwarted, right here within the gorges,
the Xiao and Xiang and Lake Dongting reflect the sky in vain.
Under Chu’s heavens never stopping, rain through all four seasons,
in the Wu Gorges there ever blows a thousand-league wind.
Thatched pavilion on the sands, by willows newly hidden,
in the natural pool beside the walls the lotus will soon be red.
The end of spring, ducks and egrets stand on sand-flats and isles,
bringing their young, they fly away, still an entire bunch.
18.50

即事

暮春三月巫峽長,
皛皛行雲浮日光。
雷聲忽送千峰雨，
花氣渾如百和香。
黃鶯過水翻迴去，
燕子銜泥濕不妨。
飛閣卷簾圖畫裏，
虚無只少對瀟湘。

18.51

懷灞上游

悵望東陵道，
平生灞上游。
春濃停野騎，
夜宿敞雲樓。
離別人誰在，
經過老自休。
眼前今古意，
江漢一歸舟。
Immediate Experience

18.50

Immediate Experience

Late spring, the third month, the Wu Gorges stretch long, luminously white, clouds moving float in the sunlight. The sound of thunder suddenly brings rain on a thousand peaks, the atmosphere of flowers is just like *baihe* incense.¹ Yellow orioles cross the river then wing around back, swallows, mud in beaks, are unhindered by the wet. I roll up the curtain in the soaring tower, and I’m in a painting, insubstantial illusion in which I’m missing only facing the Xiao and Xiang.

18.51

Thinking of My Excursions by the Ba

In depression I gaze toward the Dongling road,² excursions by the Ba as they used to be. In spring’s lushness I would halt my horse in the wilds, spending the night, towers reaching to clouds appear. Who is still there since I left?— in old age I’ve given up passing those places again. Mood of past and present before my eyes, where Yangzi meets Han, one homeward boat.

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¹ *Baihe* was a compound of fragrances, supposedly originally imported from the Yuezhi people in the Han.

² The road east of Chang’an, associated with *Shaoping, the Qin Count of Dongling, who, in the Han, grew melons by the east gate of Chang’an. The Ba River flows east of Chang’an.
入宅三首

I

奔峭背赤甲，
断崖当白盐。
客居愧迁次，
春色渐多添。
花亚欲移竹，
鸟窥新捲帘。
衰年不敢恨，
胜概欲相兼。

II

乱后居难定，
春归客未还。
水生鱼复浦，
云暖麝香山。
半顶梳头白，
过眉拄杖斑。
相看多使者，
一一问函关。
Sometime in the spring of 767 Du Fu moved to a cottage in Rangxi northwest of Kuizhou. This had an orchard of almost six acres (forty mu) and a smaller vegetable garden.

18.52–54

Moving Into My Cottage

I

Looming up sharply, Red Shell at my back;¹ facing White Salt Cliff, a sheared-off slope.
A wayfarer’s lodging, ashamed to be changing place,
spring’s colors gradually increase.
Flowers press upon bamboo to be transplanted,
birds peer in past newly rolled up curtains.
I dare not resent my declining years—
this magnificent view will be together with me.

II

After the Rebellion my lodgings have never been fixed,
spring is back, but the traveler not yet returning.
Waters rise on Yufu Shore,
clouds darken Musk Mountain.
On half my scalp my combed hair is white,
passing my brows, the cane I lean on is mottled.
Those I see include many sent on missions—
of each and every one I ask about Han Pass.²

¹ ‘The cliff beneath which Du Fu had his new lodgings.
² Referring to a revolt at Huazhou, between Chang’an and Luoyang.
III

宋玉歸州宅，
雲通白帝城。
吾人淹老病，
旅食豈才名。
峽口風常急，
江流氣不平。
只應與兒子，
飄轉任浮生。

18.55

赤甲

卜居赤甲遷居新，
兩見巫山楚水春。
炙背可以獻天子，
美芹由來知野人。
荊州鄭薛寄書近，
蜀客郗岑非我鄰。
笑接郎中評事飲，
病從深酌道吾真。
III

Song Yu’s dwelling in Guizhou,¹
its clouds reach all the way to White Emperor Castle.
I myself linger here, aging and sick,
a wayfarer’s meals, but hardly with Song’s talent and fame.
At the mouth of the gorges the wind always blows hard,
the river flows on, vapors never at peace.
All I should do is go with my sons,
swept along, giving myself to this life adrift.

18.55

Red Shell Cliff

I sited my dwelling at Red Shell and moved just recently,
twice having seen the spring of Wu Mountain and Chu waters.
My back-sunning skills might well be presented to the Son of Heaven,
by fine celery one can always tell a rustic.²
Zheng and Xue in Jingzhou have lately written letters,³
those sojourners in Shu, Xi and Cen, are not my close neighbors.⁴
Laughing I meet the Director and the Case Reviewer to drink,
though sick, I let you pour full cups and I tell what I really feel.

¹ *Song Yu.
² This refers to a *Liezi* story in which a man of Song so much enjoyed sunning his back in winter that he wanted to present the technique to the ruler of the domain. Another person told him of a man who loved celery and wanted a nobleman to taste it, but the nobleman found the celery almost inedible.
³ His friends Zheng Shen and Xue Ju.
⁴ Xi Ang and Cen Shen.
卜居

歸羨遼東鶴，
吟同楚孰珪。
未成遊碧海，
著處覓丹梯。  
雲障寬江北，
春耕破瀼西。
桃紅客若至，
定似昔人迷。

暮春題瀼西新赁草屋五首

久嗟三峽客，
再與暮春期。
百舌欲無語，
繁花能幾時。
谷虛雲氣薄，
波亂日華遲。
18.56

Siting My Dwelling

As for returning, I envy the crane of Liaodong,\(^1\)
my moan, the same as he who held the plaque of office in Chu.\(^2\)
I have never achieved a visit to the Sapphire Sea,\(^3\)
everywhere I seek out the Cinnabar Ladder.\(^4\)
Cloudy barriers stretch broad north of the river
spring plowing, breaking soil at Rangxi.
If a visitor should arrive when the peach blossoms are pink,
it would surely be like that man of the past gone astray.\(^5\)

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18.57–61

Late Spring: On My Newly Rented Thatched Cottage at Rangxi

I

The long-sighing sojourner in the Three Gorges
once again meets with the end of spring.
The “hundred-tongue” shrike is almost out of words,
how long can the abundance of flowers last?
The valley is an illusory presence, cloudy vapors thin,
the waves in turmoil, daylight passes slowly.

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1 *Dinglingwei.
2 *Zhuang Xi. Du Fu plays on \(yin\) 吟, both “moaning” and “chanting” [poetry].
3 Here probably the realm of the immortals.
4 *This is a ladder to the realm of the immortals.
5 *Peach Blossom Spring.
暮春题瀼西新赁草屋五首

战伐何由定，
哀伤不在兹。

此邦千树橘，
不闻比封君。

养拙干戈际，
全生麋鹿群。

畏人江北草，
旅食瀼西云。

万里巴渝曲，
三年食饱闻。

彩云阴复白，
锦树晓来青。

身世双蓬鬓，
乾坤一草亭。

哀歌时自短，
醉舞为谁醒。

细雨荷锄立，
江猿吟翠屏。
How can warfare be settled?—

my grief and pain are not for things here.

II

This land has a thousand tangerine trees,
but I don't see the comparison to a count with a fief.¹
I nurture simplicity at the edge of a world in arms,
preserve my life among herds of deer.
Wary of people: the grasses north of the river;
dining as a sojourner: the clouds of Rangxi.
Thousands of miles from home, tunes of Ba and Yu,
after three years, I have truly had enough of hearing them.

III

Clouds brightly colored, shadow, then white,
trees of brocade, green with the dawn.
Myself and the world: a pair of tangled tresses;
Earth and Heaven: a single thatch pavilion.
With sad songs I sometimes fault myself,
I dance drunkenly—for whom should I be sober?
In fine rain I stand with hoe over shoulder,
as river gibbons chant on azure cliffs.

¹ In the Grand Scribe's Records it was said that a household with a thousand tangerine trees was the equivalent of a count with the income from a thousand households.
IV
壮年学书剑，
他日委泥沙。
事主非无禄，
浮生即有涯。
高斋依药饵，
绝域改春华。
丧乱丹心破，
王臣未一家。

V
欲陈济世策，
已老尚书郎。
未息豺虎斗，
空惭鸳鸯行。
时危人事急，
风逆羽毛伤。
落日悲江汉，
中宵泪满床。
IV

In my prime I studied book and sword,
in other days, cast down into sand and mud.
Serving the ruler is not without salary,
but this life adrift has its shores.
In my high studio I depend on medicinal herbs,
on this far-flung frontier spring’s splendor changes.
In death and destruction this loyal heart was broken,
officers of the king—not yet a single family.

V

I wanted to offer plans to save the age,
already old, this Gentleman of the Secretariat.
The combat with tigers and jackals has not ceased,
in vain I am put to shame by the ranks of egrets and ducks.¹
The times perilous, human affairs urgent,
the wind against me, down and feathers harmed.
In the sinking sunlight I grieve by Yangzi and Han,
at midnight tears fill my bed.

¹ Officials at court.
寄從孫崇簡

嵯峨白帝城東西，
南有龍湫北虎溪。
吾孫駙曹不記馬，
業學尸鄉多養雞。
龐公隱時盡室去，
武陵春樹他人迷。
與汝林居未相失，
近身藥裹酒長攜。
牧豎樵童亦無賴，
莫令斬斷青雲梯。

江雨有懷鄭典設

春雨暗暗塞峽中，
早晚來自楚王宮。
亂波分披已打岸，
弱雲狼藉不禁風。
寵光蕙葉與多碧，
點注桃花舒小紅。
18.62

Sent to My Grand-Nephew Du Chongjian

Towering White Emperor Castle, its walls stretch east and west, to the south there is a dragon tarn, to the north, a tiger creek. My nephew serves in the Mounts Section, but doesn’t note the horses,\(^1\) devoted to learning in Shixiang, he raises many chickens.\(^2\) When Pang Degong entered reclusion, his whole household went off with him,\(^3\) spring trees in Wuling, others lose the way.\(^4\) Like you I live in the woods and never lose contact with you, my medicine bags stay close to me, I always carry ale. Even herdboys and young wood-gatherers are undependable—don’t let them cut open a path up into blue clouds.

18.63

River Rain, I Have Thoughts of Zheng of the Household Affairs Service

Spring rain darkens everything, blocking the space within the gorges, sooner or later it comes from the Chu king’s palace. Wild waves spread everywhere already beating the shore, pliant clouds in wild disarray do not resist the wind. Its favor shines on the basil leaves, making them very green, in drops it pours on the peach blossoms spreading their small pinks.

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1 In the *New Account of Tales of the World* Wang Huizhi was an Adjutant in the Mounts section under Huan Chong. Huan Chong asked him one day what office he held, and Wang Huizhi answered that he did not know, but since people were always bringing horses around, it must have something to do with horses. When Huan asked him how many horses he was in charge of, Wang Huizhi replied that a sage did not concern himself with horses.

2 According to the *Liexian zhuan*, there was a resident of Shixiang called “The Old Invocator of Chickens” who raised several thousand chickens, all of which had names; whenever he called a chicken by name, it would come to him.

3 *Pang Degong.*

4 *Peach Blossom Spring.*
谷口子真正憶汝，
岸高瀼滑限西東。

18.64

熟食日示宗文宗武
消渴游江漢，
羈棲尚甲兵。
幾年逢熟食，
萬里逼清明。
松柏邙山路，
風花白帝城。
汝曹催我老，
迥首淚縱橫。

18.65

又示兩兒
令節成吾老，
他時見汝心。
浮生看物變，
為恨與年深。
長葛書難得，
江州涕不禁。
My Zheng Zizhen of Valley Mouth, at this moment I think back on you,
the bank is high and the Rang is slippery, east to west movement is blocked.

18.64

Cold Food Festival: for Zongwen and Zongwu

With diabetes I roam Yangzi and Han,
lodging as sojourner, still amid arms.
For how many years have we met Cold Food Festival
thousands of miles from home, with Qingming close upon us?
Cypress and pine, the roads on Beimang,
breeze and blossoms, White Emperor Castle.
You two hurry me to old age,
I turn my head and my tears stream freely.

18.65

Another to My Two Sons

This fine festival completes my old age,
some day to come will reveal your hearts.
In this life adrift I watch things change,
the resentment I feel is as deep as my years.
Letters are hard to get from Changge,
as for Jiangzhou, my tears won’t be stopped.

1 *Zheng Pu. Here Zheng Pu is a figure for the Zheng addressed in the poem.
2 The festival on the fourth, fifth, or sixth day of the fourth month, after the Cold Food Festival.
3 The hills with tombs near Luoyang.
4 Where Du Fu’s younger brother was.
5 Where Du Fu’s younger sister was.
得舍弟觀書自中都已達江陵今茲暮春月末行李合到夔州悲喜相兼團圓

團圓思弟妹，
行坐白頭吟。

18.66
得舍弟觀書自中都已達江陵今茲暮春月末行李合到夔州悲喜相兼團圓可待賦詩即事情見乎詞

爾到江陵府，
何時到峽州。
亂離生有別，
聚集病應瘳。
颯颯開啼眼，
朝朝上水樓。
老身須付託，
白骨更何憂。

18.67–68
喜觀即到復題短篇二首

巫峽千山暗，
終南萬里春。
I long for reunion with brother and sister, 
sitting and walking, a “Song of White Hair.”

18.66

I Got a Letter from My Brother Guan; from the Capital He Has Already Reached Jiangling. At the End of the Last Month of Spring He Should Reach Kuizhou on His Journey. Sadness and Joy Came Together, and a Reunion Could Be Expected. I Wrote a Poem about the Moment, My Feelings Revealed in the Words.

You have reached Jiangling, 
when will you reach Xiazhou? 
We were separated in our lives by rebellion, 
when we’re together, I’m sure my sickness will be better. 
Swiftly my weeping eyes clear up, 
every morning I climb an upper storey by the river. 
I must finally entrust my aged person to you,¹ 
then what more worries will I have about my bones?

18.67–68

Happy That Guan Is About to Arrive, I Write Two More Short Pieces

I

A thousand mountains darken the Wu Gorges, 
from Mount Zhongnan, ten thousand leagues of spring.

¹ Instructions regarding Du Fu’s imagined death.
病中吾見弟，
書到汝為人。
意答兒童問，
來經戰伐新。
泊船悲喜後，
款款話歸秦。

II

待爾嗔鸚鵡，
拋書示鶺鴒。
枝間喜不去，
原上急曾經。
江閣嫌津柳，
風帆數驛亭。
應論十年事，
愁絕始星星。

18.69

晚登瀼上堂
故躋瀼岸高，
頗免崖石擁。
開襟野堂豁，
繫馬林花動。
In sickness I will meet my brother,
the letter came, and you were still among the living.
I expect you will answer my sons’ questions,
having recently come through places of battle.
After the grief and joy when your boat moors,
we will leisurely chat of going home to Qin.

II

Waiting for you, I scold the magpies,
I take your letter to show to the wagtails.
The good news does not leave the branches,
on the plain, they once rushed to give urgent help.
From my river tower I hate the willows at the crossing,
I count the post station stops for your wind-blown sail.
I’m sure we will tell of what happened the last ten years,
my sorrow will be gone, and for the first time I will feel fully aware.

18.69

Late in the Day, Entering the Hall by Rang Creek

On purpose I mounted the high banks of Rang,
to avoid being too crowded by rocks of the cliff.
My mood opened up, the hall in the wilds was spacious,
where I tied my horse, flowers in the woods stirred.

1 Which bring news of the arrival of a loved one.
2 *Sugarplum.
3 That is, the news brought by magpies.
4 *The wagtails.
5 Because they block sight of the boat coming.
雉堞粉似云，
山田麦无垄。
春气晚更生，
江流静犹湧。

四序婴我怀，
群盗久相踵。
黎民困逆节，
天子渴垂拱。

所思注东北，
深峡转修耸。
衰老自成病，
郎官未为冗。

凄其望呂葛，
不复梦周孔。
济世数嚮时，
斯人各枯塚。

楚星南天黑，
蜀月西雾重。
安得随鸟翎，
迫此懼将恐。
The battlements were whitewashed, like clouds,  
in mountain fields, the wheat had no dividing embankments.  
The spring vapors came back late in the day,  
the river flowed on, serene but still surging.  
The four seasons entwine my concerns,  
bands of rebels have long followed one after another.  
The common folk are in difficulty by the rebellious,  
the Son of Heaven thirsts to rule by non-action.  
My longings focus on a place to the northeast,  
here deep gorges get ever more long and jutting.  
Decline in old age naturally brings illnesses,  
but the Director is not yet considered superfluous.¹  
Dreary, my hope to be a Lü Shang or Zhuge Liang,²  
I no longer dream of Confucius or the Duke of Zhou.  
Saving the age—I count those of former times;  
each of these men lies in a dried-out grave.  
Chu stars in the black of the southern skies,  
the fog lies heavy over the Shu moon in the west.  
How can I go off with the wings of a bird?—  
I am oppressed here by fear and trembling.

¹ Du Fu himself, referring to his position as vice-director in the Board of Works.  
² The ministers of King Wen of Zhou and of Liu Bei, the Shu ruler in the Three Kingdoms.
寄薛三郎中璩

人生無賢愚，
飄飖若埃塵。
自非得神仙，
誰免危其身。
與子俱白頭，
役役常苦辛。
雖為尚書郎，
不及村野人。
憶昔村野人，
其樂難具陳。
藹藹桑麻交，
公侯為等倫。
天未厭戎馬，
我輩本常貧。
子尚客荊州，
我亦滯江濱。
峽中一臥病，
瘧癘終冬春。
春復加肺氣，
此病蓋有因。
18.70

Sent to Director Xue Ju (3)

Human lives, whether of wise man or fool,
are tossed along like the motes of dust.
Unless one becomes an immortal or god,
who avoids putting his life in peril?
You and I both have white hair,
ever suffering in constant service.
Although we may be Gentlemen of the Secretariat,
a village rustic is better off.
I recall village rustics of bygone days,
their joys are hard to recount in full.
Hemp and mulberry criss-crossed in bounty,
they were on the same level as duke or count.
But Heaven is not yet weary of war-horses,
and people like us are basically always poor.
You still sojourn in Jingzhou,
I too am held up on the Yangzi’s banks.
Once I lay down sick in the gorges,
I suffered malaria all winter and spring.
In spring again was added asthma,
for this illness there is indeed a reason.
早歲與蘇鄭，
痛飲情相親。
二公化為土，
嗜酒不失真。
余今委修短，
豈得恨命屯。
聞子心甚壯，
所過信席珍。
上馬不用扶，
每扶必怒嗔。
賦詩賓客間，
揮灑動八垠。
乃知蓋代手，
才力老益神。
青草洞庭湖，
東浮滄海濱。
君山可避暑，
況足采白蘋。
子豈無扁舟，
往復江漢津。
我未下瞿塘，
空念禹功勤。
聽說松門峽，
吐藥攬衣巾。
In earlier years with Su Yuan and Zheng Qian
I drank myself sick, and we were dear to one another.
These two men have been changed into dirt,
without ever losing their natural lust for ale.
Let the rest of my life be long or short now,
I cannot repine at the harshness of fate.
I hear that your mind is quite vigorous,
those you visit are “treasures on the mat.”¹
You don’t need to be helped when you get on a horse,
whenever helped, you always scold angrily.
You compose poems among the guests,
what you dash off stirs the world’s eight bounds.
Now I understand that a master of a whole age
grows more divine in force of talent as he ages.
From Green Grass Bay and Lake Dongting
one sails east to the edge of the gray sea.
On the Mountain of the Lady one can avoid the heat,²
besides which it offers much white water clover to pick.
You cannot want for a little boat
to go back and forth at crossings of Yangzi and Han.
I have not yet come down through the Qutang Gorge,
in vain I brood on the effort of Yu’s deed.³
When I hear tell of Pinegate Gorge,
I take an emetic and pull on my gown and headband.

¹ Confucian scholars.
² An island in Lake Dongting.
³ In cutting the course of the Yangzi River through the mountains.
聞惠子過東溪

高秋卻束帶，
鼓枻視清旻。
鳳池日澄碧，
濟濟多士新。
余病不能起，
健者勿逡巡。　
上有明哲君，
下有行化臣。

18.71

聞惠子過東溪

惠子白駒瘦，
歸溪唯病身。
皇天無老眼，
空谷滯斯人。　
崖蜜松花熟，
山杯竹葉新。
柴門了無事，
黃緹未稱臣。
In high autumn I will tighten my sash,  
beat the sweeps, gazing on clear fall skies.  
Emerald waters of Phoenix Pool get daily more pure,¹  
many new gentlemen throng the court.  
I am so sick I cannot rise to the occasion,  
but those who are hale should not hesitate.  
We have a wise ruler above,  
we have below officers to carry out his civilizing task.

18.71

Hearing That Master Hui Will Stop By East Creek

Master Hui’s white colt is gaunt,  
returning to the creek, only a sick body.
August Heaven’s eyesight doesn’t weaken with age,  
an empty valley detains this person.  
Cliff honey, pine flowers bee-brewed,  
a mountain cup, the “bamboo leaf” is fresh.²  
At his ramshackle gate, no problems at all,  
a Lord Xiahuang or Qili Ji who never went to serve.³

¹ The court.  
² “Bamboo leaf” was a name for an ale.  
³ *Four Graybeards.
18.72–83

承聞河北諸道節度入朝歡喜口號絕句
十二首

I

祿山作逆降天誅,
更有思明亦已無。
洶洶人寰猶不定,
時時鬥戰欲何須。

II

社稷蒼生計必安,
蠻夷雜種錯相干。
周宣漢武今王是,
孝子忠臣後代看。

III

喧喧道路多歌謠,
河北將軍盡入朝。
始是乾坤王室正,
卻交江漢客魂銷。

承聞河北諸道節度入朝歡喜口號絕句十二首
Hearing That the Military Commissioners of All the Circuits of Hebei Have Come to Court, I Am Delighted and Wrote Twelve Extempore Quatrains

I
An Lushan raised rebellion, brought Heaven's punishment down, and then there was Shi Siming, he too is gone. The human realm roiled in turbulence, still it is not settled, time and again fighting battles, what's the purpose?

II
The common folk of our dynastic altars, plans must be for peace, the various groups of Mon and Yi folk err in their transgression. King Xuan of Zhou, Emperor Wu of Han, such is our present king—the filial son and loyal official will be seen by later times.

III
All noisy along the roads, many street songs, the Hebei generals are all coming to court. In the universe only now is the royal house set right, but it melts the soul of the sojourner by Yangzi and the Han.
IV

不道諸公無表來，
茫然庶事遣人猜。
擁兵相學干戈銳，
使者徒勞百萬迥。

V

鳴玉鏘金盡正臣，
修文偃武不無人。
興王會靜妖氛氣，
聖壽宜過一萬春。

VI

英雄見事若通神，
聖哲為心小一身。
燕趙休矜出佳麗，
宮闈不擬選才人。

VII

抱病江天白首郎，
空山樓閣暮春光。
衣冠是日朝天子，
草奏何時入帝鄉。
IV
They don’t care that all these lords come without petitions, all these matters are murky and make one suspicious. Surrounded by troops they imitate each other in the sharpness of their spears, court emissaries have labored in vain a million times.

V
Ringing gold and jade, all upright officials, to cultivate the civil and let the military rest we do not lack people. May our King of the Restoration purge the aura of witchery, it is fitting His Majesty’s life surpass ten thousand springs.

VI
The hero sees matters as if in communication with the gods, the way our Sage Ruler thinks is that his person is but small. May Yan and Zhao cease to boast of sending forth beauties, at the harem gates there are no plans to select ladies-in-waiting.¹

VII
Sick under river skies, a white-haired Director,² a tower in deserted mountains the end of spring’s glory. On this day in robes and caps they go to dawn court, when will I, drafting petitions, enter the imperial domain?

¹ Literally, cairen, a harem rank. Yan and Zhao, the states proverbial for beautiful women, were, at the time, under the control of the Hebei warlords. Du Fu apparently is advocating that the emperor not accept women sent to the harem by the rebel generals.
² Du Fu himself.
VIII
澶漫山東一百州，
削成如桉抱青丘。
苞茅重入歸關內，
王祭還供盡海頭。

IX
東逾遼水北滹沱，
星象風雲喜共和。
紫氣關臨天地闊，
黃金臺貯俊賢多。

X
漁陽突騎邯鄲兒，
酒酣並轡金鞭垂。
意氣即歸雙闕舞，
雄豪復遣五陵知。

XI
李相將軍擁薊門，
白頭雖老赤心存。
竟能盡說諸侯入，
知有從來天子尊。
VIII
Faint and far, East of the Mountains one hundred prefectures, pared flat as a table, encompassing Blue Hill. Bundled reed again will enter back into Within-the-Passes,\(^1\) again providing for royal sacrifices from all the way to the sea’s edge.

IX
Eastward across the Liao’s water, north past the river Hutuo, star signs, the wind and clouds, rejoice that all is in harmony. The Pass of Purple Aura looks out on the vastness of Heaven and Earth,\(^2\) and the Terrace of Gold amasses many men of distinction and virtue.\(^3\)

X
Yuyang’s attack cavalry, the lads of Handan,\(^4\) tipsy from ale, riding side by side, their golden whips dangling. Their high spirits right now return to dance obeisance at the paired turrets,\(^5\) tough men again let Wuling know of them.\(^6\)

XI
Minister Li Guangbi, the General, held Jimen,\(^7\) though aging with white hair, his loyal heart endured. He was able at last to persuade all the lords to come to court, and make them realize that always the Son of Heaven is exalted.

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1 The ancient tribute offering from the Northeast.
2 Han Barrier Pass, between Chang’an and Luoyang, defining “Within-the-Passes.”
3 The Terrace of Gold was built in the capital of Yan, in the Tang one of the rebel provinces. Here it might refer to the rebellious Northeast, now submitting to the throne, or, figuratively, to Chang’an.
4 These are the troops of the Northeastern warlords.
5 At the palace.
6 Wuling is an area outside Chang’an famous for its young toughs.
7 Li Guangbi was one of the great loyalist generals during the Rebellion and was made military commissioner of the far northeast.
XII

十二年來多戰場，
天威已息陣堂堂。
神靈漢代中興主，
功業汾陽異姓王。

18.84–86

月三首

I

斷續巫山雨，
天河此夜新。
若無青嶂月，
愁殺白頭人。
魍魎移深樹，
蝦蟆動半輪。
故園當北斗，
直指照西秦。
XII

For the past twenty years many were the fields of battle,  
Heaven’s authority has put to rest the splendor of our battle-lines.  
In divine wisdom the ruler of the restoration of Han times,  
for his achievements Fenyang has a Prince of a different surname.¹

18.84–86

Moon

I

Intermittent, the rains on Wu Mountain,  
the River of Stars is fresh this night.  
Were it not for the moon over the green cliff,  
4 it would sadden this white-haired man to death.  
Goblins move to deep in the woods,  
as the Toad stirs in its half orb.  
Where my home garden faces the Northern Dipper,  
8 it goes straight to shine on westerly Qin.

¹ This refers to Guo Ziyi being made Prince of Fenyang in 762. Princes were generally from the imperial family, Li. For someone of a different surname to be made a prince was recognition of extraordinary merit in the service of the dynasty.
II

併照巫山出，
新窺楚水清。
羈棲愁裏見，
二十四回明。
必騐升沉體，
如知進退情。
不違銀漢落，
亦伴玉繩橫。

III

萬里瞿塘峽，
春來六上弦。
時時開暗室，
故故滿青天。
爽合風襟靜，
高當淚臉懸。
南飛有鳥鵝，
夜久落江邊。
II

Lit by moon and stars Wu Mountain comes forth, 
now it newly peers into clear waters of Chu. 
In my sadness as a sojourner, I have seen it 
grow full twenty-four times. 
I must investigate its form rising and sinking, 
it seems to understand feelings of advancing or withdrawal. 
It does not stray from the River of Stars in setting, 
and also keeps company with the Jade Rope across the sky.¹

III

Ten thousand leagues from home, Qutang Gorge, 
since spring came, six new moons. 
From time to time it lights up the darkened room, 
on purpose it fills the blue heavens. 
Serene, its briskness matches the wind blowing open my lapels, 
it hangs on high, facing my tearful face. 
Flying south there are magpies, 
as night grows long, it sinks by the river.

¹ The Jade Rope is a constellation.
晨雨

小雨晨光內，
初來葉上聞。
霧交才灑地，
風逆旋隨雲。
暫起柴荊色，
輕霑鳥獸群。
麝香山一半，
亭午未全分。
18.87

Morning Rain

A light rain in the morning sunlight,
when it first came, I heard it on the leaves.
Mixing with fog, it only then sprinkled the ground,
the wind hit it, and next it followed the clouds.
For a while it brought out the colors of the shrubs,
it lightly dampened flocks of birds and herds of beasts.
Musk Mountain is only half there,
by noon I cannot yet make it out in its entirety.