初唐詩

The Poetry of the Early T'ang

Stephen Owen

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To the memory of a friend and teacher
Arthur Wright

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INTRODUCTION

The period in the history of Chinese poetry known as the Early T'ang extends from the foundation of the dynasty in 618 until roughly 713, when Hsüan-tsung took the throne. The Early T'ang does not represent a unified style in its own right: rather it saw the close of a long era of court poetry and the slow transition to the new style of the High T'ang. The tradition of court poetry stands at the center of the changes that were taking place in the seventh century. "Court poetry" here refers specifically to the poetry of the later Southern Dynasties, Sui, and Early T'ang courts. Although poetry was written in the Chinese courts both before and after this period, it was during the late fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries that the court was the real center of poetic activity in China. Not only was a substantial proportion of the surviving corpus written for court occasions, the distinctive "courtly style" also dominated poetry written outside the court.

During the first half of the seventh century the courtly style became increasingly mannered and rigid; strong counter-trends developed which sought either to modify the courtly style or develop an alternative to it. The thematic scope of poetry began to broaden as poets went beyond the strictly limited range of topics and occasions found in court poetry. Furthermore, the rigid techniques of rhetorical amplification in court poetry came to exert a less mechanical control over the process of composition. In these and other ways, poets of the late seventh and early eighth centuries moved toward a new freedom, while retaining much that was good in the older style.

Literary freedom must be defined negatively: there must be a background of norm and convention that poets transgress. Beginning in the late seventh century, the conventions of court poetry came to serve exactly this function: they formed a body of poetic expectations which articulated the freedom of better poets. The poetry of the mid-eighth century, the High T'ang, is frequently described as "direct" and "natural"; such qualities are never inherent in literature. In the case of the High T'ang, they appear by measuring poems against the background of poetry of the seventh century.

This book is a study of those normative conventions and how Early T'ang poets broke free of them, how they learned to use such conventions for their own ends. Although this study is limited to Early T'ang poetry, these same normative conventions form the silent background of eighth- and ninth-century poetry. Poets of the eighth and ninth centuries had attained an even greater mastery over the conventions and tradition than the last of the Early T'ang poets, and they were not fond of Early T'ang poetry. Instead they admired what was written before the age of court poetry because it was in the "ancient manner." Yet in actual practice they depended on the norms of treatment evolved during the seventh century.

The eighth-century prejudice against the poetry of the Early T'ang has lasted more than a millennium. Even in Chinese and Japanese there have been very few studies of Early T'ang poetry. Those that exist are primarily concerned with individual poets or the development of tonal regulations. Larger literary histories generally confine themselves to identifying the major poets of the period and noting the relationship of the Early T'ang poetic style to that of the Southern Dynasties. There has been no attempt to treat the period extensively as a whole or to trace the important changes then

occurring in poetry.

This study must omit two of the most interesting collections of poems, at least part of which date from the Early T'ang, the poems of Han-shan and Wang Fan-chih. The omission is unfortunate but necessary: their poems stand so far outside the mainstream of the poetic tradition and present so many problems of dating and attribution that consideration of them would only distract from the real literary historical problems of the period. There is no evidence that their works were even known to poets of the capital at that time. Another poet, Wang Chi, whose work superficially resembles that of Han-shan and Wang Fan-chih, is included because his work represents a self-conscious rejection of the tradition of court poetry. I have also omitted consideration of Liu Hsi-yi and Chang Jo-hsü, whose work belongs properly to the early eighth century. They are often mistakenly considered Early T'ang poets.[1]

I should mention a few conventions of the text and translations here. Since measures were rarely used with any exactitude in poetry, I have felt free to replace Chinese measure with inexact English equivalents: thus a Chinese li is translated as a "mile," and so forth. I have kept the Chinese system of calculating a person's age, so that a child is one year old at birth. I have also transposed Chinese lunar years into their approximate western counterparts, so that the twelfth month of the third year of the Ching-lung reign will be called 709, even though the twelfth month should properly be 710.

As in any work that tries to cover a great deal of material, I have had to keep the notes to a minimum, explaining allusions and references in a poem only when they contribute to the discussion or are necessary to follow the surface argument of a poem. The texts of the Chinese poems are often eclectic. Where critical

texts are available, as in the case of Ch'en Tzu-ang's poetry, I have usually followed them. Very often the earliest text and the only surviving primary text is that of the Wen-yüan ying-hua 文苑英華, which is notoriously poor. Where no other early texts are available, I will take the Wen-yüan ying-hua reading over a Ch'üan T'ang shih 全唐詩 reading, except where the Ch'üan T'ang shih has corrected an obvious error. Frequently the text I give is made up of a number of sources. Except where special problems occur, I will not discuss textual variants. For the convenience of readers who want to look up the various early texts and to refer to other poems not translated I give the numbers assigned to the corpus of the Ch'üan T'ang shih in the Tōdai no shihen by Hiraoka Takeo et al.

CHRONOLOGY OF EARLY T'ANG RULERS

618-626 Kao-tsu 高祖

627-649 T'ai-tsung 太宗

650-684 Kao-tsung 高宗 (Wu made empress in 655)

684 Chung-tsung 中宗 (ruled for one month; then deposed by his mother Empress Wu)

684-690 Jui-tsung 睿宗 (ruled for about two months, then banished by Empress Wu, who continued to rule as regent in his name)

690-705 Empress Wu 武后, 武則天 (in 690 Jui-tsung was formally deposed and the name of the dynasty changed to Chou 周)

705-710 Chung-tsung (second reign) (empress sequestered; dynasty called T'ang again; power soon in hands of Empress Wei 韋 and family, who poison Chung-tsung in 710)

710-712 Jui-tsung (second reign) (placed on throne by Prince of Lin-tzu, later Hsüan-tsung, in favor of whom Jui-tsung abdicated in 712)

712-756 Hsüan-tsung 玄宗 (in 756 began joint rule with Su-tsung, but retired from active service)

PART ONE

COURT POETRY AND ITS OPPOSITION

THE AGE OF COURT POETRY

During the period of the Northern and Southern Dynasties, from the conquest of North China by non-Chinese in 317 until the Sui reunified China in 589, Chinese poetry was forced to adapt to unprecedented circumstances. In North China, where political power was in the hands of the "barbarian" military aristocracy, poets were little more than gracious adornments of their courts. The courts of South China, increasingly impotent as political entities, came to devote more time to poetry and the arts of gracious living than they did to governing. It was an age of aristocracy, and Chinese poetry was ill at ease in it.

To Han Confucians the public function of literature had been to assign praise and blame to those who governed, to encourage virtue and criticize corruption; its private function was to express personal sentiments, but such sentiments were seen primarily as reactions to prevailing political and social mores. The value of the expression of such sentiments was that through them the condition of society and the moral nature of the poet would be made manifest. These attitudes were certainly not a fertile ground for a great imaginative literature, but they were immensely compelling in that they provided a legitimate position for literature in the Confucian state. In the Northern and Southern Dynasties these ties with Confucian values and the literary and cultural past were almost broken.

Disillusionment with Confucian literary values and the ideal of the scholar-official had appeared strongly as early as the early third century. At first the dissociation of poetry from the state and its consuming

ethical standards proved to be liberating: poetry found a wealth of new themes in the act of rejection itself. Eremitic poetry, landscape poetry, Taoist philosophical and imaginative poetry flourished. However, the cost of this liberation was great: the comforting Confucian assumption that poetry and one's personal experience might have some lasting significance to the state and Chinese civilization disappeared. It had been a tenuous assumption at best, but it was a necessary one.

By the late fifth century poetry was becoming increasingly the possession of the southern Chinese courts. The dominant concerns of eremitic and landscape poetry during the preceding two centuries had been reduced to bloodless clichés. Poetry was in the hands of highly literate and cultured emperors and the great aristocratic families, who were the ultimate arbiters of poetic excellence. As much as poetry had evolved away from traditional Confucian values during the preceding centuries, the great southern families clung to it as an evidence of their cultural heritage and their superiority over the North, whose literature they despised.

The poetic stagnation of the South coincided with its political decay. The amazing continuity of court poetry can be largely attributed to the conservatism of the aristocratic patrons of literature and the highly stratified social structure: an outsider's entrance into their poetic world was possible only through absolute conformity to the canons of poetic taste, decorum, and grace. Poetry had become an elegant diversion, and the intrusion of Confucian moralizing or the fierce independence of the recluse was considered unforgivably boorish.

In the following poem by T'ao Hung-ching 陶弘景 (452-536), the characteristic defiance of the hermit is less surprising than the emperor's condescending question.

POEM WRITTEN IN ANSWER TO HIS MAJESTY'S QUESTION: "WHAT IS THERE IN THE MOUNTAINS?"[1]

詔問山中何所有
賦詩以答

"What is there in the mountains?" you ask—
Many a white cloud on mountain peaks.
But these are pleasures for me alone,
I can't take and send them to my Prince.

山中何所有
嶺上多白雲
只可自怡悅
不堪持奉君

Political concerns were likewise felt to be out of place in the world of poetry and in the amusements of the court. From the point of view of orthodox Confucian morality, a person in power should be ever vigilant in the search for men of talent to assist him in governing; public matters should always have precedence over private amusements. But when a certain Yü Kao sought an office from the Liang aristocrat Hsü Mien at a party, Hsü replied, "Tonight we chat only of the wind and moon—it's not proper to touch on public matters."[2] Such a response is understandable and surely occurred with even the most grimly serious public officials of the Han, yet the attitude expressed here by Hsü Mien (that there was a time when "public matters" were inappropriate) was later to provoke Confucian reformers to bitter attacks on the lack of public concern manifested in the literature of the Southern Dynasties. Perhaps alluding to the above incident, the Sui Confucian Li O wrote: "Poem after poem ...never got beyond images of the moon and dew; tables were heaped and chests filled with nothing more than the descriptions of the wind and clouds."[3]

Two styles dominated court poetry.[4] First, there were poems written in a stylized imitation of folk lyrics, yüeh-fu 樂府; among such literary yüeh-fu love lyrics were particularly popular, though these were refined far beyond their simple antecedents. Second, there were formal occasional poems, celebrating with grace and wit some object or event in the daily life of the courtier. The Chinese personal lyric had earlier found

expression not only in the Confucian political context but also in eremitic and landscape poetry. During the period of court poetry, however, more often than not the poet's inner life was submerged in the persona of the folk lyric or in the role of the courtier.

North China, violent and politically unstable, was a worse environment for poetry. Some northern folk songs of the period have real artistic merit, but in general northern poets either imitated the southern style poorly or wrote doggerel. Northern rulers, however, desiring to add poetic adornment to their courts, often solved the problem with characteristic directness; when southern poets were sent north on diplomatic missions, northern rulers would detain them under house arrest. Three of the finest poets of the sixth century Yü Hsin 庾信, Wang Pao 王褒, and Hsü Ling 徐陵, thus satisfied the northerners' yearning for southern culture.

Sixth-century authors could look back on more than a millennium of a continuous literary tradition. Even the dominant poetic genre, the pentasyllabic shih, was more than five hundred years old, the approximate span of all English literature since Malory. It is not surprising that the court poets of the sixth century acutely felt the burden of their rich and varied literary past. The Liang Emperor Yüan-ti 梁元帝 writes of this in an almost despairing tone:

> Philosophers flourished during the Warring States, while collections of poems and belles lettres filled the two Hans. It reached the point where every family had written something, every individual had his own collected works. Among these the finest may express well their emotions and ambitions, honoring custom, but the lesser serve only to clutter up the books and wear out those of us born later. So much has accumulated from those now dead, and yet future generations continue without end. Though one may anxiously set one's mind to study, one's hair may turn white

without having read them all.[5]

The court poets of the late fifth through seventh century practiced a kind of "creative imitation" similar in many ways to that found in lyric poets of the European Renaissance. Once the basic themes and forms of court poetry were set in the late fifth century, poets accepted their inheritance as the absolute limits of poetry; within this inheritance poets sought novelty of expression rather than true originality. What they lost in freedom and depth, the court poets tried to compensate for in craft, style, and cleverness. Even when real stylistic and structural individuation appeared toward the end of the seventh century, there was still very little innovation in the cognitive aspects of the themes themselves. For their limitations the court poets suffered the damnation of succeeding ages: Li O wrote, "They banished reason and preserved what was unusual, sought emptiness and exiled the profound. They competed over the originality of a single rhyme and contested the cleverness of a single word."[6]

The development of the court poetry of the Southern Dynasties into that of the Early T'ang is a gradual process involving no major or abrupt changes. The fixed conventions which we will describe here are primarily true of the Early T'ang, but all had their origins in the court poetry of the Southern Dynasties. In this chapter we will give only a brief overview of those aspects of poetic convention that are generally true for the entire period of court poetry. In a later chapter we will examine in greater detail the conventions in their final form, during the first decade of the eighth century. What began in the fifth century as an unusually homogeneous period style was gradually transformed into a restrictive set of rules that defined poetic good taste.[7]

Increasingly in the sixth and seventh centuries court poetry came to be dominated by those rules of rhetoric and decorum. They served to make poetry an acquired skill, a learnable art. Aesthétic judgement was not based on the degree of originality or complexity and seriousness of meaning, but rather on how well the poet operated within those rules. It was an art of subtle variation in which a premium was placed on a graceful performance. There was no room here for the untutored genius. In court poetic compositions, where a premium was placed on speed of composition, these rules and conventions facilitated extempore versifying without awkwardness. In their refinement they set a virtually insurmountable barrier between the outsider whose knowledge of poetry came from earlier collections and anthologies and the young man raised in the milieu of the court. These aesthetic rules were the possession of the court, and they produced a poetry aristocratic both in occasion and in conception. They restrained the daring and aided the uninspired, leveled genius and raised mediocrity; they permitted the ordinary courtier to write a poem that could stand without too much embarrassment beside the work of the greatest court poets.

First among these unwritten rules was a sense of topical and lexical decorum. One of the things that defines a court poem proper is that it is written to a prearranged topic (sometimes indicated by phrases such as fu-te 賦得), often to imperial command (ying-chih 應制). In the larger realm in which we are using the term court poetry (that is, the courtly style), one finds very little personal poetry. As we have said earlier, political claims and pleas for preferment were out of place; eremitic aloofness was gauche. Of course, such poems were written, but they tend to be by outsiders to the court, either by young poets who have not yet been accepted into courtly circles or by older poets exiled

from court or renouncing it. Private poetry occurs most often in exile or retirement, while social poetry between colleagues and friends is somewhat less common than in the eighth century.

The area of lexical decorum is quite complicated. Words describing objects of everyday life were considered out of place. One seldom finds the rich, expressive vocabulary which in earlier literature described intense emotional states. This is largely due to the avoidance of emotional extremes in court poetry; feigned distress, polite awe, and wonder are far more common. Particles do occur, but sparingly, and they tend to occur primarily at the beginning or the end of a poem. This tendency continues through the eighth and ninth centuries. Colloquialisms and archaisms are avoided. The basic vocabulary is relatively small and is marked by recurring elegant terms; for example, lin 臨, "to look down on" (used instead of the earlier poetic location formula X 有 Y, "at X there is Y"), pi 碧, "jade green" (in preference to ch'ing 青, a more natural green), lung 籠, "veil" or, literally, "encage."

The normative diction of court poetry is based on certain kinds of formalized divergences from what we presume was the norm of the classical language. Here we find a preference for periphrasis, distorted syntax, semantic warping, and for figured language in general. Ornament is always preferable to direct statement, though this is rarely carried to the extremes that we find in parallel prose. The excessive ornamentation used by a poet like Lo Pin-wang is as alien to the norm of court poetry as the self-conscious simplicity of the hermit-poet Wang Chi.

Structural conventions played an important role in the making of a court poem. The basic pattern we will call the "tripartite form," consisting of topic, descriptive amplification, and response. As we shall discuss in a

later chapter, this form had its origins in the poetry of the second and third centuries; late in the seventh century it was generically codified in regulated verse and continued to dominate the majority of "old style" poems, ku-shih 古詩. The poet begins by stating his theme as gracefully as possible; Shang-kuan Yi, visiting a mountain villa, begins:

The highroad arrived at a P'ing-chin Lodge, 上路抵平津
The rear hall has arrayed a great banquet. 後堂羅厲陳
[02708]

In the middle of the poem, the courtier amplifies the topic with two or more descriptive parallel couplets, and then closes with a personal reaction to the scene, often a witty compliment or an intrusion of personal opinion or emotion. Closure varies from subgenre to subgenre: banquet poems, for example, often close with a version of the theme, "it is evening now and we must return, though we have enjoyed ourselves so much and don't want to go." Li Pai-yao:

As the sun slants down homeward riders move, 日斜歸騎動
But our lingering pleasure fills the mountains and streams. 餘興滿山川
[02847]

The formalization of structure greatly facilitated quick composition on court occasions.

Parallelism was virtually demanded in the middle couplets of the poem, and the exigencies of court composition exerted an important influence on the development of parallelism in poetry. The subtle juxtapositions which one finds in parallel couplets of the eighth and ninth centuries are rare in the sixth and seventh centuries; in court poetry, once the mechanics of the technique were mastered, the hurried courtier had the

answer to the pressing question of what to say next. In court poetry there is usually little sense of a necessary relation between the descriptive couplets of a poem, and poetic argument is weak, if present at all.

Poetic closure, as a response or comment on the preceding part of the poem, was an important factor in the strengthening of poetic argument. The older forms of emotional response—exclamations, streaming tears, rhetorical questions such as "who understands...," and the Hsieh Ling-yün closure of regret at the absence of a friend to share an experience—still occur in certain subgenres such as parting poems and travel poems. More often in formal occasional poetry closure appears as a clever deduction from the scene accompanied by an expression of surprise, ching 驚, or regret, hsi 惜. To introduce conclusions drawn from the middle couplets there were set formulae such as nai chih 乃知 and fang chih 方知, "now/then I understand..." The sense of twist in closure often appears in rhetorical question formulae that dismiss objections or truisms, such as shui wei 誰謂, "who claims...?"

Each subgenre had its own conventions. In some subgenres such as yung-wu 詠物, "poems on things," the conventions were so strong that a virtually independent tradition of development was created with very little borrowing from other subgenres. In other subgenres, the descriptive middle couplets might be interchangeable between subgenres, but the conventions of poetic closure were distinctive. The conventions and norms of the various subgenres had begun to take shape in the second to fourth centuries; by the seventh century they had grown particularly strong. Not only did the range of subgenres delimit what might be treated in poetry, their own internal laws determined how that topic or occasion should be treated.

There were numerous other minor characteristics. The

conventional identification between the court and the world of the immortals not only provided a readily available metaphor complex for the purposes of ornamentation, but it also supplied innumerable witty closings concerning the appearance of the world of the immortals here on earth. Han place names and personal names provided another set of elegant substitutions. Finally, there was a tendency to remove human beings from the scene, to substitute their gestures, actions, implements, and clothes for their human presence. Many of these characteristics can be seen in the following opening couplet of a poem (02707) by Shang-kuan Yi. The topic is set: the emperor and the court went to K'uei-lin Hall for a party. This becomes:

The pacing palanquin emerges from P'i-hsiang Palace, 步輦出披香
Clear singing looks down on T'ai-yeh Pool. 清歌臨太液

T'ang palace names are replaced by Han palace names. The emperor disappears into his palanquin; the singers disappear into an impersonal "singing." These songs are not "at" T'ai-yeh Pool, but instead decorously "look down on" (lin, with overtones of an imperial "visit") the site.

Despite its limitations, the acute attention to craft in court poetry contributed considerably to the development of Chinese poetry. During this period the poetic language was refined into the condensed and flexible medium used by the great poets of the eighth and ninth centuries. From their search for novelty of expression evolved the syntactic freedom and ability to shift word classes found in later Chinese poetry. Out of their sense of structural and tonal decorum evolved the regulated verse and regulated quatrain. And from their attention to the surprising use of individual words in lines evolved a particular concentration on style and diction which characterizes later poets from Tu Fu to

Wang Shih-chen. Yet their contributions were collective rather than individual, and, with the partial exception of Yü Hsin, it would be difficult to point out a single poet who towers above the rest.

The strength and influence of court poetry was such that it weathered the violent attacks made against it for two hundred years. Although a certain amount of poetry was written outside its scope, its aesthetic appeal was so great that even those who bitterly attacked it in theory could not escape from it in practice. In the eighth century, the center of literary activity shifted away from the court, but in the court the old style remained dominant. It was institutionalized in the examination poem, and it continued to be the appropriate style for poetry addressed to high officials throughout the T'ang.

AN OPPOSITION POETICS AND THE SUI

The rise of court poetry in the late fifth century provoked an immediate reaction; however, this opposition was a poetics without a poetry, without an aesthetically appealing alternative. The opposition poetics was ultimately to develop into the fu-ku 復古, "return to antiquity," theories which played an important role in one of the greatest ages of Chinese poetry, from the early eighth through the early ninth centuries.

Definition of the fu-ku sentiment is difficult because it meant different things to different people. In some cases it meant specifically moralistic opposition to "palace poetry," kung-t'i shih 宮體詩 (a mildly erotic subgenre initially associated with court poetry), which describes the emotions and ambiance of a fair lady. In other cases the fu-ku sentiment meant opposition to stylistic ornateness in favor of greater directness and concision. In still other cases it indicated opposition to poetry without political import. In short, it involved opposition to any of the various characteristics of court poetry and the grounds for its opposition were primarily ethical rather than aesthetic. Thus in these early stages before the eighth century we shall call it the "opposition poetics," since it defined itself in negative relation to court poetry, sometimes implying "return to antiquity" and sometimes not.

With characteristically Confucian polemical rhetoric, the opposition poetics were firmly opposed to "decadence," "lasciviousness," and pointless "ornateness"—qualities which no one, even in the sixth and seventh centuries, could reasonably support. Exactly what works in court poetry embodied these pernicious qualities was a matter

of debate. The poetic alternatives were equally vague, though the consensus of opposition critics seemed to favor either a poetry expressing deep personal feeling or a poetry that served some didactic and political purpose.

The first strong statements of the opposition poetics are found in one of the greatest works of Chinese literary theory, the Wen-hsin tiao-lung 文心雕龍, written during the last decades of the fifth century by Liu Hsieh 劉勰 (465-522). The following passage represents true fu-ku, containing both opposition to courtly decadence and the alternative of the classical model. The concept of literature which it advocates is based on Confucian statements about literature from the pre-Ch'in and Han. These same ideas, expressed in innumerable reformulations, were later to build into a monotonous roar.

> The efficacy of literature is contingent upon its being a true offshoot of the Classics: it is the substance through which the Rites are performed and the means by which Government Functions are carried out. Through it the relationship between army and state is elucidated. If you trace the sources of such writings, you will find they are always in the Classics. However, as times grew remote from those of Confucius, literary forms decayed. Rhetoricians loved the unusual and valued the frivolous and bizarre; they decorated feathers merely for the love of painting and embroidered patterns on leather bags. They have gone too far from what is fundamental in pursuit of the false and superfluous.[8]

In this passage Liu emphasizes the function of literature in the context of the Confucian state and society; in other places in the Wen-hsin tiao-lung he places emphasis on literature as self-expression. Distaste for superfluous ornament comes through clearly in this passage, but such ornamentation characterizes not only court

poetry but also the parallel prose style in which the passage itself is written.

By the Liang dynasty (502-56) we find such denunciations aimed specifically against poetry in P'ei Tzu-yeh's 裴子野 "Essay on Insect Carving" 雕蟲論 .[9] "Insect carving," like "dragon carving" (tiao-lung) in the title of Liu Hsieh's work, refers to attention to craft and ornament; in the form "insect carving" the idea is pejorative. The force of these polemics soon made itself felt among court circles: the classical pedigree of the opposition's arguments made them difficult to oppose. A few defensive arguments in favor of contemporary literature appeared; even the great court poet Hsü Ling (507-82) felt obliged to apologize for the poetry he had collected in his anthology, the Yü-t'ai hsin-yung 玉臺新詠: "I have put together ten chapters of love poetry here—of course, not the peer of the Odes or Hymns, nor an outgrowth of the Airs [the three divisions of the Shih-ching]—there remains a distinction between the turbid Ching River and the clear Wei."[10] Hsü is arguing here that the lascivious, "turbid" poetry he has collected can exist side by side with the "clear" poetry of antiquity; like the two rivers alluded to, these two kinds of poetry will never mix, and the purity of the classical tradition will not be threatened. Clearly the court poets felt vulnerable to the attacks of the opposition poetics; the real confrontation was yet to come.

When Yang Chien 楊堅, scion of a northern military clan, completed the creation of a unified empire, he brought opposition to the courtly style into state policy: "When Kao-tsu [Sui Wen-ti, Yang Chien] first unified the government, he gave constant thought to hacking away the ornate in favor of the simple. He sent forth orders to get rid of all flowery frills. However, the fashion of the age was elegant diction, and there remained much decadent attention to beauty."[11] This was in 584, five

years before the Sui's conquest of the Ch'en dynasty and the final reunification of the empire. Wen-ti's motives probably lay in his puritanical dislike for ostentation and were not those of a Confucian moralist. There is no mention of a "return to antiquity," no harkening back to first principles.

However, in his concern for simplicity and directness, Wen-ti's attitude was close enough to that of the Confucian exponents of the opposition poetics that his ministers chose to consider it as a validation of those poetics. Thus the censor, Li O 李諤, responded to Wen-ti's commands with Confucian polemics against the courtly style. I will quote almost all of Li O's "Letter Requesting the Rectification of Literary Style" so that the reader can get the flavor of such polemics and see the essentials of the argument.

> I have heard how the wise kings of antiquity civilized the people: they had to change the way people saw and heard things, curbing their sensual desires and blocking their impulses to abandon themselves to evil—they showed the people the path of simplicity and harmony. The Five Teachings and the Six Actions were the basis for instructing the people; the Book of Songs, the Book of Documents, the Book of Rites, and the Book of Changes were the gateways to Righteousness and the Way. Consequently, nothing was of more importance than being able to bring the family back to parental love and filial respect, bringing men to understand rites and courtesy, rectifying customs and setting manners straight. When they presented memorials, offered rhapsodies, composed elegies, or engraved inscriptions, it was always for the purpose of praising virtue and placing men of integrity in their proper place for illuminating merit and verifying the rule of Reason. And even if it were not a matter of warning or encouragement, for the sake of the Right, they would not compose pointless pieces.
>
> Descending down to later ages, customs and instruction gradually

declined. One after another the three rulers of the Wei were devoted to literature: indifferent to the Great Way of the ruler and his people, they took pleasure in the minor art of "insect carving." Those below follow those above, much as an echo or a shadow. They competed in driving on this trend to literary floweriness, and in consequence, it became the custom. In the southeast during the Ch'i and Liang dynasties, this abuse reached an extreme: noble and base, sage and fool, all devoted themselves exclusively to verse. Thus they cast off Reason and held to what was unusual, sought emptiness and pursued the trivial. They competed over the originality of a single rhyme and contested the cleverness of a single word. Poem after poem and document after document never got beyond describing the moon and dew; tables were heaped and chests filled with nothing more than the appearance of the wind and clouds. From such as these the age derived its standards of excellence, and in such a way did the court select scholars. Since the road to profitable employment had been opened, hearts which had already been partial to such things attached even greater importance to them.

The result was that the ignorant youth of the villages and the children of the nobles didn't even glance at the basics of numeration, but instead learned to write poems in pentasyllabic lines. And when it came to the Book of Changes, to the Book of Documents, to the discourses of Yi Yin, Fu Yüeh, the Duke of Chou, and Confucius, they didn't care anymore—they hadn't even heard of them! They thought that their boastful extravagances were "pure and selfless"; they thought that expression of their emotions was a public merit. They pointed to Confucian simplicity as ancient clumsiness and used rhapsodies [fu] to determine who was a superior man. Thus belles lettres and utilitarian prose flourished more each day, while the government became more and more disorderly. In truth, this arose from the abandonment of the Pattern of the Great Sages, from fabricating the useless and thinking it useful. Such destruction of the fundamental and pursuit of the nonessential has inundated the heartland. They took each other as their masters, and after a while the flames

were fanned even higher.[12]

Li O goes on to praise the Sui's orders for a rectification of literary style; most have honored the edict, but he fears that pockets of pernicious ornamentation are still to be found in remote regions. He closes with a request that reports of corrupt style be sent to him so that severe punishment may be meted out. The antisouthern direction of the letter is only thinly veiled.

Unlike much later fu-ku writing, Li O has made no attempt to compromise the aesthetic considerations of literature with its public functions. It is perhaps difficult to see how this essentially antiartistic attitude could have such an ultimately salutary effect on the development of Chinese poetry; however, once the poet did make a compromise between his art and the values of the Confucian state, he could feel that his poetry had lasting significance, and if he wished to reject traditional Confucian values, he had a worthy opponent on whom to sharpen his argument.

From Li O's damnation, "they thought that expression of their emotions was a public merit," the poet was driven to make his emotions fit the larger context of the world around him. The protest ballad, the meditation on history, the commentary on contemporary politics—many of the great subgenres and themes of eighth- and ninth-century poetry—were grounded in just this need to speak in a public context and thus be relevant to the course of history.

However, all this lay far in the future; the immediate results of Wen-ti's proclamation and Li O's letter were hardly so grand. Outside of the court, as Li O complained, the southern style lingered on. Within the Sui court attempts to write moral, instructive poetry were pathetic. Wen-ti's Confucian minister Li Te-lin 李德林 writes:

Gentleness perfected, His Cultural Instruction stretches far, 至仁文教遠
Yea, our Sage, His military accomplishments manifest. 惟聖武功宣
A Great Lord observes the Six Principles (of literature), 太師觀六義
As the Nobility congratulate His Longevity...[13] 諸侯問百年

and the infamous Yang Su 楊素:

Of old Heaven and Earth were blocked up, 在昔天地閉
All things were in Early Difficulty and Folly. 品物屬屯蒙
Peace ceased with the Royal Way, 和平替王道
Bitterness and lament knotted men's style...[14] 哀怨結人風

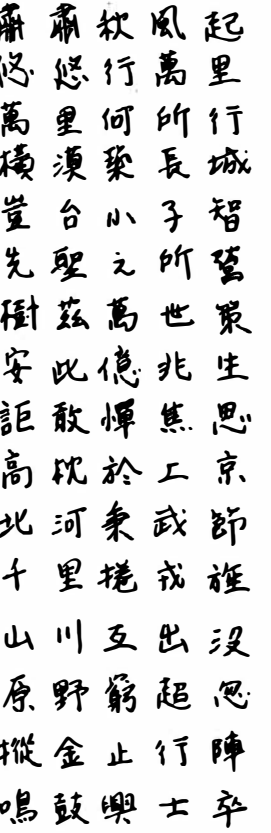
Early Difficulty and Folly are two hexagrams from the Book of Changes. "Bitterness and lament" are associated with poetry written in states that are going to ruin (see p. 34). These examples are clearly not the sort of thing to lure people away from the charms of court poetry.

The ill-fated Sui Yang-ti 隋煬帝, the second and last true emperor of the Sui, was the most considerable poet of that short-lived dynasty. His work shows the conflicting pulls of the opposition poetics, adopted by his father as appropriate for the unified empire, and the rich, alluring poetry of the South. A man of deep aesthetic sensibilities, Yang-ti could hardly have been satisfied with the poetic productions of men such as Li Te-lin and Yang Su. On the other hand, Yang-ti was no Ch'en Shu-pao 陳叔寶, the last and genuinely decadent poet-emperor of the Ch'en dynasty; many of Yang-ti's poems reveal a man with dreams of military glory, a man who takes pleasure in seeing himself as emperor of all China. It was this latter aspect of Yang-ti's poetry that the seventh-century historian Wei Cheng seized upon as though it were a manifestation of Confucian political concern.

Yang-ti's only statement of the opposition poetics was made when he first became crown prince; he complained of some ceremonial songs that their diction was too "frivolously lush and incapable of manifesting imperial accomplishment and might."[15] This closely echoes his father's dislike of ostentatious southern elegance, but Yang-ti's motives are suspect in that at this time he was trying to curry his father's favor.[16]

One of Yang-ti's poems selected by Wei Cheng as exemplary of the proper imperial style is his "Watering My Horse by the Great Wall: To the Courtiers Accompanying Me on Campaign"飲馬長城窟行示從羣臣. The event referred to is Yang-ti's reconstruction of the Great Wall and his aggressive policy on the northern frontiers, which was later to have disastrous results in his campaigns against Korea.

The autumn wind rises moaning,
As we march far away for thousands of miles.
Marching thousands of miles away to what end?—
Across the desert we rebuild the Great Wall.
But this was no idea of Our own,
It was built by wise past emperors:
They planted here a policy to last thousands of ages,
To secure the lives of their millions of subjects.
How then could We shrink from such concerns,
And rest in calm unconcern in the capital?
Our legions' standards held high by the river's northern reaches,
For a thousand miles the battle-flags unfurl.
An endless succession of rivers and mountains appear before us, sink away,
Then plains and steppes stretching to infinity.
The gongs are struck to halt the files and columns,
And drums are beaten to stir the troops:



A thousand chariots, ten thousand horsemen move
And water their horses beside the Great Wall.
Autumn dims clouds from beyond the frontier,
Fog darkens the moon over mountain passes.
Post horses climb up along the steep cliffs,
And beacon fires appear, suspended in the sky.
"What news from the posts at the Great Wall?"—
"The Khan is coming to court; he submits."
Evil's turbid aura clears from Heaven Mountain,
And morning light shines on the palace gates.
The troops are discharged and return peacefully,
Our work on the frontiers now is done.
Drink the cup of victory, tell that We have returned!
Our ancestors will learn Our deeds before the Temple.[17]

千乘萬騎動
飲馬長城窟
秋昏塞外雲
霧暗關山月
緣乘空問長城
借單于氣靜天
晨釋雲飲功

Although Yang-ti speaks of his concern for his people, what we see here is less an expression of Confucian morality than an evidence of Yang-ti's consciousness of being emperor. A fascination with his power and glory pervades the poem. Whatever the motives, Yang-ti's poem is still a world apart from Ch'en Shu-pao's effete version of the same ballad:

A battle steed enters a strange land;
On mountain flowers this night, radiance.
Apart from its herd, it neighs to its shadow;
A fragrance often stirs with the wind.
The moon's color swallows the Wall's darkness;
Autumn sounds are jumbled in the length of the passes.
How shall it repay the Son of Heaven?—
By its horsehide it will announce those dead on the frontier.[18]

征馬入他鄉
山花此夜光
離羣嘶何影
因風屢動香
月色含城暗
秋聲雜塞長
何以酬天子
馬革裹疆場

The last line here refers to the practice of wrapping the dead in horsehide. The delicate sensibilities of

this flower-sniffing steed seem out of place beside its grisly vows of self-sacrifice to the state, but the Ch'en emperor's experience of the frontier was purely literary. The sense of imperial responsibility in Yang-ti's poem is altogether absent here.

However bloodless and impersonal Ch'en Shu-pao's vision of the border may be, the superior artistry of the southerner is also visible in the contrast between the two poems. The idea of the horse neighing to its shadow because it lacks companions combines a cleverness and sensitivity characteristic of court poetry. Nor could Yang-ti produce anything to match the delicate stylistic craftsmanship in the middle couplets of Ch'en Shu-pao's ballad. A less obvious but more fundamental aspect of southern poetic craft is the tight rhetorical amplification in Ch'en's ballad that contrasts sharply with Yang-ti's rambling manner. There were many patterns of amplification, but most involved splitting up, recombining, and expanding elements from earlier lines or couplets. Furthermore, the repeated elements had to be expressed in different terms or implied indirectly; for example, radiance, shadow, and the primary term moonlight.

The first couplet of Ch'en Shu-pao's poem sets the primary terms: horse and strange land, flowers and moonlight. The second couplet should split and recombine them: thus in the third line we have horse and moonlight. The fourth line has the expected flowers but adds a new term, wind. The third couplet then picks up this secondary antithesis of moonlight and wind and amplifies it in terms of the "strange land," the frontier. The irregularity of the fourth line makes the poem less perfectly symmetrical than many courtly poems, but the mechanics of the technique are clear:

1st couplet	horse	strange land
	flowers	radiance (moonlight)

2nd couplet	horse	shadow (moonlight)
	flowers	wind
3rd couplet	moonlight	Great Wall (strange land)
	jumbled sounds (wind)	passes (strange land)

Finally, following the rules of the tripartite form, Ch'en Shu-pao interjects a direct emotional response, reversing the melancholy tone in the horse's vow of self-sacrifice. Yüeh-fu tended to use set personae who voice the formalized response in the closure. With a horse as the only possible responding figure in the poem, Ch'en is compelled to place the conventional gesture of heroic resolve in its mind.

This refined southern sensibility could not help but attract Yang-ti. Yang-ti never mastered the southern occasional poem, the courtly style at its most ornate, but there is no evidence he ever tried to do so. For poetry bearing directly on the life of the court, he found the imperial dignity and aesthetic poverty of the opposition poetics quite appropriate. On the other hand, the languid folk poetry of the South, the celebration of the "good life," appears frequently in his work.

THE JOY OF MY PALACE IN CHIANG-TU	江都宮樂歌
Oh, to linger in my old haunts in Yang-chou	揚州舊處可淹留
Terraced kiosks, high and bright, where I love to stroll.	臺榭高明復好遊
To meet early summer in breeze-blown pavilions, under blossoming trees,	風亭芳樹迎早夏
And say good-bye to autumn's end on tracts of marsh and grain-covered slopes.	長皐麥隴送餘秋
Cassia oars on clear pools, fishhawk prows bobbing;	桂櫂浮青雀
A fruit falls on my golden saddle, the dark steed startles.	果下金鞍躍紫騮

Amber wine and pale lees, we drink the drifting clouds,
Of long sleeves and clear song, a land of pleasure and delight.[19]

綠醽素蟻流霞飲
長袖清歌樂戲州

Like his imperial poetry, much of Yang-ti's poetry in the southern style betrays a self-conscious love of a role. In this poem and in others we see a consciousness of the South as a separate entity, quite different than the court poet's assumption that the South was the world. Yang-ti is on the outside looking in.

At other times, however, Yang-ti is not so self-conscious and often succeeds in capturing the sensuality of southern poetry. Since he lacked the rhetorical panoply of the southern court poet, the result could have a haunting freshness and beauty.

SPRING RIVER, FLOWERS, MOON, NIGHT

The evening river, level, unmoving;
Spring flowers full, just blossomed.
The rolling waves carry the moon away,
While tide waters come, bearing the stars onward.[20]

春江花月夜
暮江平不動
春花滿正開
流波將月去
潮水帶星來

It might be added that the prototype of this song was composed by none other than Ch'en Shu-pao.[21]

Although we do find other poems of the style and quality of Yang-ti's "Watering My Horse by the Great Wall," the Sui generally failed to produce an aesthetically pleasing alternative to court poetry. Meanwhile, court poetry flourished as ever. The Sui left this literary legacy to the T'ang, just as it left the T'ang its legacy of institutions and military ambitions. The T'ang inherited the opposition poetics of the Confucian moralists along with the lingering allure of southern court poetry. The history of seventh-century poetry was largely a history of the interaction between these

two contending forces, and it was from the brushes of former Sui officials that the T'ang found its first, uneasy compromise of the two values.

THE SUI LEGACY: WEI CHENG AND LI PAI-YAO

The two poets who carried the new poetry inspired by the opposition poetics into the Sui were northerners; in the South court poetry was still strongly entrenched. The poetry written by Wei Cheng and Li Pai-yao during the internecine wars at the end of the Sui and in the earliest years of the T'ang represented the potential for a vigorous poetry engagé. However, their subsequent development during the T'ang marks the decline of the opposition poetics: Wei Cheng moved into sterile didacticism, while Li Pai-yao conformed to T'ai-tsung's proclivity toward court poetry.

Wei Cheng 魏徵(580-643) was from Wei-chou in the modern province of Shantung, one of the strongholds of Chinese culture in the North. Orphaned at an early age, Wei dabbled in Taoism as a youth, then joined the rebel Li Mi in his struggle first against the Sui and later against the T'ang. After Li Mi's collapse, Wei transferred his loyalty to the T'ang. There he rose rapidly, becoming one of the compilers of the Sui History and an eminent intellectual in T'ai-tsung's court.

Apart from some ceremonial songs, Wei Cheng's poetic output was minuscule: only four poems survive. One would hardly think of him as a poet at all were it not for the fact that "Expressing My Feelings" was taken by Ming neoclassicists as the first characteristic production of T'ang poetry.[22] It is unclear at precisely what point in Wei Cheng's career "Expressing My Feelings" was written. It was either soon after Wei, along with the warlord Li Mi whom he served, submitted to the new dynasty or shortly after T'ai-tsung took the throne. In either case the poem is from the early years of the

dynasty and is closer in spirit to much Sui poetry than to the poetry of the first decades of the T'ang.

"Expressing My Feelings" represents a kind of poetry which might have successfully fulfilled the goals of the opposition poetics. Apt parallels have been drawn between it and Yang-ti's "Watering My Horse by the Great Wall": not only does Wei Cheng express admiration for Yang-ti's poem, both poems are products of the same era and the same poetics.[23]

EXPRESSING MY FEELINGS

When they began scrambling for the crown
on the central plain
I cast down my pen to serve in a chariot.
My plots and my plans all came to nothing,
But determination and my ardor endure.
I whipped on my horse, swore fealty to the
Son of Heaven,
Then galloped swiftly out from the passes,
Begged reins to halter Nan-Yüeh's king,
Leaned on my carriage rail, talked Ch'i to
surrender,
Strode over high mountains on tortuous paths,
Gazed on the plain, coming into view,
disappearing.
In ancient trees the birds of winter sing,
On deserted mountains the gibbons cry by night.
The eye gazes far, the heart is wounded,
The dreaming soul flies home, startles awake
again and again.
How can I help but cower at such danger?—
Yet I feel deeply the honor His Majesty
shows me.
I'm a Chi Pu who need not say yes twice,
I'm a Hou Ying who honors his word.
Human life is impelled by noble spirit—
Who cares for mere glory and fame?

述懷

中原初逐鹿
投筆事戎軒
縱橫計不就
慷慨志猶存
杖策謁天子
驅馬出關門
請纓繫南越
憑軾下東藩
鬱紆陟高岫
出沒望平原
古木鳴寒鳥
空山嘯夜猿
既傷千里目
還驚九逝魂
豈不懍險艱
深懷國士恩
季布無二諾
侯嬴重一言
人生感意氣
功名誰復論

[02442]

Historical allusions fill this poem; I will confine myself to those which are absolutely necessary to make the piece intelligible. The "reins" of line seven refer to a story told of the Han official Chung Chün, who was sent as an envoy to the king of Nan-Yüeh to convince the king to submit to Han suzerainty. On his departure, Chung Chün is supposed to have expressed his readiness to serve the state by asking the emperor for long reins to "halter" the king of Nan-Yüeh and bring him back to the capital. Like Chung Chün, Wei intends to exert his persuasive powers to the utmost in the service of his ruler. The following line refers to the orator Li Yi-chi, who, working on behalf of the founder of the Han dynasty, managed to talk a resurgent Kingdom of Ch'i into surrender. Both Chung and Li met their deaths as a result of their efforts. Hou Ying and Chi Pu, mentioned toward the end of the poem, were both known for the strength of their word and their loyalty.

Even if "Expressing My Feelings" does not possess the stature that Li P'an-lung and Shen Te-ch'ien claimed for it, and even if it is, as the modern scholar Wen I-to 聞一多 says, an "ordinary poem," still it possesses a simplicity of diction, a directness of feeling, and an expression of political concern that lie further outside the scope of court poetry than even Yang-ti's ballad.[24] Wei draws most of his references from history rather than from earlier poetry, and in the one case where he clearly borrows from an earlier poem, his choice is significant. The last couplet of "Expressing My Feelings" is lifted almost verbatim from one of the rare pieces of Confucian poetry in the Southern Dynasties.[25] The poem was written by Hsün Chi 荀濟, a man who fled the Liang to the Northern Wei because he had stirred the Liang emperor's wrath by his opposition to Buddhism.

The model for the title, "Expressing My Feelings," shu-huai 述懷, is "Singing My Feelings," yung-huai 詠懷,

by Juan Chi 阮籍 (210-63). We know that by the fifth century Juan Chi's poem series was read as a personal commentary on the dissolution of the Wei dynasty and the rise of the Ssu-ma clan, which was to establish the Chin.[26] By 658 when Li Shan 李善 presented his commentary on the Wen-hsüan 文選 to the throne, individual poems of "Singing My Feelings" were being read as topical allegory. By associating his poem with those of Juan Chi in title and style, Wei not only points to the larger realm of social and political concerns, he also suggests an identification with the qualities of sincerity, boldness, spontaneity, and intense emotionalism. These qualities were closely associated with the poetry of the Chien-an and Wei by T'ang readers; they represented a compelling primitivism which was felt to have been lost during the period of court poetry. As we shall see later, the model of Chien-an and Wei poetry was to be one of the principal means by which T'ang poetry escaped from the confines of court poetry.

There were also some Southern Dynasties poets interested in the primitivism of Chien-an and Wei poetry, but their treatment of it is quite different than Wei Cheng's: to them it was not a means of self-expression, but rather a quaint artifact to be imitated as a literary exercise.[27] The first poet to use the model of "Singing My Feelings" for serious personal ends was Yü Hsin, a southern poet who wrote much of his poetry during his captivity in the North. In his work there is a strong sense of regional style and manner, a feeling that a "northern" poetry should be different from a "southern" poetry. Yü Hsin has twenty-seven "Imitations of the Yung-huai"擬詠懷 ; it is believed that all date from Yü's captivity. Technically these poems are still "imitations," like other imitations of third- and fourth-century poetry written by Southern Dynasties poets; however, many of Yü Hsin's "Imitations of the Yung-huai" are intensely personal,

either directly so or in their analogical implications. Yü Hsin's series has a range of themes similar to the original Yung-huai: autumn laments, historical poems, philosophical pieces, and personal narratives. Later during the T'ang, fu-ku poetry also spans a wide range of themes associated with Chien-an and Wei poetry. The "Imitations of the Yung-huai" are important antecedents for the poetry that the opposition poetics ultimately did develop, but they contain a certain amount of heavy-handed parallelism, virtually inescapable in a poet raised in the tradition of southern court poetry. The influence of the "Imitations of the Yung-huai" was not direct; in the Early T'ang an "imitation of Yü Hsin" did not refer to the style of the opposition poetics at all, but to the most precious kind of court poetry. However, they were probably very much in Wei Cheng's mind when he wrote "Expressing My Feelings."

Unlike court poetry, which is essentially a poetry of celebration, Yü Hsin's "Imitations of the Yung-huai" and Wei Cheng's "Expressing My Feelings" both represent a poetry of self-expression, harkening back to a principle stated in the "Great Preface" to the Shih-ching, that "poetry state intention [chih 志, 'ambition,' or whatever one's mind is set on, with strong political connotations]." The poem is to be centered on the poet and his inner life; if description of the external world is present, as it is in lines nine to twelve of "Expressing My Feelings," it is subordinate to the poet's reaction to it. There is no attempt at objectivity (Li O's "pure and selfless") nor the restrained and formalized emotional response of the court poet. If we compare Wei Cheng's landscape description with the description in Ch'en Shu-pao's "Watering My Horse by the Great Wall," we see no interest in the scene for its own sake as in Ch'en's poem, no clever arrangement of the elements of the landscape; rather we see a simply constructed scene each of whose

elements is designed to reveal what stirs the poet's emotions. Finally, "Expressing My Feelings" is not didactic: the poet affirms certain principles, but these are personalized, directly connected with his circumstances.

The threat of didacticism was a greater danger to this kind of poetry than the lure of court poetry. The theorists of the opposition poetics saw such poems as exemplary of proper moral attitudes rather than as a personal art with ethical dimensions. If the primary function of poetry was to teach, then would it not be more proper to teach directly with overtly didactic poetry? After he rose to high position during the T'ang, Wei Cheng succumbed to this danger, prodding the great T'ai-tsung with an audacity highly prized in Confucian ministers. In the following anecdote T'ai-tsung writes a poem on imperial ethics, but his ethics have a slightly Buddhist flavor, Wei Cheng "corrects" the imperial error in emphasis by an exemplary poem on the Western Han, concluding with the proper Confucian emphasis on rites. Such a preference for imperial power and propriety over common ethics may indeed have represented Wei Cheng's personal feelings, but the function of the poem is to teach and not to express.

When T'ai-tsung was at the Lo-yang Palace, he made an excursion to the Pool of Deep Azure. They held a drinking party where everyone composed a poem on a given topic.

His Majesty's poem went:

. . .

Many were the benighted rulers who gave free reign to their emotions,
Enlightened lords who overcame themselves are few
Self-ruin depends upon a string of evils,
Lasting fame arises from accumulated good.

恣情昏主多
克己明君鮮
滅身資累惡
成名由積善

Then Wei Cheng wrote a poem on the Western Han that went:

[Wei first describes the military and convivial splendors of the Han]

. . .

In the end His Majesty made use of Shu-sun T'ung's Rites,
Only then did one know how exalted the emperor was

終藉叔孫禮
方知皇帝尊

T'ai-tsung then said, "Wei Cheng never fails to bind me up with Rites."[28]

Shu-sun T'ung was one of the men responsible for the state sponsorship of Confucianism during the Han. T'ai-tsung did not miss the point. The opposition poetics was unable to distinguish adequately between poetry that embodied moral principles and poetry that merely stated them, didactic poetry. If "Expressing My Feelings" was a successful example of the former, this later poem by Wei Cheng is clearly didactic. Such didactic poetry could never compete aesthetically with court poetry, and the promise which Wei Cheng's earlier poem showed was lost.

Wei Cheng's importance as a poet is minimal in comparison to his importance as an historian. His "Preface to the Biographies of the Men of Letters" in the Sui History is one of the best reasoned and most generous statements of Chinese literary history as conceived by the opposition poetics. Wei begins by reaffirming the conventional didactic theory of literature, which we saw in Liu Hsieh and Li O. He continues, however, with the theory of self-expression in a political context:

Sometimes there is a banished courtier who has met with slander; sometimes there is a homeless scholar at the end of his road—the way is tortuous and his prince not yet found, his will repressed within and not yet brought forth. In such a state of depression his misery stirs, and he sends some winged writing to the palace—

he springs swiftly from the mud and mire and reaches the Blue Clouds.[29]

Wei proceeds to describe the literature of the preceding two centuries as a process of the fragmentation of the ideal unity of wen (文, "pattern," "ornamentation," the aesthetic qualities of literature) and chih (質, "substance"). The wen of southern literature was excessive, while too much chih made northern literature unpalatable. In the period immediately preceding the Sui, southern aestheticism was imported to the North.

Such an interest on the part of the moralist and historian in the process of literary change arises from an early tenet in Chinese literary thought, that literature reveals the political and spiritual state of the nation. Thus when Wei Cheng describes the poetry of Hsü Ling and Yü Hsin as having emotions that are mournful and full of longing," he is evaluating the political conditions of the later Northern and Southern Dynasties: in the "Great Preface" to the Shih-ching we find:

> The Sounds of an age of order are peaceful and happy—its government is in harmony. The sounds of a world in disorder are bitter and full of rancor—its government is perverse. The sounds of a fallen kingdom are mournful and full of longing—its people are in dire straits. Consequently, to understand how things have succeeded and how they have failed, to move Heaven and Earth, and to stir supernatural beings, there is nothing more appropriate than poetry.

In large measure this theory accounts for the moralists' serious concerns with the propriety of literary style.

Wei Cheng goes on to praise the poetry of Yang-ti, mentioning specifically the ballad "Watering My Horse by the Great Wall." This, Wei says, "has the proper style and represents a return to classical regulation."[30] Since historians universally condemned Yang-ti's character

and capabilities as a ruler, Wei's evaluation of Yang-ti's poetry directly contradicts the theory stated above, that poetry reflects the age. Wei Cheng, quite capable of quoting scripture for his own purposes, avoids the difficulty by referring the reader to a less popular critical adage, Analects, XV. 22: "The Good Man does not put aside the words because of the man"; that is, the moral value of a work cannot be judged from the author's character.

Thus it seems that to Wei Cheng, who can be said to represent to some extent the literary historical opinion of the first decades of T'ai-tsung's reign, the literature of the Sui constituted a rejection of the courtly style and a return to classical principles. What is puzzling is that Wei seems to have deliberately ignored Yang-ti's more effete, southern-style poetry, which would have been more consistent with the historian's evaluation of the man. If we were to speculate as to Wei's motives in this, it may be that Wei was holding these poems of Yang-ti up to T'ai-tsung as a prescriptive example in order to counter the new poetic stars of the 630s and 640s, Shang-kuan Yi and Hsü Ching-tsung. The work of Shang-kuan and Hsü represented a resurgence of court poetry without even a facade of moral concern.

The decline in the effectiveness of the opposition poetics and the resurgence of court poetry during T'ai-tsung's reign can be seen also in the changes that took place in the poetry of Li Pai-yao 李百藥 (565-648), one of the most popular poets of the day. Li Pai-yao was the son of Li Te-lin, Sui Wen-ti's leading Confucian minister, whose unsuccessful attempts at a Confucian poetry we have mentioned earlier. Yang-ti had had an aversion to Li Pai-yao and gave the poet a post in the far South. Li participated in one of the rebellions at the end of the Sui and came to incur the wrath of T'ang Kao-tsu. Banished to Ching-chou because of his unpopularity, Li eventually met T'ai-tsung. T'ai-tsung, who generally liked those

whom his father disliked, befriended the old poet. When T'ai-tsung took the throne, Li Pai-yao was summoned to court and was one of the principal literary figures of the first part of T'ai-tsung's reign.

The poetry that Li Pai-yao wrote in the South during the latter part of the Sui is close in tone and style to Wei Cheng's "Expressing My Feelings" and Yang-ti's "Watering My Horse by the Great Wall."

ON THE ROAD: EXPRESSING MY FEELINGS

Ts'ai Yung was sent north of the passes,
Ts'ui Yin went to Liao Peninsula.
And I—how have I become a wanderer,
All alone, clinging to Cloud Terrace Mountain?
The road stretches far, the sun has set,
The way of an age of peace is here at its end.
Roots pulled up, the grass on the shore laments,
Half-dead, leaves fall from the wu-t'ung on the cliffs.
My eyes watch the geese go off to Heng-yang,
My heart is pained by the maples over the river.
Indeed trouble was lurking behind good fortune,
Now in truth it is hard to find success.
But a man does have his determination and his spirit,
So how can he grieve that he won't be ennobled?

[02833]

途中述懷
伯嗈伯余之何爲者
亭伊獨守雲臺已斯
時搴心悲岸巖陽上
情今也夫傷

北客
東
中
暮
窮
草
桐
雁
楓
伏
通
志
公。

Contrary to all rules of courtly composition, Li Pai-yao rushes into his poem with two historical precedents for his own condition, the exile of Ts'ai Yung and Tou Hsien's allotment of a miserable post in the northeast for Ts'ui Yin. Both Ts'ai and Ts'ui were Eastern Han scholars. Heng-yang is said to be the point at which the geese migrating southward stop their journey. This poem was written in about 605, when Li was in exile in the South,

thus more than a decade earlier than Wei Cheng's "Expressing My Feelings." Both poems close with affirmations of principles and moral resolution:

But a man does have his determination and his spirit, 丈夫自有志
So how can he grieve that he won't be ennobled? 寧傷官不公

and

Human life is impelled by noble spirit— 人生感意氣
Who cares for mere glory and fame? 功名誰復論

The two poems are also similar in their use of historical exemplars and in their use of landscape description.

We will pass over the other poetry written by Li Pai-yao in the last years of the Sui for the moment and look at some poems that he wrote during the T'ang. His poetry written to imperial command is virtually indistinguishable from that written by T'ai-tsung and his other courtiers. The poet disappears into the celebration of the outings of the court:

ANSWERING "EARLY SPRING EXCURSION": TO COMMAND 奉和初春出遊應令

Singing fifes emerge from Gazing Garden; 鳴笳出望苑
Carriage canopies in flight descend to Mushroom Fields. 飛蓋下芝田.
Light beams on water drift in the evening sunshine, 水光浮落照
Bright-colored clouds paled by thin mists. 霞彩淡輕煙
The color of willows will last three months; 柳色臨三月
Plum blossoms divide two years. 梅花隔二年
As the sun slants down, homeward riders move, 日斜歸騎動
Their lingering pleasure filling the mountains and streams. 餘興滿山川

This shift from a poetry of self-expression to a poetry of celebration occurs not only in his poetry to imperial command but also in poetry to his friends. The fragmentation of the world into a pastiche of interrelated scenes, characteristic of court poetry, stands in sharp contrast to Li Pai-yao's earlier poem in which he tried to develop an idea, to understand his circumstances by historical and natural analogies and to overcome his despair by moral resolution.

To some extent the stylistic differences between these two poems are based on a subgeneric difference; practical circumstances play a large role in stylistic variation. Li Pai-yao cannot be expected to write the kind of poetry he wrote in exile and adversity when he was attending one of T'ai-tsung's banquets. However, a court poet like Yü Hsin did manage to write personal poetry in the fragmented, impersonal courtly style, while moralists such as Wei Cheng managed to avoid it even on occasions that seemed to call for it. At the court gathering cited earlier Wei Cheng carefully avoided writing of the sensual grandeur with which the Western Han was conventionally associated. The models of a courtly personal poetry and an anticourtly public poetry were available to Li Pai-yao and he avoided both. The crux of the matter lies in the fact that Li Pai-yao and Wei Cheng did write poetry of self-expression during times of stress, poetry which did not use the style and conventions of court poetry. For most court poets, on the other hand, poetry's primary purpose was the tasteful celebration of aristocratic society.

During the Southern Dynasties we do find some huai-ku 懷古, meditations on the past usually occasioned by a visit to an ancient site. These, however, are relatively few; the Southern Dynasties was one of the least historically minded periods in Chinese history. The Sui unification brought with it a renewed interest in the

past, particularly in the Han dynasty as a model for the unified empire. One of the most potent influences on the T'ang huai-ku was Pao Chao's 鮑照 (412-66?) "Weed-covered City" 蕪城賦, a meditation on the past splendor and present ruins of a great city.

Li Pai-yao wrote many meditations on ancient sites, usually following the pattern established by "Weed-covered City," describing first the glory of the city at its height, then the desolation of its ruins, and closing with a meditation on the changes of fortune. We will see this theme appearing again strongly in the capital poetry of the 670s. Such huai-ku appear frequently in the first three decades of the seventh century, and it was during this time that the subgenre took on the characteristics it was to retain throughout the rest of the T'ang.

Li Pai-yao's "Meditation on the Past at Ying" (02834) is perhaps his finest poem. Ying was the capital of the Warring States Kingdom of Ch'u. Unfortunately the poem is so laden with historical allusions that it makes cumbersome reading in translation. Li follows closely the outline of Pao Chao's fu, but while Pan Chao associates their fall with the arrogance of their age of glory, Li Pai-yao is more concerned with the inevitable patterns of rise and fall:

Their cycle ran out—they were set amid galloping horses;	運圮屬馳驅
The age was Difficulty, when the whips were unleashed.	時屯恣敲扑

This is a powerful combination of abstraction, allusion, and vision of Armageddon. In the second line of the couplet, the fall of Ying is interpreted in terms of the hexagram ch'un 屯, Initial Difficulty, from the Book of Changes. Ch'u was defeated by the state of Ch'in, and "the whips" is a phrase from a famous essay by Chia

Yi on the tyranny of Ch'in.

The following undatable poem (02832) is a more personal and generalized treatment of the theme of ruins. The melancholy which pervades the poem will become characteristic of T'ang huai-ku.

CLIMBING AN ANCIENT WALL ON AN AUTUMN EVENING 秋晚登古城

Sunset, the road I travel stretches far, 日落征途遠
In depression I look down from this ancient wall. 悵然臨古城
On its tumbled ramparts wrens of winter gather, 頹墉寒雀集
From weedy parapets evening crows fly up in surprise. 荒堞晚烏驚
Impenetrable and gloomy, dense forests rise, 蕭森灌木上
Far in the distance a lone column of smoke appears. 迢遞孤煙生
Vision of red clouds, gleaming in last sunlight, 霞景煥餘照
Dew-filled air clears the evening cool. 露氣澄晚清
An autumn wind whirls the falling leaves— 秋風轉搖落
How can I set my mind at rest? 此志安可平

Here we can begin to see a shift from the relatively objective treatment of nature found in court poetry to the conflation of mood and scene characteristic of T'ang poetry. The ruins serve here as only one element in a scene of autumnal melancholy.

Li Pai-yao's work shows a versatility unusual in the poetry of the first half of the seventh century. He wrote a few excellent "palace poems" of uncertain date and was equally adept at the courtly skill of writing a clever couplet:

Wave-flowers, blossoming, folding in; 浪花開已合
Wind-blown patterns, straight and then joined. 風文直且連

[02840]

The changing forms of the water, moving from one extreme to the other, suggest the notion of plasticity and change, but the visual scene is ingenious: the rising and sinking of the waves appear to be like flowers blossoming and folding up. It is also possible that the "flowers" are sparkles of light appearing on the waves, their flashing compared to the blossoming and folding of flowers.

Unlike Wei Cheng, whose poems were at most peripheral to his other activities, Li Pai-yao was as well-known as a poet as a historian. Perhaps being the son of Li Te-lin kept him from court poetry in his youth. In his youthful poetry written during the Sui the force of the opposition poetics can be felt, but later, required to participate in the poetic celebrations of T'ai-tsung's court, he abandoned his stronger, more personal style. During T'ai-tsung's reign the new poetry of opposition poetics began to fade into the background, and with the defection of Li Pai-yao to the courtly style, the opposition poetics lost its best hope to produce a viable alternative to the courtly style.

POETS OF T'AI-TSUNG'S COURT

In 621, before he took the throne, Li Shih-min 李世民 (T'ai-tsung 太宗) gathered eighteen of the leading literary men and scholars of the day to found the College of Literature (Wen-hsüeh kuan 文學館). These men formed the nucleus of T'ai-tsung's cultural establishment and included such famous figures as K'ung Ying-ta 孔穎達 (574-648), a commentator on the classics, and the historian Yao Ssu-lien 姚思廉. Only three of the eighteen have more than one poem extant today: Yü Shih-nan 虞世南, Ch'u Liang 褚亮, and Hsü Ching-tsung 許敬宗.

All three of these poets were from the southeast: Ch'u Liang and Hsü Ching-tsung were from Hang-chou, while Yü Shih-nan was from nearby Yüeh-chou. This was the heartland of Southern Dynasties culture and of court poetry. Hsü Ching-tsung was only thirty years old when the College was founded, but both Yü Shih-nan and Ch'u Liang were protégés of the great court poet Hsü Ling. Thus despite the infusion of moralizing Confucian poetics during the Sui, the direct tradition of Southern Dynasties court poetry continued into the T'ang and into T'ai-tsung's court.

Yü Shih-nan (558-638) was one of the leading intellectuals of this time and by far the ablest poet of the three men mentioned above. Yü grew up under the feeble Ch'en dynasty where his youthful poetic endeavors received the attention not only of Hsü Ling but also of Chiang Tsung 江總 (518-90), another master of court poetry. Yü Shih-nan was a multifaceted Southern Dynasties intellectual: he dabbled in Buddhism and as secretary in the Sui Imperial Library, he compiled the Pei-t'ang shu-ch'ao 北堂書鈔, a famous encyclopedia. He served in and

wrote poetry for the court of Yang-ti, where his elder brother Yü Shih-chi 虞世基, was one of Yang-ti's most trusted counsellors. Thus, by the time Yü Shih-nan came to serve T'ai-tsung, he was already one of the grand old men of literature. Like many of the ministers of the early part of T'ai-tsung's reign, Yü Shih-nan had a close and informal relationship with the sovereign. T'ai-tsung was genuinely fond of him, and when Yü Shih-nan died, T'ai-tsung was said to have remarked, "Shih-nan was like my very self."[31] Such terse imperial comments are part of biographical convention, but they probably do represent genuine feeling.

In Yü Shih-nan's poetry we find an uneasy grafting of the opposition poetics onto the base of court poetry. Though a court poet by training and nature, Yü could not escape the influence of the opposition poetics during its heyday in the first decades of the seventh century. The following anecdote reveals an at least pro forma sense of the moral responsibilities of the court poet:

> His Majesty [T'ai-tsung] wrote a poem in the palace style and ordered Yü Shih-nan to write another using the same rhymes. Yü Shih-nan responded, "Your Majesty's composition is well wrought, certainly—but the style is not seemly. When a ruler likes something, those beneath him like it in the extreme. I fear that if this poem is handed around, the customs of the empire will become decadent. Thus I dare not accept your command." His Majesty said, "I'll try your suggestion," and then wrote a poem describing the process of dynastic rise and fall.[32]

To the opposition poetics the "palace poem" was the most irritating of court poetry's subgenres. We should note here that Yü Shih-nan, more courtier than moralist, prefaces his remonstrance with a compliment to the aesthetic qualities of T'ai-tsung's poem. Furthermore, his argument is flatteringly predicated on the emperor's

power and influence. The ethically acceptable alternative is the poem on history, closely related to the theme of the huai-ku, the rise and fall of a great city or state.

"Palace poetry" did decrease sharply during the Sui and Early T'ang, though it did not disappear. This is probably because it was the one form that the opposition poetics agreed constituted literary decadence: it was considered morally reprehensible to write poetry about beautiful women. One of the popular literary historical misconceptions about Early T'ang poetry is that it is made up largely of "palace poetry." Most Early T'ang poets do have a few "palace poems," but these constitute a far smaller percentage of their works than in poets of the Southern Dynasties or in many poets of the High and Mid-T'ang. Yü Shih-nan, for example, has more surviving border poems (poems about frontier warfare and the life of frontier troops) than "palace poems."

Yü Shih-nan's poetic exchanges with T'ai-tsung reveal a condescending pedagogic tone which must have sorely tried the imperial patience and embarrassed the imperial ego. Yü appears as the learned encyclopedist, the culturally smug southerner, and the Confucian moralist all conjoined. T'ai-tsung writes:

ON THE BAMBOO LOOKING DOWN ON THE POOL	賦得臨池竹
Their pure stalks screen off the twisting stairs,	貞條障曲砌
Azure leaves that bear the winter's frosts.	翠葉負寒霜
They brush the window—you discern dragon shadows.	拂牖分龍影
Look down on the pool—await the phoenix in flight.	臨池待鳳翔

[00091]

The third line, echoing numerous traditional associations between bamboo and dragons, suggests the similarity of

the shadows of the bamboo on the window to dragons; the fourth line refers to the legend that phoenixes nest only in bamboo. But in the second line T'ai-tsung has made a poetic "error," a violation of decorum, by introducing the theme of the bamboo's endurance of winter in a spring or summer scene. T'ai-tsung asked for a response from Yü Shih-nan, and this is what he got:

ON THE BAMBOO LOOKING DOWN ON THE POOL: TO IMPERIAL COMMAND	賦得臨池竹應制
Pale azure and substance of highest clouds,	葱翠梢雲質
Their bright colors fall, shine back in the clear pool.	垂彩映清池
Waves float their reflection full of wind,	波泛含風影
And current shakes branches that fend off the dew.	流搖防露枝
Dragon scales drifting in Hsieh Valley,	龍鱗漾嶰谷
Phoenix wings brushing the ripples.	鳳翅拂漣漪
But if you want to see their nature that lasts the winter,	欲識凌冬性
It can only be known in the cold of the year.	唯有歲寒知

[02573]

The fifth line refers to the legend of Li Ling, musician of the Yellow Emperor, who was ordered to go to Hsieh Valley, where a special variety of bamboo grew, in order to cut some for a set of panpipes.

Yü's poem is both an implicit and an explicit "correction" of T'ai-tsung's quatrain. T'ai-tsung did not keep to the topic, which should demand a description of the bamboo in relation to the pool. In the first couplet Yü Shih-nan contrasts the "height" of the bamboo—their physical height, their color, their lightness, and their spiritual "loftiness," all like clouds—with the "lowness" of their reflections on the pool. The second couplet is

a brilliant amplification of the theme of disparity: the waves, stirred by wind, capture in reflection the form of the bamboo stirred by wind (or the shaking of the bamboo's reflections in the waves make them seem wind-blown when in fact they are stationary), and a large amount of water ironically traps the form of things which fend off small amounts of water, the dew. In the third couplet, Yü shows T'ai-tsung how to bring in the dragon and phoenix associations while keeping to the theme of the bamboo in reflection: the pool becomes the stream of Hsieh Valley in which their "dragon forms" are reflected; the arrival of the phoenix in the reflection seems to "brush the ripples."

After demonstrating to T'ai-tsung the "proper" treatment of the topic, Yü Shih-nan points out the explicit error in the quatrain: one must wait until winter to speak of the bamboo's endurance of the cold. This quality of the bamboo has strong ethical associations: like the evergreen, the bamboo is a symbol of integrity, of resolute endurance of hardship. Thus Yü Shih-nan is implying that one may praise such qualities only when they are tested.

When we speak of the "proper" treatment of a topic, we are referring not only to the structural conventions of amplification and keeping to the subject, we also mean the use of the body of lore, of literary references and stories, which grew up around each of the common poetic topics. This lore, along with examples of the proper literary treatment, came to be codified in the literary encyclopedias. For the poetry of the Southern Dynasties and the Early T'ang the two relevant encyclopedias are the Yi-wen lei-chü 藝文類聚 compiled by Ou-yang Hsün 歐陽詢 (557-641) et al. under imperial auspices, and the Ch'u-hsüeh chi 初學記, compiled by Hsü Chien 徐堅 (659-729) et al., also under imperial auspices. These encyclopedias formed a concise "burden of the past"

which set the limits of elegant variation of a topic. Though the encyclopedias were directed at students and poets of less than encyclopedic learning, they give us a good idea of how more learned poets conceptualized the material that went into making a poem. To a poet like Yü Shih-nan the literary past and its conventions were immediately present, but an encyclopedia can show us how that past was used. If we wanted to write a court poem on a cicada, we would look up the entry "cicada" in an encyclopedia. Here we would find the traditional "facts" about the insect, (if we used the Ch'u-hsüeh chi), the references and anecdotes we might allude to, and finally a number of literary examples. From the latter we could borrow phrases and get an idea of what aspects of the topic should be treated in our poem.

The following quatrain (02582) is characteristic of Yü Shih-nan:

THE CICADA

蟬

Dipping its proboscis, it drinks clear dew;
垂緌飲清露
Its floating echoes emerge from the sparse wu-t'ung.
流響出疏桐
It dwells high, its voice naturally goes far,
居高聲自遠
And it need not depend on the autumn wind.
非是藉秋風

A brief survey of cicada lore and literature in the Ch'u-hsüeh chi can fill in much of the background here. In the first of the "anecdotal parallels," shih-tui 事對, we are told that "unless it can drink the dew, it will not eat."[33] The "parallel" to this is the fact that it "listens for the wind"; this is substantiated by a line from the "Cicada Fu" of Fu Hsüan 傅玄 (217-78): "It listens for the shang [autumn] wind and sings along with it" 聆商風而和鳴.[34] Yü Shih-nan has followed this parallel closely, matching the singing with the dew-drinking.

The "dwelling high" first appears in the section on literary examples in an earlier "Cicada Fu" by Ts'ao Chih 曹植 (192-232), in the couplet: "It roosts in the lofty branches and raises its head,/Rinses its mouth with the pure streams of morning dew 棲崇枝而仰首兮,嗽朝露之清流."[35] Most of the elements of Yü Shih-nan's quatrain appear together in the following passage from Ch'u Kuei's 褚玠 (529-80) "Fu on the Cicada in the Wind":

There is an autumn wind coming into my courtyard,	有秋風之來庭
On the high willow, a singing cicada.	於高柳之鳴蟬
At times its lonely chanting breaks off for a moment,	或孤吟而暫斷
Then suddenly the jumbled echoes return continuous.	乍亂響而還連
It dips its black proboscis and its moaning stills, . . .	垂玄緌而嘶定...
Then again drinks the glittering dew.[36]	方復飲露兮光鮮

We find the wu-t'ung tree, the distance of the voice, and the idea of something being carried afar by the autumn wind in the following passage from a poem by Chang Cheng-chien 張正見 (?-575):

The cold cicada cries out in the willow;	寒蟬噪楊柳
The north wind attacks a wu-t'ung tree.	朔吹犯梧桐
Its leaves go far, fly, and can't be stopped;	葉逈飛難住
The branches remain, their shadows all bare.	枝殘影共空
Its voice remote, after it drinks the dew.[37]	聲疎飲露後

Chang Cheng-chien here plays on the word su 疎, used to describe the "remoteness" of the cicada's voice, but also meaning the "sparseness" of a tree after its leaves have been stripped by the wind. Thus the cicada's voice is "like" the leafless tree. Yü Shih-nan also uses su, but he uses it to describe the "sparseness" of wu-t'ung, conventionally associated with autumn.

It should be emphasized that Yü Shih-nan's use of these commonplaces is not an allusion to individual literary works, such as we find in poetry of the eighth century and afterward (though the use of commonplaces occurs then too). The lore of the cicada grows up through the additions of individual works, but for the most part it is independent of them. If an author uses a particularly clever idea or makes a bold innovation, then that idea or innovation may come to be associated with a specific work, but this is not the case in any of the sources quoted above.

The above examples should suffice to show that almost every element in Yü Shih-nan's poem is a convention. Yü varies those conventions and comments on them. Yü places his cicada in the autumnal wu-t'ung rather than in the conventional willow; by doing so he stresses the unity of the autumn world, willows not being traditionally associated with that season. Then Yü gracefully reverses the convention that the cicada sings along with the autumn wind: it is rather because the cicada dwells "high" (associated with a pure and noble nature) that its voice is carried far, and not because it needs the autumn wind. Yü's poem is a work of gracious craftsmanship, not truly original but possessing a certain novelty when set against the tradition of cicada lore.

Most poetry is created from a fusion of literary tradition and personal, extraliterary experience. Of the two, the latter is the expendable element. For court poets, the literary tradition, "literary experience," is primary, and there is a tendency to write poems purely as an exercise on topics the poet knows nothing about.[38] The frontier, one of the most popular of yüeh-fu topics, could be credibly evoked by poets who would have fainted at the sight of a hostile Tartar in the flesh. Border poetry was very much a literary experience, but it taught later poets who went on campaigns or into exile how to

"see" that stark world. In Yü Shih-nan's version of the popular ballad "Watering My Horse by the Great Wall" (02561), we read: "The moon is out, the passes still dark" 有月關猶暗. Ominously dark fortifications in the moonlight are part of the border scene. In Ch'en Shu-pao's version: "The moon's color swallows the Wall's darkness" 月色含城暗; and in Yang-ti's: "Fog darkens the moon over mountain passes" 霧暗關山月. We do not read of the Great Wall or the fortified passes in the light of noon; we do not read of their color, their height, or their majestic solidity. The darkness of walls in the moonlight is an essential literary unit in building a border scene.

Yü Shih-nan is not a great poet, but his work has an undeniable charm. He has the ability, rare among court poets, to combine conventional elements to produce a fresh effect. In the restricted aesthetics of court poetry, this may be the highest form of praise.

SPRING NIGHT

春夜

In the springtime garden the moon tarries;
A bamboo hall opens at nightfall.
A startled bird cleaves the forest in passage,
As windblown petals come from across the water.

春苑月裴回
竹堂侵夜開
驚鳥排林度
風花隔水來

[02579]

This shows the court poet's attention to the incidental, to a moment of beauty in the world. In the all-important craft of the couplet, Yü surpasses most of his contemporaries. Of a pair of cranes he writes:

Shining on the sea they seem floating snow,
Brushing a torrent they pour out a flying stream.

映海疑浮雪
掠澗瀉飛泉

[02567]

The second line, in which the pair becomes a white

frothing waterfall leaping from the stream, shows an almost Marinistic ingenuity. Sometimes the urge toward a novel treatment of conventional elements can produce brilliant couplets which must be based on sensitive observation of nature:

Soaked, the grain on the slope grows still more azure; 隴麥霑逾翠
Wet, the flowers on the mountain flame still brighter. 山花溼更然

[02572]

Here the wetness brings out the special brilliance of the colors; later Tu Fu was to echo this intensification of colors in a famous couplet:

From the green of the river the birds are still whiter; 江碧鳥逾白
From the blue of the mountains, the flowers are about to burst into flame. 山青花欲然

[11355]

In this case the intensification of color is brought out by comparison with another color. Tu Fu's couplet has a long tradition of invention and improvement. Certainly Yü Shih-nan contributed the most with his idea of the intensification of color, but he borrowed the metaphor of red flowers seeming to burn from earlier poets—from Liang Yüan-ti: "In the woods the flowers seem about to burst into flame"林間花欲然;[39] and from Yü Hsin: "Mountain flowers, flames blazing" 山花伯火然.[40] The material Tu Fu used for his couplet was a collective accomplishment, but not only does his revision of it show brilliant craftsmanship equal to any court poet, he integrates its complex symbolic overtones into the poem as a whole. This the court poet, Yü Shih-nan, cannot do, and it sets the major poet, Tu Fu, apart from the craftsman, Yü.

Yü Shih-nan can be taken as representative of scores

of other competent court poets of T'ai-tsung's reign: for example, Ch'u Liang, Hsü Ching-tsung, Ch'en Shu-ta 陳叔達, Yang Shih-tao 楊師道, and Yüan Lang 袁朗. Some excelled in particular aspects of court poetry—Yang Shih-tao, a northerner, in the description of nature; Ch'en Shu-ta, a descendent of the Ch'en royal house, in stylistic grace. At the center of these poets was T'ai-tsung.

T'ai-tsung, who ruled from 627 to 649, was neither as complex an individual nor as talented a poet as Yang-ti. He was, however, a more successful ruler. The surviving corpus of his poetry is one of the largest of the period, and despite his limitations as a poet, it is clear that he devoted much attention to the craft. During the first part of his reign he seems to have encouraged Confucian moralizing and the elegance of court poetry equally, admitting both as appropriate to his royal dignity. The result was the uneasy union of the two opposing currents that can be seen in Yü Shih-nan's poetry.

T'ai-tsung's poetic experience was not unlike that of Yang-ti and Li Pai-yao: he was an outsider to the highly cultured circle of court poets that surrounded him. He lacked both their erudition and their education in the court poet's craft, but still he tried to force his poetry into their mold. Unfortunately T'ai-tsung lacked the poetic sensitivity of Yang-ti and Li Pai-yao, and in his poetry the contrast between the strong personality of the man and the impersonal grace of the court poet is striking. In the following poem (00017), the emperor is first the court poet, describing a visit to his former home with balance and objectivity; in the final couplet his true self emerges, blunt and proud of his own rise in the world.

PASSING MY FORMER HOUSE 過舊宅

I halt my purple carriage here at Hsin-feng, 新豐停翠輦

Stay the singing fifes in the town of Ch'iao.
My garden is grown with weeds, its one path lost;
The terrace has aged—half its stairs are aslant;
And from my pools the old water has seeped away,
Yet my former trees put forth new flowers.
One morning I took leave of this land
And the entire earth became my home.

譙色駐鳴笳
園荒一徑斷
臺古半階斜
前池消舊水
昔樹發今花
一朝辭此地
四海遂為家

Another couplet in a similar vein runs:

Long ago I went off riding a single horse,
Now return, driving thousands of chariots.[41]

昔乘匹馬去
今驅萬乘來

Had T'ai-tsung seen the merit in such straightforwardness, he might have become a much better poet. But like so many northerners, T'ai-tsung felt the aesthetic superiority and smugness of court poetry. Though he did write a number of moral pieces and tried in several cases to emulate the sturdy, personal style of the late Sui, the majority of his poems show a man working hard to write in the courtly style, particularly in the latter part of his reign. He had the most elegant of courtly stylists, Shang-kuan Yi, revise all his drafts, and with imperial license he was even freer than most court poets about borrowing good lines and clever ideas from others. Ch'u Liang, for example, wrote of a candle, punning on the work <u>hua</u>花, "flowers," referring both to real flowers and to "sparks."

Don't say that spring is getting late—
Here the candle constantly blossoms—spark-flowers.

莫言春稍晚
自有鎮開花

T'ai-tsung writes:

ON A CANDLE [first of two]

詠燭

The flame stirs—it senses the coming wind;
Its flower-sparks blossom, not waiting for spring.
In a thousand constant streams its tears roll down,
But not because it longs for anyone

[00086]

誤驚風來動
花開不待春
鎮下千行淚
非是爲思人

In the idea of the candle's sparks/flowers substituting for the flowers of spring, we have a new, almost baroque twist on the pun, which was already well-worn by earlier poets. We cannot tell whether T'ai-tsung or Ch'u Liang had the idea first, but judging from T'ai-tsung's other borrowings and the almost mechanical ingenuity of his poem, we may guess that Ch'u Liang was the willing donor.

T'ai-tsung did not reject the opposition poetics entirely. He has a version of the popular "Watering My Horse by the Great Wall" (00011) which is so close to Yang-ti's version in structure that it must be an imitation of it. T'ai-tsung's sensitivity to the demands of the opposition poetics is particularly evident in the preface which he wrote to the ten poems entitled "Imperial Capital." This is an important document in the development of the opposition poetics into fu-ku, and in part probably accounts for the reason most later T'ang literary historians associate the literary return to antiquity with the founding of the T'ang. T'ai-tsung is satisfied neither with the simple opposition to court poetry of Sui Kao-tsu nor with the gradual process of literary decline described by Wei Cheng:

> I am the last to follow in the footsteps of the hundred kings, but I send my heart a thousand years into the past. Deeply stirred I meditate on antiquity and imagine the men of wisdom then. I hope to wipe away the vileness of Ch'in and Han [their literary style and everything since] by the style of Yao and Shun,

to use the Hsien and Shao melodies to change the lewd, indecent tunes [of the present].

[00001]

Music is here a metaphor for poetry, which in turn is important primarily as a manifestation of moral government. Such hyperclassicism is characteristic of T'ang fu-ku: present "decadence," the burden of the real poetic past, if thrown off by a resolution to recapture the poetry of "high antiquity," a poetry that was no longer extant.

The ten poems that follow the preface by no means live up to the high ideals T'ai-tsung had set for them. They are conventional court poems, praising the splendor of the capital and of imperial outings. Here and there the poems affirm his fu-ku poetics, but there is nothing else in the style or the content of the poems to separate them from the work of other court poets. The first poem begins grandly:

In the streams of Ch'in, a powerful emperor's residence,
In Han Pass, mighty royal dwelling.

秦川雄帝宅
函谷壯皇居

and continues lamely:

Filagree halls rise a thousand yards,
Detached palaces, more than a hundred feet up.
Tiers of tiled roofs reach the Milky War afar,
Soaring pavilions pass remote into the void.
Sun and moon are shaded by the layered gate-towers,
Wind and mist emerge from the filagree ornament.

綺殿千尋起
離宮百雉餘
連薨遙接漢
飛觀迥凌虛
日月隱層闕
風煙出綺疏

[00001]

As grandly as T'ai-tsung's first poem begins, it is basically a composite of clichés on the capital of Ch'ang-an drawn from capital fu. The opening and other

parts of the poem are particularly close to a problematic poem on the capital ascribed to the Liang and Ch'en poet Chang Cheng-chien, "Where the Emperor Dwells" 帝王所居篇 (CCS, 2.14b, WYYH, 192.1b). This begins:

In Yao and Han passes, a powerful emperor's residence,
At Wan and Lo a mighty royal dwelling.

嶢函雄帝宅
宛洛壯皇居

What makes the poem problematic is that these are specifically northern capitals, while Chang was a southern poet who died before the reconquest. The fourth poem illustrates T'ai-tsung's difficulty in finding a poetry for his poetics:

Singing fifes approach the pleasure pavilion,
In this season of fragrance eye and ear rejoice.
Shrill flutes in tune with vermilion strings,
And clear song that freezes the white snow.
In dazzling color the stately phoenix descends,
While black cranes from ranks in multitudes.
Here we are rid of Cheng and Wei's degraded song
And now can delight in the proper tones.

鳴笳臨樂館
眺聽歡芳節
急管韻朱絃
清歌凝白雪
彩鳳蕭來儀
玄鶴紛成列
去茲鄭衛聲
雅音方可悅

[00004]

No one, least of all T'ai-tsung, was exactly sure what the alternative to literary decadence might be. In this poem it seems that simple affirmation of the opposition poetics made the poem morally "proper." Or it may be that because T'ai-tsung felt his court was exemplary of Confucian morality, poetry celebrating that court was therefore moral. The first four lines are so typical of courtly banquet poem that they are virtually anonymous. The third couplet modulates into a glittering, metaphorical Confucian mode, quite acceptable in court poetry: the

phoenix and the two-thousand-year-old "black cranes" come in response to the virtuous music of antiquity. In the last couplet T'ai-tsung tacks on his affirmation of the opposition poetics. It is a strange, uneasy compromise and is typical of T'ai-tsung's work.

Whatever their shortcomings, these poems are landmarks in their own way: they are the first examples of poetry written with the stated purpose of fulfilling the aims of fu-ku poetics. Though they may be the worst, they were certainly not the last. A second and equally important effect of these poems was to stimulate a number of poems in praise of Ch'ang-an. In a later chapter we shall discuss how this topic merged with poetry on ruined cities to produce some of the finest poems of the Early T'ang.

Great cities were easily seen as metaphors for states. The most visible reminders of the Period of Disunion between the fall of the Han and the founding of the Sui were the ruins of capitals and great cities. The splendid city of Ch'ang-an was equally the most visible evidence of the power and wealth of the united empire. With the resurgence of Confucian and historical studies in T'ai-tsung's reign, poets were not only impressed with the splendor of the present, but developed a romantic fascination with the past and were deeply moved by the contrast between splendor and fall. To mention just a few of the examples of both themes in this period, Li Pai-yao wrote a no longer extant series on the "Imperial Capital" in response to T'ai-tsung's.[42] Yüan Lang has a poem on the splendor of Ch'ang-an (02398); Lu Ching 陸敬, a poem on the decay of the Sui eastern capital at Lo-yang (02496); Yang Shih-tao, a poem on Han Lo-yang, meant as a metaphor for the T'ang capital (02505); Yü Shih-nan, a haunting short poem on the ruins of the capital of the Three Kingdoms state of Wu (02569); and Wang Chi, a poem on the rise and fall of an unspecified Han city (02641).

As we shall discuss later, the conventions of these poems derive both from the capital fu of the Han and Pao Chao's "Weed-covered City." Wang Chi's poem may be taken as a characteristic treatment of the theme of rise and fall; I quote a passage from it:

翡翠明珠帳
鴛鴦白玉堂
清晨寶鼎食
閒夜鬱金香
天馬來東道
佳人傾北方
何其赫隆盛
自謂保靈長

Kingfishers on bright pearled curtains,
Mandarin ducks in halls of white jade.
On cool mornings they ate from precious vessels,
On calm nights the scent of aloes wafted.
The finest steeds came on the road eastward,
The fairest ladies poured down from the north.
In the might and majesty of their glory,
They said they would hold its magic forever.

The last line quoted is a variation on Pao Chao's "They planned to make their generations eternal and make heaven's mandate stay with them."[43] This time-conquering arrogance on the part of the people of the city is one of the most durable conventions of the theme and inevitably begins the description of the decline of the city. The balancing half of Wang Chi's vision is even more convincing:

魂神吁社稷
豺虎鬬嚴廊

Phantoms and spirits hoot on the altars of the state;
Jackals and tigers fight on the high balconies.

. . .

狐兎驚魍魎
梟鴟嘯鴻狂
空城寒日晚
平野暮雲黃

Fox and hare startled up lurking demons,
Amid the crazed screeching of vultures and owls.
Over deserted walls the winter sun sets,
Across the plain evening clouds yellow.

Green thorns burn in a wild blaze, 烈烈焚青棘
The wind blows mournfully through the poplars. . . . 蕭蕭吹白楊

[02641]

5

WANG CHI

During the age of court poetry the eremitic themes that dominated the poetry of the late Wei and Chin dynasties had all but disappeared: there was little room in the elegant world of the court poet for the eccentric drinker, the cantankerous hermit, and the self-sufficient farmer. The confrontation between the independent hermit and the refined aristocrat has been seen earlier in the poem by T'ao Hung-ching.

The powerful but plain poetry of T'ao Ch'ien 陶潛 (365-427), now generally considered the finest poetry before the T'ang, was not popular during the age of court poetry. Yang Hsiu-chih 陽休之 (509-82) in his "Preface to the Works of T'ao Ch'ien," wrote: "I have looked over the writings of T'ao Ch'ien, and though there is nothing outstanding in the elegance of his diction, still there are surprises and marvellous phrases throughout."[44] Yang apologizes for the lack of courtly elegance and directs the reader to look out not for moving simplicity and conviction of values but for "surprises and marvellous phrases." Whatever his own opinion of T'ao's work, Yang Hsiu-chih knew the aesthetic taste of the readers of his own age.

In the early seventh century T'ao Ch'ien had a kindred spirit in Wang Chi 王績 (585?-644). Wang turned away from both the effete style of the court and the soporific poetry of the opposition poetics to assume the role of the drunken and eccentric poet-farmer, the role of T'ao Ch'ien. Wang began state service as a "corrector of characters" in Yang-ti's famous library, where he perhaps met Yü Shih-nan. He soon quit this post, supposedly because he found it boring. His biography in the official

histories says that he then took a minor county post, whose duties he shamelessly neglected because of his drinking. Up to this point his biography is relatively consistent, but as is the case with so many poets of the period, fact, legend, and role all obscure one another. The Old T'ang History says that during the chaotic conditions at the end of the Sui, Wang Chi returned to his farm and remained there some thirty years, living by his own toil, without wife or children. It then goes on to say that at the beginning of the T'ang he took a minor post in the Chancellory, and following that, an even lower post in the "Office of Sublime Music," supposedly because of the wine-brewing talents of its director. This second version of his life says that he quit office and retired at the beginning of T'ai-tsung's reign (627). Even in the unlikely event that Wang Chi went through two offices in the preceding year (626), this thirty-year retirement would have Wang quitting his post in Yang-ti's library at the age of eleven, nine years before Yang-ti ascended to the throne.

As to Wang Chi's having no wife and children, we read in the poem "Early Spring": "I called to my concubine by the stove,/And told the news to my wife at her weaving" (02606); and in "Sitting Alone":

My three sons have married into fine families, 三男婚令族
My five daughters have taken worthy husbands. 五女嫁賢夫
[02615]

It is best to assume that Wang Chi is being neither overwhelmed by the model of T'ao Ch'ien nor deliberately mendacious. He is certainly not simply iterating a poetic convention: in court poetry mention of the family was virtually taboo. Not only did Wang have a family, he also served during the T'ang. This latter point can be deduced from the fact that he has prose pieces to the

court poet Ch'en Shu-ta, given as his superior in the Chancellory.[45] Thus the version of his biography that has him retiring for thirty years at the end of the Sui is certainly pure fabrication, an attempt to fit the man into the conventionalized role of the hermit.

Wang Chi's poetry is a unique phenomenon in his age (if we discount the problematic collections of Han-shan and Wang Fan-chih). He possesses a simplicity of diction, a directness of syntax, and a lack of ornament which are like a fresh breeze in the rarified atmosphere of contemporary court poetry. Wang Chi's peculiar manner, his revision of T'ao Ch'ien, was to develop into one of the most successful styles available to the poets of the eighth century. Only a few of his poems, such as "Passing an Ancient City of the Han," fall into easily recognizable contemporary poetic "types."

Wang Chi's poetry is filled with references to and echoes of Juan Chi and T'ao Ch'ien. Wang Chi saw a very different Juan Chi than did Wei Cheng: to Wang, Juan Chi was the eccentric who disdained public life, not the historically minded moralist who lamented the decline of the Wei Dynasty. Both elements exist in Juan Chi's poetry, and both versions were to be significant in later T'ang poetry. As Wang Chi admires Juan Chi and T'ao Ch'ien, so those two poets wrote at length of their admiration for the hermits of antiquity. Yet there are significant differences in the stance assumed by the T'ang poet and those of the two older poets. Juan Chi and T'ao Ch'ien both assumed the role of the recluse, but each had his individual version of that role; each had his own specific concerns. In their writings, Juan and T'ao are anything but intellectually consistent, yet they show a strong focal personality which united their variations on the role of the recluse. In Wang Chi we find a fascination with the ethos of the late Wei and Chin as much as with the role of the hermit. Wang Chi

accepted the multiplicity of Wei and Chin eremitic themes without qualification, without the least concern for the contradictions between them. While Juan and T'ao sought personal, ethical models, Wang Chi seems primarily interested in capturing the mood or manner of a historical period and making it live in the present. In this he shares his contemporaries' almost romantic fascination with the past; this treatment of the past was to grow through the seventh century and become one of the dominant characteristics of T'ang poetry.

In his poems Wang Chi runs blithely through the gamut of possible eremitic responses. In "Leaning on My Staff, Seeking the Hermit" (02620), he compares himself (or possibly the hermit in question) to Lü Shang, the minister of Chou Wen-wang, who first met his prince while fishing; the implication is that he lives a reclusive life, refusing to serve, because he is awaiting recognition by a virtuous ruler. This was a popular excuse for not serving, but on the other hand, Wang Chi evokes the Wei and Chin scorn for Confucianism:

Music and Rites imprisoned the Duke of Chou, 禮樂囚姬旦
The Songs and Documents tied up Confucius. 詩書縛孔丘
[02613]

Wang can be the impassioned seeker after the secrets of eternal life: "My wild nature lusts for the elixir pill" (02607). He can just as easily reject the idea of immortality in favor of the pleasures of the simple life:

I ask you, what more do I need 問君樽酒外
Than a flagon of wine, sitting alone . . . 獨坐更何須
My life will end as it is fated 百年隨分了
With no desire to mount the immortal isles. 未羨陟方壺
[02615]

Wang Chi is equally varied in his reasons for drinking.

On the one hand, he can use the venerable theme of true sanity lying behind seeming insanity, an opposition to the true insanity which lies behind the seeming sanity of the world:

DROPPING BY THE TAVERN II 過酒家五首之二

I spent the whole day in the muddle of drink, 此日長昏飲
And it wasn't to care for my "divine spark"— 非關養性靈
My own eyes saw everyone else was drunk, 眼看人盡醉
So how could I bear to be sober alone. 何忍獨爲醒

[02625]

In the second line Wang rejects the notion that he affirms elsewhere, that the spontaneous behavior achieved by drinking was good for the soul. In other cases, drinking can be a way to avoid awareness of impermanence:

DRUNK 醉後

Juan Chi was seldom sober, 阮籍醒時少
Most days T'ao Ch'ien was drunk. 陶潛醉日多
How else can we pass the years of our lives 百年何足度
But by following our whims and long songs? 乘興且長歌

[02632]

Intellectual consistency was never the hallmark of the Chinese poet. The literary tradition offered a variety of roles and responses from which the poet could select; he could use them and put them off again as suited his fancy and his personal needs. In court poetry the variety of roles and responses was severely limited, and the potential for originality within them was greatly depleted. Poetry was no longer performing the creative and psychological functions it was supposed to perform. Wang Chi's solution of searching in the poetry of the past for new roles and responses was essentially the same as Wei Cheng's and Li Pai-yao's; Wang's personality

simply directed him to a different kind of past poetry. To see Wang Chi's poetry as merely "natural" is to misunderstand him: his spontaneity is articulated through the model of T'ao Ch'ien and against the backdrop of court poetry.

Wang Chi is not an "imitator" even in the sense of some eighth- and ninth-century poets who tried to rewrite some of T'ao Ch'ien's poems. Rather the model of T'ao Ch'ien was a means for renewal; it was an open model. Throughout Wang Chi's poetry we sense a genuine delight in the physical world, as though its beauty had just been revealed to him. The arrival of spring, a hackneyed theme in court poetry, can seem like a total surprise to Wang Chi.

EARLY SPRING

The last morning I went out to walk in the garden
There wasn't a flower in the whole grove,
But today at dawn when I came down from the hall and looked,
The pond ice had been broken up for quite some time.
Snow fled from the plum trees by the south porch,
Winds hurried the willows in the north yard.
I called to my concubine by the stove
And told the news to my wife at her weaving:
The season has come just at the right time—
Let's get busy on the spring wine that fills the jugs.

[02606]

初春

前旦出園遊
林華都未有
今朝下堂望
池冰開已久
雪避南軒梅
風催北庭柳
遙呼爐前妾
卻報機中婦
年光恰恰來
滿甕罨春酒

Framed in the middle of this relaxed, unconventional poem is the third couplet—parallel, descriptive, and using cleverly metaphorical verbs in the second position. Though it would have fitted comfortably in a court banquet poem, it does not seem out of place here.

The eremitic poet was always in danger of being confused with the Neo-Taoist poet and the quest for immortality. At times Wang Chi is careful to dissociate the two, choosing the lazy, physical life of this world instead of the quest for immortality.

FARMERS I

一之首三家田

All his life Juan Chi was lazy,
And Hsi K'ang was a carefree spirit.
When they met, they drank their fill,
Sat alone, wrote a few lines,
Tried raising cranes by a tiny pool,
Pastured piglets in tranquil fields.
Grass grew over T'ao Ch'ien's path,
Flowering trees hid Yang Hsiung's cottage.
Lie on your bed, watch your wife weave,
Up a hill and urge your son to hoe—
Then turn your head and the quests for the immortals
Become all one great emptiness.

阮籍生涯懶
嵇康意氣疏
相逢一醉飽
獨坐賦行書
小池聊養鶴
閒田且牧豬
草生元亮徑
花暗子雲居
倚牀看婦織
登壠課兒鋤
迴頭尋仙事
併是一空虛

[02598]

Elsewhere in Wang Chi's work, he can evoke a strong sense of Taoist nihilism, as in the following tantalizing fragment, which has an abstract strength rare in Chinese poetry:

I sent my body a thousand years into the past
To stroll for a while at the beginning of of all things.
I was about to command that Nothing turn into Being,
But then realized how substance becomes Nothingness.[46]

嘗身千載下
聊遊萬物初
欲令無作有
翻覺實成虛

If it seems paradoxical that a man who could delight so

much in the arrival of spring would also threaten to stop the very force of creation, we should remember that the thread which unifies Wang Chi's poetry is essentially negative. Like the opposition poetics, Wang Chi's poetry is a counterstatement to the aristocratic and worldly glory of court poetry. If their poetry is formalized, he seeks spontaneity; if they react blandly to spring's arrival, he reacts to it with boisterous enthusiasm; if they delight in physical beauty, he calmly declines to set the process of creation into motion. His counter-statements to court poetry may be drunkenness, pastoralism, or Taoist nihilism, but all these responses may be defined in negative relation to court poetry and the aristocratic society that produced it.

Wang Chi does seem to have been something of an alcoholic, and his obsession with wine surpasses even that of T'ao Ch'ien. Chinese poets were usually less interested in the wine itself than in their vision of themselves drunk. Wang Chi is no exception, but in addition to the conventional self-image of drunken freedom Wang Chi enjoys contemplating himself in a helpless stupor:

Only when propped against the tavern can I get some rest,
Or lying across a jug can I get some sleep.

倚罏便得睡
橫甕足堪眠

[02627]

Wang is at his best in poems on drinking:

DROPPING BY THE TAVERN I

I've got no mansion in Lo-yang
And lack a patron in Ch'ang-an,
So if my gold isn't all spent yet,
It's because this tavern is so cheap.

過酒家五首之一

洛陽無大宅
長安乏主人
黃金銷未盡
祇爲酒家貧

[02624]

DROPPING BY THE TAVERN V

過酒家五首之五

If I have a guest, I make him drink;
If I've got no money, I get it another way.
I come in, say "Put in on my bill!"
Embarrassing the Turk who runs the tavern.

有客須教飲
無錢可別沽
來時長道莫
慚愧酒家胡

[02628]

WRITTEN ON THE TAVERN WALL

題酒店壁

Last night a jar was emptied,
This morning a new jug opened.
In dream I foresaw that the dream would end,
And I would come back to the tavern.

昨夜瓶始盡
今朝甕卽開
夢中占夢罷
還向酒家來

[02633]

DRINKING ALONE

獨酌

How long can this floating life last?
A formless creature chasing empty glory.
Better to brew a lot of wine,
To tip your cup often in a bamboo grove.

浮生知幾日
無狀逐空名
不如多釀酒
時向竹林傾

[02636]

All of these poems show a sequential, almost narrative unity which is rare in court poetry. One line is a cause or an antecedent condition for the next. The structure of a well-written court poem is quite different, amplifying its theme almost synchronically.

In the six poems entitled "Ancient Theme," ku-yi 古意, Wang Chi assumes quite a different stance than he does in his wine poems. These are philosophical and moral pieces, thematically and stylistically close to some of Juan Chi's Yung-huai, "Singing My Feelings." Wang Chi's "Ancient Themes" are even closer to Ch'en Tzu-ang's Kan-yü 感遇, "Stirred by My Experiences," written some fifty or more years later. These poems of Ch'en Tzu-ang

are often taken as the beginning of the High T'ang style, as a rejection of court poetry, and as an expression of that poet's fu-ku sentiments. The predominant philosophical orientation in all three series—"Singing My Feelings," "Ancient Themes," and "Stirred by My Experiences"—is Taoist. But Ch'en Tzu-ang's series, read in the context of his fu-ku polemics, was to be remembered and have a lasting influence on T'ang poetry. Wang Chi's series was forgotten as were most of the poems written in response to the opposition poetics of the Sui. Perhaps "Ancient Themes" was not as aesthetically satisfying as "Stirred by My Experiences," but probably the real reason for their failure is that they were written in isolation at the wrong moment in the history of Chinese poetry.

I will quote the fifth poem of the series; its style is consciously simple and graceless, and its philosophical message is explicit.

This cassia tree, so rich and green,
Flowers still more fragrantly as autumn comes.
It's claimed that its nature, enduring the cold,
Knows nothing of the dew and frosts.
The recluse honors this power it has,
And plants them before his hall.
Eight or nine trees, sinously bending,
Two or three rows, thrusting skyward.
Branch twines itself around branch,
Every leaf stays face to face.
There a pair of geese come and go,
Two mandarin ducks also roosting:
It's not because the flowering shade is dense,
But because no axe will ever harm it.
When, with loyal heart, I promise to serve my lord,
How can I forget the lesson given by these?

桂樹何蒼蒼
秋來花更芳
自言歲寒性
不知露與霜
幽人德此物
待植臨前堂
連偃八九樹
枝葉去來息
交陰誠不忍
斤斧亦勿傷
未心許君時
此意那可忘

The cassia tree is a traditional symbol of moral rectitude and endurance of hardship, flowering and nurturing itself in seclusion. Though the "lesson" is not to be forgotten, it is not at all clear whether the lesson is perfect loyalty or avoiding the "axe" by remaining in seclusion. If we compare this poem to the poems on bamboo by T'ai-tsung and Yü Shih-nan, we can see how artless the descriptive style is here.

One of Wang Chi's most famous poems is a strange and beautiful regulated verse with a restrained dignity entirely uncharacteristic of Wang Chi's other poetry. "Plucking bracken" in the last line refers to the story of the hermits Po Yi and Shu Ch'i, who refused to serve the newly founded Chou dynasty and instead retired to the hills, eating bracken until they starved to death. In this case, the allusion suggests eremitic purity rather than political criticism.

VIEW OF THE WILDS

Toward evening on East Hill gazing,
Hesitant, uncertain, nothing to depend on.
On tree after tree, the colors of autumn,
On mountain after mountain, radiance of setting sun.
The herdsman turns back, driving his calves,
The hunter's horse returns, bearing a bird.
I look at them; I do not know them.
A long song and a yearning to "pluck the bracken."

野望

東皋薄暮望
徙倚欲何依
樹樹皆秋色
山山唯落暉
牧人驅犢返
獵馬帶禽歸
相顧無相識
長歌懷采薇

[02612]

The subtle and enigmatic juxtapositions here put this poem well ahead of its time. The poet climbs a high place and faces a world of autumn, of old age and decline. The tranquil, pastoral figures in the third couplet, beginning their symbolic "return," are entirely in harmony with the peaceful scene, but even here the poet does not belong.

The seventh line powerfully expresses the poet's alienation from the scene, the isolation of someone who is out of place in human society, of someone who has no place to which to "return."

SHANG-KUAN YI

As the generation of poets who had reached their maturity during the Sui gradually died away, there seems to have been a resurgence of court poetry. For a few decades in the mid-seventh century we find no fu-ku declarations and no poetic endeavors to realize the opposition poetics. This period of court poetry is represented by the work of Shang-kuan Yi 上官儀(608-64). Judging from his twenty surviving poems, Shang-kuan Yi is entirely within the courtly tradition, but his wit and refinement earned him the honor of being the first T'ang poet to have a style named after him, the Shang-kuan t'i 上官體, the "Shang-kuan style."[47] His poetry was widely imitated, and it is said that T'ai-tsung depended on him to polish up imperial infelicities.

In Shang-kuan Yi's poetry we see the reassertion of court poetry's primary function, that of celebration. The moral tone that appears in many of the poets of the preceding generation is altogether absent in Shang-kuan Yi; he does not even affect the compromise between the opposition poetics and court poetry that we saw in Yü Shih-nan. The reasons for this are uncertain: for one thing, Shang-kuan Yi reached his maturity in the T'ang, and the opposition poetics was associated primarily with the Sui; yet another reason may be that in his later years T'ai-tsung grew increasingly autocratic and less receptive to criticism.

Shang-kuan Yi first served in the government as an auxiliary scholar in the College for the Development of Literature (formerly the College for Literature). Because of his age, his entry could not have been earlier than the 630s. It was probably there that Shang-kuan Yi was

initiated into the subtleties of court poetry. His style closely resembles that of one of the older, regular scholars, Hsü Ching-tsung, whom we have mentioned earlier. Hsü's poetry is equally ornate and devoid of ethical concerns, but he lacked Shang-kuan Yi's talent; what is celebration in Shang-kuan Yi's poetry is in Hsü Ching-tsung's work mere obsequiousness. Ironically, these two poets whose styles are so similar were members of opposing court factions during Kao-tsung's reign. Hsü's name is held in infamy by traditional historians for his support of Empress Wu and his machinations to bring down the statesman Chang-sun Wu-chi. Shang-kuan Yi, as we shall see, lost his life by being on the other side.

Transferred to a post in the Imperial Library during T'ai-tsung's reign, Shang-kuan Yi rose to be under-director in the reign of Kao-tsung. Once, Kao-tsung took it in mind to depose the powerful Empress Wu and summoned Shang-kuan Yi to draft the edict. The empress, however, got wind of the affair and confronted Kao-tsung. Kao-tsung characteristically backed down and blamed everything on Shang-kuan Yi. He and most of his family were executed. For his part in this incident Shang-kuan Yi has received favorable notices in the official histories, but this should not obscure the fact that he was no moralist, having yielded to the autocratic tendencies of the age that sense of moral responsibility to the state which a poet was supposed to feel.

The following piece (02707) is characteristic not only of Shang-kuan Yi's work but also of the courtly banquet poem at its most gracious.

EARLY SPRING IN K'UEI-LIN HALL: TO COMMAND 早春桂林殿應詔

The pacing palanquin emerges from Pi-hsiang Palace; 步輦出披香
Clear singing looks down on T'ai-yeh Pool. 清歌臨太液
Morning trees with warbling orioles filled, 曉樹流鶯滿

Spring slopes with fragrant plants swelling. 春堤芳草積
Scene's radiance spread out on dew's traceries, 風光翻露文
Blossom-flakes of snow rise on the sky's emerald. 雪華上空碧
Flowers and butterflies had not stopped coming, 花蝶來未已
When the mountain light darkened toward evening. 山光曖將夕

We have mentioned the first couplet of this poem earlier when discussing the general conventions of court poetry. The tripartite form is followed perfectly, with the conventional banquet poem closing which suggests the possibility of continued pleasure prevented by the necessity of returning home in the evening.

Shang-kuan Yi's talents appear most clearly in his handling of parallel couplet. Indeed, traditionally he is credited with a sixfold and an eightfold classification of parallelism.[48] The third couplet of the poem above is an excellent example of his overripe courtly wit. The poet sees the radiance of spring, its traditional attribute, or perhaps the spring scene itself as a flashing reflection on the drops of dew. The snowflakes (literally "snow flowers") are blown upward, as though falling back to the emerald green sky that gave them birth, much as a real flower falls to earth. It is the court poet's special art to pick out the unique "wonders," ch'i 奇, of the natural scene.

Shang-kuan Yi's poetry at times shows a sensitivity to the minutiae of nature and the subtle relations between elements of the visual scene. The master craftsman can observe and describe them, but he cannot give them depth in the context of the poem as a whole as the greatest High T'ang poets could. Even in the pitifully few poems that survive we can see the artfulness for which he was admired in couplets like:

Falling leaves flutter cicada shadows 落葉飄蟬影
The level stream sketches the lines of geese. 平流寫雁行

[02722]

A sense of the fragility of autumn things is captured here with consumate artistry. Two symbols of autumn, cicadas and falling leaves, are mingled and each is potentially a metaphor for the other. We do not know whether the falling leaves (or their shadows) flutter like the shadows of cicadas, whether the cicadas (or their shadows) flutter like falling leaves, or whether the real leaves flutter past the shadows of cicadas. The potential for mutual metaphor as well as for direct description stresses the unity between the two things, as well as a sense of the tininess, helplessness, and insecurity which are part of the vision of autumn. The second line of the couplet echoes the theme of impermanence in the flowing stream and the southward passage of the geese. Since the two lines must be read in parallel, the second line should suggest that the nonmetaphorical description is the dominant interpretation, though both metaphorical interpretations are possible.

Another line of particular beauty (ironically preserved to illustrate a stylistic fault) is: "Green mountains cage the snow-flowers (flakes)" 青山籠雪花.[49] The scene is early spring, and the immense, solid vitality of the mountains seeming to imprison the fragile snowflakes.

Though Shang-kuan Yi is best known as a court poet, it is not surprising that his finest lines were not written to imperial command. The following fragment (02723) was written during Kao-tsung's reign and shows some of the vitality that characterizes the poets of the 660s and 670s.[50] It draws from court poetry the unwillingness of the poet to intrude his emotions into the scene, but looks forward to later poetry in its ability to create a whole scene, a panorama, rather than a fragmented world of minutae.

Silent I gaze, the broad stream flows,

I gallop my horse past the long sandbars.

Magpies fly past the mountain moon in dawnlight,

And cicadas chirp in the autumn wind of the wilds.

脈脈廣川流
驅馬歷長洲
鵲飛山月曙
蟬噪野風秋

PART TWO

AWAY FROM COURT POETRY: THE 660S AND 670S

7

THE FOUR TALENTS OF THE EARLY T'ANG

It was in the first year of the Lung-shuo Reign [661] that there was a change in style in the world of letters. Then they were competing to construct the delicate and subtle, vying to make the ornamented and the crafted, confounding the gold and the jade, the dragon and phoenix, confusing vermilion and purple, yellow and green, copying each other in their greed for great merit, artificing parallelisms to proclaim the loveliness of their craft. Informing point and spirit were utterly gone; strength and subtleness unheard of.

Yet yearning to excise these faults that they might bring glory to the deeds of their ambition were Hsüeh Yüan-chao of the Secretariat, the elder man of letters in court, who formed friendships with his juniors and urged this total change, and Lu Chao-lin, a genius in the ordinary world, who observed the true pattern and brought a halt to those activities man should strive against.

Those who understood literature joined them; those who understood the men themselves followed them. Thereupon, they set their minds drumming and dancing, put forth their usefulness, so that all within the eight points of the compass gathered headlong through their thoughts, while myriad ages appeared and disappeared under the tips of their brushes. . . . And in these mighty mirrors men found the hegemons of letters, powerful but not empty, strong yet able to enrich, ornamented but not precious, stable and growing ever sturdier. . . . And as when, shaken by the constant wind, the multitude of fine sprouts bend to it naturally, so they moved the hosts of shallow artists, who came to lack even the security of a hedge, and the profusion of lesser talents, who came to lose their fastnesses of metal walls and moats of boiling water. In but a single morning the filagree preciousness of many years was swept clear and open, spacious

was the garden of brushes, and the forest of fine phrases grew ever more imposing.

Yang Chiung, "Preface to the Collected Works of Wang Po"[1]

Yang, Wang, Lu, and Lo—the style of that age— 楊王盧駱當時體

"Not serious in their writing"—the sneering never stops. 輕薄爲文哂未休

But you who sneer, your bodies and names will fade away altogether, 爾曹身與名俱滅

Without stopping the great river that flows on forever. 不廢江河萬古流

Tu Fu, second "Playful Quatrain" [11229]

Like many others before and after him during the Sui and Early T'ang, Yang Chiung proudly proclaimed the great literary reformation, dating it precisely in the year 661. Even so, by the mid-eighth century the only voice raised in defense of the Early T'ang was that of Tu Fu, a long time admirer of court poetry. Although Tu Fu's quatrain is polemical rather than a balanced evaluation of their merits, to him the "Four Talents of the Early T'ang" are the great river and as such will outlast their detractors. But even though he maintains insistently that the "Four Talents" are superior to his contemporaries, in the third of his "Playful Quatrains" (11230) Tu Fu bows to the conventions of fu-ku literary history, that the "Four Talents" are inferior to the poetry of the Han and Wei, which is closer to the ancient poetry of the Shih-ching and the Ch'u-tz'u. Tu Fu underestimated the influence of his contemporaries: to this day the quatrain of Tu Fu's that is quoted above is more famous than any poem by the "Four Talents of the Early T'ang."

Yang, Wang, Lu, and Lo—Yang Chiung 楊炯, Wang Po 王勃, Lu Chao-lin 盧照鄰, and Lo Pin-wang 駱賓王 — were grouped together as the "Four Talents of the Early

T'ang" 初唐四傑 by the first decade of the eighth century, though the source claims that the name is earlier.[2] The real bond among the four writers is their parallel prose style rather than their poetry, but because of the traditional grouping, their poetry is usually represented as a homogeneous style. Although there were contacts between individuals of the four at various times, they never seem to have been all together at any one place at any one time. Furthermore, as the modern scholar Wen I-to points out, they belong to two distinct generations, Lu Chao-lin and Lo Pin-wang being older than Wang Po and Yang Chiung. Three met tragic deaths; one, Yang Chiung, led a relatively stable life as a court poet of Empress Wu. Two, Wang Po and Lu Chao-lin, moved toward a simplification of the courtly style in their poetry. At the other extreme, Lo Pin-wang's poetry moved toward ornamental periphrasis and learned allusion; this excess of figuration was as alien to the realm of court poetry as the more personal poetry of Lu and Wang. Though he wrote a number of excellent poems, Yang Chiung never really found his own poetic voice, and because much of his work is indistinguishable from that of his fellow courtiers, we will not consider it here. All but Yang Chiung did most of their work in the 660s and 670s when Empress Wu was wresting power from the weak and uxorious Kao-tsung.

Although Lu Chao-lin, Lo Pin-wang, and Wang Po all were connected with the court at some period in their lives, it is no accident that they did their most characteristic work when separated from the court. With the exception of Wang Chi they were the first major literary figures in many centuries to achieve widespread poetic fame through essentially private compositions. Even Yang Chiung, in the preface quoted above, speaks of Lu Chao-lin's fame as "a genius in the ordinary world" (人間才傑), in contrast to Hsüeh Yüan-chao, the courtier.

Wang Chi's renown was less widespread and more due to his eccentric character than to his literary oeuvre. Because of the tremendous conservatism of court poetry, dissociation from the court seems to have been necessary for poetry to find a new direction.

LU CHAO-LIN: THE FAILURE OF COURT POETRY

Among the poets who moved away from the decorous world of court poetry in the 660s and 670s, Lu Chao-lin's transformation was the most dramatic. In his public occasional poetry he was a competent practitioner of the graceful Shang-kuan style, but by the end of his life he was writing bitter, exclamatory lyrics of a man unbalanced by disease. Like his junior, Wang Po, Lu's departure from the courtly style did not occur through any general change of taste; judging from his treatment of the highly conventional Southern Dynasties' yüeh-fu themes, he seems to have had an inherent urge to complicate the traditional responses. However, the primary impetus to his revision of the courtly style were experiences whose pain and complexity could find no place in the stately conventions of aristocratic verse.

Lu Chao-lin was from Fan-yang in the far northeast, a region which was later to be the base of the rebel An Lu-shan and the home of the Mid-T'ang poet Chia Tao. Though his family was not as nationally prominent as that of Wang Po, it was one of the great elite families of the northeast. In his youth Lu studied with two eminent scholars who had retired from the court of T'ai-tsung and later became a favorite in the entourage of a T'ang prince. For reasons that are not altogether clear, in 669 he was transferred to the low post of "subprefectural manager" in Hsin-tu, Ch'eng-tu, the cultural center of the Szechwan region.

In 673 we find him again in Ch'ang-an, sick. After moving from place to place, eventually both feet and one hand were paralyzed. It was probably at this point that he bought a small estate in Ho-nan where he lived out

his remaining years. It is said that finally, unable to bear the pain of his disease any longer, he committed suicide by drowning himself in the Ying River. His dates are uncertain, but we may set them tentatively at 634-84.[3] As with the other "Four Talents" his collected works survive independently of the anthologies. There remain just over a hundred poems, including ritual songs, heptasyllabic ballads, formal occasional poems, travel poems, Ch'u songs, and yüeh-fu. These represent the full topical range of Early T'ang poetry, with the notable exception of court poems proper.

It is impossible to date any of Lu Chao-lin's poems before his demotion to Szechwan. If, as Yang Chiung claims, he was a central figure in a literary reformation of 661, it is not apparent in his works. Lu's formal occasional poetry after his return from Szechwan shows him an able, but undistinguished follower of Shang-kuan Yi, a master of the elder poet's powers of description if not his ingenuity. In this case it is the subgenre rather than the date that makes the style, and it would be difficult to imagine Lu writing formal occasional poetry in any other style before his exile. In fact, it was probably Yang Chiung's affiliation with Empress Wu that caused him to set the great literary reformation in 661; Lu himself set the reformation at the beginning of the T'ang, consonant with his political associations. There was a strong tendency to use literary history and the dating of the great literary reformation as an affirmation of dynastic loyalties rather than as an independent literary historical judgment. However, these purely political motives could rebound on poets, who might feel that some change should be manifest.

There is a charm in Lu's formal occasional poetry, but it is the charm of court poetry, which admits no individual personality. Lu's "Third Month Banquet by the Meandering River: to the set rhyme tsun" (02747)

closes:

Over stretches of sand the white terns fly, 連沙飛白鷺
And on lonely isles black gibbons shrill. 孤嶼嘶玄猿
Sun-cast shadows fall before peaks, 日影巖前落
Cloud flowers roll upon the river. 雲花江上翻
Then, our pleasure over, horses and carriages scatter, 興闌車馬散
As evening birds babble by forest pools. 林塘夕鳥喧

One should not be surprised to find earlier in this poem the line: "The way of the Odes survives again today" 雅道今復存 . Like similar lines in T'ai-tsung's "The Imperial Capital," this bow to the opposition poetics is not a serious comment on the style of the poem, and in this case is assimilated as an additional compliment to one's host and fellow poets. In the passage above Lu follows the conventions of the banquet poem, building up the evening scene before announcing the close of the banquet: birds return to their roosts for the night, and the peaks cast long shadows. The closing couplet rearranges elements that appear time and again in the last couplets of banquet poems. To cite just two examples, Shang-kuan Yi has:

Now I regret that our flowing goblets are full— 方悔流觴滿
Evening birds have left the city gates. 夕鳥去城閨

[02708]

and Li Pai-yao has:

As the sun slants down homeward riders move, 日斜歸騎勤
But our lingering pleasure fills the mountains and streams. 餘興滿山川

[02847]

It is appropriate to mention the evening birds, the pleasure (hsing 興) of the guests, and the departure of

the horses and carriages.

Lu Chao-lin was quite capable of writing sparse and convincing eremitic poetry; however, under the influence of the courtly style demanded in formal occasional poems, even this theme can become incongruously bejeweled.

TO THE RHYMES OF "A SUMMER DAY IN MY MOUNTAIN VILLA"[5]

和夏日山莊

On those idle days in the Orchid Office
You are wont to hide away behind your rustic gate.
There dragonlike boughs grow bare over the jade well
And phoenix leaves descend upon the gold-fast bastion.
Light on the stream shakes arrows through the water,
Mountain mists raise ladders into the clouds.
When the pavilion is secluded, hear the cry of the crane;
Dawn breaks through the window, listen to the rooster's crow.
Jade carriages advance into the winds,
Marble broths are carried, reflecting moonlight,
Farmers indeed have their own private joys—
Who would willingly leave this blue creek?

蘭署乘閒日
蓬扉狎遁棲
龍柯疏玉井
鳳葉下金堤
川光搖水箭
山氣上雲梯
亭幽聞唳鶴
窗曉聽鳴雞
玉軨臨風奏
瓊漿映月攜
田家自有樂
誰肯謝青溪

[02800]

When Lu wishes to compliment this unknown official of the Imperial Library as an exemplary recluse-farmer, the "jade carriages" and "marble broths" which he summons up rest uneasily beside the closing affirmation of his simple pleasures. The last line is probably an echo of Kuo P'u's 郭璞 second "Poem on the Wandering Immortals"遊仙詩: "The valley of blue creek, a thousand yards deep and more, / Therein is a single Taoist" 青谿千餘仞, 中有一道士.[6] Our protean farmer-recluse-immortal-courtier of Lu Chao-lin's poem lives in a different poetic world

from that of T'ao Ch'ien or Wang Chi.

Such ornate graciousness faded quickly as Lu Chao-lin set off for exile in Szechwan. The narrative of personal experience was already a subgenre with its own conventions, and the real hardships of the journey to Shu (Szechwan) was a yüeh-fu theme; even so, in poems like the following there is a credible starkness and power that rises above the conventions of the subgenre. Such exile-travel poems were later to play an important role in the breakup of the Early T'ang style during the first decade of the eighth century.

MORNING: CROSSING THE WATERSHED

早度分水嶺
丁年遊蜀道
班鬢向長安
征貢周王粟
空殫漢吏冠
馬蹄穿欲盡
貂裘敝轉寒
層冰橫九折
積石淩七盤
重溪既下澈
峻峯亦上干
隴頭聞戍鼓
嶺外咽飛湍
蕭蕭松風急
蒼蒼山月團
傳語後來者
斯路誠獨難

In the years of my prime I wander the roads to Shu,
Hair streaked with white, I face toward Ch'ang-an.
I have wasted the rice of the King of Chou,
Aimlessly dusted the cap of the servant of Han.
My horse's hooves, almost gouged away,
Sable cape turned to tatters and ever colder.
Layers of ice stretch across the coiling roads,
Heaps of stone rise over the twists and turns.
I have gone down to drink from stream after stream,
And have crossed up over the jutting peaks.
Then I've heard the drums from the Lung-t'ou forts,
And the moaning cascades from southern ranges.
Rustling now, the wind grows faster in the pines,
Then the mountain moon, round in the dark, dark sky.
I send these words back to those who shall follow—
These roads are hard indeed, like no others.

To "waste" the King of Chou's rice is polite self-deprecation: the poet has received a salary without being competent enough to perform his duties. To "dust the cap" is a cliché meaning to retire from office; from what we know about Lu Chao-lin's life—admittedly not much—he did not retire from office at this point. Either he is treating his humiliating transfer-exile as a "retirement," or he actually did retire and took the minor post of "subprefectural manager" only later, perhaps as a means of subsistence.

Though the differences between this poem and the preceding one should be apparent, there remain some fundamental similarities between the technique of this poem and that of court poetry. The tripartite form of introduction, description, and emotional response remains constant. The opening couplet of a poem on an imperial outing will often oppose starting point to destination; for example, Shang-kuan Yi's "Early Spring in K'uei-lin Palace: to command" (02707):

The pacing palanquin emerges from P'i-hsiang Palace. 步輦出披香
Clear singing looks down on T'ai-yeh Pool. 清歌臨太液

Lu Chao-lin properly mentions his starting point and destination in the opening couplet, but wanting to focus attention on the starting point, Ch'ang-an, he inverts the order. The closing response of Lu's poems borrows conventions from the yüeh-fu "Hard Roads to Shu" 蜀道難. A contemporary of Lu's, Chang Wen-tsung 張文琮, closed his version of the ballad:

Alone I clasp my bridle, heave a long sigh, 攬轡獨長息
Now knowing these roads are hard indeed! 方知斯路難
[02701]

Li Po 李白 was to use the same convention in his famous

version of "Hard Roads to Shu":

The hardships of the roads to Shu are harder than scaling the blue skies, 蜀道之難難於上青天
I lean my body, gaze westward, and heave a long sigh. 側身西望長咨嗟

[07926]

One need only compare Lu Chao-lin's poem and Li Po's ballad to see how much more energetic a High T'ang treatment of the theme could be.[7]

Framed between the opening, which sets the limits of the journey and its ostensible motives, and the closing emotional response are the parallel descriptive couplets. These couplets are the new wine in old jars—stark, personal situations treated with the perfect, almost monotonous symmetry of the court poet's craft. The uneasy intrusion of ugly reality into this highly controlled artistry finds an emblem in the sable cape, mark of wealth and power, turning to tatters from the hardships of travel. Such juxtaposition of extremes is part of a larger fascination with ironic twists which characterizes Lu Chao-lin's poetry as a whole. This goes against a primary requirement of court poetry, harmonious decorum. Even as he obeys the unwritten rule to set the limits of his journey in his opening couplet, he notes the incongruities of his situation: he is "in his prime," yet his hair is already "streaked with white."

The bulk of Lu Chao-lin's poetry dates from his residence in Szechwan. The following huai-ku is a regulated verse in all but tone pattern: it has the length and structure of a regulated verse, and the parallel couplets are in the correct places. It is surely a mistake to see regulated verse as a fixed form in the seventh century; rather, it is an unconscious ideal toward which a large number of "imperfect" versions tend. The "imperfect" as well as the perfect regulated

verse had been very much associated with formal court poetry. Lu, like his fellow exile Wang Po, was one of the first to use it for genuinely personal ends. The style becomes more straightforward, the argument more unified, and the themes different.

SSU-MA HSIANG-JU'S LUTE TERRACE

相如琴臺

I have heard of a soft and gentle land,
For a thousand years none dwell nearby.
In its groves and gardens, windblown mists of the past,
By pool and terrace the pines and shrubs turn spring.
Clouds seem the poet composing his fu,
The moon like his lady, listening to the lute.
Silent now where the orioles are singing—
A helpless pain to the wanderer's soul.

聞有雍容地
千年無四鄰
園院風煙古
池臺松櫁春
雲疑作賦客
月似聽琴人
寂寂啼鶯處
空傷遊子神

[02781]

Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju 司馬相如, a native of Szechwan and the most famous fu poet of the Han dynasty, eloped with Cho Wen-chün, the daughter of a wealthy merchant. Lu Chao-lin, visiting a site associated with these famous lovers, here indulges in a meditation on the continuity of nature set against the impermanence of man. The mists, the evergreen trees and shrubs (which are associated with tombs), and the songs of the birds are the same as ever; indeed Nature seems to mimic the forms of the ancient lovers, and the present songs of the orioles remind the poet of the silence of Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju's lute. The total effect of the poem up to the last line is characteristically T'ang—understated, unornamented, and evocative—but the closure reverts to the direct statement of emotion of earlier meditative poetry.

Living in Szechwan a hundred years later, Tu Fu visited the Lute Terrace and, like Lu Chao-lin, composed the following huai-ku to commemorate the occasion. Note

that the last two couplets of Tu Fu's poem closely echo the corresponding couplets of Lu Chao-lin's version, but that Tu Fu has gotten rid of the primitive "it makes me sad" closing response.

THE LUTE TERRACE

琴臺

After his great sickness at Mao-ling
And still in love with Cho Wen-chün,
There was his wineshop in the world of men
And the lute terrace among the sunset clouds.
Her beauty marks are kept on in the wildflowers,
And in the vines can be seen her skirts of gauze.
But the theme of phoenix seeking his mate
Is no longer heard in the vast, empty expanse.

茂陵多病後
尚愛卓文君
酒肆人間世
琴臺日暮雲
野花留寶靨
蔓草見羅裙
歸鳳求皇意
寥寥不復聞

[11159]

The last couplet refers to an allegorical love poem then attributed to Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju.

During the last years of his life, Lu Chao-lin seems to have written very little poetry. Among the most interesting of his last poems are three songs in the Ch'u style appended to parts of a remarkable piece of poetic prose, "Release from Sickness" 釋疾文. Songs in the Ch'u style were strongly associated with an exclamatory emotionalism that stood diametrically opposed to the restraint of court poetry. In Lu Chao-lin's short lyrics this generic mode is heightened by a sense of madness, real or feigned, which makes them extraordinary productions for their age. The following is the third of the set.

There is bracken on Tz'u Mountain, there are ripples in the Ying,
Po Yi is the cypress that bears its cones in autumn,
Shu Ch'i is the willow that flies in the spring rain.

茨山有薇兮潁水有漪
夷爲柏兮叔有實
叔爲柳兮春雨飛

Suddenly laughter—float off at Ts'ang-lang and never return. 倏爾而笑汎滄浪兮不歸

[02769]

Po Yi and Shu Ch'i were the two exemplary recluses of antiquity mentioned earlier. When the Chou dynasty conquered the Shang, Po and Shu retired to the mountain as an act of political protest, "refusing to eat the rice of Chou." Instead they ate bracken and eventually starved to death. It is quite possible that Lu's reference to these two figures was intended as a slur against Empress Wu, who had total control of the government during the last years of Lu's life. It might further suggest that Lu was contemplating suicide as an act of political protest rather than as an escape from the pain of his disease; however, there is no way to verify this.

The Ts'ang-lang of line four is associated with the famous song of antiquity:

When the waters of Ts'ang-lang are clear, 滄浪之水清兮
I can wash my hat ribbons; 可以濯吾纓
When the waters of Ts'ang-lang are dirty, 滄浪之水濁兮
I can wash my feet. 可以濯吾足

Though the song appears elsewhere in early literature, Lu Chao-lin is here referring to the context of its use in "The Fisherman" 漁父, a narrative poem in the Ch'u-tz'u. In the older poem Ch'ü Yüan encounters an old fisherman and bemoans how he has been unjustly slandered and how he refuses to be corrupted by the evil in the world. The fisherman responds that it is better to ride with the time and stay alive, but Ch'ü Yüan will hear none of it. Finally the fisherman laughs and goes off, singing the song quoted above, the allegorical point of which is that one should adapt one's behavior to political realities. Soon afterward Ch'ü Yüan committed suicide.

In Lu Chao-lin's short poem it is not clear whose part he is taking, that of the fisherman on Ch'ü Yüan;

the latter would seem more reasonable from the context. The poem is haunted by righteous suicide, old legends emerging from the natural world in fragments of sight and sound. The courtly trope of resemblances in nature—Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju in the clouds and Cho Wen-chün in the moon—has been transformed into a demonic reality as the noble suicides of antiquity appear in the forms of trees and the fisherman's laughter breaks in from nowhere, mocking his resolve.

As we said earlier, Lu Chao-lin's poetry covers almost the entire spectrum of subgenres and topics in seventh-century verse. As one example, we may look closely at some of Lu's border poetry to see what new elements he brought to this highly conventional subgenre.

THE BLACK-MANED BAY

紫騮馬

The bay steed, its golden saddle shining,
After battle's shifting tactics, enters Fort Kao-lan.
At the barrier gates the wind grows sharper,
By the Great Wall the rivers at their coldest.
Its clinking harness weighs heavily under snow-darkened skies,
The mountain stretch long—it suffers jade ice streams.
Yet it won't balk at crossing the whole Gobi—
When will its flowing blood ever dry?

騮馬照金鞍
轉戰入皐蘭
塞門風稍急
長城水正寒
雪暗鳴珂重
山長噴玉難
不辭橫絕漠
流血幾時乾

[02737]

Like earlier border ballads, Lu Chao-lin builds the poem out of fragments of scenes, arranged more or less chronologically. In contrast to earlier versions of this ballad, however, here there is a greater sense of violence and dramatization.[7] The sense of increasing hardships serves to intensify the courageous resolution of the horse expressed in the seventh line. Lu cannot resist the closing twist which undercuts the value of the horse's

courage by suggesting the futility of it all: the blood will never dry because the region will never be conquered, and one brave horse has turned into whole generations of brave battle steeds which, like the soldiers they stand for, have ridden out into the Gobi to die.

Although border poetry has been commonly associated with the High T'ang, it was in fact one of the most conservative of the poetic subgenres. High T'ang poets often continued the seventh-century practice of juxtaposing fragments of scenes; however, their greatest successes in this mode came from vivid dramatization in the fragments and stark contrasts in the juxtapositions. From these crucial fragments the reader was to extrapolate a whole scene, then string those scenes together to form something like a narrative. The following poem (05782) by Wang Wei uses a technique identical to that of Lu Chao-lin's poem, but Wang Wei uses it with High T'ang sophistication.

ARMY BALLAD

從軍行

The bugle blows, setting the marchers moving,
A grumbling hubbub as the soldiers rise.
Fifes screech, a tumult of neighing horses
As they struggle to ford the Golden River.
Sunset at the edge of a great desert,
Sounds of battle within the dust and mist.
Having bound up the necks of all the famous chieftains,
They return to report to the emperor.

吹角動行人
喧喧行人起
笳悲馬嘶亂
爭渡金河水
日暮沙漠陲
戰聲隱塵裏
盡繫名王頸
歸來報天子

For all the effectiveness of Wang Wei's juxtaposition of the violence of battle with the placid border scene, his is a much smugger poem than Lu Chao-lin's. Along with a fascination for border warfare went an interest in the bravo, the yu-hsia 遊俠, who appears variously as a hot-headed young tough, as a courageous righter of wrongs, and as a war hero. The ballad "Pacts with Friends on the

Sporting Fields of Youth" 結客少年場行 had once tended to stress the failure of young men who went off to the frontiers to achieve fame and honor.[8] Under the influence of court poetry's aversion to all forms of unpleasantness, sixth- and seventh-century versions of the ballad tended to emphasize the heroism and gallantry and mute the theme of failure.[9] As in the "Black-maned Bay" Lu plays along with the conventional treatment up to the last line.

Ch'ang-an honors its bravos,
Lo-yang is rich in wealth and courage.
Jade swords, riders like floating clouds,
Golden riding whips, bows bent like the bright moon. . . .
Beacon fires like the moon by night,
Then at dawn the aura of the troops forms rainbows.
They march abreast along with their comrades,
Arrows slung on their backs on a far campaign.
Their dragon banners darken the northern fog,
Their battle ranks roll up the Tartar dust.
When they rush in pursuit, the Gobi moans,
Then the battle over Yin Mountain left bare.
Back they go to thank His Majesty,
Old men on horseback.

長安重遊俠
洛陽富財雄
玉劍浮雲驕
金鞭明月弓
烽火夜似月
兵氣曉成虹
橫行徇知己
負羽遠從戎
龍旌昏朔霧
鳥陣捲胡風
追奔瀚海咽
戰罷陰山空
歸來謝天子
何如馬上翁

[02740]

All of a sudden the gallant young warriors appear as old men, and our admiration for their lives spent in service to the emperor falls prey to the tragedy of their age. Lu seems to be unconsciously using the traditional technique of the Han fu, praising something at length, then attacking it at the very close of the poem. The application of this technique in this shih is more effective than in the fu, because rather than simply raising a moral objection, it becomes a genuine devaluation of the theme previously treated with admiration.

The link between the appearance of this technique in the shih and fu probably occurs through the capital poems, which we shall treat in chapter 9.

Lu Chao-lin's delight in juxtaposing contrary values is matched by his sense of paradox, which likewise runs counter to the need for harmony in court poetry. This sense of paradox is left unresolved in the following poem (02739), one of Lu's most famous.

PLUM BLOSSOMS FALL

梅花落

When the blossoms first emerge on plum ridges,
The snow has not yet opened up on Heaven Mountain.
Those snowy spots seem filled with flowers,
Where flowers are, snow seems to swirl.
Windblown they enter the dancers' sleeves,
Mixed with powder, fall in ladies' chambers.
Tens of thousands of miles away, the Hsiung-nu
Don't even know that spring has come.

梅嶺花初發
天山雪未開
雪處疑花滿
花邊似雪迴
因風入舞袖
雜粉伺粧臺
匈奴幾萬里
春至不知來

As in some earlier versions of this yüeh-fu, Lu Chao-lin plays on the visual similarity of plum blossoms and snowflakes, a similarity strengthened by the fact that a "flake" of snow is in Chinese a "flower" of snow (see line 4). But Lu plays this simple metaphor into a strange confusion of "white worlds." Despite the confusion, the two worlds are opposites: in the barbarous, male northland it is still winter, while in the delicate, feminine South it is already spring. In ordinary court poetry the snow world should be a metaphor for the plum world or vice versa; the impulse on the part of the reader to make these traditional metaphors strengthens the identities and points up the distinctions. Puns also bind the two worlds: in the North the snow has not yet "opened up" k'ai 開, a word also meaning "to blossom." Another association of k'ai which might operate here is "opening

up" the frontiers, the spreading of imperial civilization. Lu avoids the temptation to round the poem off by making some clever point about the relation of the two worlds; rather, he leaves the reader with the strange image of the barbarian Hsiung-nu amid the snow and two worlds which are both the same and the opposite.

All the above elements of dramatization, paradox, and the fusion of contrary worlds can be seen in the following border poem (02775).

SONG OF THE FALLING SNOW 雨雪曲

At autumn's end nomad horsemen come down,	虜騎三秋入
Clouds over the passes, flat for thousands of miles.	關雲萬里平
The snow seems dark as the Tartar sands,	雪似胡沙暗
The ice as bright as the Chinese moon.	冰如漢月明
At Tallgate Pass the gates are made of silver,	高關銀爲闕
And the wall of the Great Wall turns to jade.	長城玉作城
The standards and banners have all fallen away,	節旄零落盡
And the Son of Heaven knows not their glory.	天子不知名

The ice and snow turn the Great Wall into a palace of silver and jade, a palace for immortals, yet ironically this is where the Chinese troops met their deaths. The proper "ellipsis of battle" is maintained, but the implied violence of their deaths lies behind the stately and tranquil scene of the Great Wall, where the clouds are "flat" (p'ing 平, also meaning "pacified").[10] The word used for "fallen away," ling-lo 零落, of the banners is ironically most commonly associated with the trees losing their leaves in autumn. Unknown to their lord and unperceived by us, who see only the "even calm," p'ing, of the scene and the jewel fortresses, the soldiers have all perished, their banners falling to earth as gently as autumn leaves. Their "glory," ming 名, is literally their "names": no humans are left in the scene

except for the anonymous dead. A new interest in pre-sixth-century yüeh-fu was one means by which to escape the sterility of court poetry without going off into uncharted territory. Songs of heptasyllabic and irregular line lengths had long been associated with direct emotion and popular poetry. Lu Chao-lin, like many of his contemporaries, turned to these and the model of Pao Chao 鮑照(412?-66), author of a series of poems entitled "Hard Travelling," Hsing-lu nan 行路難. These poems, primarily on the themes of impermanence and personal failure, seem to have captured the imaginations of the poets of the 660s and 670s.

Lu Chao-lin's "Hard Travelling" uses a dead tree as its "stimulus" (hsing 興, a natural object that evokes a specific emotion). In doing so he lyricizes an object which had been used allegorically earlier in a fu by Yü Hsin and also allegorically in a fu of his own.[11]

HARD TRAVELLING	行路難
Can't you see, there north of Ch'ang-an's walls, by the Wei River bridge,	君不見長安城北渭橋邊
That bare, withered tree, chopped across, lying in an ancient field?	枯木橫槎臥古田
In days of old it filled with red, then filled with purple,	昔日含紅復含紫
And always there lingered the fog, and also lingered the mist.	常時留霧亦留煙
In spring light and spring wind its flowers seemed like snow,	春景春風花似雪
A constant rumble, scented-wood carriages and coaches fitted with jade.	香車玉輿恆闐咽
Was there ever any traveller who failed to break a spray?	若個遊人不競攀
Was there ever any singing girl who failed to snap a sprig?	若箇娼家不來折
Singing girls with jeweled breastbands, dragon-broidered robes,	娼家寶袜蔽龍帔
Young nobles on silver saddles, riding past in thousands.	公子銀鞍千萬騎

One by one the orioles
were coy among its flowers,

And, pair by pair, bluebirds
played there with their young.

Its thousand-foot boughs,
its hundred-foot branches,

Blotted out moon's cassia
and the elm of the stars.

Upon its leaves of coral
there were mandarin ducks,

And in the nests of phoenixes
were the phoenix brood.

The nests fell, the branches broke,
the phoenixes went away,

Boughs withered, leaves fell,
bearing the blasts of the wind.

In one morning it was stripped bare,
and no one came any more,

Then an eternity of ruin—
how can you understand?

In human life glory and want
never cease to change,

Goes in a flash, goes in an instant,
cannot trust to it long.

Who is there can halt the sun
over the western mountains?

Who is there can dam and stop
the eastward flowing stream?

Trees on the tombs of the House of Han
fill the land of Ch'in,

All coming hither or going hence,
all to be lamented.

Since ancient days the dukes and lords
had their ton of rice a year,

And all made plans that their glory
last a hundred centuries;

Where now do you see their crimson lips,
their fair faces?

You only hear of pale thorns on the graves
and the Yellow Springs.

A time will come when your gold and your sable
must be sold to buy wine,

黃鶯一一何花嬌
青鳥雙雙將子戲
千尺長條百尺枝
月桂星榆相蔽虧
珊瑚葉上鴛鴦鳥
鳳皇巢裏雛鸞兒
巢傾枝折鳳歸去
條枯葉落任風吹
一朝零落無人問
萬古摧殘君詎知
人生貴賤無終始
倏忽須臾難久恃
誰家能駐西山日
誰家能堰東流水
漢家陵樹滿秦川
行來行去盡哀憐
自昔公卿二千石
咸擬榮華一萬年
不見朱脣將白貌
唯聞素棘與黃泉
金貂有時須換酒

Jade flakes of flowers ever cast
fluttering countless coins.
玉塵恒搖莫計錢

I send these words to you who lodge
in the offices of "the gods,"
寄言坐客神仙署

When you hang here between life and death,
you see true friendship.
一生一死交情處

Come not to the foot of the palace,
the Gate of the Blue Dragon,
蒼龍闕下君不來

I, at least, will surely go off
to White Crane Mountain.
白鶴山前我應去

No hope to reach Heaven or immortal isles—
too far, too far—
雲間海上邈難期

And when again shall we ever be
so openheartedly in accord.
赤心會合在何時

I wish only the span of King Yao,
a mere million years,
但願堯年一百萬

To be forever the hermits Ch'ao and Yu,
never leaving that life.
長作巢由也不辭

[02761]

There are a number of allusions and references in this poem, but most of them are clear from the context. Ch'ao-fu and Hsü Yu, who close the poem, were hermits of high antiquity. Ch'ao-fu, the "nest father," made his dwelling in a tree, while Hsü Yu washed out his ears when he was asked to take over rule of the world. Though in his desire for spontaneity Lu lapses into occasional hysterical non sequiturs, the poem succeeds in conveying the urgency of a vision of the bones beneath the skin. The tree is both a physical presence, a "stimulus" for Lu's meditation, and also a metaphor for the process of flourishing and decline, companionship and abandonment. The stock yüeh-fu phrase, "Don't you see," chün pu-chien 君不見, retains some of its original verbal force as the poet frantically points out this symbol of mortality and mutability.

As a relatively straightforward memento mori, this poem has little intellectual interest, but it does have a great deal of poetic and literary historical interest.

Like Ch'en Tzu-ang several decades later, Lu Chao-lin turns back to an older form of poetry to escape from the confines of court poetry. From Yü Hsin through Lu Chao-lin the "dead tree" became an important symbol object in the poetry of the eighth and ninth centuries, a symbol of greatness brought low and abandoned. Tu Fu, for example, has a number of poems on dead and dying trees (see 10676-79), and the symbol plays an important role in his "Ballad of the Old Cypress" (10768).

Eremitism and the quest for immortality are major themes in Lu's poetry. In most such poems we do not find the frenetic intensity of "Hard Travelling" or the songs from "Release from Sickness"; instead there is a controlled quietism. In these poems Lu borrows themes and diction from T'ao Ch'ien and the landscape poet Hsieh Ling-yün 謝靈運, a contemporary of Pao Chao. At times he may quote T'ao Ch'ien almost verbatim as in the second line of the following passage:

In utter silence I have ceased welcoming strangers,	寂寂罷將迎
At my gate there's no sound of horse and carriage.	門無車馬聲
Lute set before me, I answer the mountain and rivers,	橫琴答山水
Opening a scroll I peruse the lives of great men.	披卷閱公卿

[02804]

Like his younger contemporary Wang Po, Lu Chao-lin was a master of the descriptive couplet; both poets show a movement away from the ornateness and preciousness of the court couplet. At least one of Lu's couplets was cited in the Sung dyansty as an exemplar of good couplet construction, under the category of "shock lines," ching-ts'e 警策:[12]

The grass impedes, men walk slowly; 草礙人行緩
The flowers tangled, birds cross leisurely. 花繁鳥度遲
[02803]

The semantic distinction between English "slowly" and "leisurely" is sharper than between the Chinese synonyms huan 緩 and ch'ih 遲. We have two structurally identical situations—figures moving slowly through a density of vegetation. But the individual semantic relations of the other parallel elements—plain grass versus attractive flowers, the tangle which impedes versus the tangle of lushness, the walking movement whose goal is hidden versus of the crossing which can get beyond—all these ultimately call attention to the difference between earth-bound man and the freedom of the birds, between a slowness of constriction and a slowness of choice. In this subtle juxtaposition of similarities and differences, the shock is not obvious as in courtly wit, but rather the surface simplicity draws the reader to look into the couplet more deeply and find there a more general significance. The external simplification and internal complication of the parallel couplet is an important process in the ultimate development of the High T'ang style.

Except perhaps in "Ch'ang-an: ku-yi," which we will discuss in chapter 9, Lu Chao-lin's poetry never rises to the greatness of the major High T'ang poets. But Lu's range of style, and of tone is extraordinary for his age, from courtly grace to unbalanced intensity to an honest and direct beauty not easily matched in the seventh century. Shang-kuan Yi might have written a descriptive couplet with more cleverness, but he could never close a poem:

If by chance you meet someone loyal and kind, 倘遇忠孝所
Tell them for me—I remember Ch'ang-an. 為道憶長安
[02758]

9

THE CAPITAL POEMS

To the poets of the first half of the seventh century Ch'ang-an excited only wonder; it was the city, the marvel of its day, the living proof of T'ang power. Being employed there meant or held out the hope of success; being an official elsewhere meant failure. Losing the great city, most responded as Lu Chao-lin did, with longing—they "remembered Ch'ang-an." But in the 660s and 670s the T'ang royal house seemed to be stumbling as Empress Wu assumed more and more of the real authority of government. It is not surprising that loss of confidence in the stability of the dynastic house and a feeling that something was deeply wrong in the government should appear in a critique of the capital. For this there were solid traditions.

Such capital poems drew on two literary traditions, one an outgrowth of the other. The earlier of the two is to be found in the capital *fu* of the Eastern Han. The manner in which Ch'ang-an was treated in these *fu* is of central importance in understanding the associations which the seeming praise of the capital in these T'ang poems held for the contemporary reader. When Kuang-wu-ti restored the Han dynasty in A.D. 25 he moved the capital from Ch'ang-an to Lo-yang; this transfer became the subject of fierce controversy. Tu Tu's 杜篤 "Fu on the Capital," *Lun-tu fu* 論都賦, took the part of Ch'ang-an, praising the former capital in terms of its strategic and historical significance. Perhaps in response to this work Pan Ku 班固 wrote "Fu on the Two Capitals," *Liang-tu fu* 兩都賦, in which a partisan of Ch'ang-an and a partisan of Lo-yang dispute the merits of the two cities. Ch'ang-an was portrayed as representing the

materialistic and aggressive, the military aspects of Chinese civilization. The pro-Ch'ang-an interlocutor was to be utterly confounded by the advocate of Lo-yang, which represented restraint, frugality, and the Confucian virtues. Long after the political controversy had died down, the two capitals continued to be topics for fu, coming to symbolize two contrary principles of society. Thus the rich, sensual Ch'ang-an represented in these capital poems of the mid-seventh century already carried with it an element of criticism.

The second important tradition, which grew out of the capital fu, began in Pao Chao's "Weed-covered City" and developed into the poetry on ruins which we saw earlier in the seventh century. Lu Chao-lin had turned to Pao Chao as a model for his songs on impermanence, but the juxtaposition of the city in its glory versus the city in ruins, the formula evolved in "Weed-covered City," was even more influential. A version of this formula can be seen in the description of the withered tree in "Hard Travelling." Combined, these two traditions formed a warning about the instability of human society and the need for restraint in order to preserve it.

It is impossible to date precisely these poems on the capital, but they fall between the 660s and the early 680s. Afterward the theme all but disappears until the High T'ang, except in a few huai-ku. Though we cannot arrange the following poems chronologically, we can place them on a scale of ornateness, ranging from the dense and allusive "Imperial Capital," Ti-ching p'ien 帝京篇, of Lo Pin-wang to the relatively straightforward "Looking Down from the High Terrace," Lin kao-t'ai 臨高臺, of Wang Po. Somewhere between the two lies the finest of them all, Lu Chao-lin's "Chang-an: ku-i," 長安古意.

Ku-yi 古意, "ancient theme/attitude," is a difficult term whose significance varies with the age and the individual writer. Originally it was equivalent to

ni-ku 擬古, "imitation of an old theme," but came to mean anything from huai-ku, meditation on the past (usually an occasioned poem written on a visit to an ancient site), to "ancient morality," to what seems to be the case here, the use of a historical subject—Ch'ang-an of the Han dynasty. The use of a historical example as a mirror for the present was a practice as old as Chinese literature itself:

CH'ANG-AN: KU-YI 長安古意

Ch'ang-an's broad avenues link up with narrow lanes,[13] 長安大道連狹斜

There black oxen and white horses, coaches of fragrant woods, 青牛白馬七香車

Jade-fit palanquins go left and right past the mansions of lords, 玉輦縱橫過主第

Gold riding whips in a long train move toward barons' homes. 金鞭絡繹向侯家

Dragons bite jeweled canopies, catching the morning sun, 龍銜寶蓋承朝日

The phoenix disgorges dangling fringe, draped with evening's red clouds. 鳳吐流蘇帶晚霞

A hundred yards of gossamer strands strain to enwrap the trees, 百丈遊絲爭繞樹

While a single graceful flock of birds join their cries among flowers. 一羣嬌鳥共啼花

Cries among flowers, playful butterflies, by the palace's thousand gates, 啼花戲蝶千門側

The emerald trees, the silver terraces, thousands of different colors. 碧樹銀臺萬種色

Double-decked passageways, intertwined windows make the union of lovers. 複道交窗作合歡

Paired tower gates, rising layers of tiles which sweep as phoenix wings. 雙闕連甍垂鳳翼

The Liang clan's muraled tower rises into the skies,[14] 梁家畫閣天中起

The Emperor of Han's golden columns jut straight beyond the clouds.[15] 漢帝金莖雲外直

But those you gaze on before great buildings are those you do not know, 樓前相望不相知

And those you meet upon the paths,
no acquaintances of yours.

Tell me of her who plays the pipes
off into purple mists—

She has spent her years of beauty
in the study of the dance.[16]

If we could become the pi-mu fish,
why should we flee from death?[17]

Could we but be the mandarin ducks,
no yearnings to be immortals.[18]

The pi-mu, the mandarin ducks,
are truly worth our yearning—

They go in pairs, they come in pairs—
can't you see them now?

Most I hate that single phoenix
woven in the top of the drape,

Most I love the swallow pair
fixed on the curtained door.[19]

Pairs of swallows fly in their pairs
around the painted beams,

There, gauze hangings, the kingfisher
quilt, scent of turmeric.

Then one by one, hairdos like clouds,
cicada-wing curls hanging,

Eyebrows slender like new moons
above the tawny oils.[20]

Tawny with oil, white with powder,
they step from coaches,

Charms within, loveliness within,
hearts not fixed on one.

Bewitching boys on jeweled horses
with ironblack spots,

And courtesans, pins of coiling dragons,
golden legs bent under.[21]

In the office of the Censorate
the crows cry by night,[22]

By the Constabulary gate
the sparrows go to roost.[23]

Mightily rising Vermilion Walls
look down on roads like jade,

In the distance azure carriages
sink behind gold-fast bastions.

陌上相逢詎相識
借問吹簫向紫煙
曾經學舞度芳年
得成比目何辭死
願作鴛鴦不羨仙
比目鴛鴦眞可羨
雙去雙來君不見
生憎帳額繡孤鸞
好取門簾帖雙燕
雙燕雙飛繞畫梁
羅幃翠被鬱金香
片片行雲著蟬鬢
纖纖初月上黃昏
黃昏粉白車中出
含嬌含態情非一
妖童寶馬鐵連錢
娼婦盤龍金屈膝
御史府中烏夜啼
廷尉門前雀欲栖
隱隱朱城臨玉道
遙遙翠幰沒金堤

Slings are clasped, falcons flown
north of Tu-ling,

Lots drawn for killing by sworn companions
west of the Wei.

Greeting each other the bravos
with lotus-hilted swords,

Spend nights together on paths to peach
and plum, the houses of singing girls [24]

At sunset in singing girls' houses
are skirts of purple gauze,

And a verse of clear singing
comes swelling from their mouths.

In the northern halls night after night,
people move as the moon,[25]

On southern paths at every dawn,
riders move as the clouds.

Southward paths and northern halls
link through the Northern Quarter,

Then great crossroads and wide highways
rein in the Markets.

Pliant willows and green ash
hang brushing the earth,

Sweet air and red dust
rise darkening the skies.

Royal heralds of the House of Han come,
a thousand outriders,

Then kingfisher-colored liquors
in parrot-shaped goblets.

Blouses of gauze and jeweled sashes
are taken off for you,

The songs of Yen, the dances of Wu
for you performed.

But there are others bold and splendid,
called "minister," "general,"

The day turns, the heavens rolls,
and neither will yield to the other.

Haughty spirits ever willing
to push aside a Kuan-fu,[26]

A hold on power which cannot give
in the least to a Minister Hsiao.[27]

Haughty spirits, hold on power,
the stuff of ruthless heroes,

挾彈飛鷹杜陵北
探丸借客渭橋西
俱邀俠客芙蓉劍
芙宿娼家桃李蹊
娼家日暮紫羅裙
清歌一囀口氛氳
北堂夜夜人如月
南陌朝朝騎似雲
南陌北堂連北里
五劇三條控三市
弱柳青槐拂地垂
佳氣紅塵暗天起
漢代金吾十騎來
翡翠屠蘇鸚鵡杯
羅襦寶帶爲君解
燕歌趙舞爲君開
別有豪華稱將相
轉日回天不相讓
意氣由來排灌夫
專權判不容蕭相
專權意氣本豪雄

Blue Dragon and Purple Swallow, great steeds in the spring wind.	青虬紫燕坐春風
They said themselves their songs and dances would last a thousand years,	自言歌舞長千載
And claimed a pride and extravagance beyond the Great Lords.	自謂驕奢凌五公
But the glory of each thing in its season was not to wait on them,	節物風光不相待
Mulberry fields and green oceans interchange in an instant.	桑田碧海須臾改
Where once were the golden stairs, the halls of white marble,	昔時金階白玉堂
We now see only the green pines remaining.	即今唯見青松在
Silent there in the emptiness, the dwelling of Yang Hsiung,[28]	寂寂寥寥揚子居
Year after year, every year, his whole bed covered with books.	年年歲歲一牀書
Alone are the cassia flowers, blooming on South Mountain,	獨有南山桂花發
They fly back and forth, fly into his sleeves.	飛來飛去襲人裾

[02762]

The poem opens with the reader's eyes somewhere on the great roads of Ch'ang-an, watching the traffic. The aspect which Lu Chao-lin emphasizes about this noble society is that of socializing, travelling and meeting, visiting patrons and lovers. To this is opposed the dwelling of Yang Hsiung at the end of the poem. But in the capital everything is movement and mobility, a flux that mirrors the larger theme of impermanence: the poet focuses on descriptions of coaches, palanquins, passage-ways, all the means by which people can move and get together.

The seasonal motif is spring, associated with sexuality and physical prowess in the young bravos, the yu-hsia. Spring is a prodigal season and its lushness finds an echo in the ostentatious extravagance of the wealthy and noble. With this aristocratic society of the court is

associated the yearning for immortality—dragons, phoenixes, buildings (which symbolically "rise into the sky") painted with murals of the immortals, and the golden columns with their dewpans from which was to be made the elixir of eternal life.

At this point Lu Chao-lin weaves in the first dissonant note. Despite all the hustle and bustle, the visits and parties:

But those you gaze on before great buildings are those you do not know,	樓前相望不相知
And those you meet upon the paths, no acquaintances of yours.	陌上相逢詎相識

This is a "big city," and like all big cities, it is full of strangers. With this in mind, all the travelling and visiting takes on a new aspect, a quest for companions in a world of strangers. Like the quest for the immortals it is a constant striving out of one condition to another, not a stable, secure world of human relations. As estrangement undercuts the theme of companionship, the treatment of this splendid world in terms of spring growth undercuts the quest for immortality. In lines 17 and 18 there is a question about a lady, first in the guise of the daughter of the Duke of Ch'in, then as Chao Fei-yen; the answer tells how she "spent her years of beauty" (literally "spent her years of fragrance," tu fang-nien 度芳年). Such images recurring in the poem enforce the identity between this sensual life in the capital and the vegetative life of spring, a fragile and impermanent beauty. By the end of the poem we are left only with the pines of the tombs and the cassia which endure the cold.

At this early point in the poem, however, the poet takes a less extreme stand than he does in the end. He counters the false hope of immortality with an affirmation of the constant but mortal love of the pi-mu, the mandarin ducks, and the swallows. He sees through the frantic

search for companions in the aristocratic world to its essential solitude and fickleness; this he hates. This hated solitude is unlike the noble solitude of Yang Hsiung at the end of the poem. The relation of the images of mortal love to the intense but brief spring life and affairs with singing girls is analogous to the relation of the hermit to the figures of political power: both reject intensity and extravagance for restraint, striving and activity for contentment.

The idleness of the Censorate and Constabulary, seen in the behavior of the birds, might be positive at this point in the poem, suggesting that the peace and order of the times makes their work unnecessary; it might also be negative, suggesting that their work is being neglected. This latter interpretation of the omens becomes more and more inescapable as we see young bravos choosing lots to assassinate their enemies. The mood of violence and aggression, hidden behind the beauty of spring, increases as the poet moves into the political sphere, to the struggles for power of the ministers and generals. In them the heroic spirit, appearing in more attractive forms earlier in the poem, turns to arrogance, and the quest for immortality becomes hubris. Here appears the fixed topos which precedes the description of the city in ruins in "Weed-covered City" and the poems in that tradition: "They said themselves their songs and dances would last a thousand years."

Next the poet brings in the explicit theme of impermanence: men and their empires are cyclical and seasonal, passing from flowering to ripeness to ruin. But Lu Chao-lin does not stop there: he offers the enigmatic alternative of Yang Hsiung, appearing as the hermit. His silence contrasts to the city's bustle; his solitude contrasts to their gregariousness; his bed of books contrasts to their sensual concerns. And though he is not granted more than a mortal span, the phrase "year after year, every year,"

nien-nien sui-sui 年年歲歲, gives a sense of stability and continuity, set against the impermanence of the struggle for glory and the futility of the quest for immortality in the capital. The cassia, traditional symbol of purity and virtue, grows on South Mountain, traditional symbol of eternity. The haunting last line brings back the world of change in the image of the falling blossoms, but beside the hermit these seem almost inconsequential as they are blown back and forth by the wind and into his sleeve.

The theme of impermanence here is too meekly universal to be full-fledged topical political protest. On the other hand, one cannot miss a general disillusionment with the world of the court. Yang Hsiung, representing learning and Confucian values, takes the place occupied by the praise of Lo-yang in the "Fu on the Two Capitals," a silent reproof and mockery of the world of Ch'ang-an.[29]

Lo Pin-wang's "Imperial Capital" is a virtuoso performance in seventh-century rhetoric. As in most of his other poetry, here Lo unfolds a dazzling display of periphrasis and erudition, to the detriment of the poem as a whole. In its shifting line lengths the poem is metrically more innovative than the heptasyllabic "Ch'ang-an: ku-yi," but rather than the rhythms of yüeh-fu and popular song which irregular line lengths usually suggest, here the shifting pentasyllabic and heptasyllabic lines approximate in poetry the shifting rhythms of parallel prose with its tetrasyllabic and hexasyllabic lines. Instead of disillusioned attack as in Lu Chao-lin's poem, Lo Pin-wang's piece is a persuasion designed to win the poet recognition. Lest the point be missed, the poem is provided with a preface in the most abstruse parallel prose. The theme, however, was hardly an apt one for Lo's purpose, prophecies of doom being hardly the best way to win over a prospective patron.

The title Ti-ching p'ien is the same as that of

T'ai-tsung's ten-poem series, and Lo's opening echoes the conventions of the capital theme which appear in the first of T'ai-tsung's poems. T'ai-tsung begins:

In the streams of Ch'in, a powerful emperor's residence,
In Han-ku Pass, mighty royal dwelling.
[00001]

秦川雄帝宅
函谷壯皇居

Lo Pin-wang amplifies:

Mountains and rivers, a thousand-mile domain,
Palace wall towers, the ninefold gates.
Without beholding the might of the royal dwelling,
How can you know the majesty of the Son of Heaven?
Royal dwelling, Imperial compound in Yao and Han-ku Passes.
[04148]

山河千里國
城闕九重門
不觀皇居壯
安知天子尊
皇居帝里崤函谷

From the very beginning "Imperial Capital" has the signs of panegyric, but for all its shimmering rhetoric, it is a simpler poem than "Ch'ang-an: ku-yi." Scenes, objects, and themes are remarkably similar in the two poems, but in Lo's poem they are strung together in epideictic enumeration, while in Lu's work they are fused into significant scenes. When "Double-decked passageways, intertwined windows make the union of lovers," 複道交窗作合歡 ("Ch'ang-an: ku-yi," line 11), Lu Chao-lin combines the idea that the passageways enable lovers to meet ("make for the union of lovers") with the clever visual image that the passageways and windows seem themselves to be linked in a sexual embrace ("act out the union of lovers"). The historical dimension is answered in the Lover-Union Palace of Han, while the sexual implications are given a discreet botanical veil in the mimosa tree, the ho-huan 合歡, "lover-union tree." The "double-decked

passageways" reappear in Lo Pin-wang's poem, but instead of taking on the lusty forms of the activities they permit, they simply "slant across to Bluejay Pavilion" 複道斜通鵲鵲觀 ("Imperial Capital," line 15).

While Lu Chao-lin weaves disillusionment through his praises, Lo Pin-wang holds to the traditional technique of the Western Han fu, clearly separating the closing censure from the preceding praise. In contrast to Lu Chao-lin's very skillful use of this technique in his yüeh-fu, which we saw in chapter 8, Lo Pin-wang's use of it has all the abrupt incongruity of its use in the fu. Of "Imperial Capital" one could well make Yang Hsiung's famous critical comment on the fu: "That's protest poetry!? I'm afraid it dosen't avoid encouraging [the kind of behavior it is supposedly protesting]."[30] The strong fu traditions that lay behind these shih on the capital always threatened that the poem become no more than a poorly done fu. Lo succumbed to the danger, not only in the simple praise-blame technique described above, but in his use of purely epideictic rhetoric, unsubordinated enumerations of objects and scenes. When Lu Chao-lin goes into his long description of the traffic on Ch'ang-an's avenues, it is to prepare us for the knowledge that everyone is a stranger, that a deeper isolation underlies the festive gatherings. In Lo Pin-wang's poem the description exists for its own sake.

Level Terrace, In-laws Compound lined with lofty ramparts,	平臺戚里帶崇墉
The "smoked gold," the jade tidbits await the ringing bells.	炊金饌玉待鳴鐘
Smaller halls with lacework curtains, three thousand doors,	小堂綺帳三千戶
Great roads and blue brothels, twelve layers deep.	大道青樓十二重
Jeweled awnings, carved saddles, horses with golden halters,	寶蓋雕鞍金絡馬

Orchid windows, filagree columns, coiling dragons of jade.
Filagree columns, alabaster capitals, stucco walls shining,
Tinkling gold and ringing jade, princes and barons in glory.

蘭窗繡柱玉盤龍
繡柱璇題粉壁映
鏘金鳴玉王侯盛

[lines 29-36]

If this works in poetry, it works in the peculiar realm of aesthetic values that belong to the fu.

From praise of the capital's glory, Lo moves abruptly into a lament for impermanence:

Since ancient times glory and fame were like floating clouds,
You cannot split off the highs and the lows in human life.
First you see the T'ien's and the Tou's climb above each other,
Then suddenly hear of Wei's and Huo's achieving great deeds.

古來榮利若浮雲
人生倚伏難分
始見田竇相移奪
俄聞衛霍有功勳

[lines 59-62]

The T'ien's and the Tou's were the two most famous ministerial families of the Han, while Wei and Huo were the surnames of two of the Han's greatest generals. Lo next moves to those who achieve high office and then desert their former friends: his real motives in the poem are coming to the fore. Instead of a noble hermit, Lo closes with a series of allusions to historical figures to serve as analogies for his own condition and desire for advancement. Yang Hsiung appears appropriately, but in a different guise: "Yang Hsiung served the Han, but lacked a good matchmaker," 楊雄仕漢乏良媒 (line 90). The "matchmaker" derives from the erotic metaphors of the Ch'u-tzu and refers to someone who could recommend him to the ruler. At the very end Lo emerges as Chia Yi, the young Han statesman and writer, who fell from favor and was banished to Ch'ang-sha in the South to serve as a tutor to an

imperial prince.

Who pities the tutor of Ch'ang-sha, 誰惜長沙傅
Who alone is confident in the talent of Lo-yang? 獨負洛陽才

[lines 95-96]

Chia Yi was indeed a native of Lo-yang, but one can see here a clear echo of the Han capital argument: Lo Pin-wang, like Chia Yi, is a representative of the Lo-yang side, of frugality and Confucian virtues set against the extravagance of Ch'ang-an.

Wang Po's "Looking Down from the High Terrace" is a yüeh-fu with its own tradition, but Wang's version is much closer to the poems on the capital than it is to earlier poems with the same title. Metrically varied like "Imperial Capital," Wang Po's version of the capital theme is the simplest and most lyrical of the three. Its closing memento mori is the most perfunctory of the three poems, and it is more a simple lament for impermanence than a social critique of aristocratic society. "Ch'ang-an: ku-yi" is seen from the street; Wang Po's vision of the capital is from a "high terrace," echoing the old theme of a high place giving an "overview" which leads to understanding.

LOOKING DOWN FROM THE HIGH TERRACE 臨高臺

Look down from the high terrace, 臨高臺
The high terrace, rising away, out of drifting dust. 高臺迢遞絕浮埃
Its marble railing and carved structures stand towering in the sky, 瑤軒綺構何崔嵬
Where song and flute of immortal birds ring still and mournful. 鸞歌鳳吹清且哀
Peer down now on the roads of Ch'ang-an, 俯瞰長安道
And the greenery along the royal moat, 蓁蓁御溝草
Then look sideways to Sweetspring Palace road, 斜對甘泉路

Where the trees stand dark on the tombs of Han.
蒼蒼茂陵樹

From the high terrace it's the same all around—
高臺四望同

A richness in the air, full and sweet, of the Royal Domain.
帝鄉佳氣鬱葱葱

Purple towers and red mansions shine sparkling everywhere,
紫閣丹樓紛照耀

Jade-plaqued chambers, ornately painted halls, laid out like latticework.
璧房錦殿相玲瓏

To the east lose sight of Ch'ang-lo Pavilion,
東迷長樂觀

To the west point straight to Wei-yang Palace.
西指未央宮

Great walls of vermilion shine in the morning sun,
赤城映朝日

Green trees sway in the spring wind.
綠樹搖春風

A hundred lanes of bannered shops, the New Market appears,
旗亭百隧開新市

A thousand tiles of great mansions split the In-laws Ward.
甲第千甍分戚里

Red wheels and azure canopies cannot bear the spring,
朱輪翠蓋不勝春

Layers of kiosks, files of columns rise face to face.
疊榭層楹相對起

And then there are the blue brothels along the great roads,
復有青樓大道中

Doors, beams, and windows carved to intricate patterns, turning with color.
繡戶文窗雕綺櫳

Where the brocade coverlets are not folded up by day,
錦衾晝不襞

And gauze bed-curtains at night not yet empty.
羅帳夕未空

At dawn they hide in the azure of the singing screens,
歌屏朝掩翠

And look to their evening rouge in the make-up mirrors.
妝鏡晚窺紅

It's for you she sets her jeweled coiffure,
爲君安寶髻

Moth eyebrows quitting the clumps of flowers.
蛾眉罷花叢

In a cloud of dust those narrow lanes darken toward evening,
塵間狹路黯將暮

Then clouds open to the moon, as white as silk.
雲開月色明如素

Over Mandarin Duck Pool they fly pair by pair,
鴛鴦池上兩兩飛

Beneath Phoenix Hall they pass two by two.
鳳凰樓下雙雙度

The bright beauty of things being as it is,
物色正如此

Why should you not hope to meet your lady?
佳期那不顧

Silver saddles, embroidered hubs, the splendor and the glory,
銀鞍繡轂盛繁華

And wonderful to spend this night at the singing girl's home.
可憐今夜宿娼家

Tell the youngest of them there she must not frown—
娼家少婦不須顰

Peach and plum in the eastern garden have but a moment of spring.
東園桃李片時春

Just look where the high terraces were in days gone by,
君看舊日高臺處

From Po-liang, from Copperbird Terrace the yellow dust rises.
柏梁銅雀生黃塵

[03443]

Wang Po's vantage point is from high above the ubiquitous dust, first stirred by the throngs of carriages making their way to the gay quarters and later seen rising from the ruins of ancient terraces in the poet's imagination. Po-liang Terrace, site of a famous group poem composition by Han Wu-ti and his ministers, augurs the end of poets; Copperbird Terrace, in which Ts'ao Ts'ao ordered that his palace ladies be cloistered after his death, augurs the end of fair ladies. But up on the high terrace now, the music, associated with immortal birds, is clear and sad, suggesting the burden of knowledge gained by gazing down on the city and seeing the impermanence of its beauty.

From far vistas the scene gradually focuses in on the gay quarters, the "blue houses," and the theme turns to love. Although Wang's description of the city depends much less on allusion than the two preceding poems, he

is more subtle as his eyes pick out evidence that the lovers have spent the day and night together:

The brocade coverlets not folded up by day,
And gauze bed-curtains at night not yet empty.

錦衾晝不疊
羅帳夕未空

But Wang Po's resolution to the poem is neither an eremitic renunciation of the shining world nor a plea for preferment; his theme is rather carpe diem. He advises the young ladies to take advantage of the "bright beauty of things" and not to frown; he recalls how the dust from the carriages of lovers turns into the dust rising from ruins where lovely ladies of ancient times wasted their lives cloistered.

The shifting valences of the capital theme can move from an eremitic critique of aristocratic splendor to carpe diem, but by far the most common use of it was in the huai-ku. Huai-ku tend to be in pentasyllabic rather than heptasyllabic meter, and are stylistically quite distinct from the songs translated above. Such poems had been written earlier in the seventh century, but fine ones are to be found in the 660s and 670s.

One of the most effective variations on the theme of splendor and ruin is the "Ballad of Fen-yin," 汾陰行, by Li Chiao 李嶠 (644-713), a poet whose work spans five decades, from the time of the "Four Talents" to the end of the Early T'ang. It is impossible to date the "Ballad of Fen-yin," but its style is very much that of the heptasyllabic songs of the 660s and 670s. The topicality of the historical incident referred to might suggest there is some topical, political intent behind the poem. Fen-yin was a minor county that enjoyed a brief moment of glory when Han Wu-ti performed the sacrifices to Earth there.

BALLAD OF FEN-YIN 汾陰行

Haven't you seen in olden days when the Western Capital was in full glory, 君不見昔日西京全盛時

His Majesty himself made sacrifice to the Earth at Fen-yin. 汾陰后土親祭祠

In the fasting room he spent the night, set out the offering, 齋宮宿寢設儲供

Then they rang bells, beat the drums, planted the feathered banners. 撞鐘鳴鼓樹羽旂

The House of Han's fifth generation, brilliant and bold, 漢家五葉才且雄

Who banqueted the hosts of spirits, who brought the barbarians to court. 賓延萬靈朝九戎

And when the great feast and poem session at Po-liang was over, 柏梁賦詩高宴罷

An edict was made and the Royal Coach went on tour to Ho-tung. 詔書法駕幸河東

The Governor of Ho-tung himself swept the region clean, 河東太守親掃除

Humbly welcomed the Most High, led the belled palanquin. 奉迎至尊導鑾輿

Set out as guards, Imperial Armies lined all the roads, 五營夾道列容衛

The three River Provinces permitted to watch, their villages emptied. 三河縱觀空里閭

Banners circled, His Majesty halted on the field where the spirits come down, 回旌駐蹕降靈場

Incense was burned, libations offered, to invite a hundred blessings. 焚香奠酹邀百祥

The golden tripod's beauty shone forth its aureate sheen, 金鼎發色正焜煌

The spirits and Earth God shimmered, unfurling their radiance. 靈祇煒燁擁景光

Jades were buried, sacrifices spread, the rites were ended, 埋玉陳牲禮神畢

Then pennons lifted, horses mounted, and He left on the palanquin. 舉麾上馬乘輿出

The bends of the river Fen were perfect for excursions, 彼汾之曲嘉可遊

His oars were of magnolia, his boat of cassia. 木蘭爲楫桂爲舟

Rowing songs hummed softly, painted cormorant prows drifted,

Flutes and drums played mournfully, an autumn of white clouds.

Then joyous banquets were provided and gifts for great princes,

Home after home sent men to court, all given meat and wine.

The sounds and the brilliance stirred Heaven, such joy there has never been,

"A thousand autumns, ten thousand years—live as long as South Mountain!"

But since the Son of Heaven went back toward the passes of Ch'in,

The jade-fitted palanquins, gilded coaches never returned again.

The pearled screens and feather fans are silent forever,

How can one hold to the dragon's whiskers that leap from Tripod Lake?[31]

A thousand years of human deeds can vanish in a morning,

The whole world is an emperor's home, but not the road there.

Where now are their bold manners, their proud spirits?—

Altar fields and palace halls, all covered in weeds.

On the road I met an old man and he heaved a great sigh:

"The way of the world is a whirling ring, not to be fathomed,

Where in the blue brothels long ago they faced the songs and the dances,

Today there is yellow dust, clusters of brambles and thorns."

Mountains and rivers fill my eyes, tears soak my robes,

Riches, glory, and honor—how long can they endure?

Don't you see right now, there above the river Fen,

櫂歌微吟絲鷁浮
簫鼓哀鳴白雲秋
歡娛宴洽賜羣后
家家復除戶牛酒
聲明動天樂無有
千秋萬歲南山壽
自從天子向秦關
玉輦金車不復還
珠簾羽扇長寂寞
鼎湖龍髯安可攀
千齡人事一朝空
四海爲家此路窮
豪雄意氣今何在
壇場宮館盡高蓬
路逢故老長歎息
世事回環不可測
昔時青樓對歌舞
今日黃埃聚荊棘
山川滿目淚沾衣
富貴榮華能幾時
不見祇今汾水上

Only the autumn geese, flying by year after year. 唯有年年秋雁飛

[03535]

About half a century later we hear again of Li Chiao's ballad:

> Toward the end of the T'ien-pao Reign [754-55, just before the outbreak of the An Lu-shan Rebellion] Ming-huang climbed the second story of Ch'ing-cheng Hall to enjoy springtime, and he ordered his court musicians to play him a few stanzas. And when they sang:
>
> Mountains and rivers fill my eyes, tears soak my robes, 山川滿目淚沾衣
> Riches, glory, and honor—how long can they endure? 富貴榮華能幾時
>
> and the following verse, His Majesty, who was getting on in years, asked, "Whose poem is that?" Someone answered, "Li Chiao's." Tears streamed down His Majesty's face, then he rose abruptly saying, "Chiao was a man of genius." Later that year when His Majesty had flee to Szechwan, he climbed Po-wei Ridge and gazed into the distance for a long time. Again they sang this song, and he responded, "A genius indeed!" And from Kao Li-shih on down all were wiping away their tears.[32]

It is rare to find someone in the eighth century paying tribute to an Early T'ang poem. But the imperial musicians seem to have performed High T'ang surgery on the poem, stripping away the lush description and leaving only a lyrical quatrain. To those who knew Li Chiao's entire poem, the first part of the poem served as a significant background context for the quatrain, contrasting Han Wu-ti's glory to Ming-huang's (Hsüan-tsung) impending doom. The "Ballad of Fen-yin" was quite popular and was anthologized not only in the T'ang-shih chi-shih 唐詩記事, but also in the Sou-yü hsiao-chi 搜玉小集, the Wen-yüan

ying-hua 文苑英華, and most surprisingly in the sternly fu-ku T'ang wen-ts'ui 唐文粹.

All four of the poems quoted in this chapter are either heptasyllabic songs or songs of irregular line length based on a predominantly heptasyllabic meter. Heptasyllabic songs had been written as early as the Wei and had found a brief moment of glory in the hands of Pao Chao. However, it was in the Early T'ang that the heptasyllabic song attained the characteristic themes, diction, and syntactic conventions which were handed down to the poets of the eighth century.

10

WANG PO: A NEW DECORUM

Wang Po's transformation of the courtly style was less extreme than that of Lu Chao-lin, and perhaps for that reason its influence on subsequent poetry was more long-lasting. His regulated verse began the trend toward simplification and personalizing which ultimately led into High T'ang regulated verse. Even when the court was again the center of poetic activity in the later reign of Empress Wu and Chung-tsung, one no longer finds the extreme mannerism of a Shang-kuan Yi. Unlike Lu Chao-lin, Wang Po's best work was in regulated verse and quatrains. His innovations are not to be found in the treatment of thematic conventions, but rather in poetic technique—in the art of the parallel couplet and in poetic closure. Although Wang's poems lack the formarized decorum of court poetry, they have a restraint all their own, a balance that continues to characterize regulated verse in later centuries.

Wang Po (ca. 650-76) represents a distinct biographical "type," the promising young talent who dies tragically before his time. Wang Po's family was illustrious and aristocratic, including the bibulous Wang Chi, whose poetry we have already discussed. His education was surely the best available, and he is supposed to have offered a critique of Yen Shih-ku's commentary to the Han History at the age of nine. Such stories are part and parcel of biographies of literary men, and while we need not completely doubt its veracity, it seems likely that such precocious displays of learning were watched for carefully and embellished by doting relatives.

At the age of twenty Wang Po passed a special examination and entered the court, taking service with a prince

who was particularly fond of cockfighting. For the prince's delectation, no doubt, Wang wrote a comic piece entitled "Mobilization of the Prince of Ying's Cock," which must have been a parody of imperial military documents. Kao-tsung, however, was not in the least amused, and Wang Po found himself dismissed from office. He then began a series of wanderings which took him first to the southeast and later to Szechwan.

Once in Szechwan Wang managed to find a minor post; however, his ill star had not left him. He gave refuge to an escaped slave, then relented, worrying lest he be caught. Unfortunately his solution was to kill the slave, and whole affair was discovered. For this crime he was sentenced to death, but received a pardon before the sentence was carried out. His father, however, had lost his post because of Wang Po's crime and had been exiled to a magistracy in Vietnam. Wang Po left Szechwan to join his father, but was drowned while crossing the South China Sea.

It would be tempting to believe that Wang Po's move away from the style of court poetry was in some way connected with his own rather dramatic removal from court. This, however, does not seem to be the case. The following poem, Wang's most famous and one of his least courtly, was written while he was still in the capital.

MAGISTRATE TU, ON HIS WAY TO TAKE OFFICE IN SHU-CHOU

杜少府之任蜀州

At the palace gates that support the land of Ch'in,
Gazing into the windblown mist of Five Fords,
Thoughts of parting shared with you,
Being both men on official journeys.
If in this world an understanding friend survives,

城闕輔三秦
風煙望五津
與君離別意
同是宦遊人
海內存知己

Then the ends of the earth seem like next door.
So let us not, at this crossroads,
Like a young boy and girl soak our robes with tears.

天涯若比鄰
無為在岐路
兒女共霑巾

[03456]

Five Fords stands for Szechwan where Magistrate Tu is going. Besides being one of Wang Po's least courtly productions, it is also one of his least characteristic. From certain stylistic idiosyncracies we can be relatively certain that the poem is indeed Wang's own, but the Confucian dignity of the poem belies the real direction of Wang Po's talent, the descriptive couplet. The poem begins by setting up the distance which will lie between the two men: from the palace, the center of the state, to the hazy distance of Shu-chou where Tu's post lies. We may notice the variation of the conventional opening which sets the starting point and destination of a journey. Against this distance which will divide them, Wang Po sets up a series of unities—of emotion, of circumstance, and finally of the Confucian sentiment of the brotherhood of good men (Analects, XII. 5). Through these unities the poet opposes the natural sorrow of parting.

This is a remarkable poem for the 670s: it has a tight, internal unity rare in the poetry of the period; instead of descriptive middle couplets, it has personal and philosophical affirmations; and in the closure it consciously inverts the "response of tears," appropriate to parting poetry. This is a poetry of ideas rather than a poetry of celebration, as court poetry is. Its straightforwardness contrasts favorably with the mannered style of the day.

The theme of the unity of the spirit as a counter to the pain of separation is a favorite of Wang Po's. When he speaks of it, his usually carefully crafted style tends to take on a simple dignity.

PARTING FROM HSÜEH SHENG-HUA[33]

別薛升華

The many sending you off have come to the end of their journey,
Now restless, you alone will ask of the ford.
Sad and chill, this thousand-mile road,
Broken by sorrow, man's hundred-year span.
But in heart we shall share your drifting,
To life's end, be with you in suffering.
Speak no more of departure and staying—
We are together men in a dream.

送送多歧路
遑遑獨問津
悲涼千里道
悽斷百年身
心事同漂泊
生涯共苦辛
無論去與住
俱是夢中人

[03449]

"To ask of the ford" is what Confucius requested of his disciple Tzu-lu (Analects, XVIII. 6). The two plowmen Tzu-lu asked turned out to be "crazy" Taoists who responded dementedly that the world was in flux and flood and that there was no "ford." As in the Analects passage, the phrase here is used ambiguously, "to find one's way," both in a physical and spiritual sense. Although in this case the unity of spirit cannot overcome the grief of parting, as it did in the preceding poem, it offers some consolation to the person leaving. Structurally this poem is quite similar to the preceding poem, particularly in the negative imperative of the last couplet, the rejection of a common response. The particular phrasing of Wang's affirmation of unity in the last line is a pattern he uses repeatedly:

We are together men in a dream, 俱是夢中人

and in "Magistrate Tu," line 4:

Being both men on official journeys, 同是宦遊人

and elsewhere:

We are together men in the land of Yüeh. 俱是越鄉人

[03488]

We are together men weary of travel. 俱是倦遊人

[03490]

This pattern is not a convention of court poetry, but what is interesting is that, having become fond of it, Wang Po uses it as though it were. It goes into his mental warehouse of poetic conventions to draw out and use as building block in a poem whenever it seems appropriate. It is a curiously intermediary stage between sixth- and seventh-century conventionality and eighth-century originality.

We can also see a modification of the courtly style in many of Wang Po's quatrains. Courtly quatrains used the same mannered diction as longer court poems, but depended even more heavily on wit, to the point that the quatrain was becoming almost an epigram. Of the two dominant forms of poetic closure, which we shall discuss later, the quatrain was increasingly dominated by the witty twist, which has come to sound almost like a "punch line."[34] Wang Po was one of the first poets to use a grand understatement, often a single image or descriptive line, to close the quatrain. Because it left the quatrain open and suggestive, this technique became one of the dominant forms of poetic closure in the eighth and ninth centuries.

PARTING BY MOONLIGHT IN A RIVER PAVILION II 江亭夜月送别其二

Wild mists veil the emerald stairs, 亂煙籠碧砌
The moon in flight heads toward the southern horizon. 飛月向南端
Silence, the pavilion where we part is closed— 寂寂離亭掩
Mountains and rivers cold this night. 江山此夜寒

[03493]

Characteristic of courtly descriptive techniques are the

"emerald stairs" and the cliché metaphorical verb "veil" 籠, literally "encage" (cf. Shang-kuan Yi, p. 75). However, the elegant opening couplet is transformed by the simplicity of the last line, which besides explaining why the pavilion is closed, suggests a feeling of ubiquitous chill shared by both the men and the landscape. Loneliness and chilliness are strongly associated in the poetic tradition, and on this final night before parting, the men are locked in together against the spiritual chill of solitude as well as against the physical cold. The sense of cold seeping in from the outside and extending over the deserted night landscape is far more powerful than some clever twist on the part of the poet.

Epigrammatic quatrains continued to exist alongside the open-ended, suggestive variety through the subsequent history of Chinese poetry, but it was in the latter form that the Chinese quatrain found its true greatness. The following poem, another example of this new technique, was among the most popular of Wang Po's poems in later ages.

IN THE MOUNTAINS 山中

Grief at having lingered by the long river, 長江悲已滯
Longing for future return over thousands of miles. 萬里念將歸
Even more, set in this evening when the wind is high, 況屬高風晚
And on mountain after mountain the yellow leaves are flying. 山山黃葉飛

[03503]

In the first couplet Wang Po sets himself in time, between an unsatisfying past and a desired future. His wish to return home is intensified by his awareness of autumn and the dissolution of the forest scene in the autumn wind. But most of the interest in the poem lies in the

hidden parallel, of which the reader is unconsciously aware, between the poet and the leaves. As they are breaking loose and flying away, he too longs to "break loose" from his "fixed" position, to be set in motion also, to fly away to his home (cf. Shen Ch'üan-chi, "Rejoicing at a Reprieve," lines 7-8, p. 362). But the fall of the leaves also indicates autumn and impending destruction, lending a sense of urgency to his return. The structural relation between the two halves of the poem is not explicit: the poem is left "open" with an objective scene, left for the reader to sense or decipher why it is "even more" urgent on this evening.

In a less personal mood, Wang Po was quite capable of writing clever, mannered quatrains in the courtly style. By way of contrast I offer the following pair:

PARTING ON AN AUTUMN RIVER

秋江送別二首

I

其一

Early I met early autumn in a strange land,
By a river pavilion the bright moon was carried on by the river's flow.
I had known that the stream's passage onward wounds thoughts of parting,
But look now how the ford trees hide the boat you leave on.

早是他鄉值早秋
江亭明月帶江流
已覺逝川傷別念
復看津樹隱離舟

[03512]

II

其二

Homeward boats, homeward riders, form a strict line,
North of the river and south of the river, gazing at one another.
Who says that these waves are only a strip of water?—
I now understand that mountains and rivers are two different lands.

歸舟歸騎儼成行
江南江北互相望
誰謂波瀾纔一水
已覺山川是兩鄉

[03513]

Both poems employ playful word repetitions, something of a tour de force: the first- and sixth-position words in each line of the first couplet of the first poem are identical, as are the first- and third-position words in the first couplet of the second poem. Wang Po is playing with one of the most common and enduring antitheses in the parallel couplet, the opposition of land and water. In the first poem the poet is already distressed by the river and its actual and symbolic significance to those parting, but he finds it particularly perverse that the trees on the land should add to his difficulty by blocking his friend from sight. In the second poem Wang uses one of the most common of courtly tropes to set up a clever comment: "Who says X is true (when X most certainly is true), because Y (clever idea) contradicts it." Through parting, the river becomes not a tiny area but a division between two different worlds.

As might be expected from one of China's greatest parallel prose stylists, Wang Po's real strength lies in his descriptive powers and his ability to write a perfect couplet. Although Wang's characteristic couplet style is quite different, if he so desires he can outdo any court poet in mannered excess:

On plum swards fall evening blossoms,
In willow realms startle up first leaves.
Flowing water draws forth strange fancies,
Toppling clouds sprinkle scented tablets.
[03435]

梅郊落晚英
柳甸驚初葉
流水灑奇弄
崩雲　芳牒

The growth of the leaves is compressed in time to a "startling up," ching 驚, "to rise up swiftly with surprise"; the waves are "sprouting" into strange forms, or "drawing forth," ch'ou 抽, the poet's fancies by their forms. The "toppling clouds" sprinkle the poet's writing tablets with light rain, the external circumstances of

the composition as well as their topic. The uncharacteristic ornateness of this passage can be attributed to the fact that it is a banquet poem, the most tenacious and rigidly prescribed of the courtly subgenres.

As he worked to simplify the parallel couplet without letting it get dull and mechanical, Wang learned to frame his startling images in lines that were otherwise direct. In this way attention was focused on the image and its effect heightened by contrast. For example, the following line: "A hawk-wind withers the evening leaves," 鷹風凋晚葉 (03454). "Hawk-wind" is original; Wang Po excelled in creating compounds in which the relation between the two elements is suggestive and undefined. There is a resemblance between the way in which the destructive autumn wind strikes the leaves and a hawk strikes its prey: both are keen, swift, and convey a sense of sharpness and violence. To an earlier court poet "withers" would probably have been too direct a verb and "evening" too simple a modifier for the leaves; such a poet might have written: "A hawk-wind touches the jade leaves"; the extraneous ornament would have destroyed both the precision of the line and the power of the phrase "hawk-wind."

In his descriptive lines Wang Po went far beyond the creative imitation practiced by the court poets to original observation of Nature. Instead of the parks and groves of the court poet's excursions, Wang Po was fascinated by the grander aspects of Nature:

Lightning whips drive on the dragon light. 電策驅龍光
[03439]

or:

Fish-beds—waters invading the banks; 魚牀侵岸水
Bird-roads—mist entering the mountains. 鳥道入山煙
[03463]

or:

Compound cliffs delude daylight's bright beauty, 複嶂迷曙色
Empty crags differentiate streams in darkness. 虛巖辨暗流
[03473]

With this interest in the larger natural world Wang Po was drawn to scenes of steepness and sheerness, to precarious situations.

Layered gates look down on a huge abyss, 重門臨巨壑
Linked beams rise on lofty mountain bends. 連棟起崇隈
[03448]

Towers and terraces look down on sheer slopes. 樓臺臨絕岸
[03450]

The road to the ford looks down on a huge abyss, 津塗臨巨壑
Village huts framed on precarious cliffs. 村宇架危岑
[03474]

Much can be learned about a poet by studying the kinds of landscape he sees; the traditional correlation of the poet's inner state with the external landscape was based on his ability to structure and select elements from a real landscape before him which serve as parallels to his own state. Wang Po's obsession with peril mirrors the perils of his experience, and the poet who sought out dangerous forms in the landscape was the poet who implicated himself in one dangerous situation after another.

The innovations of Wang Po in the poetic closure of quatrains extend to a lesser degree into his regulated verse and longer poems. The problems of poetic closure were complicated because they involved basic concepts of what constituted a poem, a shih. The evolution and codification of the tripartite form in shih was no accident: the tripartite form was the structural manifestation of

a particular concept of poetry as a description of an external scene or experience and an internal response to it. The earliest and simplest form of this concept of poetic closure was in exclamatory sighs or tears. This basic "it makes me sad" closure went through periods of relative disuse, but it never disappeared entirely. As one may well imagine, it permitted very little verbal variation and often dangles like a familiar, formulaic appendage at the end of an otherwise brilliant poem. During the fourth and fifth centuries other intellectual and meditative closing forms evolved, each a different kind of "response" to the main body of the poem. By the seventh century, however, the only real competitor with the direct, emotional closing was the witty closure of court poetry. Though such cleverness may seem less a "response" than the other forms, it is still usually internal in comparison to the external scene: it may involve some new and clever perception or understanding of the scene, some novel interpretation of the external world. Often the emotional component of the "response" will be affirmed as the poet expresses his "surprise" at the observation.

Trapped into a choice between supercilious wit and dull sighs, there appeared a third and very attractive possibility for poetic closure: the emotional response was transferred from the poet to the reader by leaving the closure open, by using a scene or image to generate a complex mood or emotion, like the ancient "stimulus," hsing. The reader is invited to set the closing image in relation to the scene and mood already established. This technique for poetic closure antedates Wang Po, and we saw a contemporary use of it in the closing of "Ch'ang-an: ku-yi." But Wang Po was one of the first poets to apply it to the quatrain—with brilliant results. It appears also in some of his longer poetry, as in the following regulated verse (03472).

DEPARTING FROM YI-YANG IN THE EARLY MORNING

易陽早發

I packed my bags in dawn moonlight,
Wait on the fading stars to speed up my riding whip.
From the sheer tower make my way over cinnabar cliffs,
Off twisting bridges reach to azure screens.
Among clouds I'm lost in the shadows of trees,
Then in fog can't make out the forms of the cliffs.
And now again a chill gust comes,
Sets flying night's fireflies in deserted mountains.

飭裝候曉月
奔策候殘星
危閣尋丹障
回梁屬翠屏
雲間迷樹影
霧裏失峯形
復此涼飆至
空山飛夜螢

The "azure screens" are probably cliffs covered with green foliage. This is a brilliant application of the court poet's miniature descriptive art on a larger canvas. The relationship of the cold gust of wind and the flight of fireflies in the dark expanse to the arduous day's journey is a complex one: in many ways it resolves the poet's sense of being confined, fogged in, and hard pressed. Somehow it works and works far better than if he had merely stated his dissatisfaction with the journey. Beneath a mask of impersonality the closing couplet manages to be deeply personal.

In the majority of his poems, however, Wang Po suffers the court poet's inability to weld the diverse elements of his poems together into a powerful whole. Ironically, some of his most thematically unified poems are occasional court poems such as "Banquet at Lo-yu Gardens on a Spring Day" (03435), in which the pervasive wetness of the scene symbolizes the kindness and generosity of his companions. Many of Wang's travel poems are weak precisely because of his reliance on the older form of poetic closure. The following poem exemplifies this problem: Wang sets the perils of travel by water against the perils of travel

by land in a series of superb descriptive couplets; however, the couplets lead to nothing, and the poet can say no more in the end than that it disturbs him.

MUD GULCH 泥谿

I rest my oars to pass through a swift ravine, 弭櫂凌奔壑
And put down my whip to pace a steep mountain path. 低鞭躡峻岐
River billows emerge from banks dangerous, 江濤出岸險
Peak steps enter the clouds perilous. 峯磴入雲危
The current sharp, boat's patterned wake a jumble, 溜急船文亂
Precipices slant, the rider's shadow shifts. 巖斜騎影移
Then mist on the water veils azure isles, 水煙籠翠渚
And mountain sunshine falls on rust red slopes. 山照落丹崖
The wind rises in the leaves of reed shores, 風生蘋浦葉
Dew glistens on the branches of bamboo pools. 露泫竹潭枝
Trips by water are supposed to be wonderful— 泛水雖云美
Who can understand the song of my hardships? 勞歌誰復知
[03476]

The surprise and beauty of these scenes lies not in the observation of the quirks and minutiae of Nature, but rather in a freshness of perception achieved through the syntactic distortions that were the legacy of court poetry. In the second couplet we cannot be sure whether the bank or billows are dangerously high, whether the steps or clouds hangs perilously above the poet. Instead of rising in the "reed leaves on the shore," Wang Po's wind chooses to appear in the "leaves of reed shores" 蘋浦葉. Such syntactic rearrangements of a line became standard in the diction of regulated verse, the above poem being an extended regulated verse, a p'ai-lü 排律.

Though he modified the courtly style, Wang Po was never far from it; he never made the sharp break with court poetry which we find in at least some of Lu Chao-

lin's poetry. With the dignified descriptive grace of his new style, Wang will write:

Pulling at flowers, make my way through the purple valley, 牽花尋紫澗
Then treading leaves I descend to a clear creek. 步葉下清谿

[03465]

but in the next line he will speak of the stream as a "nephrite broth" 瓊漿.

Wang Po's collection contains a number of eremitic poems and poems on the immortals, but neither of these types has the power of his parting and travel poems. There are a few heptasyllabic songs, the best of which is "Looking Down from the High Terrace," discussed in chapter 9. One of Wang's most famous poems in his "Tower of the Prince of T'eng," which follows Wang's best-known piece of parallel prose, the "preface" on the banquet there. Certainly much of the poem's fame is due to the preface. The poem is an eight line, heptasyllabic "old-style" verse, ku-shih 古詩, more successful than Wang's other ku-shih because its symmetrical tightness and regularity bring it closer to regulated verse, in which he excelled. A sense of generic propriety demanded that the theme of the impermanence of worldly glory be treated in heptasyllabic "old-style" verse.

TOWER OF THE PRINCE OF T'ENG 滕王閣

The Prince of T'eng's high tower looks down on river isles, 滕王高閣臨江渚
Jade bangles and ringing phoenixes have ceased their songs and dances. 珮玉鳴鸞罷歌舞
Morning—its painted beams send flying Southbank's clouds, 畫棟朝飛南浦雲
Evening—beaded curtains roll up the rain on western mountains. 珠簾暮捲西山雨
Calm clouds, reflected in pools, go on and on each day, 閒雲潭影日悠悠

But things change, constellations move—
how many autumns gone by?
And where today is the prince of the tower?—
Beyond the railing the great river
flows on and on alone.

物換星移幾度秋
閣中帝子今何在
檻外長江空自流

[03444]

The tower is a world of singing and dancing, a world of sensual pleasure that lasts only a short while; against it is set the great river which is eternal. "Morning clouds" and "evening rain" are together a euphemism for sexual intercourse, but with strong associations of the impermanence of sensual pleasure. They derive from a story told in the preface to the Kao-t'ang fu 高唐賦, attributed to Sung Yü 宋玉, of how the King of Ch'u met the goddess of Wu Mountain in a dream and made love to her.[35] As she left him she recited these verses:

I live on the sunny slope of Wu Mountain,
On the steep places of the high hill—
At dawn I am the morning clouds,
At evening, the moving rain.

妾在巫山之陽
高丘之阻
旦爲朝雲
暮爲行雨

Afterward the King of Ch'u sought her again, but like the "morning clouds" with which she had identified herself, the goddess had moved on. Looking into the physical scene before him, Wang Po sees these emblems of sexuality: they are haunting reminders of past joy much like Lu Chao-lin's version of the lovers Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju and Cho Wen-chün in the landscape around Lute Terrace.

The opening of Wang's poem is a closing, the end of the feast. The unwritten banquet poem celebrating this feast and the Prince of T'eng's past feasts is over, and what follows is an expanse of time, a string of mornings and evenings that contain emblems of Nature's permanence and human impermanence. This landscape filled with the hermetic signs of the passage of time undermines the joy of the feast and transforms celebration into elegy.[36]

11

LO PIN-WANG: POETRY AND RHETORIC

Among the poets of the seventh century Lo Pin-wang's work is distinguished both by complexity and size (about 130 poems in all), yet his poetry presents the most difficult problems of interpretation and evaluation. Like Lu Chao-lin and Wang Po, Lo Pin-wang was a master of parallel prose rhetoric, but while Lu and Wang made a clear distinction between their various poetic styles and parallel prose, Lo Pin-wang brought the structure and diction of poetry closer to that of prose rhetoric. Like Lu and Wang, Lo Pin-wang was moving away from the decorum of court poetry, not toward a new simplicity and directness, but rather toward the complexity of rhetorical exposition.

Ironically, this hermetic style responded in many ways to the demands of the opposition poetics. The parallel prose model offered the poet the kind of moral and intellectual seriousness that was felt to be lacking in court poetry. Parallel prose possessed a structural and intellectual vocabulary for expressing complex ideas, developing a meditative theme, and narrating personal experiences. Lo made extensive use of these elements from parallel prose: although he did write a number of courtly occasional lyrics, he has far more meditative poems and personal narratives than any T'ang poet before him.

Unfortunately what Lo Pin-wang gained in seriousness of topic he lost in poetry. Lo seems incapable of direct or moving statement; he preferred any form of circumlocution, metonymy, metaphor, or allusion. Parallel prose brought him excessive artifice along with seriousness. More than any poet before Han Yü, Lo was an intellectual poet: to him a poem seemed to be a highly ornamented idea.

In the classical West, poetry and the art of persuasive rhetoric were old friends; in China this meeting was late, and judging from Lo's poetry, we may be grateful that the two soon parted company. Lo's reputation as a parallel prose stylist endured, but his poetry fared even more poorly than Lu's or Wang's. The "Imperial Capital" is a partial exception. In the ten anthologies which survive from the T'ang and in the T'ang wen-ts'ui there is only one poem by Lo Pin-wang, and that is in the Sou-yü hsiao-chi, an anthology of Early T'ang poets in which many of Lo's contemporaries figure heavily.

Unlike Wang Po, Lo Pin-wang (ca. 640-84) was not from the upper levels of officialdom, though his father was a county magistrate of some local fame. Like many young intellectuals of the period, Lo began his career by entering the service of a T'ang prince, the Prince of Tao. It was probably after the prince died in 664 that Lo received a minor post as Secretary of Rites and later as a textual editor in the Chancellory.

In 670 Lo was banished to the northwestern frontiers for an unknown offense or association. There he participated in the wars against the Tibetans. In the years following that he travelled southward through Szechwan to the extreme southwestern corner of the empire, where he held several minor posts. In 676 was recalled to Ch'ang-an where he served first as a registrar and later in 678 as a censor in the court of general affairs. The censorate was not a particularly safe position to be in during Empress Wu's regency, and like so many other officials, Lo found himself on the wrong side of the struggle for power. Soon after his promotion to the censorate, Lo was imprisoned for remonstrating with the empress. In 679 he was released in the amnesty that went with the adoption of a new reign title and the transfer of the capital to Lo-yang.

His release did not change his unpopularity with his

superiors. In 680 Lo was exiled to a minor post in the county of Lin-hai in modern Chekiang Province. Lo was in no great hurry to reach this post, and when he arrived there, he found the job so distasteful that he soon quit. Out of work and out of favor he joined Hsü Ching-yeh's rebellion against Empress Wu, which broke out when she assumed absolute authority. His contribution to the rebellion was a famous and effective proclamation against the empress which was said to have excited her admiration for his style as much as it annoyed her. When the rebellion was crushed, Lo was captured and presumably executed. There is an apocryphal legend that he escaped and became a Buddhist monk, to be discovered many years later by his old friend Sung Chih-wen.

Lo Pin-wang's early work is quite securely within the structural confines of court poetry; however, even then he shows a tendency to extreme circumlocution and display of erudition. Mooring one evening in early autumn at the Yangtze port of Chiang-chen, Lo saw ships from the imperial fleet. The essentials of the situation appear straightforwardly in the title, "Mooring by Chiang-chen in the Evening" 晚泊江鎮(04235), plain words in their proper order. But as he moves into the poem proper, he is taken by a seemingly irresistable urge to elegantly deform, elaborate, and replace:

The fourfold cycle shifts to the Yin pitch-pipes, 四運移陰律
The Three Wings float on Baron Yang. 三翼泛陽侯

The educated contemporary reader would certainly know that the "fourfold cycle" was the cycle of the seasons, that the "Yin pitchpipes" were associated with autumn, and that Baron Yang, as the god of the waves, represented the river. It might have taken a bit more trouble to remember that the Three Wings were the three classes of war galleys. There would probably have been a certain

amount of admiration at Lo's technical prowess in finding a "three" and "Yang" in the second line to match a "four" and "Yin" in the first. But the courtier's sharp eye and clever wit are absent here; no one could miss the fact that Lo has said something very banal with extreme elegance.

Taken as a whole "Mooring by Chiang-chen in the Evening" is a far better poem than the first couplet promises. The descriptive section is competent but not brilliant, and in the expanded response section we can already see tendencies to complex argumentation.

MOORING BY CHIANG-CHEN IN THE EVENING

晚泊江鎮

The fourfold cycle shifts to the Yin pitchpipes,
The Three Wings float on Baron Yang.
The scent of lotus melts away late summer,
As breath from chrysanthemums enters new autumn.
Night crows chatter on whitewashed battlements.
Geese descend for the night on isles of reeds.
Ocean fogs veil the frontiers,
A wind from the river encircles the fortress tower.
The whirling tumbleweed startles at signs of parting,
The shifted orange grieves for departure's sorrow.
My soul flies to the slopes of the Pa Mounds,
My tears are used up in Lake Tung-t'ing's currents.
I'll stir my shadow, my thoughts on the "swan over the plain,"
And flee renown, withdrawing from Anthill.
But then I sigh at how far the capital is—
In vain I gaze on the white clouds drifting.

四運移陰律
三翼泛陽侯
荷香銷晚夏
菊氣入新秋
夜烏喧粉堞
宿雁下蘆洲
海霧籠邊徼
江風繞戍樓
轉蓬驚別緒
徙橘愴離憂
魂飛灞陵岸
淚盡洞庭流
振影希鴻陸
逃名謝蟻丘
還嗟帝鄉遠
空望白雲浮

[04235]

The last eight lines require a paraphrase:

> I, a wanderer like the whirling tumbleweed, am shaken when I see something that reminds me of parting and being away from home; in the same way I am like the orange, which grows only in the South and changes to a different tree if transplanted in the North, thus a symbol of steadfastness and purity. Since my body cannot go there, my soul flies off to the Pa Mounds, near Ch'ang-an where I long to be; since I cannot go there I use up all my tears weeping here in the South. In the Yi-ching we read, "The wild swan slowly crosses the plain, but the wanderer does not return." The best visual evidence of my motion will be in my shadow, so I'll set it moving to emulate that wild swan and return home. In avoiding political success and fame I'll be like that tavern keeper at "Anthill" in Ch'u who left his tavern to avoid meeting Confucius. But even though I would like to return home and renounce worldly glory on one level, I cannot help but yearn for the distant capital and worldly success on another. Thus as I gaze toward the capital, my vision is blocked by white clouds, suggesting to me both those who "block" me from Her Majesty's/His Majesty's favor and the cloudlike vanity of my desires.

Such an argument built up of multiple allusions is characteristic of parallel prose.

Lo Pin-wang was easily capable of using new and recondite allusions, but there is a tendency to use the same ones over and over again. A little downstream from Chiang-chen Lo writes in another poem (04226):

The Imperial Walls look down on the shores of the Pa,	帝城臨灞浐
Yü's cave rests on the Yangtze's banks.	禹穴枕江干
Further on, the orange's nature will surely change,	橘性行應化
And the tumbleweed's heart goes off uneasily.	蓬心去不安

At times Lo Pin-wang could outdo even Shang-kuan Yi

in clever and mannered description:

Flowers in her mirror shake the water chestnut sun, 鏡花搖芰日
Robe's musk enters the lotus-scented wind. 夜麝入荷風
[04215]

The meaning of the first line of this couplet is open to various interpretations. The "flowers" are probably flashes of light shining off of it, rather than real flowers reflected or the fair lady herself, a "flower." These reflected flashes may quiver on the water chestnuts as tiny "suns" or mingle with the sunlight shining on them. Lo is reworking a couplet of Yü Hsin:

Sunbeams move as flames on her hairpins, 日光釵燄動
Light through the window shakes flowers in her mirror.[37] 窗影鏡花搖

However, such visual ingenuity is not usually characteristic of Lo's poetry.

Lo Pin-wang's strong sense of rhetorical argument and prose amplification enabled him to write poems much longer than was common in the seventh century. Besides his "Imperial Capital," Lo has several other long pieces that aim at a seventh-century sense of seriousness. The preface to one such poem (04132) begins with Confucian literary dogma, "What is in the heart as intention is poetry when it appears in speech. Still, what is written cannot completely express what is spoken, and what is spoken cannot completely express what is in the mind," and proceeds to apply these principles to the poet's own experiences. Lo's formulation of Confucian dogma stresses that serious literature is about oneself, and Lo applies himself energetically to this, his favorite topic. One of Lo's most successful poems is thus the mammoth "Long Ago," Ch'ou-hsi p'ien 疇昔篇(04149), a highly ornamented poetic autobiography in two hundred lines.[38] This poem is

one of the earliest examples of long poetic autobiography, a subgenre which was to become important in the eighth and ninth centuries. The tendency of the later subgenre to extreme ornamentation may derive in part from the model of "Long Ago."

As Lo Pin-wang borrowed the diction, structure, and themes of parallel prose, only the formal differences and extended treatment of parallel prose remained to differentiate the two genres. We can see this clearly in the relationship of the preface and the poem in the following allegorical piece.

A FLOATING LOG

As my eyes drifted over the stream, they spied a floating log, tossing aimlessly like that wooden statue riding the current, lost and not knowing where it was going.

I observed how its roots coiled and how its trunk and branches spread out all around. In its larger parts there was material for beams and oars; in its smaller parts it might have served for wheel axles and rafter eaves.

Were it not endowed with the surging spirit of Heaven and Earth, did it not possess within itself the pure essences of the universe, how could it have relied on that outward form which passed up over the clouds and measured the sun, how could it have clasped within such a frame on which the snow piled and which the frost encased?

And while it was able to keep its material to itself in some hidden marsh, to hide its flowering behind layered cliffs, then it cut off from its sight the glory of the Temple's porch, where the plans of state are made, then it banished its form from ruin by axe and hatchet. Securely it could spread down its shade over ten thousand acres and hang bright radiance up through the nine layers of the sky; it could compare its height with the (legendary) Chien tree and could equal the long life of the mighty Ch'un tree.

But it set down its roots on a perilous cliff, trusted its substance to dangerous paths; above it was smashed by gales and

sudden gusts, beneath was dashed through by rushing billows and swift waves. Since its base was enclosed by the soil, its position was rendered precarious by the lay of the land.

The order of its increase and decline was not bound up with the times, nor were the principles of nurture and husbandry within its own control. Once it fell into the stream valley, it bobbed and swirled ten thousand miles, floating then sinking under the waves, moving off then stopping according to chance.

Though some Yin Chung-wen may sigh that its life is gone (as he did seeing the withered tree in the courtyard), though Confucius, Eminent Father, may realize how hard it is to work rotten timber—all the same, if it comes upon a fine craftsman or meets some immortal, then it can tie up at Ox Jetty after floating over the vault of Heaven, and the path ahead of the Jade Ornament—found by T'ai-kung in a fish—will not be long. Then Craftsman Shih will size it up, and it will not be far from becoming a vessel for the Emperor, Lord of Ten Thousand Chariots. When I think of these possibilities, I realize that it is purely chance whether this material is to be used or not. Alas!

This being true, how can it be that among the myriad things only those of the same voice and same spirit may respond to one another? Deeply stirred, I have written this poem to offer to those who suffer the same sickness.

浮槎并序

遊目川上。觀一浮槎。泛泛然若木偈之乘流。迷不知其所適也。觀其根柢盤屈。枝幹扶疏。大則有棟梁舟楫之材。小則有輪輻棬桷之用。非夫稟乾坤之秀氣。含宇宙之淳精。孰能負凌雲概日之峯。抱積雪封霜之骨。何使懷材幽藪。藏穎重巖。絕望於巖廊之策。遺形於斤斧之愚。固可垂蔭萬畝。懸映九霄。與建木較其短長。將大椿齊其年壽者。而系根險岸。託質畏途。

上為疾風衝颿所摧殘。下為奔浪迅波所激射。基由壞拓。勢以地危。豈盈衰之理數乎時。封植之道存乎我。一墜泉谷。萬歎飄淪。與波浮沈。隨時逝止。雖殷仲文良生意已盡。孔宣父知朽質難雕。然而遇工。逢仙客。牛磯可託。玉壎之路非遙。匠石先談。萬乘之器何遠。故材用與不用。時也。悲夫。然則萬物之相應感者。亦莫必同聲同氣而已哉。感而賦詩。始諸同疾云爾。

Of old it relied on its thousand-foot substance,
And on high, looked down over nine-cubit peaks.
Its pure heart surpassed the cassia late in the year,
Its sturdy resolve outdid the winter pine.
Suddenly it met with a gale, was broken,
Then was struck by billows and waves,
To no purpose it rages against its ruin
And has become useless through knottiness.
Three thousand miles into the Sea of Po,
Through how many layers of sand and mud?
It seems a boat, rolling, unstable,
Or like that statue, floating to what end?
To the last it will be hard to find an immortal,
Nor will it be easy to meet a good craftsman.
In vain it harbors a vessel for the emperor,
But who will make measurements for the crafting?

昔負質
高臨千尋
眞心凌九仞
勁節掩晚峯
忽坐値風颿折衡
摧擁腫波浪根庸
渤海空遂有里
泥沙幾萬重
似舟梗泛不定
如仙客終何從
良工豈易逢
徒懷萬一托
誰爲先容

[04236]

Originally a "preface," hsü 序, was meant to establish a historical or biographical context in which a poem or event could signify fully. This classical form appears in Wang Po's "Tower of the Prince of T'eng": the preface describes the banquet, scene, and history of the event,

and the poem responds to the situation. The distinction between the poem and the parallel prose preface is clearly drawn. In "A Floating Log," however, the preface says at length what the poem says succinctly. The primary variation is that the preface sets up the hope that the log will be used, that the wanderer will be employed, and the poem destroys that hope. With the exception of the closing, however, the poem closely follows the argument of the preface, both in categories of discussion and in phrasing.

The third paragraph of the preface corresponds to the first couplet of the poem: its height, "relying on that outward form which passed up over the clouds and measured the sun," 負凌雲概日之姿, is stripped to "Of old it relied on its thousand-foot substance," 昔負千尋質. The fourth paragraph of the preface concerns the tree's safety in its seclusion and how it flourished there; in the poem this is rendered in the seclusion and endurance of the pine and cassia. The poetic version has stronger ethical associations, punning on "pure heart/trunk," 心, and "sturdy resolve/joints," 節. The preface presents an elegant and graceful version of the traditional hyperbolic trope in which some object is compared favorably to a mythical exemplar; "it could compare its height with the (legendary) Chien tree and could equal the long life of the mighty Ch'un tree," 與建木較其長短, 將大椿齊其年壽者. In the poem this elegant phrasing must be discarded in favor of the concise clichés of the "surpassing" trope: "surpass," 凌, and "outdo" (literally "cover over"), 掩. The legendary trees of the preface are replaced by the emblematic pine and cassia mentioned above.

Again in the third couplet, the expressive phrasing of the preface is stripped to a weak echo by verse's demands for economy; from "above it was smashed by gales and sudden gusts, beneath it was dashed through by rushing

billows and swift waves," 上為疾風衝飄所摧殘；下為奔浪迅波所激射, to "Suddenly it met with a gale, was broken,/Then was struck by billows and waves," 忽值風飄折，坐為波浪衝. The painful inferiority of the poem to the parallel prose of the preface exemplifies the problem of trying to make poetry work like parallel prose: the stylistic devices of poetry had been evolved to function in the economy of the pentasyllabic line; the ornament of parallel prose required longer periods and looser structure, and when "translated" into verse, it became flat and thin.

Lines seven to twelve of the poem disengage themselves from the meditation on chance and fate which is to be found in the corresponding section of the preface. Instead the poem elaborates on the insecurity and helplessness of the log; no one appreciates it. As the poem breaks free from the argument of the preface, it may turn around and comment on what was said in the preface: it gives a negative answer to the hope expressed in the preface that the log may meet a good craftsman. In this the poem complements the preface, but the difference is partially a function of generic demands: the closing expression of distress is the natural coda of the shih tradition.

Lo's poetry ranges from the sort of versified argument which we see in the preceding poem to a peculiarly dense and allusive lyric style which appears in his formal exercises on set topics and in his famous "On the Cicada: in prison." This poem too has a parallel prose preface, but in this case there is a distinction between the prosiac and poetic treatment.

ON THE CICADA: IN PRISON

The Western Course: a cicada's voice singing;	西陸蟬聲唱
A southern cap: longing for home intrudes.	南冠客思侵
How can I bear those shadows of black locks	那堪玄鬢影
That come here to face my Song of White Hair?	來對白頭吟

Dew heavy on it, can fly no farther toward me,
The wind strong, its echoes easily lost.
No one believes in nobility and purity—
On my behalf who will explain what's in my heart?

露重飛難進
風多響易沈
無人信高潔
誰爲表予心

[04190]

This certainly requires a paraphrase:

When the sun moves through the Western Course of the heavens, a sign of autumn, the cicada sings. Its singing causes homesickness in me, like that once felt by Chung Yi of Ch'u, wearing his southern cap as a memento of his homeland when a prisoner in the state of Ch'in. Like him I am a southerner imprisoned in the North. How can I bear that those wings of the cicada, so often used to describe the curls of beautiful ladies, come to listen to my "Song of White Hair," like that which Cho Wen-chün sang when Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju abandoned her? Those black cicada wings like curls remind me of youth and attractive beauty, unbearable to one who is growing old and feels rejected by his ruler. Futhermore, since the singing of the cicada is a reminder of autumn, the season associated with the coming of old age how can I bear that it come any closer to me, reminding me of my own aging? But perhaps I have misunderstood the cicada: associated with purity and old age, it may be a kindred spirit. If my ruler hears it, it may remind him of my purity and old age, and thus obtain my release. In this respect its singing is like pleading my case to the throne. But it, like me, is caught up in the autumn situation which it represents: the dew is so heavy on it it can fly no further and thus will not be able to get into the palace and reach the ruler's ears; furthermore, though I might hope that its singing will be heard from outside, the autumn wind is so strong that its voice will be drowned out. Even if his singing, or my own in this poem, were to reach near the throne, it would do no good, because no one believes any more in nobility or purity—neither mine, my innocence of crime, nor that of the cicada. Thus there is no one to state my case

for me.

Expanded by paraphrase, the logic of this poem does come close to a parallel prose argument; however, the poetic economy of hint, allusion, and ambiguity reduce it to something quite different than "A Floating Log." Lo's looser, more discursive style is more common than the density of the poem above. By way of comparison there is another poem of the same imprisonment, "Brief Notes to My Friends from Prison," 幽縈書情通簡知己 (04251), the first eight lines of which follow:

In years gone by I met my Yang Te-yi,	昔歲逢楊德
Observing the radiance, they honored Ch'u's genius.	觀光貴楚材
It seemed the cinnabar phoenix would rise from its cave,	穴疑丹鳳起
It was as if a white colt came from among the willows.	場似白駒來
One order sunk some bait for the proud,	一命淪驕餌
A "thrice-sealed" warned of calamity's womb.	三緘愼禍胎
Before speaking I suffered waxing and waning,	不言勞倚伏
Here suddenly encountered twists and turns.	忽此遘遭迴

This continues for twenty-eight more equally turgid lines. The lines above say only that Lo found someone who appreciated his talents, but that no sooner were his fortunes on the rise than he fell into disfavor.

However unsuccessful they were, such attempts to achieve a poetry that could serve as a vehicle for self-expression were an important phenomenon of the period. Two decades later in the work of Ch'en Tzu-ang, a better vehicle was found.

PART THREE

CH'EN TZU-ANG

[Wu had once been a state on the lower Yangtze; it later became an elegant designation for the general region. The Wu region was the cultural center of the Southern Dynasties. In the Chronicles of Wu and Yüeh, a romanticized history of the lower Yangtze region a millennium before the Southern Dynasties, there is a story that after the wise minister Fan Li had aided Yüeh in conquering the neighboring state of Wu, he left the service of Yüeh. In memory of Fan Li's accomplishments, the King of Yüeh had artisans cast a golden statue of him.]

Shen Ch'üan-ch'i and Sung Chih-wen dashed over the field of literature—
沈宋橫馳翰墨場

Courtly men who at first couldn't abandon the Ch'i and Liang,
風流初不廢齊梁

But if we judge whose is the credit in conquering Wu,
論功若準平吳例

They ought to compose the shining gold to cast a Ch'en Tzu-ang.
合著黃金鑄子昂

Yüan Hao-wen, "Quatrains on Poetry" VIII[1]

In the eyes of the famous thirteenth-century poet and critic Yüan Hao-wen 元好問, Sung Chih-wen and Shen Ch'üan-ch'i, whose poetry had been the glory of the last decades of the Early T'ang, were in fact mere craftsmen, fit only to glorify the true talent of the age, Ch'en Tzu-ang 陳子昂. To Yüan, Ch'en Tzu-ang was the man responsible for the literary defeat of Wu, the southern courtly style, just as Fan Li had been responsible for the military defeat of the ancient state of Wu.

Yüan Hao-wen was a champion of the northern poetry of his own Chin dynasty against that of the Southern Sung and thus had his private motives for praising Ch'en Tzu-ang as the conqueror of the poetic style of the Southern Dynasties. However, in his admiration he followed an already long-established tradition that credited Ch'en

with changing the stylistic norms of poetry single-handedly. Tu Fu, usually an admirer of court poetry, seems to be suggesting Ch'en's role as the first to restore the greatness of ancient literature in the following lines from a poem on Ch'en's former dwelling in Szechwan:

It caused you no pain that your office was low,	位下曷足傷
Sage wisdom and virtue were what you honored.	所貴者聖賢
Talent you had—to continue the Odes and Sao,	有才繼騷雅
"Great craftsmen" fell short of your stature.	哲匠不比肩
Born to the line of Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju, Yang Hsiung,	公生揚馬後
Your fame hangs in the heavens with sun and moon.	名與日月懸

[10709]

Ch'en Tzu-ang's contentment with his low office echoes a strain of Confucian thought which associates virtue and poverty. Fu-ku sentiments had always been attractive to those outside court circles, those who never made it to the top of the official hierarchy. Ch'en possesses the talent to "continue" ancient poetry after a hiatus of many centuries. "Great craftsmen" had been a positive term, but in this passage Tu Fu is clearly using it in a somewhat pejorative sense, referring to those like Sung Chih-wen and Shen Ch'üan-ch'i who put the craft of poetry ahead of its political and moral content. Finally Ch'en is filiated to Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju and Yang Hsiung, partially because all three writers were natives of Szechwan, but primarily because Ch'en is seen as an upholder of Confucian morality in the court.

Three decades later, in a poem recommending his friend Meng Chiao for office, Han Yü 韓愈 recited the standard fu-ku version of Chinese literary history: before the T'ang there had been a constant process of literary decline, but:

In our dynasty literature again flourished. 國朝盛文章
Ch'en Tzu-ang was first to mount to the skies. 子昂始高蹈
[17828]

Like other later T'ang writers, Han Yü was anxious to forget almost a century of T'ang court poetry. The phrase "mount to the skies," 高蹈, is usually associated with attaining immortality; the primary implication here is that Ch'en was been an "immortal of literature," but Han Yü may be also commenting ironically on Ch'en's fascination with the cult of immortality. Although fu-ku writers generally acknowledged Ch'en Tzu-ang as their literary ancestor, Ch'en's commitment to Confucian social values was not single-minded.

Following such comments by Tu Fu, Han Yü, and others, Ch'en Tzu-ang's prestige and place in literary history was assured. Even today he is considered the first major figure in T'ang poetry and the forerunner of the High T'ang.[2] In his own time, however, Ch'en was a peripheral talent, overshadowed by men such as Li Chiao, Tu Shen-yen, Sung Chih-wen, and Shen Ch'üan-chi. The last decades of the seventh century and the first decades of the eighth century were the last great age of court poetry, its "Indian summer," and the mutations of the courtly style that occurred then probably had more lasting significance for the development of T'ang poetry that did Ch'en's complete rejection of court poetry. Still, it was Ch'en's name that was remembered, not Sung's or Shen's; to later poets Ch'en represented the necessary illusion of a complete break with the recent literary past.

CH'EN TZU-ANG'S POETIC CAREER

Ch'en Tzu-ang was born in 661 to a Szechwan family of some local importance that was undistinguished by service to the central government. From our accounts of his youth it hardly seemed that he would grow into someone who would deal a mortal blow to court poetry. His biographers say that he took absolutely no interest in studies until the age of eighteen, at which time he began to apply himself diligently. By the time he was twenty-one he felt qualified to go to the capital at Lo-yang and sit for the chin-shih examination. Unfortunately, Ch'en's examiners felt otherwise, and in 682 Ch'en failed in his first attempt at the chin-shih.

When Ch'en Tzu-ang was a youth, the three greatest poets of the empire—Wang Po, Lu Chao-lin, and Lo Pin-wang—were all in Szechwan at one time or another. Ch'en, however, acknowledges no debt to them, nor does his poetry show more than a few hints that he was familiar with the work of the older poets. It seems rather that Ch'en grew up in relative isolation from contemporary literary culture. What he knew about poetry was probably learned from books like the Wen-hsüan, which on the whole presented a very different kind of poetry from what was then being written in Lo-yang. The art of court poetry was a social art, developed through intercourse with other, elder poets and was not to be learned from books. Ch'en's friendships with local Szechwan poets, such as with the monk Hui 暉, seem to be of a later date. Furthermore, Ch'en's early poems do not show familiarity with the corpus of poetic lore to be found in encyclopedias such as the Yi-wen lei-chü, so important to the court poet's education in the proper techniques of amplifying a topic.

Courtly yung-wu poems, such as those by Li Chiao, are altogether absent; these represent the kind of exercises in craft which we expect to find from an aspiring young court poet. Of course, it is possible that Ch'en excluded such pieces from those poems which were to be circulated, but his early poems which do survive show no hint of such training.

A number of poems survive that probably date from Ch'en's first trip to Lo-yang to take the examination. A version of the tripartite form is followed in these poems, though the descriptive middle couplets are on the whole quite different from what one finds in court poetry. When he does try his hand at a courtly descriptive couplet, his range is limited, as we shall see. Still these poems possess a directness which is not to be found in poems written at the court; it is not the artful directness of great poetry, but rather that of an intelligent young man, well enough read in the poetic tradition to avoid awkwardness, but who had not submitted himself to the constraints of court poetry.

MEDITATION ON THE PAST AT WHITE EMPEROR CITY

The sun sinks—evening on the blue river
I rest my oars to ask of local customs.
These walls look out on the land of Pa,
While into the terraces sink the palaces of the King of Han.
A wild region—still in Chou's domain,
Deep in its mountains remain the deeds of Yü.
Peaks hang, their green cliffs broken off,
Terrain perilous, the emerald stream goes through.
Ancient trees rise at the edge of the clouds,
Homeward sails emerge in the fog.
My river road goes off without end—
This wanderer's longing now seems endless too.

白帝城懷古

日落滄江晚
停橈問土風
城臨巴子國
臺沒漢王宮
荒服仍周甸
深山尚禹功
巖懸青壁斷
地險碧流通
古木生雲際
歸帆出霧中
川途去無限
客思坐何窮

[04451]

A unity of structure, diction, interests, and sentiment binds this poem with the following three poems, which can be located at successive stages of Ch'en's voyage down the Yangtze.

CROSSING CHING-MEN, GAZING TOWARD CH'U

I have left the Wu Gorges far behind,
Ever gazing, descend to Chang-hua Terrace.
Gone are the mountains and streams of Pa,
And Ching-men appears amid parting mist and fog.
A city wall wedges in beyond the azure plain,
Trees break off in the folds of white clouds.
Today a madly singing wanderer—
Who knows he is coming into Ch'u?

[04417]

度荊門望楚
遙遙去巫峽
望望下章臺
巴國山川盡
荊門煙霧開
城分蒼野外
樹斷白雲限
今日狂歌客
誰知入楚來

MEDITATION ON THE PAST AT HSIEN MOUNTAIN

I graze my horse above the wild domain,
Climb a high spot to view an ancient capital.
Still there is grief for the "monument of tears,"
And I can yet imagine the Resting Dragon's diagram.
Far away the city demarcates Ch'u territory,
The mountains and rivers are half into Wu.
In vain do burial mounds come out before me—
How many saints and sages have rotted away?
A tree in the wilderness breaks off in the blue gray mist,
A building at a ford, alone in the evening air.
Who knows of this wanderer from a thousand miles away,
Irresolute and faltering now, in meditation on things past?

[04452]

峴山懷古
秣馬臨荒甸
登高覽舊都
猶悲墮淚碣
尚想臥龍圖
城邑遙分楚
山川半入吳
丘陵徒自出
賢聖幾凋枯
野樹蒼煙斷
津樓晚氣孤
誰知萬里客
懷古正踟躕

Hsiang-yang, the city visible from Hsien Mountain, had once been the headquarters of the Three Kingdoms warlord Liu Piao. Ch'en Tzu-ang probably did feel some of the Early T'ang fascination for the vanished glory of ancient cities, so strongly associated with the opposition poetics, and in his eagerness to find a "ruined capital" he probably chose Hsiang-yang as the nearest at hand. The "monument of tears" is associated with the Chin dynasty magistrate Yang Hu 羊祜, who vowed that if his soul endured after death, it would reside on Hsien Mountain. Because of his virtue local residents erected a monument to him on the mountain, and it became customary for visitors to Hsiang-yang to climb the mountain and shed tears for Yang Hu's soul. The "Resting Dragon" is Chu-ko Liang 諸葛亮, minister of the Three Kingdoms state of Shu-Han. A group of prehistoric monoliths in the region were commonly believed to represent a schematized battle plan devised by Chu-ko Liang for an attack upon the state of Wu.

STAYING IN LO-HSIANG COUNTY FOR THE EVENING	晚次樂鄉縣
My homeland is infinitely far—	故鄉有無際
Here, setting sun and a solitary journey.	日暮且孤征
Streams and plains hide my former country,	川原迷舊國
A road moves out toward frontier walls.	道路入邊城
A fortress in the wilds, moor mists break it off,	野戍荒烟斷
Deep in the mountains, ancient trees level.	深山古木平
What is it like, the grief of this moment?—	如何晚時恨
Screeching shrilly, gibbons cry by night.	嘷嘷猿鳴

[04418]

These four poems might best be characterized as "tourist poems," describing the young westerner's first journey into the Chinese heartland, albeit its southern fringes. He is constantly looking back to Pa (Szechwan), and is

careful to note "the domain of Chou" (which excluded Szechwan), the land encompassed by the "deeds of Yü." He repeats the broadest geographical designations as though they held some magic interest in themselves. He is fascinated by the history and antiquity of these regions. His meditation on the past (huai-ku) at White Emperor City focuses neither on a historical event nor on a process of rise and fall, but rather on the antiquity itself which links it to the heartland of Chinese civilization.

The melancholy which rides along with the huai-ku form modulates easily into his sentiments of solitude and homesickness. Unlike the rhetorical exercises of more proficient poets, these poems are more concerned with evoking a mood than with craft. Ch'en Tzu-ang is much closer to the travel poems of Li Pai-yao than to those of Wang Po, Lu Chao-lin, or Lo Pin-wang. Ch'en's couplets roll out less mechanically than Wang's or Lu's; Ch'en's style is even farther from that of Lo Pin-wang, whose meditative travel poems show that highly mannered diction can obscure even the most genuine sentiments and completely deform the mood of a poem.

Ch'en's parallel couplets describing natural scenes are nothing like Shang-kuan Yi's in complexity, yet when they appear in these poems, they stick out and disrupt the poem's flow. In these Ch'en betrays some influence of court poetry by his metaphorical use of verbs to describe the visual scene. It is interesting, however, how few of these he has at his command:

Peaks hang, their green cliffs broken off.	巖懸青壁斷
Trees break off in the folds of white clouds.	樹斷白雲限
A tree in the wilderness breaks off in the azure mist.	野樹蒼煙斷
A fortress in the wilds, moor mists break it off.	野戍荒煙斷

A disruption of a visual continuity is inevitably a "breaking off" 斷. If the continuity is resumed after the interruption, the interruption becomes a "wedging in" or a "dividing" 分. This common spatial usage is often, as below, indistinguishable from the use of fen as a verb of perception: "to make out."

A city wall wedges in beyond the azure plain. 城分蒼野外

Far away the city demarcates Ch'u territory. 城邑遙分楚

If a visual continuity is unbroken, stretching into the distance, then it is said to "enter" that distance:

The mountains and rivers are half into [enter] Wu. 山川半入吳

A road moves out toward [enter] frontier walls. 道路入邊城

Neither the metaphorical use of verbs in general nor the metaphorical use of these verbs in particular are at all uncommon in seventh-century poetry; however, Ch'en's marked tendency here to describe spatial relationships in active terms imparts a certain vigor to his lines. Though he is less interested in the visual "wonders," ch'i, of the landscape than Wang Po, Ch'en Tzu-ang shares something of the elder poet's preference for vistas over minutiae. Also like Wang, Ch'en Tzu-ang understands that in order to concentrate the reader's attention on one or two well-chosen words in a line, he must keep the rest of the line plain. But Ch'en clearly lacks Wang Po's mastery of visual description, and when he finds a scene or a phrase that pleases him, he does not mind seeing that scene again in similar words farther down the river.

In spite of the legend, preserved in various sources, that Ch'en Tzu-ang's works were immediately acclaimed on his arrival in the capital, it seems more likely that poems such as the ones above would have been looked on

with some condescension: as his friend and biographer Lu Ts'ang-yung 盧藏用 said: "Those of the age did not understand him."[3] There is another famous story of Ch'en's arrival in capital, which is amusing, if almost certainly apocryphal:

> When Ch'en Tzu-ang first came to the capital he was an unknown. There happened to be someone asking a million cash for a Tartar lute he was selling, and none of the young nobles and men about town who were passing it around to have a look at it knew its true worth. Suddenly Ch'en Tzu-ang popped out of the crowd and said to the by-standers, "I'll take it for a thousand strings of cash." When people asked in surprise why he would pay this amount, he answered that he was really good at that kind of music. Everyone then asked if they might hear him play for them, and Ch'en told them to gather the next day in Hsüan-yang Ward. When the appointed time came, everyone went there together, and there they found wine and delicacies set out for them with the lute placed in front. After eating, Ch'en picked up the lute and said, "I, Ch'en Tzu-ang of Shu, had a hundred scrolls of writing. When I came riding into the capital, there were droves of common, worldly scholars, and I was unknown to anyone. This sort of music is for a low artisan and not worth your attention." Thereupon he lifted the lute, shattered it, and passed around his writings. In one day his fame filled the capital.[4]

Whatever the good qualities of his early poetry might have been, they were not those of court poetry and therefore not elegant enough to win him the chin-shih. Leaving Lo-yang in 682 after failing the examination, Ch'en wrote for the first time in the eremitic vein that characterizes much of his later work.

RETURNING WEST AFTER FAILING: PARTING FROM WEI LIN 落第西還別魏四懍

The tumbleweed that rolls, not now at rest; 轉蓬方不定
Plummeting wings shudder when the bowstring whirs. 落羽自驚弦

Once I leave these mountains and rivers,
How many years before our joy here returns?
The parting pavilion, dark with wind and rain,
The road I must travel leads into clouds and mist.
To return I shall follow the footpaths of North Mountain,
Home to care for the fields of Eastslope.

山水一爲別
歡娛復幾年
離亭暗風雨
征路入雲烟
還因北山逕
歸守東陂田

[04427]

The tumbleweed had been a popular metaphor in Chien-an and Wei poetry for someone cut off from home on endless travels. The same archaizing metaphor appeared earlier in two of Lo Pin-wang's poems where the deep emotional associations it was supposed to carry were submerged under Lo's involute rhetoric. In the simplicity of his poem, Ch'en captures something of the metaphor's power. A failed examination candidate was often referred to as someone struck by an arrow or a shot-pellet. North Mountain probably refers to the famous "Proclamation on North Mountain," a satire on insincere hermits, which is preserved in the Wen-hsüan.[5]

If this poem is any indication of what Ch'en Tzu-ang did on the examination, it is no wonder that he failed. The poem clearly sets up a regulated verse pattern of tonal antithesis, but the serious tonal violations in line five, seven, and eight cannot be excused even by looseness of Early T'ang regulated verses. Only a few hints of the tripartite form can be seen: the third couplet is an acceptable descriptive couplet in the right position, but the hypotactic second couplet is not. The metaphors of the first couplet are out of place, while the last couplet begins an entirely new topic in its response. The form is just close enough to the proto-lü-shih of the Early T'ang to appear as a conscious violation of the genre. This generic violation corresponds to the eremitic rejection of the search for office. In

another poem written after his failure (04426), Ch'en shows he can produce a structurally and tonally perfect, if plain and dull, regulated verse.[6]

In 683 Ch'en Tzu-ang returned to Ch'ang-an to take the examination a second time. In the spring of 684 he passed and became a chin-shih. In early spring Chung-tsung was still the nominal ruler, though Empress Wu held all power. By autumn, when Ch'en received his first post as Corrector of Characters in the Secretariat, the Empress formally assumed the regency in the name of Jui-tsung. Six years later, in 690, she abolished the T'ang altogether and set up her own Chou dynasty.

As has been discussed in earlier chapters, the opposition poetics, which we may now call fu-ku, had found the most support from those who were outsiders to the court poetic tradition. Although Ch'en Tzu-ang eventually mastered the courtly style well enough to make a respectable showing of himself, he was not a craftsmen of the same caliber as a Sung Chih-wen or a Shen Ch'üan-ch'i.[7] It is doubtful that he ever could have won in the court poetic competitions, which we will discuss in the next section. From his early travel poems we can see that Ch'en was conscious of the distinction between his homeland and the Chinese heartland; even in the apocryphal anecdote translated above he announces, "I, Ch'en Tzu-ang of Shu [Szechwan]..." It was not that Szechwan was not a civilized place in the seventh century—it was just that it had not produced many poets or cultural figures for some five hundred years. Szechwan had been the home of many of the greatest writers of the Han dynasty, and this may be part of the reason that Ch'en Tzu-ang filiated himself to the literary past rather than to contemporary literature: he was "of the line of Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju and Yang Hsiung." Because of this sense of regional identity and because of his initial rejection by the literary arbiters of the capital, it was natural for Ch'en to turn

to the opposition poetics and fu-ku. There he found justification for the kind of bold simplicity that was already present in his earlier poetry.

The fu-ku argument certainly found sympathetic ears, and court poetry still had developed no counter argument to it. The following poem and its famous preface cannot be dated precisely, but they are clearly from a time when Ch'en Tzu-ang was in Lo-yang. In the preface we can see Ch'en Tzu-ang reiterating the venerable arguments of the opposition poetics with a new energy and specificity, but we should remember that this does not represent disinterested theorizing; rather, it was written to flatter and gain the favor of a high official who shows sympathy for Ch'en's kind of writing. The poem that accompanies the preface is justly less famous, but it is of some importance in showing another kind of poetry associated with fu-ku: it is an ornate moral and political allegory.

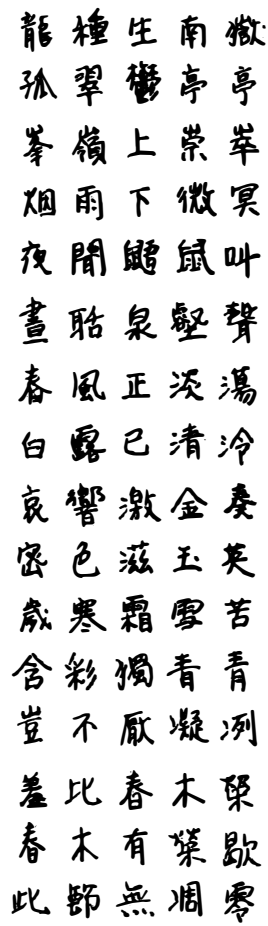
THE LONG BAMBOO

To His Excellency Tung-fang Ch'iu:

The Way of Literature has been in a sorry state some five hundred years now. The strong style of the Han and Wei was not passed on in the Chin and Liu-Sung: there is ample evidence of this in the literary productions of that time. In leisure hours I have carefully examined poems of the Ch'i and Liang, works of flashy beauty that strove for ornateness, but which were utterly lacking in deeper significance. Always then I would sigh, brooding on the ancients, in constant fear lest they become lost in their distance from us and perish. The Airs and the Odes of the Book of Songs are not being written, and thereby I am disquieted.

The other day at Mr. Chieh's house I saw Your Excellency's poem "On a Lone Wu-t'ung Tree." Its style and structure soared straight upward; its tone and mood were terse and abrupt. It was both splendid and refined, possessing the sound of imperishable metal and stone. Thereby my heart was washed free of

petty concerns, my vision was enhanced, and all that had been repressed deep within me was brought forth. I had not expected to see the tone of the Cheng-shih [Wei reign period, associated with the poetry of Juan Chi and Hsi K'ang 嵇康] appearing here once again; it would bring the authors of the Chien-an to look at one another and smile. Mr. Chieh said that Chang Hua, Ho Shao, and Your Excellency were all of the same ilk [Chang Hua and Ho Shao were both poets and high officials of the Western Chin]. I further consider you to be someone who understands the art of language. Thus, stirred to sighs by your proper and refined creation, I have myself written a poem entitled "The Long Bamboo." Assuredly there will be someone who understands both it and myself, one who will hand it down and show it to others.



The dragon bamboo grows on the Southern peak,
Where it stands azure and alone, tall, dense with leaves;
Peak and precipice tower above it,
While beneath is the murky dark of mist and rain.
At night it hears the screech of flying squirrels,
By day gives ear to the voice of valley streams.
No sooner has spring wind swept and shaken it,
Than it feels the chill of autumn's white dew.
It resounds mournfully, wind-stirred to tap rhythm,
Colors dense, blossoms of marble moist.
In the cold of the year when frost and snow are harsh,
It alone is green, retaining its splendor.
It does indeed hate the biting ice,
And is shamed beside spring plants in their glory;
Yet the glory of spring plants will sometimes fade,
While in its steadfastness it is never stripped bare.

始願與金石
終古保堅貞
不意伶倫子
吹之學鳳鳴
遂偶雲觱瑟
張樂奏天庭
妙曲方千變
簫韶亦九成
信蒙雕斲美
常願事仙靈
驅馳翠虬駕
伊鬱紫鸞笙
結交嬴臺女
吟弄升天行
攜手登白日
遠遊戲赤城
俯昂玄鶴舞
斷續綵雲生
永隨衆仙去
三山遊玉京

It had only wanted to be strong as metal or stone,
Preserving hard purity for all time,
And had not expected the flutemaster Ling Lun
Would blow on it, imitating the phoenix's call.
Then it was paired with a zither from Yün-ho Mountain,
An orchestra performing in the courtyard of Heaven,
Wondrous tunes in a thousand variations,
The ancient Hsiao-shao played nine times.
Truly it has been made lovely by the carving
And has always wanted to serve the immortals.
The blue dragon carriage went galloping onward,
Repressed emotion from the purple phoenix sheng.
The maid of Ying's Terrace joined her lover,
And they played on it as they mounted the heavens.
Hand in hand they climbed to the bright sun,
Wandered afar, sporting by Red Wall,
High, then low, the black cranes dance,
Stopping, continuing, bright clouds appear.
Forever following the troops of immortals away,
On the Three Mountains, to visit the Capital of Jade.

[04387]

We have already seen some of the proper bamboo "lore" used in T'ai-tsung's and Yü Shih-nan's poems on bamboo: reference is made to the fact that they stay green through the winter, thus showing their "steadfastness" (chieh 節, also meaning a "section" of the bamboo), and for this quality they are likely to be cut by Ling Lun, musician of the Yellow Emperor, to be "carved" (given courtly polish) and used in celebrations of the immortals (those at court). However, Ch'en Tzu-ang's narrative allegorical

treatment of the topic is quite different than the treatment given by T'ai-tsung and Yü Shih-nan, who simply allude to these various aspects of bamboo. Ch'en's poem is much closer to Lo Pin-wang's allegorical "Floating Log": in both cases the ethical and political message of the allegory puts the poems in the camp of the opposition poets, despite the ornateness of the style.

What separates Lo's poem and the poem above from the average court poem may be Ch'en's concept of hsing-chi 興寄, translated freely as "deeper significance." Such terms are virtually impossible to translate literally, but essentially it means that the surface level of the poem is a "vehicle" (chi, a "sending" or "entrusting") for some personal response to a thing or event (hsing). Thus, as in allegory, the logic of the surface is subordinate to the "meaning." In the case of "The Long Bamboo," the narrative that evolves out of the yung-wu lore has very clear autobiographical implications. Ch'en is the bamboo, an exemplar of purity and steadfastness, the "dragon species" to be exact. He is brought to court, not of his own volition but because of his outstanding qualities, where he receives "polish." He suggests to Tung-fang Ch'iu that he would like to rise even higher in court circles, to be closer to "Heaven," the emperor (or in this case Empress Wu, perhaps suggested in the allusion to the "maid of Ying's terrace," the daughter of the Duke of Ch'in who flew on a phoenix to heaven—the imperial position—with her lover, the pan pipe player).

In Chinese literature a useful distinction can be made between general and topical allegory. The distinction is not absolute: all topical allegory may be read generally, while much general allegory has topical overtones. However, there is an important distinction between a poem in which bamboo is used as a general symbol of integrity, such as Yü Shih-nan's or T'ai-tsung's, and

a poem in which the bamboo stands for the integrity of a given individual. This distinction in the treatment of allegory bears directly on the account of literary history in the preface: topical allegory flourished during the Eastern Han and Wei, followed by a tendency toward general allegory during the Chin and Liu-Sung.[8] Therefore, during the great age of court poetry, the allegorical implications of an object were usually subordinated to its presence at hand (from "this object represents" to "about this object we may summon the following associations"), or they served only as building blocks in a rhetorical exercise. This is what we find in T'ai-tsung's and Yü Shih-nan's poem on bamboo, even though the reference is general rather than topical. The use of topical allegory in the T'ang is a consciously archaizing technique, dignified both by its antiquity and by its implications of Confucian morality.

In Ch'en Tzu-ang's work of the 680s in Lo-yang can be seen a growing mastery of the descriptive couplet, not the stately and static formality of the Shang-kuan t'i, but a kind of energetic brilliance which at times plays counterpoint to the inherent restraint of the parallel couplet. The following poem was written during Ch'en's term as Corrector of Characters, between 684 and 689.

ENTERING CH'IAO GORGE AND AN-CHU CREEK: THE SOURCE OF WOOD-CHOPPING CREEK WAS HIDDEN FAR AWAY, FORESTS AND PEAKS BRIGHTENED ONE ANOTHER—A WONDROUS EXPERIENCE.

入峭峽安居谿
伐木谿源幽遠林
嶺相映有奇致焉

I whistled to companions, sang "Chopping Wood,"
Oars raced the skiff bouncing the ripples.
On a long, winding course I followed the waters,
Splashing through current, upstream in the shallows.
Misty sands split the two shores,
Dew-drenched isles flanked by pairs of shoals,

嘯侶歌伐木
驚櫂漾輕舟
廻迵隨波水
濺湲泝淺流
烟沙分兩岸
露島夾雙洲

Dense forests of ancient trees reaching the clouds,
And floating peaks, criss-crossed, fallen upon the waters.
Cliff and pool cast lovely light upon each other,
Stream-filled valleys circle round and round.
The road is far, light presses urgently on me,
The mountains deep, my mood still more withdrawn.
Evening—chill brooding of deer and squirrels;
Autumn—sunset sounds of gibbons and birds.
I vow to give up my plans in the Royal Library,
Go travelling in the hermit land of cassia.
Thus I write to take leave of friends and loved ones,
For a thousand years I'll search for Fairy Hill.

古樹連雲密浮
交峯入浪映媚
巖潭相屬環周
溪谷屢迴光踰逼
路迥光踰逼幽
山深興轉思晚
麚鼯暮聲紋
猿鳥暮聲紋衆
誓息蘭臺樹遊
將從桂樹親愛
因書謝親蓬丘
千歲負蓬丘

[04463]

"Chopping Wood" is the title or Shih #165, associated with seeking companions in the traditional Mao interpretation. Line eleven primarily refers to the setting sun making him aware of the necessity to return, but it is difficult to resist the visual image of the literal translation.

Ch'en Tzu-ang's descriptive technique is distinctive and generally more energetic than that of his contemporaries. As we saw in the poetry of Lu Chao-lin, there is a growing tendency to narrative order in the arrangement of the couplets; Ch'en is moving further and further upstream into the mountains as day turns to evening and is lured by the temptation not to return. Despite this tendency to narrative order and the poem's eremitic message, the form is basically tripartite, with the opening and closing response expanded to two couplets instead of one. Running alongside the tripartite form are rapid shifts in mood, from exuberant speed and companionship to a brilliant but solitary landscape of

misty shoals, shining peaks, and sparkling reflections, and from there to a melancholy mood of reclusion in which the poet yearns to escape from the world of human society.

Twice Ch'en Tzu-ang accompanied Chinese armies on campaigns against the nomadic tribes of the North. The first of these campaigns was to the northwest and lasted from 686 to 687; the second, some ten years later, was directed against the Khitan in the north and northeast. Ch'en's talents found a more congenial outlet in his campaign poetry, but even so there is a striking difference between the poetry of his first campaign and that of his second. The poetry of the 685 campaign is much closer to court poetry: it is dense, mannered, and less emotional than the poetry of the Khitan campaign, but its descriptive flashes reveal the Early T'ang at its best.

CROSSING GORGE-MOUTH MOUNTAIN: TO THE REMINDER CH'IAO CHIH-CHIH AND WANG WU-CHING

度峽口山贈喬補
闕知元王二無競

Gorge-mouth, south of the Great Desert,
峽口大漠南

Stretches sharply before me: a border for our Middle Land.
橫絕界中國

First chaotic masses of ragged stone,
叢石何紛糺

Then small mountains that swell with blazing light.
小山復翕艷

Seen from afar, it teems with many faces,
遠望多衆容

Up close, its appearance is unvaried.
逼之無異色

Half craggy heights where lone peaks loom broken,
崔萃半孤斷

A circuitous path, twisting, then going straight.
逶迤屢迴直

It locks us indeed against the attack of Tartar horses,
信關胡馬衝

Blocks also the gateways to the Chinese frontier.
亦距漢邊塞

But we do not rely on a fastness of mountains and rivers,
豈依河山險

Rather we bring compliance by the glory of Imperial Virtue.
將順休明德

When things are most forceful, they surely decline,
Forms mighty as these easily reach their limit.
The continuous winding is suddenly gone,
There are vast stretches, level without end.
You gentlemen, with bodies as of gold,
How are you here in this wild uncivilized region?
By the Cloud Terrace there are many officers,
They await you beside the Royal Courtyard.

物壯誠有衰
勢雄良易極
邐迤忽而盡
泱漭平不息
之子黃金軀
如何此荒域
雲臺盛多士
待君丹墀側

[04396]

Cloud Terrace was the ceremonial location in the capital where frontier generals were honored. It seems at first that Ch'en Tzu-ang is tacking an incongruous social compliment onto a beautiful landscape description, but he is in fact transposing the technique of "reading the landscape," practiced by Hsieh Ling-yün 謝靈運(385-433) into an occasional mode. The characteristic Hsieh Ling-yün landscape poem observes the landscape, draws philosophical conclusions from its structure, and closes with a personal response to the hidden order which the poet has discovered.[9] In Ch'en's poem, his passage through the ever higher mountains and then out onto the level desert is interpreted in terms of Chinese cyclical theory: as things reach some extreme, they inevitably return to a "level" condition. The formal "response" of the poem is that the fortunes of Ch'en's friends will likewise return to stability after the hardships of campaign.

In 689 Ch'en received a ceremonial post in the Imperial Guard, a rank only slightly higher than his earlier post in the Secretariat. In 691 he returned to Szechwan on the death of his mother and returned to the capital in 693. One need only compare the opening of the following poem, written on his return to the capital, with his earlier poem on Ch'iao Gorge to see how little change

had occurred in his occasional style:

SETTING OUT FROM WAN-CHOU AT DAWN AND LETTING MY BOAT RIDE THE FLOODS: SENT BACK TO MY FRIENDS AND RELATIVES IN SZECHWAN

萬州晚發放舟乘漲還寄蜀中親友

A drizzly sky, then rain clears from the cliffs
And, sparkling brightly, dawn clouds return.
I whistle to fellow travellers, set out with the light,
Speeding oars race past broken jetties.
Vast stretches of forests and peaks wind around,
Continuous billows fly over the floods.
From distant shores lone clouds emerge,
Behind far peaks the sunlight is faint. ...

空濛巖雨霽
爛熳曉雲歸
嘯旅乘明發
奔橈鶩斷磯
蒼茫林岫轉
駱驛漲濤飛
遠岸孤雲出
遙峯曙日微

[04462]

Once back in Lo-yang, Ch'en was made Reminder of the Right, an office which, though low in rank, involved a certain honor because of its proximity to the throne. Service in Empress Wu's court was not without its perils, and in 694 Ch'en was imprisoned because of a factional struggle in the court. The following year he was released, and in 696 Ch'en was made Grand Counsellor on the staff of General Wu Yu-yi in his campaign against the Khitan. It was on this campaign that Ch'en wrote many of his best and most famous poems. The style of these poems differs sharply from Ch'en's earlier work and looks forward to one of the many faces of High T'ang poetry. It is difficult to say what factors were responsible for this change. Lu Ts'ang-yung attributes Ch'en's famous "Song on Yu-chou Terrace" to the poet's depression at a demotion, earned by Ch'en's repeated warnings to the inept Wu Yu-ying about the impending military disaster.

The "Song on Yu-chou Terrace" (04415) is preserved in Lu's biography of Ch'en Tzu-ang and is probably Ch'en's most famous work:

I look back—I do not see the ancients; 前不見古人
I look ahead—can't see the generations to come. 後不見來者
I brood on the endlessness of Heaven and Earth, 念天地之悠悠
And tears stream down—I stand alone. 獨愴然而涕下

Ch'en is more remembered for these simple lines than for all his elegant descriptions of landscapes. The poem is a straightforward and moving description of the isolation of the individual in space and time, cut off from past and future, dwarfed by the immensity of the universe. Man stands in time facing backward; the first couplet reads literally:

I do not see the ancients in front of me/from before 前不見古人
I do not see those to come behind me/afterward. 後不見來者

The poem is best characterized as a variation on the huai-ku, one of Ch'en Tzu-ang's favorite forms. Yu-chou, with its many historical associations, first becomes the occasion for Ch'en to articulate the ubi sunt theme: "I look back—I do not see the ancients." But the center of interest in the ubi sunt theme is quickly inverted from the vanished glory of the past to the isolation of the present, from the future as well as from the past. All human beings are reduced in size, life span, and significance by the "endlessness," both in space and time, of Heaven and Earth. The archaic "response of tears" is completely in place here, with its associations of simplicity and deep feeling.

For all the beauty and pathos of its directness, the poem is based largely on a passage from the Yüan-yu 遠遊 in the Ch'u-tz'u:

When I consider the eternity of Heaven and Earth, 惟天地之無窮兮
I bewail human life's long suffering. 哀人生之長勤
Those gone before I shall never reach, 往者余弗及兮
Of those to come I shall hear nothing.[10] 來者吾不聞

The poet of the Yüan-yu, whom Ch'en believed to have been Ch'ü Yüan, resolved his grief over human mortality by a flight through the heavens to a state of transcendence; Ch'en Tzu-ang resigns himself to solitude and tears, but the pathos of the situation is heightened by the background of the Yüan-yu. The flight through the heavens is the expected response which is not there.

Despite the fact that three of Ch'en Tzu-ang's four simple lines can be traced to this single passage, the impact of the poem is in no way reduced. The isolation of the lines, the failure to take the expected resolution, and the biographical and occasional contexts all change Ch'en's poem substantially from the source. One might make the analogy to a painter who bases the style of one of his own paintings on a detail of another, large painting. As we have seen earlier, new poetry is created by reaching back into the past, using it, and altering it.

From the same period comes the following series of poems, also considered to be representative of Ch'en Tzu-ang's departure from the Early T'ang style. I translate the preface and the first two poems.

VIEWING THE PAST AT CHI HILL: TO THE RECLUSE LU TS'ANG-YUNG, SEVEN POEMS WITH A PREFACE

薊丘覽古贈盧居士藏用七首并序

697. On a campaign in the North, I have passed through Chi Gate and viewed the former capital of the state of Yen, whose walls, moats, and all traces of its former hegemony have sunk beneath the weeds. I was deeply moved, but repressed my sighs. I remember its glory of long ago when Yüeh Yi, Tsou Yen, and a host of worthy men visited this place. Thus I came to climb Chi Hill and wrote seven poems to express myself on the subject. I send these to the recluse Lu of Mount Chung-nan. There were also traces of the Yellow Emperor here.

THE YELLOW EMPEROR'S TERRACE

軒轅臺

To the North I climbed Chi Hill for the view,
Seeking the past on the Yellow Emperor's Terrace.
His winged dragon is nowhere to be seen,
Where horses were pastured, now only brown dust.
Yet still I imagine Kuang-ch'eng-tzu,
Who has left his traces in the folds of white clouds.

北登薊丘望
求古軒轅臺
應龍已不見
牧馬空蘼蕪
尚想廣成子
遺迹白雲隈

[04388]

The Yellow Emperor's Terrace was supposed to have been located on the spot where that mythical emperor defeated the equally mythical bandit Chih-yu. In this encounter the Yellow Emperor rode a winged dragon. The fourth line refers to a story in chapter twenty-four of the Chuang-tzu in which the Yellow Emperor asked a herd-boy how to govern the empire; the boy replied that, like pasturing horses, it simply required that one do nothing to harm the horses. Now in the desolation of warfare's dust, there is no more of that pasturing, which teaches good government. Kuang-ch'eng-tzu was a recluse, of whom the Yellow Emperor asked about the perfection of the Way. The absence of the winged dragon and grazing horses in Ch'en's vision suggests not only the ubi sunt theme, it also points to Wu Yu-yi's military failure. This first poem of the series seems to be directed particularly to Lu Ts'ang-yung, who as a recluse would probably be more interested in the Yellow Emperor than in the historical scenes that follow. The closing reference to Kuang-ch'eng-tzu suggests that although there is no longer any winged dragon to defeat the bandits—the Khitan—the ideal recluse represented by Kuang-ch'eng-tzu still survives today in men like Lu Ts'ang-yung, far away "in the folds of white clouds." The further implication is that Wu Yu-yi would do well to emulate the Yellow Emperor

in perfecting the Way before attempting any more campaigns. This sort of selective historical analogy would fall under Ch'en's idea of hsing-chi. "deeper significance."

KING CHAO OF YEN

燕昭王

To the South I climbed to the Lodge of Chieh Rock
And gazed afar to the Terrace of Gold.
The tomb mounds are grown over with tall trees,
But King Chao—where is he now!
His plans to be hegemon are finished now—
I drive my horse back down again.

南登碣石館
遥望黄金臺
丘陵盡喬木
昭王安在哉
霸圖悵已矣
驅馬復歸來

[04389]

This ubi sunt poem succeeds through a directness and simplicity like that of "Song of Yu-chou Terrace." Included in the Ming anthology T'ang shih hsüan 唐詩選, this is certainly the most famous poem of the series. King Chao of Yen had the Lodge of Chieh Rock built for his advisor Tsou Yen; the Terrace of Gold was built to accomodate other advisors. Here again Ch'en Tzu-ang seems to be consciously echoing an earlier poem, the thirty-first piece in Juan Chi's "Singing My Feelings." In the following poem Juan uses the Warring States Kingdom of Wei as an analogue for his own Wei dynasty.

I rode out from the capital of Wei,
Gazed south to the Flute-watching Terrace.
The music of fifes and pipes lingers,
But King Liang—where is he now!
Their soldiers ate the brewer's dregs,
Their worthies found homes in wilderness.
For before their songs and dances were done,
Ch'in's army was upon them.
Hsia Wood is no longer ours,
Now dust rises from the crimson palaces.
Their army fell beneath Hua-yang,
Their bodies became dust and ashes.[11]

駕言發魏都
南向望吹臺
簫管有遺音
梁王安在哉
戰士食糟糠
賢者處蒿萊
歌舞未終曲
秦兵已復來
夏林非吾有
朱宮生塵埃
軍敗華陽下
身竟爲土灰

While Juan Chi's huai-ku has clear topical, contemporary intent, it would be difficult to interpret Ch'en Tzu-ang's poem in any terms but the general ubi sunt theme. Juan Chi criticizes the excessive luxury of the Kingdom of Wei and suggests that it was the cause of their destruction by the state of Ch'in; the moral for his own Wei dynasty is obvious.

The other poems of the series also concern the state of Yen and the famous personages associated with it. The aesthetic qualities that gave these poems such strong appeal to later Chinese readers depended on a literary historical context which is impossible to reproduce in translation. Their emotional directness appears as a compelling artlessness in one of the most important Chinese mimetic modes—the imitation not of actions or the world, but of inner states of emotion. The historical vision gives these emotions legitimacy: they are fully serious and not the trivial emotions of purely private concerns.

Ch'en Tzu-ang's occasional poetry of this period is more conventional, as occasional poetry must be, but we can see something of the energetic, emotional style of the huai-ku even in the context of a social occasion.

CLIMBING THE TOWER ON CHI HILL: SENDING OFF OFFICER CHIA ON HIS WAY TO THE CAPITAL

登薊丘樓送都
賈兵曹入

Eastern mountains have been my abiding desire,
A campaign north was not to my heart.
Alone, back turned on the wish of my life,
Stirred now to tears which soak my robes;
At sunset I climb atop Chi Tower,
Gaze ever at the peaks of Yen's mountains.
The Sea of Liao floods far and wide,
While Tartar sands fly deep and thick.
O-mei Mountain, far and faint as a dream,
How shall I search the immortals there?

東山宿昔意
北征非我心
孤負平生願
感涕下霑襟
暮登薊樓上
永望燕山岑
遼海方漫漫
胡沙飛且深
峨眉杳如夢
仙子曷由尋

I strike my sword, rise, and sigh,
And the bright sun sinks suddenly westward.
I hear you are being sent to Lo-yang,
By you I will send word southward.

擊劍起歎息
白日忽西沈
聞君洛陽使
因子寄南音

[04408]

Although it was entirely proper to affix the "message" to the last couplet in social occasional poetry, one cannot miss the awkward incongruity of the last couplet here. The tripartite form in which personal response followed objective scene "worked" somehow; when Ch'en Tzu-ang fills in the middle of the poem with a delineation of his personal feelings, the appropriateness of the structure breaks down.

One of Ch'en Tzu-ang's finest huai-ku was perhaps written on the journey back to Lo-yang from the Khitan campaign. The poem alludes to the great Ch'in general Po Ch'i, lord of Wu-an, who inflicted a decisive and terrible defeat on the army of the state of Chao at Ch'ang-p'ing. It was while visiting the site of this battle over a hundred years after Ch'en Tzu-ang that Li Ho wrote his famous "Song of the Arrowhead at Ch'ang-p'ing" (20843).

CLIMBING THE NORTH TOWER ON THE WALL OF TSE-CHOU FOR A BANQUET

登澤州城北樓宴

For most of my life, weary of travels,
Long observing the endlessness of Change,
Then coming here, climbing this city,
And looking down, together with you.
Just now I see the forts of the troops of Ch'in,
And have heard remotely of the Chao general's valor:
Where now is the army of Lord Wu-an?—
The events at Ch'ang-p'ing have turned to nothingness.

平生倦遊者
觀化久無窮
復來登此國
臨望與君同
坐見秦兵壘
遥聞趙將雄
武安軍何在
長平事已空

Sing for a while the song "Black Clouds,"	且歌玄雲曲
Wine on your lips, dance "Fragrant Wind."	銜酒舞薰風
Do not let the students in their blue robes	勿使青衿子
Sigh for you, white-haired old men!	嗟爾白頭翁

[04411]

"Black Clouds" was a Han ceremonial song celebrating the emperor's choice of wise advisors; "Fragrant Wind" is a verse attributed to the sage-king Shun:

The fragrance of the South Wind	南風之薰兮
Can melt my people's woes.	可以解吾民之慍兮
The season of the South Wind	南風之時兮
Can help my people's fortunes.[12]	可以阜吾民之財兮

The topical circumstances that surround this poem add to its complexity. In the opening Ch'en assumes a detached, philosophical viewpoint as the "observer of Change"; although this stance is uncommon in Ch'en's occasional poetry, it is one of the dominant stances of the Kan-yü, which we will discuss shortly. From this detached viewpoint Ch'en can see a historical analogy to Wu Yu-yi's present military fiasco in the defeat of Chao at Ch'ang-p'ing. But from the same detached viewpoint Ch'en also sees the meaninglessness of the defeat in the impermanence of things. In response to this, Ch'en urges his companions to sing two songs which suggest hope that the emperor (or empress in this case) will choose good advisors and that the troubles of the nation will be alleviated. They are not to be pitied as failures, but are rather to show the next generation of officials, the "students in their blue robes," a kind of Confucian heroism. Change, which brings defeat, renders defeat meaningless by its constancy and promises better times. Like "Crossing Gorge-Mouth Mountain," this poem is a complex consolation in social occasional poetry, not simply a celebration or commiseration. Unlike the earlier poem, which is based on the philosophical

landscape poetry of Hsieh Ling-yün, this poem uses the "bold melancholy" (pei-chuang 悲壯, a modal term used in T'ang criticism and associated with the poetry of the Chien-an and Wei) of the huai-ku to work out the consolation.

In the autumn of 697 Ch'en returned to Lo-yang where he resumed his post as Reminder of the Right. It was probably in the next year that he withdrew from office on the grounds of his father's failing health and returned to his native Szechwan.

I clasp my robes crossing Han Pass,
Holding back tears, I gaze to the streams of Ch'in.
The gates to Shu begin from here,
Clouds and mountains stretching far and wide.

攬衣度函谷
銜涕望秦川
蜀門自茲始
雲山方浩然

[04395]

Shortly after his return, Ch'en's father died, and Ch'en himself was in failing health. The poems of Ch'en Tzu-ang's last years lack the intensity of his poetry written on the Khitan campaign, but many of them have a distinctive strength which looks forward to a different face of the High T'ang.

LYING SICK IN MY HOME GARDEN

In this world, the Master Without Fame,
Among mortals my years and months grow longer.
I have cast from me all my plans and strategies,
In perfect stillness the Way is my home.
As I lie sick, no one comes to call on me,
I dwell in peace, the year flowers in vain.
I still remember my friends of the Spirit Terrace,
As I lodge in Purity, hermit in great roseate clouds.
Refine the cinnabar, let the sun-carriage speed on,

臥疾家園
世上無名子
人間歲月賒
縱橫策已棄
寂寞道為家
臥疾誰能問
閑居空物華
猶憶靈臺友
棲眞隱大霞
還丹奔日御

Return to youth, swallow the "sprouts of clouds." 却老鎖雲芽
Who would have guessed that the guest at White Temple 寧知白社客
Would never weary of Green Gate's melons. 不厭青門瓜
[04459]

The "Spirit Terrace" refers to the capital; the association probably came to mind through the phrase "dwelling in peace," hsien-chü 閑居, the title of a fu by the Chin poet P'an Yüeh 潘岳(d. 300), in which the Spirit Terrace is mentioned. "Sprouts of clouds" was a kenning for tea. The White Temple was where one Tung Ching lodged in Lo-yang when eager to have an interview with the great men of the day: here it simply means that Ch'en had been eager for office. "Green Gate's melons" refers to the story of the Marquis of Tung-ling mentioned earlier in the notes. Tu Fu was to echo the last line of this poem affirming his own reclusion in his famous sequence "Autumn Wastes" (11491):

The autumn wind blows on staff and table— 杖風吹几杖
I shall never weary of North Mountain's bracken. 不厭北山薇

North Mountain's bracken refers to the story of Po Yi and Shu Ch'i, a sterner purity and more ominous reclusion than that of the Marquis of Tung-ling.

In 702 Ch'en Tzu-ang died. According to his friend and biographer Lu Ts'ang-yung, he was imprisoned by a rapacious local official who wanted to get his hands on the family wealth. Some modern scholars have suggested that Lu, who gave up the life of a hermit to chase public success in the capital, was covering up a murder instigated by an antagonistic court faction. In 702 Wang Wei and Li Po were both only infants; the High T'ang was still several decades away.

THE KAN-YÜ

In his poem (10709) written on a visit to Ch'en Tzu-ang's former dwelling, Tu Fu closes with the couplet:

You have proven your loyalty and virtue forever—
We have, left for us, the Kan-yü.

終古立忠義
感遇有遺編

Although Ch'en Tzu-ang may have been best known for his brief effusion on Yu-chou Terrace, none of his works were taken as seriously by discriminating readers as the thirty-eight poems entitled Kan-yü 感遇, "Stirred by My Experiences." They were the kind of works deemed worthy of mention in the author's biography in the official history and were included in the important early Sung fu-ku anthology, the T'ang-wen-ts'ui. They were first singled out in Lu Ts'ang-yung's preface to Ch'en Tzu-ang's collected works: "When it comes to stirring others, to abrupt strength of style, to the subtle becoming clear and the obscure becoming manifest, with a view to seeing the subtleties of Change and thereby to reach the very borders of those in heaven, then we have the Kan-yü.[13] On the other hand, none of the Kan-yü are represented in the surviving anthologies compiled in the T'ang itself, anthologies which for the most part follow popular taste in poetry.

We cannot be sure whether the Kan-yü were considered serious poetry because of the overt philosophical and moral content of many of the pieces or because of the topical political allegory that was later read into them. The great Ch'ing allegorist Ch'en Hang 陳沆(1785-1826) would read Tu Fu's phrase "loyalty and virtue" 忠義 as implying that Tu Fu saw topical, political comments in

the series.[14] However, one might just as easily take Tu Fu's reference to Ch'en's character in general terms. Lu Ts'ang-yung's comments, on the other hand, tend to suggest a more general, philosophical reading of the poems, but this too is suspect: Lu might well have sought to suppress a topical, political interpretation of the Kan-yü. Furthermore, phrases such as "those in heaven" may just as easily refer to those at court as to the gods and immortals.

The Kan-yü are usually filiated to Juan Chi's Yung-huai, "Singing My Feelings," which we have discussed earlier. This filiation is first credited to the late eighth-century monk Chiao-jan 皎然.[15] The Yung-huai certainly were read as political allegory during the T'ang, but if we read the Kan-yü closely, we can see that Ch'en Tzu-ang made only indirect use of the Yung-huai, if he used them at all. Some of the Kan-yü are almost certainly political allegory; some are clearly not. The majority of the poems lie in that difficult middle ground, and we must weigh whether topical allegory is present on a case by case basis.

The question of the presence of allegory extends even to the title of the series. The allegorists read Kan-yü as "Stirred by the problem of 'meeting one's time,'" taking yü 遇 in its political sense as "success," to appear in history at a time when one's talents are appreciated by a virtuous prince. Clearly the implication is that Ch'en Tzu-ang is "stirred" by appearing at the wrong time in history. One may also take the title in much the same way as Yung-huai, "Singing My Feelings," in which Kan-yü would be "stirred by what I encounter," "stirred by my experiences."

Certain biographical inconsistencies appear in most of the topical allegorical interpretations, even in those poems which are certainly allegorical. Many do seem to attack the empress and the Wu clan; however, we should

remember that Ch'en was a loyal servant of the empress for much of his career, the author of "A Praise of the Great Chou Receiving the Mandate."[16] One can always resolve the problem by assuming that such attacks were written early in his life, late in his life, or at some time when Ch'en was out of favor with the ruling powers; Ch'en Hang, for example, often engages in such speculations on the flimsiest of grounds. Nevertheless, with a few exceptions, our best topical interpretations can be only guesses.

While filiation to a Wei poet such as Juan Chi may be preferable in establishing a fu-ku pedigree for Ch'en Tzu-ang, a number of the poems belong thematically to the kind of poetry written during the Eastern Chin, the abstract and abstruse poetry of hsüan-hsüeh 玄學, "Dark Learning." Most hsüan-hsüeh poetry has been lost, but enough survives to see its main characteristic was neo-Taoist speculation in a highly abstract terminology.[17] A consistent trait of Chinese poetry through its long development has been a preference for concrete imagery over abstraction, and shortly after its heyday, hsüan-hsüeh poetry fell into extreme disfavor. With the exception of some quaint imitations of hsüan-hsüeh poems by Chiang Yen, the court poets carefully avoided it.[18] Hsüan-hsüeh poetry received equally rough treatment at the hands of the early fu-ku theorists: even Ch'en Tzu-ang himself condemns the poetry of the Chin in the preface to "The Long Bamboo." And yet the poetry of hsüan-hsüeh was the only model for serious, philosophical poetry that was available to Ch'en. The tradition of hsüan-hsüeh poetry is only one important source from which Ch'en drew: echoes of Kuo P'u's poetry on immortals, various prose forms, the tradition of border poetry, and even yüeh-fu can be heard in lines or whole poems of the series.

There is no overall thematic or philosophical unity

in the Kan-yü: Confucian and Taoist sentiments are mixed unreservedly. Nor does the series as a whole have any artistic unity: the first poem does seem to be an "opening piece," and here and there one can see pairs of poems that should be read together, but there is no unifying structure. This fits Ch'en Hang's contention that the poems do not represent the work of a single period but rather were written throughout Ch'en's life.[19] An earlier tradition maintained that they were all works of Ch'en's youth, but this is clearly wrong. Like the tsa-shih 雜詩 of the Wei, these poems probably represent the "unclassified" portion of Ch'en's output, those poems not written for a specific occasion or whose occasion Ch'en did not dare specify.

Though poems like "Lying Sick in My Home Garden" bear a resemblance to some of the Kan-yü, as a whole the styles of the Kan-yü are quite different from the usual style of occasional poems.[20] Although some of Kan-yü reject completely the formal, tripartite pattern of court poetry, many of the poems retain it in some concealed form. Those poems which reject it altogether often lack the structural tightness and subtlety of implied relationships which are to be found in more conventional poems.

For convenience the Kan-yü can be divided into two groups: first there are border poems and a small group of poems on the topics most commonly associated with fu-ku—bird and plant allegories and huai-ku. The second group, constituting the majority, may be classed as variations on the theme called hsien-jen shih-chih 賢人失志, "the virtuous man disillusioned."[21] The theme is basically that the virtuous man contemplates and renounces, either directly or allegorically, the corruption of the world and its impermanence; grieved or outraged by what he sees, he condemns the world of evil and transience, sings his sorrows, and may, as a final gesture, seek to become a hermit or immortal. This is a very old and complicated

theme in Chinese literature, touching some deep ritual strains in the Chinese tradition and some strong psychological chords in the character of the official class.

The Confucian tradition forced young intellectuals into its social mold with ruthless determination; however, those same moral standards which a young man was taught to apply to society might ultimately become his means to escape from society. If society failed to measure up to his moral standards, he could reject it to uphold his principles. Or, as was often the case, if society rejected him, if he failed in some way, he could translate that failure into a failure on the part of society to recognize his worth.

The hsien-jen shih-chih was a protean complex of ideas and sentiments that underwent continuous change through the course of Chinese intellectual history; it never crystalized enough to define simply. It began to take form in the Ch'un-ch'iu Period with the legends of ancient hermits who refused to serve the state. On several occations Confucius speaks favorably of those who refused to serve in times of misgovernment. In the fourth century B.C. this merged with Ch'u-tz'u themes of ritual purity, renunciation of the corruption of human society, and a flight through the cosmos, David Hawkes's tristia and itineraria. In various secular, religious, and allegorical forms, the hsien-jen shih-chih was one of the most popular themes of the Han and of the Period of Disunion before the advent of court poetry. The theme had both purely Confucian and purely Taoist forms, but most often it appears in the grey region between the two. Despite its hazy allegiances, it was an almost religious theme to many Chinese intellectuals for it appealed to many facets of their experience.

Those Kan-yü that fall within its broad boundaries, treat the hsien-jen shih-chih theme either in its complete form—from denunciation of the world to flight from it—or

in some part. Some of the poems are direct, general treatments of the theme, while others are clearly topical allegory, condemning specific events or figures from the reign of the empress.

The fifth Kan-yü gives a good overview of the theme. Like several other poems in the series, it is divided into two equal parts, the first representing the world rejected and the second representing the ideal world to which the poet aspires. This simple structure is a step backward from the tripartite form of the court poem, which permitted complex relationships between the lines of a couplet, between the couplets themselves, and between the descriptive center of the poem and the closing response. Clear value distinctions had always been something of an obsession to Confucian thinkers, and this symmetrical "praise and blame" pattern gives structural form to a moral dichotomy. The ultimate source of this structure lies in the symmetrical ch'ang-tuan 長短 persuasions of the pre-Ch'in and Han periods, with which Ch'en Tzu-ang must have been familiar. In such persuasions the good points of the position for which one argues are balanced against the negative points of the position against which one argues.

The highest value in this poem is to become an immortal, but as we said earlier, Taoist and Confucian values were seldom clearly differentiated: other poems of the series renounce the quest for immortality or suggest its futility. The assumption of an evaluative stand itself is more significant than the philosophical contents of that stand.

Men of the marketplace boast their cunning,	市人矜巧智
Yet in the Way they show child's foolishness.	於道若童蒙
Crawling over each other in boasting and show,	傾奪相誇侈
Unaware of the end they shall meet.	不知身所終
How could they see the Master of Mystery,	曷見玄眞子
Observing the world in his flagon of jade,	觀世玉壺中

Fading away, leaving Heaven and Earth, 曾然遺天地
Riding Change into the Never-Ending? 乘化入無窮
[04351]

Both Confucians and Taoists despised the "men of the market-place," who represented a different class of society. Ch'en Tzu-ang's immortals are more appealing and convincing than the "feathered people" of the Chin dynasty, when poetry on immortals was especially popular. Cold, bemused, and aloof, Ch'en Tzu-ang's immortals represent more a point of view than actual transcendent beings. They are usually alone and possess a minimum of physical presence, in contrast to the jeweled chariots, swirling robes, and variegated palaces of earlier poetry on immortals. An interesting footnote on this poem is that probably through it, the name "Master of Mystery" 玄眞子 was adopted as a pseudonym by the High T'ang poet Chang Chih-ho 張志和.

Ch'en Tzu-ang showed particular talent in heaping invective on the crassness of the everyday world. His genius in this is without precedent in the shih tradition: instead one must look for its antecedents in the satric fu of the Eastern Han such as Chao Yi's 趙壹 "Lampooning the World and Hating Evil," Ts'e-shih chi-hsieh fu 刺世疾邪賦. The tenth Kan-yü is a delightful piece of invective, whose rhetoric had an influence on later fu-ku poets such as Meng Chiao 孟郊.

I dwelled deep in seclusion, observing the basis of Change, 深居觀元化
How men struggle, swollen with resentment, licking their chops. 悱然爭朶頤
They gobble each other up with calumnies, 讒說相啖食
For profit and harm, mistrust everywhere.[22] 利害紛嚶嚶
Plump and portly, those servile fawners, 便便夸眇子
Maintaining in turn each other's splendor. 榮耀更相持
Wu Kuang yielded up the empire, 務光讓天下

While merchants compete, sharp as awls and knives. 商賈競刀錐
It's all over—I'll go pick magic herbs, 已矣行采芝
Ten thousand ages exist at the same moment. 萬世同一時

[04356]

Like the preceding poem, this poem is built out of a series of evaluative juxtapositions: the calm observer of the nature of things is set against the contentious world he observes; the ancient hermit Wu Kuang is set against the merchants; the vicious pettiness of human society is set against the final transcendence of time.

These evaluative juxtapositions are probably a conscious structural feature of the poem; if we look more deeply, we find that the structure is more conservative. The phrase "observing Change," kuan-hua 觀化, appears in the opening of many of the Kan-yü: this initial abstraction, peculiar to the Kan-yü, serves the same function as the opening statement of setting or context in a tripartite court poem. Just as the court poet sets up the occasion whose natural surroundings he describes in the middle couplets, so Ch'en Tzu-ang begins by setting the conditions under which he observes the pettiness of the world. Nor is there any more subordination in Ch'en's enumeration of the world's vices than in the enumeration of landscape features in the middle couplets of a court poem. The resolution to "go pick magic herbs" occupies a function analogous to the personal response in the tripartite form: Ch'en is, in fact, responding emotionally to what he has seen. A poetry very different from court poetry is being built out of a modification of the old tripartite form: the statement changes, but the "grammar" remains the same.

In Kan-yu XXIV (04370), Ch'en turns his genius for invective against a more specific target, the great ministers of the court.

Who are those fellows with pint-sized brains,
In pretty court robes, decked out for green spring?
On the fifteenth each month the moon may be full,
But doesn't treasure its own full splendor.
In great halls they waste the gold and the jade;
Ten tons hanging from a slender thread.
How can they carry the great tripod of state?—
When it's snatched from them, they'll be laughingstocks.

挈瓶者誰子
姣服當青春
三五明月滿
盈華不自珍
高堂委金玉
微縷懸千鈞
如何負公鼎
被奪笑時人

The image of "ten tons hanging from a slender thread" was borrowed from a Han dynasty letter to describe an extremely precarious situation. Carrying the "tripod of state" refers to the great responsibilities with which these ministers have been entrusted. Such sarcasm and mockery represents only a minor strain in the tradition of Chinese social criticism; more often writers prefer to describe sympathetically those who have suffered from misgovernment.

One of the marks of Ch'en Tzu-ang's genius in the Kan-yü is his ability to create effective poetry without the complex description of the physical world which one comes to expect in Chinese poetry. Most short Chinese poetry is presented to the mind through the senses, a scene for contemplation. Rarely does one find the mind projecting a wholly imaginary scene, except in poems on historical periods and in poems with highly conventional themes such as border yüeh-fu. From conventional allegory such as "The Long Bamboo," Ch'en proceeds to highly imaginative allegory as in the closing of the following poem, Kan-yü XXXVIII (04384):

Confucius investigated the basis of Change,
How the Dark Immense is followed by Bright and Gentle:
In the Great Cycle is Expansion and Contraction,
Springs and autumns come and go in succession.

仲尼探元化
幽鴻順陽和
大運自盈縮
春秋迭來過

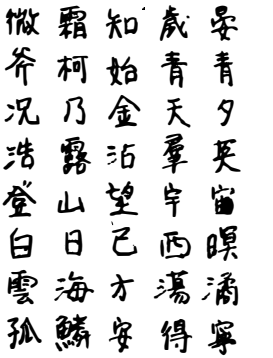
Then blinding gales suddenly scream in rage, 旹 颷 忽 號 怒
All things of the world rend each other apart. 萬 物 相 分 劇
Oceans dark and vast rumble and swell, 溟 海 皆 震 蕩
How then shall the lone phoenix survive? 孤 鳳 其 如 何

The "Dark Immense" refers to the elemental nature of winter, while the "Bright and Gentle" refers to spring. Although we now consider Confucius primarily a social philosopher, the "Ten Wings" of the Yi-ching," cosmological tracts in the form of commentaries, were traditionally attributed to him: thus Ch'en Tzu-ang sees him investigating the cosmos order. This poem seems to speak of a cataclysmic disruption of the cosmic order. The idea of the world being "in flood" had long been a favorite image of universal corruption and dissension or, depending on your viewpoint, a positive image of natural flux. Clearly defined bodies of water such as rivers with their fords could represent the Confucian Way; Taoists often preferred the undifferentiation of the sea, which stood for a primal chaos transcending values and was opposed to Confucian concepts of value differentiation and order. From this tradition Ch'en Tzu-ang projects an imaginary, allegorical scene: the moral dissolution of the world's order becomes a raging sea in which the phoenix, the emblem of the sage, finds himself helplessly tossed about.

In Kan-yü XXII we find a similar closing image of a lone creature tossed about in the violent chaos of an ocean storm. In this case the disintegration is of the year rather than of the universe; the poem is an "autumn meditation." Autumn was a season traditionally associated with destruction and dissolution, and the final image here suggests a close connection between the moral disintegration of the universe and the physical disintegration of nature with the onset of autumn. In the hsien-jen shih-chih theme, evil and impermanence are strangely associated:

in fleeing one, the hermit-immortal also flees the other.

By faint frost know the year comes to a close,
The axe handle once was green and leafy.
Still more, this evening of fall's metallic skies,
When floods of dew soak the crowds of blossoms.
Climb a mountain, gaze upon the universe,
The bright sun has already darkened in the west.
Then the cloudy seas froth in gales—
How shall the lone fins find any peace?



[04368]

It is unclear whether the "fins" (literally "scales") refers to an ordinary fish, a dragon, or a whale.

In Kan-yü Ch'en Tzu-ang shows a fascination for vast, cosmic panoramas; it is the scope of vision of that transcendent eye which "observes Change." Ch'en does not concern himself here with the unique forms of nature, its "wonders," which the court poet captures in his parallel couplets. Rather Ch'en observes the generalities of the autumn landscape. In doing so and in choosing the theme of impermanence, Ch'en is aligning himself with the poetry of the Chien-an and Wei in their treatment of autumn. But while Ch'en may be trying to capture something of the Chien-an and Wei manner, he never truly sounds like a Chien-an and Wei poet. Their autumn landscapes were constructed out of a fixed repertoire of elements which were followed according to an almost formulaic pattern. Ch'en, on the other hand, is a self-conscious, structuring poet who uses his material for original ends.

In its rhetorical question, the closing couplet uses one of the standard response devices of the tripartite form, but it is also one of those closing images designed to stir a response in the reader. In both this and the preceding poem a solitary creature is reduced to tininess

and helplessness in the midst of a vast, turbulent landscape. This technique of making something appear tiny and helpless by setting it alone in a immense, inanimate scene was effective, and it was to become a favorite closing device of Tu Fu. To cite just two of the most famous examples, in "Night Travels: writing my feelings":

Wind-tossed, what am I like?— 飄飄何所似
A lone sand gull between Heaven and Earth. 天地一沙鷗
[11433]

and in the seventh "Autumn Meditation" (11554): "Lakes and rivers fill the earth—one old fisherman" 江湖滿地一漁翁. Though the technique is the same, Ch'en Tzu-ang's allegorical beasts in their allegorical storm contrast sharply with Tu Fu's visionary symbolism.

Despite Ch'en Tzu-ang's extravagant claims for it, there was not really much "new" (or in Ch'en's terms, so old that it seemed new again) in "The Long Bamboo"; Ch'en topicalized and personalized the allegory, but this kind of ornate allegory had never completely disappeared during the age of court poetry. Lo Pin-wang, for example, wrote many such poems. On the other hand, the kind of allegory in the two poems above was truly new and made a powerful impression on a few contemporary and many later readers. It was the Kan-yü that were remembered and not "The Long Bamboo." At times Ch'en's imagination slips into an almost maniacal frenzy as in Kan-yü XX (04366):

The dark, mysterious heavens are hidden and silent, 玄天幽且默
The crowds dispute—mocking, raucous laughter. 羣議曷嘵嘵
Yet the teaching of the Sage endures 聖人教猶在
While the world's cycles have long rolled high, then low. 世運久隆夷
One rope—to what can it be tied? 一繩將何繫
Nor can we hold to drunken melancholy. 憂醉不能持

Off, off!—go pick magic herbs, 去去行採芝
Do not be cheated by the dust of this world! 勿爲塵所欺

Again we see Ch'en's fascination for violent juxtapositions: above are the heavens whose purpose is both mysterious and unknowable; beneath is an ugly, raucous world of turmoil. In this unstable world the only constants are the models of the sages and the laws of Change itself ("the teaching of the Sage" can also refer to the cosmology of the Yi-ching commentaries specifically).

Ch'en's abrupt shifts in subject and his brief flashes of powerful imagery give a picture of mental imbalance rather than decorous control. From Ch'en's more conventional poetry we can see that this is an assumed role rather than a necessary condition of Ch'en's writing. It is in the tradition of the "virtuous incoherence" of the sage, who seems unbalanced by the degeneracy of his age. One of the most famous examples of this is Analects, XVIII. 5:

> Chieh-yü, the madman of Ch'u, passed by Confucius singing: "Phoenix, O Phoenix! How low virtue has fallen! Those gone cannot be reproved, but those to come may still be saved. Finished! It is finished! Those now in government are in danger!" Confucius dismounted desiring to speak with him, but Chieh-yü fled, and Confucius did not get to talk with him.

The virtuous madman with his intense, exclamatory denunciations of the age belongs to a minor, but enduring tradition in Confucianism with tangential relations to the hsien-jen shih-chih theme. The unbalanced sage is closely allied to the figure of the crazy old Taoist, beneath whose foolishness and seeming incoherence is supposed to lie deep wisdom.

Released from the courtly demand to describe only the scene at hand, many forms of fantasy were possible for the poet. Old themes such as the spirit journey through

the heavens reappear in new guises, as in the following poem, Kan-yü XXXVI (04382):

Just now in a wild, free mood I yearn,
But for what?—for Mount O-mei in my own Shu;
I long to be with the madman of Ch'u,
To meet him in white clouds, endlessly far away.
The times must be wrong! I grieve that I've missed mine,
And tears trickle down in an endless stream.
I dreamed I climbed to the caves of Mount Sui,
Then to the south gathered herbs on Mount Wu,
Investigated the Basis, observed all things in Change,
Left the world, chasing a dragon in the clouds.
But when its undulations would seem to last forever,
I awoke. I could not see it.

浩然坐何慕
吾蜀有峨眉
念與楚狂子
悠悠白雲期
時哉悲不會
涕泣久漣洏
夢登終山穴
南采巫山芝
探元觀羣化
遺世從雲螭
婉孌將永矣
感悟不見之

The reinactment of the spirit journey in a dream journey was to become an important theme in the poetry of the eighth and ninth centuries. Though the themes themselves remain constants, each poet's treatment was to be highly individuated: Li Po's dream flights tend to be dazzlingly colorful and well developed. Again, in contrast to eighth-century treatments of identical themes, Ch'en Tzu-ang's versions are brief, stark, and abstract. The highly original poetic closure here heightens the effect by its abruptness.

As the T'ang brought back many of the older themes of Chinese literature, it often rationalized them for a new age. We suggested earlier that Ch'en's immortals represent a state of mind more than the physical beings of religious Taoism (though it might be pointed out that Li Po's immortals are quite physical). The spirit journey through the cosmos, associated with ancient Ch'u shamanism, is rationalized into the dream journey. Ch'en certainly

longed for some form of transcendence, but it seems unlikely that he could believe in the gods and immortals in the same way some earlier poets had.

This rationalization of fantasy may be connected to be presumed nonfictionality of occasional poetry, which had become the dominant mode of poetry during the preceding centuries. Court poetry had insistently kept the poet concerned with the world "at hand." It was in this world of physical presence that the poet sought "wonders" and not in the imagination. The presumption of nonfictionality is an important feature of later Chinese poetry, and it is grounded in the practice of court poetry. There was a need to seek out a historical, nonfictional frame of reference for consciously fictional poetry such as allegory and yüeh-fu, hence the later tendency to topical interpretation. Both allegory and yüeh-fu provided important outlets for the fiction-making imagination, but even in the remarkable fantasy of the Kan-yü we can see now and again the need to ground that fantasy in a real occasion, a need to say "I dreamed . . ." Dreams have an occasional, historical reality which is lacking in straight fantasy.

At times the abstract meditations of the Kan-yü approach incomprehensibility. The following poem, the eighth of the series, is unique in its heavy use of Buddhist terminology. Although Ch'en speculates that Buddhist nihilism might offer release from universal decline, the poem leaves the reader with the same sense of cosmic disorder as some of the preceeding poems.

I have observed Change from Mount K'un-lun,	吾觀崑崙化
Sun and moon lighting up Darkness as they sank,	日月淪洞冥
And in the interaction of shadow and shining Essence,	精魄相交構
Heaven and Sod arise in their own order.	天壤以羅生
Confucius investigated the Absolute,	仲尼推太極

Lao-tzu honored the Mysterious Dark, 老聃貴玄冥
The Metal Immortal of the West, the Buddha, 西方金仙子
Had lofty principles concerning Ignorance of Self. 崇義乃無明
When Appearance and Vacuity have both been extinguished, 空色皆寂滅
Then how can Cause and Karma form? 緣業亦何成
But the Doctrine of Names is in hopeless confusion, 名教信紛籍
And neither life nor death have yet ceased. 死生俱未停

[04354]

K'un-lun was an actual mountain in the northwest, but its primary significance here is as the dwelling place of immortals, particularly of Hsi-wang-mu, the great goddess who entertained King Mu on his travels (as we shall see in another of the Kan-yü). What begins as a visual scene turns visionary as Ch'en perceives the generation of the cosmos through the interaction of Light and Dark, of Yin and Yang. "Shadow and shining Essence" refer here specifically to the light and dark portions of the moon. Buddha, appearing in the guise of the God of the West, moves the poem toward the expected evocation of transcendence, but in this case the goal is Buddhist Extinction, chi-mieh 寂滅, transcending both life and death. Ch'en clearly delights in strings of abstract terminology; underneath the terms the argument is actually quite simple, and their intent seems rather to mystify.[23]

Though the preceding poem seems to be using Buddhist thought sympathetically, the nineteenth poem (04365) of the series is genuinely caustic in its attack on Buddhist secular wealth. The arguments used are the standard ones of anti-Buddhist polemics, but their effective use in poetry is something new.

The sage seeks no advantage for himself, 聖人不利己
Feels worry, gives succour to the masses. 憂濟在元元
The Yellow Canopy was not the will of Yao, 黃屋非堯意

Much less the tyrant's Terrace of Jade;
Yet I have heard of this Western Teaching
Whose Way of cleansing the soul is greatly honored.
Why is it, then, they use up gold and jade,
Carving them into something they think worth worship?
Mountain forests are gone for temples in the clouds,
They press for precious paintings, feathers, pearls.
What even the work of demons could not do,
How can human effort accomplish?
They boast their heedlessness of worldly things—entanglements only increase;
They vaunt their wisdom, but the Way grows ever darker.

瑤臺安可論
吾聞西方化
清淨道彌敦
奈何窮金玉
雕刻以爲尊
雲構山林盡
瑤圖珠翠煩
鬼功尚未可
人力安能存
夸愚適增累
矜智道逾昏

The "Yellow Canopy" was one of the imperial insignia, a modest luxury compared to the Terrace of Jade built by the tyrant Chou, last ruler of the ancient Shang dynasty. Empress Wu was particularly devoted to Buddhism, and the poem may be topical rather than a general attack on Buddhist secular wealth.

In the grand opening of the poem above we can see an attempt to recreate in poetry the kind of moral authority possessed by classical prose. Remarkable too is the overt social criticism, representing the ethical focus long sought by fu-ku theorists in poetry. Only the biting irony saves the poem from being a versified memorial. Again Ch'en uses the "praise and blame" structure, first setting forth the ideal, then following it with an attack.

The potential for topical social criticism is clear in the preceding poem; in some cases Ch'en's meditations on cosmic change and the transcendence of change do seem to have topical as well as general significance. The cosmic symbolism used in speaking of the imperial court

makes such topical, political interpretations particularly believable. In these cases, deliberate obfuscation, which we saw in the eighth poem of the series, can serve the useful purpose of shielding the poet from the consequences of more direct criticism. Empress Wu's dominance of the court and her later seizure of the throne makes an easy target beneath the thin veil of cosmic-sexual dualism, as in the sixth poem of the series (04352).

I have observed the dragon's transformation,	吾觀龍變化
And now understand the essence of pure Yang.	乃知至陽精
How dense and dark is the forest of stone	石林何杳密
And the hidden cave where no one tarries.	幽洞無留行
Those who found the immortal Way of old	古之得仙道
Were truly the match of the basis of Change.	信與元化幷
The feelings of Mystery—no childish knowledge—	玄感非蒙識
Who can plumb the engulfing dark?	誰能測淪冥
Men of this world are limited by what their eyes see,	世人拘目見
Drunk with wine, they laugh at the cinnabar classics.	酣酒笑丹經
But on Mount K'un-lun there are trees of jade—	崑崙有瑤樹
How can we get to pluck the blossoms?	安得采其英

The "cinnabar classics" are Taoist works on the cult of immortality. While most of the poem does not lend itself to allegorical interpretation, the first couplet with its "dragon transforming" and its "essence of pure Yang" make it difficult for the allegorist to resist. With an empress (female Yin principle) on the throne, all references to the male Yang principle become suspect. I will quote Ch'en Hang's interpretation of the poem in full as an example of topical, allegorical interpretation, which Ch'en applies throughout the series.

> This poem tells how the Mandate of Heaven, though lost, will return again. The inchworm has its time to expand and its time

to contract; none can fathom the transformations of the holy dragon. Since ancient times these have been used to stand for the ruler facing south and receiving the mandate. In this case it refers to the T'ang royal house and the imperial throne. From its hidden and dormant state it will leap into view, nor can it be held in check by the many forces of Yin [presumably referring to the empress]. As they accord with the Cycle and have their restoration [chung-hsing 中興], they will be in complete agreement with the Mandate of Heaven, and this is not to be accomplished by human effort. It is, in fact, exactly like an immortal attaining the Way and ascending to the sky, something that is always indicative of his complete unity with the forces of Creation. The average people of the world see only with their eyes and know nothing of the Mandate of Heaven; they understand only that decline attends upon glory. If you speak to them about this, they will laugh and not believe. May it come to pass some day that the flying dragon will find it advantageous to reveal himself again, that the myriad phenomena may all see him reigning again on K'un-lun and wandering through the Supreme Clarity.[24]

We need not accept this Ch'ing scholar's interpretation with any special authority; we have seen in earlier poems that Ch'en Tzu-ang is quite capable of writing general, nontopical meditations on change and immortality. We know that topical allegory can be present in the Kan-yü, but it is often impossible to determine with any certainty that it is. Even if we can determine that it is present, it is even more difficult to be certain what the allegory refers to. The mere fact that a topical interpretation "works" does not make it true: topical interpretation demands a kind of intentional, historical validity which most other forms of interpretation do not demand. Too many referents are available for the traditional symbols: the dragon might refer to the T'ang royal house, to an ambitious official, or, stretching the metaphor to fit unusual political circumstances, to Empress Wu herself;

in the latter case, Empress Wu demonstrates a transformation of the dragon (emperor) by leaving her hidden Yin-female state and showing herself to be in fact the "essence of pure Yang."

Some poems like Kan-yü VII (04353) hang uncomfortably between being topical allegory and being a meditative poem on impermanence.

The same bright sun never returns,
Spring, season of green and Yang, hath ended indeed.
On what vast, uncertain vision do I brood?—
Lying in the forest, I observe Nonbeginning.
Crowds of blossoms lost in the season's darkness,
The cry of the shrike pains my ear.
The state of Chaos broke up long ago,
Who now knows the Nest Father?

白日每不歸
青陽時暮矣
茫茫吾何思
林臥觀無始
衆芳喪時晦
鶗鴂鳴悲耳
鴻荒古已頹
誰識巢居子

"Nonbeginning" is a Taoist term referring to the state before creation when nothing commenced and therefore nothing came to an end. Chaos (hung-huang 鴻荒) is not specifically a Taoist term, but refers to much the same condition as "Nonbeginning." The Nest Father was a famous hermit at the time of the mythical sage-king Yao.

The allegorists would associate the sun with the emperor, ignoring its even more common function as a marker of the passage of the day, and hence as a symbol of impermanence. In the allegorical interpretation the kenning for spring, "green-Yang" (freely translated above as "Spring, season of green and Yang"), assumes special significance: the Yang would be associated with a male emperor no longer on the throne. However, since the next season, summer, is the time when the Yang is at its height, it would be difficult to connect this end-of-spring poem with the ascendence of the forces of Yin. The shrike is associated with the fall of spring's flowers as well as with evil courtiers and slanderers, following

the allegorical interpretation of the Li Sao.[25] The same question arises in regard to the closing resolution to become a hermit: we do not know if he is fleeing the world of impermanence or the evils of the court.

Meditation on the impermanence of the phenomenal world had been an important topic in the poetry of the Chien-an and Wei. We should remember that it was this poetry which was held up as the stylistic ideal in the preface to "The Long Bamboo." While not necessarily bound up with the hsien-jen shih-chih theme, the meditation on impermanence may serve as an allegory of the disillusioned scholar's response to political and moral decline. In the Li Sao, Ch'ü Yüan first laments that his ruler, the "fair one," has rejected him and then complains that time is fleeting. Fair flowers are good men, known by their reputation, their "fragrance"; weeds are evil courtiers. The associations of certain key phrases will usually signal the reader whether to look for allegory or not; the shrike in the preceding poem is such a word, leading us to revaluate the natural description in the first part of the poem. In this case we might decide that the shrike is not allegorical and echoes the Li Sao only in its surface associations with the fall of spring flowers. The impermanence of the world is an important theme in its own right.

Ch'en Tzu-ang does not subscribe to the cheerful Taoism of Chuang-tzu in which death is deprived of meaning through the constancy of Change (Kan-yü VIII is an exception here); Ch'en sees instead a world of entropy and decline, which leads him to long for transcendence, the "Nonlife" of the following poem. This is the thirteenth poem of the series (04359) and was probably written during his last years in Szechwan.

Dwelling in the forest, long sick, 林居病時久
Wood and water wipe clear my lone purity. 水木淡孤清

Calmly I lie, observing the Change of things, 閑臥觀物化
Depressed by eternity, brood on Nonlife. 悠悠念無生
Green spring no sooner sprouts into being, 青春始萌達
Then Red Fire, summer's element, is at its peak. 朱火已滿盈
From this time on, the passing and the falling— 徂落方自此
Stirred to sighs, when shall I find peace? 感嘆何時平

Instead of the elegant parallel couplets in which Ch'en cast many other landscapes he had seen, here nature resolves into its constituent elements—wood, water, and fire—and the processes which inform their alternation. This elemental landscape is natural for the intellectual vision of the calm observer of Change. But a tension exists between this detached stance and the implicit horror which the poet feels at what he sees, whether it be the contentious world of human society or the inherent entropy of nature.

It is difficult to say what makes this a Kan-yü, whereas a poem like "Lying Sick in My Home Garden" is not. Both poems probably come from the same period in the poet's life, and both are in much the same style. Here and there among the Kan-yü occasional subgenres appear in a new guise. The thirty-second poem of the series (04378) concerns longing for old friends, a common enough lyric topic, but Ch'en places it in the Kan-yü context of a meditation on impermanence.

How many days now, living in seclusion, in solitude?— 索居獨幾日
Blazing summer is suddenly in decline. 炎夏忽然衰
Bright colors in sunlight all shaded and covered, 陽彩皆陰翳
Friends and relations—strayed, gone different ways. 親友盡睽違
Climb a mountain, gaze, cannot see them, 登山望不見
Tears trickle down in an endless stream. 涕泣久連洏
All my life stirred by their faces' beauty, 脂昔感顏色
As though fixing a time to meet the white clouds 若與白雲期

Proud young men on horseback,
Galloping after each other in dumb confusion.
In the mountains of Shu, by the rivers of Ch'u—
When again shall we join hands?

馬上驕豪子
驅逐正莹莹
蜀山與楚水
携手在何時

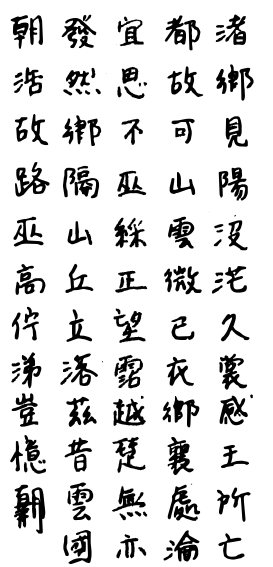
Ch'en Hang interprets this poem as an allegory for the poet's longing for his ruler; this is clearly a poem where such political allegory is out of place. Ch'en Tzu-ang begins with the same sort of detached meditation on Change that he has used in many other poems, but in this case the specific application of the process of Change is the separation of friends and relatives. Notice that the sixth line of this poem is identical to the sixth line of the thirty-sixth poem of the series; Ch'en uses repeated phrases and similar phrases throughout the series. It may be that the function of these repetitions is to approximate the lyric formulae of Chien-an and Wei poetry: tears trickling down is the most well-worn response in poetry of those periods, but it belongs at the end of the poem rather than in the middle.

Ch'en Tzu-ang's tendency to shift subjects abruptly makes part of his poems difficult to interpret. We presume that he is imagining the faces of his friends and relatives back in Szechwan who are growing old without him. But the sudden intrusion of "proud young men on horseback" leaves us wondering whether he is referring to his own youthful circle or to the heedless youth of the present among whom he is a stranger. The former seems more likely, but Ch'en Hang evidently favors the latter, interpreting the image as referring to those scrambling for power.

The poems on the impermanence of things in the natural world have a human counterpart in the huai-ku; human history was interpreted in terms of cyclical change whose laws might be observed in nature. We have already seen

how closely this theme was associated with fu-ku. Like the seasonal imagery in the preceding poems, historical incidents may be used in a variety of ways, ranging from exempla in larger poems to topical analogies for contemporary events to pure huai-ku in which the past is interesting for its own sake. In most cases, the elegiac tone which Ch'en adopts shows that the emotional focus of the poem is on the past itself, whatever exemplary, analogical function it may also serve.

Kan-yü XXVII and XXVIII represent two different kinds of huai-ku: the first is an occasional huai-ku, the poet's meditation set in the context of biographical experience, travelling past Wu Mountain; the second is more properly a historical poem. Both concern the ancient state of Ch'u, and both allude to the famous story of the goddess of Wu Mountain (see p. 137).



At dawn I set out from Yi-tu Isle,
Longing for home flooded over me.
But now my home is not to be seen,
My path has gone past Wu Mountain's south slope.
The colored clouds engulf Wu Mountain,
The high hill, now faint and indistinct.
A long, long time I've stood here gazing,
Tears stream down, soaking my robes.
This is not just the sorrow of leaving home,
For I remember King Hsiang of Ch'u long ago.
The "morning clouds" are nowhere to be seen,
The state of Ch'u has also perished.

[04373]

From the style and circumstances of this simple poem, it is tempting to place it in 681, on Ch'en's first journey to Lo-yang. It is more rambling than many of the later Kan-yü, and it lacks their stark, quickly shifting imagery. As Ch'en passes Wu Mountain on his journey

down the Yangtze, he looks back toward his home, to find his view blocked by Wu Mountain. Since Wu Mountain is within his view, he begins a huai-ku on the legend of the goddess. The "morning clouds" suggest an ephemeral sexual experience whose beauty cannot be recaptured (see p. 137), but Ch'en fuses the image with the state of Ch'u itself, whose existence now seems just as ephemeral. The "high hill" of line six is where the goddess told King Hsiang she lived; it also refers to the barrow of a ruler. Here also, in the hazy distance of the poet's vision, the two situations are interwoven. The position taken by Ch'en Hang, that sexual indulgence led to the fall of Ch'u and this refers to the relationship between Kao-tsung and Empress Wu, is simply not warranted by the poem.

On the other hand, Kan-yü XXVIII uses the story of Chang-hua Terrace, where King Ling of Ch'u used to hold his orgies.[26] In this case there is a precedent for topical criticism through historical analogy: thus is the "Chang-hua Terrace Fu" by Pien Jang 邊讓(d. ca. 208). Ch'en Tzu-ang would have been familiar with the introductory note to this fu in the Later Han History (c. 80b), which says that Pien Jang's fu was "like the indirect criticism (feng) of Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju." Thus Pien Jang's work would be criticizing the Han emperor Ling through the figure of King Ling of Ch'u.

Long ago they feasted on Chang-hua,
The King of Ch'u loved debauchery.
Rainbow banners, a kingfisher awning,
As he shot the wild ox in Yün-meng Forest.
Then back he went to the Kao-t'ang pavilion,
Gazed in sorrow toward the peak of Yün-yang.
His valiant plans—where are they now?
Only the sparrows chant on in vain.

昔日章華宴淫
荊王樂荒翠羽蓋
霓旌兕雲夢林觀
射罷來高唐陽岑
悵望雲今何在
雄圖空哀吟
黃雀

[04734]

Although this poem may be topical allegory, it does have an elegiac huai-ku ending, remarkably similar to the ending of Lu Chao-lin's poem on Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju's Lute Terrace (02781), though the birds are different. Except for the criticism implied in the first couplet, the poem is not unlike many of Ch'en's huai-ku, contrasting past glory with present decline and responding with the characteristic ubi sunt: "His valiant plans—where are they now?"

A topical interpretation is inescapable in several of the Kan-yü on historical events. While the appropriateness of a topical referent is not enough to prove its presence in a poem, it would be difficult for a contemporary reader to avoid the kind of analogies to the situation of Empress Wu that Kan-yü XXI seems to demand. Queen Hsüan, wife of King Chao of Ch'in, managed to secure top positions in the government for many of her relatives: her younger brother Wei Mao became the Marquis of Jang. Obvious parallels exist here with Empress Wu, who likewise installed her relatives in high positions. In the case of Queen Hsüan, a wandering rhetorician from the east named Fan Chü made a caustic comment to King Chao about his reputation for uxoriousness among the feudal lords. This so enraged the king that he gave Fan Chü the authority to check the abuses of Queen Hsüan and her relations. Obviously the analogy works best if we assume that the poem was written during Ch'en's youth when Kao-tsung was still on the throne and there remained a chance to check the empress' power, but we might also read the poem as Ch'en looking back on Kao-tsung's failure to check her power.

The dragonfly wanders between Heaven and Earth,	蜻蛉遊天地
At heart it fears harm from no other creature.	與物本無患
It flies and flies, cannot get away,	飛飛未能去
The sparrow has pounced upon it.	黃雀來相干

The Marquis of Jang was rich in Ch'in's favor,
Felt his joys and companions were as metal and stone.
In and out he went in the capital Hsien-yang,
None of the feudal lords dared say a word.
Little did they know that a wanderer from Shan-tung
Would stir the Ch'in king's heart to rage.
A commoner he was, becoming minister—
A thousand years and it causes bitter grief.

穰侯富秦寵
金石比交歡
出入咸陽裏
諸侯莫敢言
寧知山東客
激怒秦王肝
布衣取丞相
千載爲辛酸

[04367]

The last line here is grounds for presuming the presence of topical allegory in this poem: such grief is felt in the present because the ancient example is not being repeated in the T'ang.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this poem is the relationship between the opening story of the dragonfly and the rest of the poem. This sort of brief parable opening was used occasionally in the poetry of the Chien-an and Wei as a parallel or contrast to the main body of the poem. The parable itself comes from a compound analogy in the Chan-kuo ts'e (chüan 17, Ch'u 4) in which Chuang Hsin tells King Hsiang of Ch'u of a series of creatures and men who wander carefree, heedless of their fate, until some greater figure destroys them. The warning is that King Hsiang must remove two of his favorites or he will suffer the same fate at the hands of Ch'in. It is none other than the Marquis of Jang who will be deputed by Ch'in to bring destruction on King Hsiang.

On one level of the poem, Ch'en Tzu-ang is obviously extending the analogy of the Chan-kuo ts'e so that the final destroyer, the Marquis of Jang, will himself be destroyed. On another level, Ch'en Tzu-ang is complicating the analogy. The dragonfly is identified with the marquis, both proud and carefree, each destroyed by a

more powerful figure. The natural sympathy we give to the dragonfly must, through the analogy, be transferred to the marquis. But our analogical sympathy conflicts with the historical evaluation of the marquis and the closing of the poem. The effect is strange—sympathy for the fall of a powerful, but morally negative character—and without parallel in other seventh-century poetry.

Usually Ch'en Tzu-ang is more direct in his use of historical examples, consonant with the idea of uncompromising moral honesty which Confucian writers praised so highly. In Kan-yü IV (04350) the moral significance of each of the exempla is clear; complexity is achieved through the juxtaposition.

Yüeh Yang was a general of Wei,
Eating his son in his greed for martial glory.
If one cares so little for one's flesh and blood,
How could one be loyal to another?
Yet I have heard that the Minister of Chung-shan
Was connected to the old man that freed the fawn.
If one could not bear to harm a lone beast,
How much more true in serving one's lord to the end?

樂羊爲魏時
食子殉單功
骨肉且相薄
他人安得忠
吾聞中山相
乃屬放麑翁
孤獸猶不忍
況以奉君終

Like several of the Kan-yü translated earlier, this poem is made up of two equal and antithetical situations, in this case contrasting historical exempla. The first story is of the Wei general Yüeh Yang, who attacked the state of Chung-shan where his own son was being held hostage; Chung-shan returned the boy to his father in a stew, which Yüeh Yang unwittingly ate. The second story is of Meng Sun, the minister of Chung-shan, who captured a fawn and sent it back to his residence to be cooked. The doe followed the fawn crying out, and the

old man who had been entrusted with the task released the fawn out of compassion. The two stories are perfectly matched and are just the sort of exempla one would find paired in a prose argument. In both cases an offspring is threatened with destruction, and the parents react differently. In the first case what seems on the surface to be extreme loyalty to one's ruler is suspect, while in the second case what seems to be disobeying the commands of a superior is, in fact, an example of inner morality which promises higher loyalty. Again it is possible that a topical point is being made; Ch'en Hang suggests the execution of Crown Prince Hung by the empress, but the situation seems more complicated than that.

A good case can be made for topical allegory in the twenty-sixth poem of the series: it appears to be directed against the emperor's neglect of his palace ladies on account of the empress. If this is true, then the poem probably dates from the reign of Kao-tsung, but it might also be from the first reign of Chung-tsung, who shared the throne with the empress (his mother) for some years after Kao-tsung's death. The vehicle for political satire is the legend of King Mu of Chou who visited Hsi-wang-mu, the "Queen Mother of the West," who lived at "Tiered Walls" on the top of Mount K'un-lun. Mu's palace ladies, of course, were less than pleased with his peripatetic nature.

Rude and wild, Mu, Son of Heaven,	荒哉穆天子
Longing to meet with the white clouds.	好樂白雲期
His palace ladies always resent his leaving,	宮女多怨曠
And that Tiered Wall has blocked their moth eyebrows.	層城閉蛾眉
Each day more addicted to Jade Terrace's joys,	日耽瑤臺樂
He does not grieve for the season of peach and plum.	豈傷桃李時
In vain they fall on the green moss, gone,	青苔空萎絕
As white hair grows behind the curtains of gauze.	白髮生羅帷

The "white clouds" here refers specifically to the song sung by Hsi-wang-mu to King Mu as he feasted with her by Jade Pool:

White clouds in the sky,	白雲在天
Hills and mounds emerge,	丘陵自出
The road so long,	道里悠遠
Mountains and streams will divide us.	山川間之
I wish you to be immortal—	將子無死
You may still come again.[27]	尚復能來

Jade Pool 瑤池 was part of Hsi-wang-mu's residence, but Jade Terrace 瑤臺 was often used as a general term for immortal palaces and carried particularly unsavory associations as the name of a terrace built by the tyrant Chou of the Shang dynasty. Peaches and plums represent things of transient beauty, in this case Mu's palace ladies. Both blossoms and ladies must be appreciated while thay are in flower, and Mu, with his insatiable quest for immortality, will lose just such beautiful but impermanent things of his own world. Again Ch'en Tzu-ang is making a revision of a well-established topic, the complaint of the palace lady. This form, unpopular with fu-ku writers, has been made respectably by topical allegory.

In 690 Empress Wu did away with the T'ang dynasty and proclaimed a new dynasty, the Chou. The following poem, Kan-yü XIV, is clearly topical and must have been written after that date. The poem is based on the story of Chi-tzu, a virtuous prince of the fallen Shang-Yin dynasty. On his way to the court of Chou (the same character is used for Empress Wu's upstart dynasty), Chi-tzu passed the ruins of the old Yin capital; at the sight of wild grain growing in the ruins he was so moved that he wrote a song called "The Grain is Ripe."[28] The Yi and Ku are rivers near Lo-yang; the tripod was the symbol of the

dynasty. The Jade Terrace, the hermits of West Mountain (Po Yi and Shu Ch'i), and the Marquis of Tung-ling have all been discussed earlier.

At the crossroads I wept for the Way in the world,
Heaven's mandate is far beyond our ken.
Long ago a prince of the house of Yin,
On a jade white horse was going to court at Chou;
The jeweled tripod has sunk in the Yi and Ku,
The Jade Terrace has become an ancient mound.
Feel pain at the thought of West Mountain's loyal hermits,
At the former Marquis of Tung-ling too.

臨岐泣世道
天命良悠悠
昔日殷王子
玉馬遂朝周
寶鼎淪伊穀
瑤臺成故丘
西山傷遺老
東陵有故侯

[04360]

Beneath its wealth of historical references this is a very moving poem, suggesting the kinds of conflicts which officials must have felt when Empress Wu dropped all pretense of supporting the T'ang and founded her own dynasty. Like most members of the court, Ch'en chose to stay with the empress. While the example of Chi-tzu provided some consolation, the higher examples of Po Yi, Shu Ch'i, and the Marquis of Tung-ling must have been nagging sources of guilt.

The lure of escape from the morally compromising service to the new Chou dynasty seems to have increased Ch'en's predisposition for the life of the hermit and the cult of immortality. By renouncing his official career, Ch'en could resolve not only the genuine ethical problems posed by the empress' usurpation of the throne, but also his own sense of failure in not having achieved high office. This is the final stage of the hsien-jen shih-chih theme: one lives in an evil world which is getting worse, so that the only thing for a good man to do is to give it all up. The sense that the world has been getting ever more corrupt and the Way is becoming

lost is nothing new in Chinese intellectual history, but it was felt with particular intensity by many T'ang fu-ku writers. This sense of universal decline adds a dimension to the huai-ku that often makes it more than a simple lament for the impermanence of things.

Bluntness had long been one of the highest values praised in Confucian ministers: while he may not have enjoyed it, T'ai-tsung put up with a great deal of direct criticism. In virtually the same breath he would to told that it was the mark of a great monarch to endure such. Empress Wu, while tolerant in some matters, had committed a number of ghastly crimes in her rise to power, and these might not be mentioned. Bluntness was no longer a virtue, and the sycophant flourished.

Kan-yü XVIII sets up the idea of refusal to take office in a world where honest behavior is not tolerated. Ch'en Chung-tzu of Wu-ling in the state of Ch'i was once approached by an emissary from the state of Ch'u and asked to serve in Ch'u. When Ch'en asked his wife what she thought of the offer, she advised him that honest men did not survive long near the throne. Ch'en declined the offer and fled. Chang Chih (Chang Ch'ang-kung), mentioned in the last line, was forced to leave office because of his direct behavior.

Long has deviousness been the trend,
By now the Way of bluntness is at its end.
Certainly some are stirred by it now,
But the fashion of the age would destroy this practice.
Watering gardens is a low position indeed,
But in Wu-ling it showed radiant purity.
The ways of his age had no place for him—
Alas! Poor Chang Ch'ang-kung.

逶迤勢已久
骨鯁道斯窮
豈無感激者
時俗頹此風
灌園何其鄙
皎皎於陵中
世道不相容
嗟嗟張長公

[04364]

Despite his fascination with the idea of transcendence

and the cult of immortality, in most cases Ch'en Tzu-ang cannot completely accept it as a consolation. The eleventh poem is a praise of the model hermit Kuei-ku-tzu, "the Master of Ghost Valley," yet the poem closes on a note of futility.

I love the Master of Ghost Valley,
By his blue creek no foul vapors of this world.
In his sack he tied up the Way of world governing,
Left his body behind, now among white clouds.
Seven mighty powers then fought like dragons,
The world was in turmoil and without a lord.
He found glory hollow, a thing of no value,
Wrote "yield, preserve self, hide in a dark age."
Spread it out, it fills the universe—
Roll it up, it won't make an inch.
But how can we hope for the life of the mountain tree?
In vain do we flock with the deer.

吾愛鬼谷子
青溪無垢氣
囊括經世道
遺身在白雲
七雄方龍鬬
天下亂無君
浮榮不足貫
遵養晦時文
舒之彌宇宙
卷之不盈分
豈圖山木壽
空與麋鹿羣

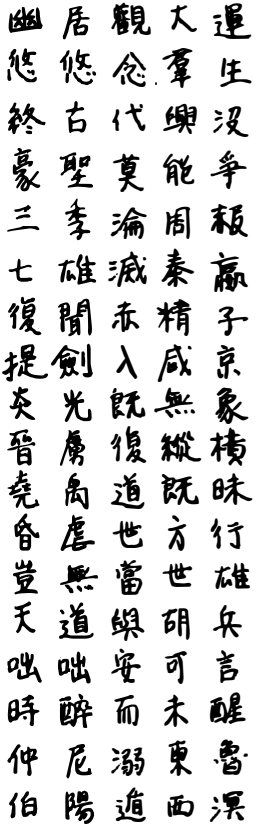
[04357]

The "seven mighty powers" are the Warring States; the "it" of lines nine and ten is, of course, the Way. Despite the counterstatement of the final couplet, the praise of the hermit dominates the poem. The manner of treatment resembles many High T'ang poems on the same topic. The bold declaration of the first line was imitated several decades later by both Meng Hao-jan (07764) and Li Po (08153). The syntax is straightforward, particles are used freely, and perfect parallelism is avoided. The effect is of a spontaneous, energetic outburst, a quality sought after by many High T'ang poets. To the western ear, the idea of "energy" may sound like a particularly elusive concept, but traditional Chinese critics of poetry took it very

seriously and saw it in many distinct forms—"pent up," "expansive," "bold melancholy." Such terms describe an identifiable quality of emotion which infuses a poem.

Even in this piece, the most positive of the Kan-yü, Ch'en closes on a despairing note. The pessimism of the Kan-yü is pervasive: vast storms of chaos rage, the natural world is falling, and the way of bluntness and honesty has been lost in human society. Ch'en's broad philosophical vision encompasses the universe, and he sees it in a state of entropy. Kan-yü XVII is one of the most powerful poems of the series, a quick review of Chinese history showing the principle of entropy at work. Ch'en Hang reads the promise of restoration into Ch'en's poems on cyclical decline; cyclical theory does promise glory after fall, but Ch'en's vision sees only the fall.

I live hidden away, observing the Great Cycle,
Brood on the endlessness of all living things.
Since earliest times rise and fall alternate,
With them neither sage nor hero can contend.
With Nan of Chou perished the last ancient dynasty,
Seven mighty powers fell to the Ying of Ch'in,
Then I've heard how the Red Spirit of Han
Lifted his sword entering Hsien-yang.
But when the Fiery light had lost all form,
Then Chin and the nomads made pact and alliance.
When the Way of Yao and Yü grew dark,
Gloom and tyranny were released upon the world.
Do you think there were no heroes then?
No—Heaven's Way was with the Tartars!
Gasp with shock—what can we say?
The times grew drunk and never sobered.
Confucius was in straits in eastern Lu,
Lao-tzu fled to the Western Ocean.



The Great Cycle has gone on like this forever, 大遷自古來
Why should a single person sigh? 孤人胡嘆哉

[04363]

The royal house of Ch'in was surnamed Ying; Ch'in conquered the "seven mighty powers" of the Warring States. The Han's element was fire, hence the "Red Spirit" and the "Fiery light." After the Han broke up into the Three Kingdoms, the Chin briefly reunified China, but soon lost the North to a series of non-Chinese kingdoms. As different as this kind of poetry is from court poetry, as soon as we look beneath the message, we see Ch'en stating first the circumstances, then listing a series of historical examples, and closing with a personal response.

From the preface to "The Long Bamboo" we know that allegorical yung-wu were closely associated with fu-ku. Because the various plants and animals which were the subjects of such poems already possessed rigidly fixed associations, allegorical yung-wu was the most stylized of the fu-ku subgenres. The second poem of the series (04348) is an excellent example of a traditional yung-wu allegory.

Orchid and turmeric grow in spring and summer, 蘭若生春夏
How richly flowering in their prime! 芊蔚何青青
Hidden, alone, their beauty in deserted forests, 幽獨空林色
Vermilion blossoms covering purple stems. 朱蕤冒紫莖
Gradually then the bright sun turns evening, 遲遲白日晚
With trembling, with quivering the autumn winds rise. 嫋嫋秋風生
When the year's flowering has all fallen away, 歲華盡搖落
What becomes of their fragrant intentions? 芳意竟何成

Orchid and turmeric stand for men of talent and virtue who live out their lives in the wilds, their virtues never appreciated. The "fragrant intentions" are, in

human terms, "virtuous intentions."

Kan-yü XXIII (04364) is a bird parable, illustrating the Taoist precept of the dangers of too much beauty.

The kingfisher nests by the South Sea,
Male and female in forests of pearl trees.
How could they know of a fair lady's whim?—
That she was doted on like shining gold.
Their bodies perish in that Blazing Land,
Their feathers fall in the shade of some marble hall.
A dense plumage to make hairpins glisten,
Lush down to leave brocade coverlets sparkling.
Certainly they were far enough away,
But still were sought by outstretched nets.
Too much worth is indeed an encumbrance,
Alas, I sigh for this precious bird.

翡翠巢南海
雄雌珠樹林
何知美人意
嬌愛比黃金
殺身炎州裏
奪羽玉堂陰
旖旎光首飾
蒨縟爛錦衾
豈不在遐遠
虞羅怱見尋
多材固爲累
嗟息此珍禽

Five of the Kan-yü are border poems. As we have seen, border poetry had been written throughout the period of court poetry and had no special attachment to fu-ku. The presence of these poems in the Kan-yü necessarily complicates our notion of what the series was meant to be. If poems on cosmic change do not fall comfortably within any of the usual subgenres, border poems and yung-wu do. It is significant that Ch'en has no yüeh-fu in his collection, and it is into that category that border poems would most easily fall. While they may have occasional, topical referents, the Kan-yü, like yueh-fü, tend to speak of types and universal situations rather than specific occasions. Unlike most yüeh-fu, the Kan-yü add a moral, political, or philosophical dimension to the universal treatment. This is also true of the border poems in the Kan-yü and may account for their inclusion in the series.

The third Kan-yü is a straightforward piece on the sufferings of the Chinese troops on the frontier.

A blue sky over the passes to Ting-ling,
Past and present, roads stretching far into wilderness.
Crumbled battlements of frontier forts,
Bones bleaching in the sun, no bodies whole.
Yellow sands rise south of the Gobi,
As the bright sun sinks under the western horizon.
Three hundred thousand Chinese troops
Have indeed done service against the Hsiung-nu.
One sees only the dead of the battlefields—
No one pities those left alone on the frontiers.

蒼蒼丁零塞 墨
今古緬荒途
亭堠何摧兀
暴骨無全軀
黃沙漠南起
白日隱西隅
漢甲三十萬
曾以事匈奴
但見沙場死
誰憐塞上孤

[04349]

Ch'en seems here to be countering the traditional yüeh-fu concern for those dead on the frontiers by shifting the focus to those left alive and alone on the frontier. Those "alone" are literally "orphans," and it is unclear whether these are real orphans, raising a social issue, or figurative "orphans," the survivors of the battles. The emotional response to the dead is called for and given, but Ch'en extends the implications back into the world of the living.

The thirty-fourth poem of the series is another piece on the futility of border warfare. The figure of the young hothead who goes out to fight the nomads and win glory for himself only to end up a white-haired private was already a stock figure by Ch'en Tzu-ang's time. But Ch'en's treatment of the theme is both distinctive and moving.

A north wind blows the trees by the ocean,
They moan and rustle: the border is autumn.
Who is that fellow in the pavilion there,
Filling the moonlit halls with his lament?
He tells us he is a wanderer in Yu and Yen,
Who tied up his hair and went on far travels.

朝風吹海樹
蕭條邊已秋
亭上誰家子
哀哀明月樓
自言幽燕客
結髮事遠遊

With his sling he killed some local clerk,
With bare blade took vengeance on some private enemy,
Then fleeing he came to the sea,
Impressed into service in this border land.
His home three thousand miles away,
Yet the Liao's waters go on and on forever.
Always he rages when Tartar troops invade,
Thinks this a shame to our Chinese land.
How could he have known that after seventy battles
He'd have white hair, and not yet be a lord?

禾丸殺公吏
白刃報私讎
避仇至海上
被役此邊州
故鄉三千里
遼水復悠悠
每憤胡兵入
常爲漢國羞
何知七十戰
白首未封侯

[04380]

Of all the Kan-yü this is closest in spirit to the yüeh-fu. The preceding poem aimed for universality in the timeless generality of its treatment; this poem approaches it by means of a normative type.

In other border poems Ch'en Tzu-ang adopts a persona in the first person. It is tempting to read such poems as purely personal, but as we read them, we can see that Ch'en's persona is also a normative type, no less universal than the preceding poems.

I'm the child of a noble family,
All my life I've admired talent.
Stirred by the times, I longed to serve the state,
Grasped my sword and rose up from the wilds.
To the west I galloped to Ting-ling's passes,
To the north I climbed the terrace of the Khan.
Went up a mountain, gazed a thousand miles,
Meditating on the past, my heart was grieved.
No one can claim that I fear my end,
To be ground away into grains of dust.

本爲貴公子
平生實愛才
感時思報國
拔劍起蒿萊
西馳丁零塞
北上單于臺
登山見千里
懷古心悠哉
誰言未亡禍
磨滅成塵埃

[04381]

Here in Kan-yü XXXV much is left unsaid: the "meditation

on the past" which depresses the persona must concern the kind of historical fatalism and sense of futility that appears so frequently in the Kan-yü. He will achieve no glory; the borders will never be pacified. Such fatalism undercuts the meaning of self-sacrifice for the state; as Ch'en wrote in Kan-yü XXII:

Do you think there were no heroes then?
No—Heaven's Way was with the Tartars!

豈無當世雄
天道與胡兵

The grisly affirmation of courage in the closing couplet is necessary: he must explain that his grief is due to this sense of futility rather than to cowardice. The undaunted courage of the border poem and the melancholy of the huai-ku are in collision.

Kan-yü XXXVII (04383) is a beautiful meditation on the physical closeness but fundamental opposition of civilization and barbarism.

At dawn I entered Yün-chung Commandery,
To the north I gazed to the terrace of Khan.
How closely Ch'in adjoins Tartary!
Bold indeed is the spirit of the sandy northland.
Scattering in confusion, the "darlings of Heaven,"
Then in a wild charge they come back again.
The guardian wall gives rise to famous generals,
Frontier forts thrust high into the sky.
But now I sigh, and what is it for?
That the border poeple's paths grow over with weeds.

朝入雲中郡
北望單于臺
胡秦何密邇
沙朔氣雄哉
籍籍天驕子
猖狂已復來
塞垣興名將
亭堠空崔嵬
嗟嗟吾何歎
邊人塗草萊

The "darlings of Heaven" refers to the nomads: a khan once replied haughtily that if the Chinese emperor was the "Son of Heaven," "then the nomads were Heaven's favorite children, its darlings." Paths are not only the physical markers of civilization, they are physical manifestations of the Way—they show people how they

should go. At this juncture between the barbarian north and China, represented as Ch'in, the forces of civilization are losing, the paths are being overgrown with weeds. It is characteristic of Chinese poetry in general and T'ang poetry in particular that the physical world and the world of ideas are not clearly differentiated. Looking at the physical world one can see ideas manifested; looking at a "way," one sees the Way. Ch'en Tzu-ang was successful in creating a powerful poetry using abstract ideas, but the real future of T'ang poetry lay precisely in the identification of the world of things and the world of ideas. The purely sensual world of much court poetry could be transformed by making the sensual world also "mean."

PART FOUR

THE COURT POETS OF EMPRESS WU AND CHUNG-TSUNG, 680-710

In rhetoric Sung and Shen boasted changing the rules,
Wang and Yang flourished their brushes, found good friends.
In those days they claimed the master's touch—
But today we see only a knack for parallelism.

沈宋裁辭矜變律
王楊落筆得良朋
當時自謂宗師妙
今日惟觀對屬能

Li Shang-yin, "Offhand Poem" I [29538]

To the poets and critics of the eighth and ninth centuries, only a very few names stood out among the hundreds of Early T'ang poets: the "Four Talents of the Early T'ang" (Wang Po, Yang Chiung, and their "good friends," Lu Chao-lin and Lo Pin-wang) would have probably been the first to come to mind, along with Ch'en Tzu-ang, who possessed unassailable credentials as a fu-ku writer. After these would come the two court poets of Empress Wu and Chung-tsung, Sung Chih-wen 宋之問 and Shen Ch'üan-ch'i 沈佺期, who were credited with perfection of the regulated verse ("changing the rules"). A complicated and sophisticated poet of the Late T'ang such as Li Shang-yin 李商隱 could look back at even the best poets of the Early T'ang and see only competent craftsmanship, a "knack for parallelism." The Early T'ang poet's work sounded hollow, his style and imagery hackneyed by two centuries of use.

Few generations can admire their ancestors until those ancestors are far enough in the past that they cease to threaten the present. Beneath the complacent confidence of Li Shang-yin's cruel and contemptuous epigram lies the fundamental continuity of many elements of Early T'ang poetry. The eighth and ninth centuries produced greater poets than the seventh, but the seventh century gave them their forms, themes, and stylistic conventions. Not only was the regulated verse created by the Early T'ang, most of the major occasional subgenres of the eighth and ninth

centuries took on their mature forms and conventions during the Early T'ang. The reason that Li Shang-yin felt that he and poets of his generation were writing "better" was because in certain fundamental ways they were writing poetry "of the same kind."

Our clearest picture of court poetry and its conventions comes from the last years of Empress Wu's reign and from the second reigns of Chung-tsung and Jui-tsung, her successors. The simplest reason for this is that more poems survive from these two decades than from the seventh century. The picture is not only clearer, it is also more attractive: certain changes and developments were taking place that were to lead into the style of the High T'ang. It may be that some factors of literary sociology had an influence on these changes in court poetry. Much of the continuity with the court poetry of the Southern Dynasties had been lost: the great southern literary families, which had produced poets if not many high officials through T'ai-tsung's reign, gradually fell out of sight as Empress Wu raised men of little-known background to positions of favor in the court. Not only was the continuity of literary families disrupted, the continuity of "poetic lineage" was broken: once a young promising poet would go to the capital to win the praise and become the protégé of some elder, established poet, a fact that would be duly recorded in his biography. Many of T'ai-tsung's poets, we may remember, could trace their literary ancestry back to the Liang: in his youth Yü Shih-nan dazzled Hsü Ling and Chiang Tsung, and each of them in turn had dazzled some notable in their youths. Although this is biographical convention, it does represent a genuine interest in literary continuity. In Empress Wu's reign young poets began to attach themselves instead to the entourages of court favorites such as Chang Yi-chih 張易之, men who could not make such subtle discriminations of propriety as Yü Shih-nan. One interesting

survival of the older tradition of "hereditary talent" is to be found in the position of Shang-kuan Wan-erh, Shang-kuan Yi's granddaughter, who was made arbiter in court poetic competitions.

The disruption of the continuity of court poetry, begun in the middle of the seventh century, inevitably resulted in the intrusion of individuality into court poetry. Earlier court poetry, with its rigid codes of decorum and normative convention, demanded technical skill and abhorred individuality. Wang Po and Lu Chao-lin show some individuation; Lo Pin-wang and Ch'en Tzu-ang have marked personal styles. Another factor was that during this period an increasing amount of personal poetry and informal occasional poetry appeared.[1] This in turn influenced the taste of the court. While court poems proper and formal occasional poems still dominate the last decades of the seventh and first decade of the eighth century, they sound subtly different than the monolithic courtly style which stretched from Shang-kuan Yi back a century and a half.

THE LITERARY ESTABLISHMENT

In the Anecdotes on Poems from the Entire T'ang (Ch'üan T'ang shih-hua 全唐詩話) and in the Records of Occasions in T'ang Poetry (T'ang-shih chi-shih 唐詩紀事) we are given a complete list of the literary establishment of the court, the Hsiu-wen-kuan 修文館, for the year 708.[2] While this list omits a number of important figures, some of whom died before 708, and while it includes a number of nonentities, it is still our best source for the major literary figures of the latter part of Empress Wu's reign and the reign of Chung-tsung. The Hsiu-wen-kuan had previously been the Hung-wen-kuan 弘文館, mentioned in an earlier chapter. Also known as the Ch'ung-wen-kuan 崇文館, it was officially part of the Chancellory and should be distinguished from the Han-lin Academy 翰林院, a less formal and not strictly literary office which achieved prominence and provided a place for some of the best poets during the reign of Hsüan-tsung.

At the top of the Hsiu-wen-kuan hierarchy were four Grand Scholars 大學士: Li Chiao 李嶠, Tsung Ch'u-k'o 宗楚客, Chao Yen-chao 趙彦昭, and Wei Ssu-li 韋嗣立. Wei Ssu-li was a clansman of Empress Wei and the brother of one of Chung-tsung's ministers; it was at his famous villa that many of the outings of the court were held. Li Chiao (644-713), the most important literary figure among the Grand Scholars and perhaps the most representative of this era of court poetry, had been a major figure since the 670s.

Next in rank were the eight Scholars 學士: Li Shih 李適, Liu Hsien 劉憲, Ts'ui Shih 崔湜, Cheng Yin 鄭愔, Lu Ts'ang-yung 盧藏用, Li Yi 李乂, Ts'en Hsi 岑羲, and the completely unknown Liu Tzu-hsüan 劉子玄. Of these

Li Shih (663-711), Ts'ui Shih (671-713), and Li Yi (647-714) are the most noteworthy. Lu Ts'ang-yung appears here in the avatar of elegant court poet; in the last section we saw him as Ch'en Tzu-ang's hermit friend and biographer.

Finally there were twelve Auxiliary Scholars 直學士: Hsüeh Chi 薛稷, Ma Huai-su 馬懷素, Sung Chih-wen 宋之問, Wu P'ing-yi 武平一, Tu Shen-yen 杜審言, Shen Ch'üan-ch'i 沈佺期, Yen Chao-yin 閻朝隱, Wei An-shih 韋安石, Hsü Chien 徐堅, Wei Yuan-tan 韋元旦, Hsü Yen-po 徐彥伯, and Liu Yün-chi 劉允濟. Among these are the three men who are generally considered the best poets of the period: Sung Chih-wen (656?-712), Shen Ch'üan-ch'i (656?-714), and Tu Shen-yen (648?-708). Their work is generally broader in scope and contains more personal poetry than other poets of the period. Hsü Chien (659-729) may be remembered as the compiler of the Ch'u-hsüeh-chi during the early reign of Hsüan-tsung.

In addition to the members of the Hsiu-wen-kuan, there were a number of other important poets who predeceased 708: Ts'ui Jung 崔融 (653-706), Su Wei-tao 蘇味道 (648-705), and the fourth of the "Four Talents," Yang Chiung 楊炯 (ca. 650-sometime after 693). Among the poets whose work spans the reign of Chung-tsung into the early part of Hsüan-tsung's reign were Su T'ing 蘇頲 (670-727), Chang Yüeh 張說, and Chang Chiu-ling 張九齡. Chang Yüeh will be treated in chapter 15. Shang-kuan Wan-erh 上官婉兒 (or Chao-jung 昭容), a favorite in the courts of Wu and Chung-tsung, has been mentioned earlier.[3]

The total corpus of poems by the poets of the Hsiu-wen-kuan, along with the poems of Ts'ui Jung, Su Wei-tao, and Yang Chiung, amounts to almost a thousand poems. Of these about six hundred can be accounted for in the collections of Li Chiao, Sung Chih-wen, Shen Ch'üan-ch'i, and Tu Shen-yen. But this is by no means the total output of the period: there were a host of other minor poets, both belonging to and outside of court circles. In

addition, sizeable parts of the large collections of Su T'ing, Chang Yüeh, and Chang Chiu-ling belong to this period, not to mention the hundred and thirty-odd poems of Ch'en Tzu-ang.

HOW TO WRITE A COURT POEM IN 708: FORMS, GENRES, AND SUBGENRES

As we examined in an earlier chapter, court poetry was a formalized art in its structure, in its range of topics and vocabulary, and in its exclusion of intense moral, political, and private sentiments. This formalization was largely a product of the circumstances under which court occasional poetry was composed. Our evidence of the practice of court poetry in earlier centuries is fragmentary, but enough material—poems, complete poem series, and anecdotes—survives from the second reign of Chung-tsung (705-10) to build a relatively complete picture.

The composition of poetry on outings of the court was not a disinterested undertaking. Following a long-established banquet tradition, the courtier who was last to finish his poem on such occasions was required to drink a forfeit of a certain amount of wine. Though this is mild indeed, we may be sure that a certain amount of embarrassment was attached to poetic sluggishness. Our chronicles of court outings do mention who was first to finish his poem and who was last. Therefore, a premium was set on being able to produce graceful verses quickly on demand. Nothing aided swift composition as much as a generous store of appropriate conventions and a fixed form in which to cast them.

This need was addressed by the "tripartite form": first, there is an opening section, usually one couplet, setting the occasion, followed by an expandable middle section of parallel descriptive couplets. The final section is the "message" of the poem, some intrusion of personal wish or sentiment, some witty idea, or some observation that casts a new light on what precedes.

Sometimes the closing couplet will simply describe the end of the occasion. Theorists of regulated verse have made more complicated subdivisions of these three parts, but these later divisions are descriptive rather than prescriptive.[4] The more basic tripartite form predates and transcends the limitations of regulated verse. A large percentage (though not all) poems of the period are in the tripartite form; in an even greater percentage the tripartite form stands as the norm from which they vary or toward which they tend.

The regulated verse, lü-shih 律詩, grew out of a gradual fusion of the very common eight-line poem, certain rules of tonal decorum, and the tripartite form. Perfect regulated verses, such as Wang Chi's "View of the Wilds," appear throughout the seventh century, but the form did not become strict and regular until sometimes during the reigns of Wu and Chung-tsung. At that time the final requirement of the genre developed: two basic tonal patterns for the couplet existed, and it was determined that those two couplet patterns should alternate through four couplets of the poem. Earlier there had been a tendency to alternation, but it was not a fixed requirement. The tripartite form was also usually followed in the developing p'ai-lu: there the form was identical to regulated verse, except that the middle descriptive couplets exceeded two.

As a convenience in this volume, we will use the term "regulated verse" for all proto-regulated verse forms, both perfect and imperfect, but it whould be stressed that to refer to "regulated verse" at any time in the Early T'ang is, strictly speaking, an anachronism. What later became a conscious, formal genre was then only an amalgam of proprieties. Because poems that set out to answer those proprieties could be judged formally on how well they fulfilled them, we have an implicit genre, which by the first decade of the eighth century had reached the

form that was later to become the conscious genre "regulated verse." In both its earlier, looser form and in its later, fixed form, this proto-regulated verse stood in opposition to poetry that ignored its proprieties or avoided them. This other poetry, associated with the pre-Southern Dynasties style, was later to become another conscious genre, ku-shih 古詩, "old style poetry."

The tripartite form dominated not only the proto-regulated genres, it also dominated much poetry in the developing ku-shih genre. Where the tripartite form is not followed exactly, it often retains its power to shape poetic structure: nondescriptive, nonparallel couplets may occur in the middle part of the poem, but they will often be paratactic enumerations, like parallel descriptive couplets, and will form the body of information to which the closing couplet or couplets respond. Ku-shih began its development after the proprieties of the courtly style had begun to form in the Southern Dynasties. The two genres, so to speak, "grew apart, side by side": as poets became aware of the increasing formalization of poetry, they reacted against it—the fu-ku impulse. They sought primitivism and spontaneity through consciously avoiding the tonal regulations of formal occasional poetry. Though poets like Ch'en Tzu-ang did try different structural principles in poetry, of all the proprieties of the courtly style the tripartite form was the most difficult to avoid. The same pattern of setting, scene, and response was still all-powerful in the ninth century, so that a poet like Li Shang-yin might see his generation's relation to the Early T'ang as one of "progress" rather than as "difference."

The development of the tripartite form in Chinese poetry is part of the history of the pentasyllabic shih from its origins. The earliest element was the idea of the closure as a personal response to what precedes. In the poetry of the Chien-an and Wei a statement of intense,

personal emotion—a desire or exclamation of sorrow—was used as a mark of poetic closure. After choosing one of a number of conventional openings, poets would often run through a series of lyric formulae and close by saying how they were grieved or stirred by the situation. A more positive closing would tell how the poet wished to be or do something that would resolve his grief. Ts'ao Chih's first "Unclassified Poem" 雜詩 is an excellent example of this early stage; here the closure is complicated by the use of both the wish and the statement of sorrow; the poet wishes the bird to carry the message of his longing, and when that fails, he expresses his sorrow.

Over high terraces are strong and mournful winds,	高臺多悲風
The dawn sun shines on the northern grove.	朝日照北林
That person is thousands of miles away—	之子在萬里
Lakes and rivers, far and deep.	江湖迥且深
How can my double boat reach him?	方舟安可極
Thoughts of one parted are always hard to bear.	離思故難任
A lone goose flies on its journey south,	孤鴈飛南遊
Giving a long and mournful cry as it passes my courtyard.	過庭長哀吟
I let my thoughts fly up to it, longing for him far away,	翹思慕遠人
Desiring to send him word thereby.	願欲托遺音
Its form and shadow are suddenly not seen—	形影忽不見
Its swift flight wounds my heart.[5]	翩翩傷我心

In the hands of a major poet such as Ts'ao Chih, the lyric conventions of the yüeh-fu theme "longing for one far away" are handled with individuality and sophistication. "Wounds my heart" is a characteristic phrase of poetic closure, as is the wish to send a message of one's longing by a bird. Moreover, the one other "response" line of the poem is line six, which marks a major break in the poem.

In the latter part of the Wei and during the Chin,

parallelism and verbal ornamentation play an increasingly important role in the shih. The couplet was becoming a self-contained unit, and parallel couplets were tending to cluster in the middle of poems. The aesthetic motives for this are not difficult to guess: the intense emotion of the closing response would be undercut by the symmetrical balance of the parallel couplet. Parallelism in the opening couplet is common, but it tends to make the poem mechanical. An early example of the perfect tripartite form is in the famous first Yung-huai of Juan Chi:

In the night I could not sleep—	夜中不能寐
Rising, then sitting, I strummed my lute.	起坐彈鳴琴
The thin curtains mirror the bright moon,	薄帷鑒明月
A clear wind blows the flaps of my robe.	清風吹我襟
A lone goose cries in the wilds outside,	孤鴻號外野
Hovering birds sing in the north woods.	翔鳥鳴北林
I pace about—what do I see?—	徘徊將何見
Melancholy thoughts wound my solitary heart.[6]	憂思獨傷心

In its length and in the position of its parallel couplets, this poem is accidentally close to regulated verse, which may account for some of its popularity in later ages. We find here the normative structure of setting, scene, and response: the first couplet, nonparallel, sets the context of the experience by describing the poet's unaccountable restlessness; the middle two couplets, parallel, describe the scene with relative objectivity, first inside, then outside; then comes the emotional response, using the same "wounded heart" as the Ts'ao Chih poem. The poet is actively present in the first and last couplets and "absent" in the middle two.

In the centuries that followed, the best poets learned to manipulate this structure for their own purposes. The landscape poet Hsieh Ling-yün may insert an intellectual

meditation on the landscape between scene and response to clarify the relation between the two. In a two-part poem such as "Entering P'eng-li Lake," he will use the closing response as a device to mark a shift in the poem's direction.[7] In a poem like "Winter Day" Pao Chao may give a response of consolation and endurance to a scene of impermanence instead of the usual cry of despair.[8] The forms that the response may take increase and complicate, but they are still a personal reaction to the preceding scene.

By the Liang dynasty the tripartite form had become increasingly fixed, both in court occasional poems as well as in the poems on other topics. To give one example from among hundreds, there is Yü Chien-wu's 庾肩吾 (fl. 520) "Following the Rhymes of the Crown Prince's 'Leaving Mystery Garden': to command":

Spring light rises in the lovely mansion,	春光起麗譙
Clog-wearing footsteps ascend the mountain peak.	履步陟山椒
The tower's shadow hangs over the flying canopy,	閣影臨飛蓋
Orioles' voices have entered the open flutes.	鶯鳴入洞簫
Waters turn back, mounting up former beaches,	水還登故渚
Trees grow tall, shading the bridge before them.	樹長陰前橋
Green lotuses grow filagree leaves,	綠荷生綺葉
Cinnabar vines send up thin tendrils.	丹藤上細苗
In compliance I look back, shamed to muster my eloquence,	顧循慙振藻
What use for me to imitate the finest jade?[9]	何用擬瓊瑤

The last couplet may be paraphrased: "In compliance with your command, I look back and describe the scene, but my own meager talents are shamed by comparison to your poem, my Prince, which is like the finest jade." The opening couplet is parallel and descriptive, but it does describe the general location and time, in contrast to the specific details described in the middle couplets. Here we see the tendency, characteristic of court poetry, to fragment the

description into a string of unrelated items. When the poet enters with his closing response, he shows the new artistic self-consciousness of the court poet: he responds to his poem as a poem rather than to be scene itself. He is not just "stating his intention" (yen-chih 言志); he is creating an artistic object that will be judged against others of its kind.

The style of a banquet poem by Shang-kuan Yi almost a hundred and fifty years later is indistinguishable from that of Yü Chien-wu.

BANQUET AT AN-TE MOUNTAIN POOL

The highroad arrives at a P'ing-chin Lodge,
The rear hall has arrayed a great banquet.
With close friends begin familiar pleasures.
Lovely mats spread out on a fragrant morning.
Windblown mists gather in dense trees.
The lotus blooms anew on the winding pools.
Rain clears—a rainbow bridge in the evening;
Flowers fall—a phoenix terrace in spring.
Kingfisher hairpins sink toward the dancing mats,
Grained pearwood beams scatter the dust of song.
Now I regret that our flowing goblets are full—
Evening birds have left the city gates.[10]

上路枉平津
後堂羅厚陳
締交開押賞
麗席展芳辰
密樹風煙積
迴塘荷芰新
雨霽虹橋晚
花落鳳臺春
翠釵低舞席
文杏散歌塵
方惜流鶯滿
夕鳥去城闉

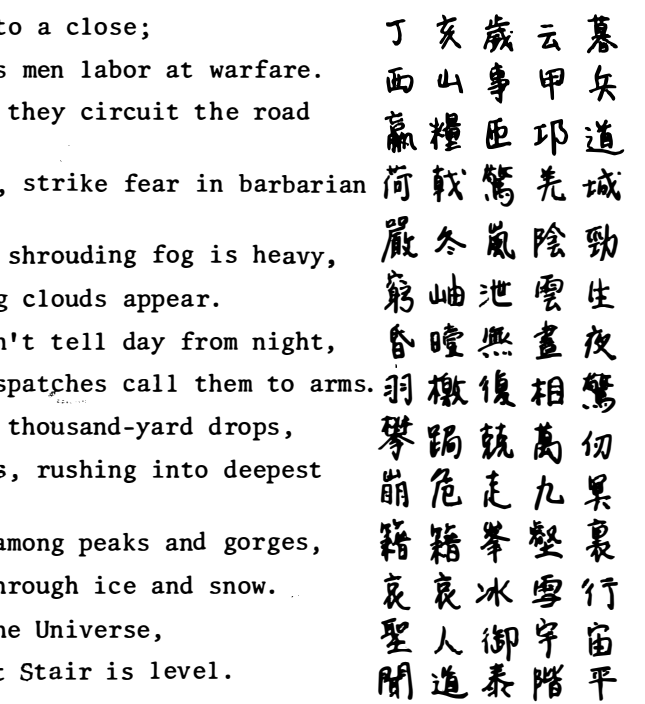
[02708]

The opening is clearer here than in Yü Chien-wu's poem, while the closing combines the expected emotional response ("now I regret") with the variant banquet closing that it is evening and the party is over. P'ing-chin Lodge was built by one Kung-sun Hung of the Han dynasty to entertain virtuous scholars. The tenth line refers to a commonplace that singing stirs the very dust on the beams to movement.

As poets like Wang Po and Lu Chao-lin began writing

more personal poetry, they carried the tripartite form with them. Even the long ballads on the capital use a variant of the pattern. Not until the Kan-yü of Ch'en Tzu-ang was there anything like a conscious attempt to break free of the tripartite form. When Ch'en Tzu-ang tried to break radically away from the tripartite form, the poem usually became mechanical and artificial in its structure, as some of the "praise and blame" poems of the Kan-yü; as we have seen, in the more successful of the Kan-yü Ch'en often is writing a variant of the old formula; for example, substituting historical exempla for descriptive couplets. Kan-yü XXIX, directed against a campaign in Szechwan, contrasts strongly with the preceding banquet poem by Shang-kuan Yi; it answers the goal of the opposition poetics by taking a moral stand on a topic of contemporary concern. All the same, the tripartite form underlies Ch'en Tzu-ang's argument and helps make the poem one of the finest of the Kan-yü.

The year 687 is coming to a close;
In the Western Mountains men labor at warfare.
Hampered by provisions, they circuit the road of Ch'iung,
Halberds over shoulders, strike fear in barbarian cities.
The dead of winter, the shrouding fog is heavy,
From empty caves, oozing clouds appear.
A gloom so heavy you can't tell day from night,
Yet again and again, dispatches call them to arms.
Clamber and crouch over thousand-yard drops,
Tumble from sheer places, rushing into deepest blackness.
Scattered in confusion among peaks and gorges,
They lament, marching through ice and snow.
Our Sage Ruler steers the Universe,
And I've heard the Great Stair is level.



The great lords, the meat-eaters, have fouled up in their plans,
And those who live on greens must go on far campaigns.

肉食謀何失
藜藿緬縱縴

[04375]

The Great Stair is a constellation that symbolizes the imperial social order: that it is "level" indicates that the world should be in order and at peace. The first couplet here is clearly the setting, the context. While the middle couplets are not parallel and have been arranged in something like a narrative order, they still form the physical "scene" to which the closing response reacts. Finally, instead of a gracious compliment or polite regret at the close of a banquet, Ch'en reacts with indignant criticism of the government, but this is still the "message" of the poem, the internal response of the poet to the preceding scene.

The major poets of the eighth and ninth centuries inherited the tripartite form, codified generically in the regulated verse and appearing more loosely in other forms. Like Ch'en Tzu-ang, they learned to integrate the form, to counter the tendency of the pattern to degenerate into a series of poorly related fragments. Sometimes they would make a narrative order out of the middle couplets, as in the preceding poem; sometimes they would play one couplet off against another—the tripartite form was open and succeptible to many variations. They also developed new forms of poetic closure, such as the objective scene designed to stir a response in the reader, which we have seen in the poetry of Wang Po. But the tripartite form remained at the heart of the Chinese lyric, which was often conceived as a structured "scene" (ching 景) followed by an emotional "response" (ch'ing 情).

In court poetry the parallel couplet was the center of stylistic interest. The "knack for parallelism" was the primary requisite for quick composition; once the

technique was mastered, the courtier could run swiftly through the middle of the poem, saving his intellectual energies for the clever closing. This applies only to technically correct parallelism; genius in parallelism was difficult and beyond the rules.

Parallelism has been a metrical device in many major literatures at some period in their development, but never was it elaborated, refined, and rationalized with such seriousness as it was in Chinese literature. In early prose parallelism served to reinforce analogical arguments of dubious logic. It appealed to the Chinese fondness for balance and symmetry, and indeed it was justified in terms of the bilateral symmetry of nature by Liu Hsieh in the Wen-hsin tiao-lung:

> Creation fashioned the forms of things; limbed bodies need be in pairs. The Transcendent Order works it thus; matters do not stand alone. Thus when the mind gives birth to literary works, it channels and casts all men's cares; high and low require each other, and through their own natures become parallel.[11]

Liu Hsieh's own prose style is beautifully parallel. Liu Hsieh not only uses bilateral symmetry as a natural analogy to parallelism, he also uses another, more subtle argument which echoes an important strain of Chinese philosophical thought. Like the concepts "high" and "low," all things can be defined only in relation to something else, something which is at once different and at the same time commensurate. The parallel couplet defines a scene by mutual context: each line highlights aspects of the other by similarities and differences.

Such a sophisticated theory of parallelism was far less important to poets than the actual practice of parallelism. Liu Hsieh himself sets up a fourfold classification of parallelism: (1) verbal, (2) historical or mythical allusion, (3) direct, and (4) antithetical. As

mentioned earlier, Shang-kuan Yi was credited with a sixfold and an eightfold classification system. But these practical guidelines were hindsight: parallelism was learned by practice. Habits grew up, such as matching "Heaven" with "Earth," balancing a line describing a mountain scene with one describing a water scene; so many conventional antitheses were available that if one sought only technical "correctness," one five-syllable descriptive line virtually wrote its match.

In the early stages of the development of the pentasyllabic shih, parallelism is often no more than a formal device, as in the second couplet of the first Yung-huai:

The thin curtains mirror the bright moon, 薄帷鑒明月
A clear wind blows the flaps of my robes. 清風吹我襟

Because of the poor matching here between the corresponding words of the two lines, later critics would probably not allow this syntactic parallelism to be "true" parallelism—yet the impulse is clear. The moonlight and the clear wind are both conventional elements of the "autumn mode" from which Juan Chi is drawing, but they bear no necessary relation to each other: they do not define one another. The solitary wild goose in the following couplet is also part of the "autumn mode," but this couplet shows a more sophisticated use of parallelism, which in the relationship between the corresponding words of the lines more closely approximates later ideas of "true" parallelism.

A lone goose cries in the wilds outside, 孤鴻號外野
Hovering birds sing in the north woods. 翔鳥鳴北林

The noble "lone goose" is set against the ordinary "birds." Since it is night, the birds should be roosting, and it seems almost as though the cry of the passing goose has set them into flight, reminding them of autumn and the time of migration. All are correlates to the poet's own

restlessness. To a certain extent, the more complex relationships between the lines of a parallel couplet were predicated on the technical demands to match things of "the same kind." The opposition of "thin curtains" and "clear wind," which do not belong to the same category, does not provide as clear a mutual definition as the opposition of "lone goose" and "hovering birds."

The more sophisticated parallelism became, the more demands it made upon the reader to fill in the ellipses and decipher the hidden relationships. Parallelism engendered a particular way of reading poetry, matching scene against scene to discover the similarities and differences. In the Shang-kuan Yi poem quoted above, we read:

Rain clears—a rainbow bridge in the evening; 雨霽虹橋晚
Flowers fall—a phoenix terrace in spring. 花落鳳臺春

In the phrase "rainbow bridge" it is not at all clear whether Shang-kuan Yi is describing a rainbow that seems like a bridge or a bridge that seems like a rainbow. The uncertainty lingers in the reader's mind until he reads "phoenix terrace": this would tend to demand a real bridge in the first line of the couplet. The transition from "Is it a rainbow or a bridge?" to "It's a bridge" is a process of visual revelation that goes along with the main thrust of the couplet. Because we have a double example of the relationship, we know that each line is an implicit conditional construction; <u>because</u> the rain has cleared up, (we can see) the rainbow bridge in the evening; <u>because</u> the flowers have fallen (from the trees, we can see) the phoenix terrace in spring. Other elements of the two lines draw together, sometimes simply as in a "spring evening," sometimes more complexly as we associate the rain with the fall of the flowers, both as a causative agent and as a parallel movement.

As an example of genius in parallelism, let us look at the middle couplets of one of Sung Chih-wen's finest poems, "Mountain Villa at Lu-hun" (03252):

源 source spring	水 water	看 look at	花 flowers	入 enter
幽 secluded secluding	林 woods	採 pick	藥 herb	行 walk
野 wilds	人 person	相 mutually	問 ask	姓 surname
山 mountain	鳥 birds	自 of themselves	呼 call out	名 name

Sung Chih-wen's tonal pattern here is an acceptable variant of a standard pattern. The couplets may be translated:

To look at flowers I follow in to the source of the waters;
To pick herbs I walk in the secluded forest.
Greet men of the wilds, exchange clan names,
But mountain birds call out their own first names.

Two of the most significant contributions of parallelism to Chinese poetic diction were in making syntactic experimentation possible and in facilitating variation of word class, that curious phenomenon of literary Chinese which allows words that normally serve as transitive, intransitive, or causative verbs, adjective, adverbs, or nouns to shift their word class according to their position in the sentence. The first of these, syntactic distortion, occurs in the first couplet above. The most natural way to construe the first line above would be: "I look at flowers entering the waters of the spring." But the second line of the couplet must be read: "I walk the secluded forest picking herbs." Therefore, the reader reinterprets the first line of the couplet as: "I enter [that is, go deep into the woods to] the source of the

waters of the spring to look at the flowers." Usually one line of a couplet is unambiguous, and its pattern may be imposed on a more problematic matching line. Sometimes, as above, it involves reinterpretation of a line; sometimes, as in the case of the Shang-kuan Yi couplet, it involves definition of an ambiguity. In a simple form, the straightforward line precedes the difficult line, allowing the reader to make his adjustments in the natural course of reading; in more complex cases, as here, the resolving line follows the difficult line, forcing us backward to call into question the relationships and "correct" our first reading. In the hands of later couplet-masters such as Tu Fu, both lines may be difficult, or one line may try to force an impossible interpretation on another line.

It must be emphasized that in most cases of reinterpretation or definition of ambiguity, the process is unconscious. The adjustment which must be made in the reading of the first line above is not radical and can be made automatically by a reader accustomed to parallelism. Such ambiguities impinge on the reader's consciousness only as a feeling of indefiniteness in the line, but the ambiguity is meaningful because, as we shall see later, he is also seeing the flowers fall into the spring. The result of this device of parallelism is often a strange tentativeness in the Chinese poetic language: the objects are present but their relation to one another is shifting and ill defined.

As we reconstrue the first line of this couplet to its new meaning, we have the poet "entering [the woods] to the source of the waters." Purposeful action ("in order to look at flowers") may be implied and it may not. Implicit in "entering to the source" is the notion that he followed the stream, and hidden here is the reason that he knew he would find flowering trees at the source—he followed the trail of blossoms upstream, having deduced

from the blossoms floating in the water that flowering trees lay ahead. This in turn echoes the story of "Peach Blossom Spring" by T'ao Ch'ien, in which a fisherman discovers a utopian village by following a trail of peach blossoms upstream. And of course when he enters to the source of the waters, he finds the blossoms entering the spring—the first interpretation which the reader was forced to abandon.

This first couplet concerns reclusion, associated with a symbolic "return" to one's home and a personal "return" to one's basic nature; "return" is specifically mentioned in the first couplet of the poem, which was not quoted above, and it is an implicit association of the "source" of the spring. Seclusion cuts one off from the world of human society, and through it a person is stripped of the false motives of public life. The "source" is the object of "return." How is this process of return realized in the structure of the couplet?

The two verbs of human activity, "looking at" and "picking," are placed in parallel to one another. This juxtaposition intensifies the ways in which these two words are different: the first is a passive activity, performed by someone who is outside nature, observing but not participating in it; the second is more active, the human interacting with the natural world. This transition is part of the process of "return" as is the transition between the second pair of verbs juxtaposed in the couplet, "enter" and "walk." The first implies a previous position outside the natural scene, from which the human "enters" and becomes secluded; in contrast to "enter," which is an end-directed activity, "walk" is not directed to some spatial goal but rather refers to free movement. In later couplets one often finds verbs that imply goals juxtaposed with verbs which do not point to the idea of spontaneity, the theme that dominates the second of the couplets quoted above.

An analogous transition occurs between "flowers" in the first line of the couplet, traditional symbols of impermanent beauty, and "herbs," used to concoct an elixir to prolong life. As in the hsien-jen shih-chih 賢人失志 theme, reclusion and immortality are connected. The juxtaposed associations of impermanence and immortality are given depth by the Peach Blossom Spring theme, whose inhabitants were treated as immortals by T'ang writers. Thus the transition implied in the juxtaposition of these two lines is a movement from a position outside nature into seclusion, a return to the "source" where one may hope to live more healthily and happily.

In this state of nature the poet meets hermits and other woodland figures, "men of the wilds." There is a freshness to these chance encounters, because these men are always strangers—he must "ask their surnames." Unlike in the public world of official society he need not know their rank or office. But there is a transition to an even greater freshness and spontaneity in the second line of this couplet. First, Sung plays on the fact that many birds were known popularly by onomotopoetic names imitating their calls, as in the English "whippoorwill" and "bobwhite." Thus the birds call out their own "names," ming 名, which is both the generic word for "name" as well as the "given name" of an individual. The "given name" aspect is playful parallelism to match the "surname" in the preceding line, while the generic "name" is what they are calling out. The couplet involves a transition from relatively natural behavior to truly spontaneous behavior: the hermits need to be asked their names, while the birds spontaneously tell theirs. The hermits tell only their family names, while birds show spontaneous familiarity in telling the poet their "given names."

At this point the skeptical reader will surely ask how much of this was "intended" by the poet. Certainly the ambiguity of the first line of the first couplet and

the witty play in the second couplet were intended. As for the subtler juxtapositions which were discussed in the first couplet, they were probably not consciously intended, but they are the means by which the couplet makes its point, a transition from a state outside nature to seclusion. Couplets like these were beyond the powers of the majority of court poets, and the complex juxtapositions they set up look forward to the best of the High T'ang. The poetic language was becoming increasingly laden with intellectual and affective associations, while parallel juxtapositions drew attention to the relationships between these richly connotative words. Thus whether such complex meanings were intended or not, they inescapably became the final result of the reading process.

With the discussion of the tripartite form and the couplet in mind, here we will look at a complete court poem. The following is a heptasyllabic regulated verse; though this genre did not have the long gestation period of the pentasyllabic regulated verse, it achieved a fixed form at about the same time, in the first decade of the eighth century. It is Shen Ch'üan-ch'i's "A Banquet at Hsing-ch'ing Pool" (05060), composed on the sixth day of the fourth month in 710.

碧	水	澄	潭	映	遙	空
emerald	water	clear	pool	reflect	distant	void/sky
紫	雲	香	駕	御	微	風
purple	cloud	fragrant	carriage	ride	faint	wind,
漢	家	城	闕	疑	天	上
Han	house	walls	palace gate	seem	Heaven	on
秦	地	山	川	似	鏡	中
Ch'in	land	mountain	streams	as though	mirror	in
向	浦	迴	舟	萍	已	綠
face to	shore	turn	boat	waterweeds	already	green
分	林	蔽	殿	槿	初	紅
divide	forest	conceal	hall	hibiscus	first	red
古	來	征	羙	橫	汾	賞
antiquity-	since	in vain	yearn	crossing	Fen	pleasure

今 日 宸 游 聖 藻 雄
this day imperial excursion Sage ornateness mightier

A clear pool of emerald waters reflects the distant void,
A scented wood carriage in a purple cloud rides the faint breeze.
Wall and towers of the House of Han seem as though in Heaven,
Mountains and streams of the land of Ch'in are as in a mirror.
The turning boat faces the shore—waterweeds already green;
A hall in the midst of the forest, hidden—the hibiscus are turning red.
Since ancient times men have yearned in vain for the joy of crossing the Fen,
But on the royal excursion today, His Majesty's rhetoric is stronger.

One of the proper ways to open a court banquet poem is with the arrival of the emperor in all his majesty; this is often done with established clichés of imperial majesty, such as having him come "shaking the earth" (for example, 03701). In this poem Shen Ch'üan-ch'i begins with a touch of drama; a still pool reflects the empty sky, which fills abruptly with color and movement as the imperial purple aura and the imperial carriage made of scented wood arrives. Shen is playing on the most popular of conventions to describe the emperor and the court—they are the immortals of heaven. As the poet looks into the pool's reflection, he "mistakes" the arrival of the court party for a vision of immortals in heaven. The emperor comes in a "cloud" set in the reflection of the empty sky, and his carriages "ride the wind" 御風, a phrase used in the Chuang-tzu to describe the apotheosis of the immortal Lieh-tzu.

The next fortuitous delusion suffered by the pool-gazing poet is the appearance of the palace compound in reflection; since these are superimposed on the reflected sky, he mistakes them for the palaces of heaven, but "corrects" his metaphor by indicating they are the palaces of "the House of Han." Shen's scope of vision fills and broadens, from the empty pool to the arrival of the

imperial party to the palace compound, all seen in reflection. Next the poet sees the entire landscape of the capital region in his "mirror." As we have seen earlier in the Kan-yü, there is a need to rationalize old fictions—here the identification of the court and heaven; the solution is a popular form of metaphor in T'ang poetry, the "delusory metaphor," in which the poet tacitly or explicitly admits the fictionality of his metaphor. Instead of saying "X is Y," the poet says "it seems to me" or "I mistakenly thought X was Y."

In their directness, in their dramatic order, and in their grand tone, these first four lines approach the High T'ang style. The narrow, specific scene of the third couplet could be found both in earlier court poetry and in the High T'ang. Here the poet looks up and first sees the scene around the pool, then sees the forest beyond. The sixth line suggests an outbuilding of the palace, appearing in the midst of the wood, but partially hidden by the flowering hibiscus. Notice that Shen uses the verb fen 分, "to split," as did Ch'en Tzu-ang, to describe the appearance of something that disrupts a visual continuity. In court poetry the time of year is often established by the order of the flowering plants: often, as here, one plant is "already" in one condition (here "green"), while another is "only now" beginning to blossom. Another popular time balance is "already" set against "not yet" (wei 未) in the second line of the couplet.

The last couplet refers to Han Wu-ti's "Song of the Autumn Wind," written at a pleasure outing after the Sacrifice to Earth at Fen-ying, described in Li Chiao's ballad.

The autumn wind rises, 秋風起兮
white clouds fly, 白雲飛

The leaves of trees and grasses yellow and fall, 草木黃落兮
geese journey south. 鴈南歸
The orchids blossom, 蘭有秀兮
the chrysanthemums bud, 菊有芳
I take my fair one by the hand, 攜佳人兮
cannot forget her, 不能忘
I sail my towered barge 汎樓船兮
across the river Fen. 濟汾河
Cutting across the midstream current, 橫中流兮
raising white waves, 揚素波
Pipes and drums ring out, 簫鼓鳴兮
a rowing song is raised. 發櫂歌
My joy is at its peak, 歡樂極兮
but gloomy feelings grow, 哀情多
How long can youth last, 少壯幾時兮
who can halt old age?[12] 奈老何

The gracious comment to Chung-tsung's poetry in the last couplet of Shen's poem brings back the imperial theme, but instead of mere identification with Han Wu-ti as we might expect, Chung-tsung outdoes him in the "mightiness" (hsiung 雄, "virile strength") of his poem. For a thousand years other rulers had tried to equal the joy of Wu-ti crossing the Fen, but Chung-tsung has succeeded. The delicate little boating scene of the third couplet transcends the strong feelings of Wu-ti. Considering the quality of Chung-tsung's extant poetry, Shen's compliment is more than generous.

The basic subgenres of T'ang poetry had reached almost their full complement during the Southern Dynasties.[13] A few of the poetic occasions popular during the High T'ang appear only rarely before the eighth century—poems on meeting someone on the road, on overnight gatherings, on informal visits to assorted pavilions, lodges, etcetera. But in all cases the proportion of personal poetry and informal occasional poetry increases dramatically early

in the eighth century. If we exclude the poets who have relatively large collections surviving—Li Chiao (209 poems), Sung Chih-wen (196 poems), Shen Ch'üan-ch'i (157 poems), and Tu Shen-yen (43 poems)—the majority of extant poems from the reigns of Wu and Chung-tsung were written to imperial command on imperial outings, banquets, and ceremonial partings. Li Chiao presents a special case because of his large yung-wu collection, but a substantial proportion of the noncourtly poems of Sung, Shen, and Tu were written during their southern exiles. Thus while there is a long but fragmentary tradition for most of the informal occasional subgenres, court occasions were still the dominant center of poetic composition.

After courtly occasional poetry the next most popular forms were yung-wu and yüeh-fu, each of which had a fixed range of narrower themes. Though yung-wu and yüeh-fu were among the oldest shih categories, in this period they retained the themes and manners of treatment which they had acquired during the Southern Dynasties. Many objects were never used as topics of yung-wu poems; others, hardly ever. Noncourtly banquet poems share the conventions of court banquet poems, but the diction varies greatly according to the status of the participants and the formality of the occasion. Verse letters (chi 寄, tseng 贈, ta 答, etcetera) also had a very old tradition; when addressed to high officials, these were among the most stylized and ornamented poems written. Parting poems had been written since the Chien-an, but they increase sharply in number during this period to become the most popular occasional subgenre later in the T'ang. The various forms of poetic lament were another old and stylized group. Other subgenres existed—poems on temples, music, and so forth—and all subgenres could be "rhyme-matched," one poet using the same rhymes or rhyme category as another. Perhaps the most personal poems of the period were the travel poems, a subgenre dating formally back to

the Chin, but even in travel poems poets were apt to be carried away by their considerable descriptive powers.

Finally, it seems that Empress Wu in particular had a fondness for heptasyllabic songs. Some of these were written for court occasions, and many others were written privately. They are some of the most interesting and lively poems of the period, and played an important role in the creation of the High T'ang style. Each subgenre had its own range of styles and its own set of conventions, though there was considerable overlap between them. Indeed during the entire period of court poetry, with the exception of a few unconventional writers such as Wang Chi, Lo Pin-wang, and Ch'en Tzu-ang, it is easier and more appropriate to describe subgeneric styles than individual styles.

POETRY IN THE LIFE OF THE COURT

In the Records of Occasions in T'ang Poetry, following the list of the members of the Hsiu-wen kuan, there is a brief description of the poetry outings of Chung-tsung. The unknown author speaks with both wistfulness and censure:

> Whenever the Son of Heaven would go on picnics or pleasure outings, he would be accompanied only by his ministers and the Auxiliary Scholars. In spring His Majesty would visit the Pear Orchard and attend the Purification Ceremony at the Wei River, at which he would present circlets of willow to ward off the pestilence. In summer he would hold banquets at the vineyards and present red cherries. In autumn he would climb to the Buddha of the Temple of Compassionate Mercy, and there he would be offered chrysanthemum flower wine with a wish for His Majesty's long life. In winter His Majesty would visit Hsin-feng, passing through the White Deer Pavilion, and climbing Mount Li, where he would permit a bath in the Warm Springs. There he would grant fragrant powders and orchid oils. To those of his retinue he would present horses from the Soaring Unicorn Stables, and to each of his officials, a yellow robe.
>
> Whenever the emperor was moved by something, he would write a poem, and all the Scholars would follow suit using the same rhyme. This indeed was what men of that age took delight in and yearned after. Thus it happened that everyone in the retinue grew overly familiar, glib, and brimming with flattery, and they forgot the rules of propriety that obtain between a ruler and his courtiers. Only through literary genius did men gain Imperial Favor: men such as Wei Yüan-tan, Liu Yün-chi, Shen Ch'üan-ch'i, Sung Chih-wen, Yen Chao-yin, and others were known for this and nothing else.[14]

These occasional poem series took various forms. They seem to have usually been competitions, the object being speed or quality. When the criterion was literary quality, the standards of judgment were extremely subtle. The reward for the victor was often a piece of brocade, and in later poetic diction, the phrase "to get the brocade" meant to achieve poetic renown. The loser was required to drink a specified amount of wine as a forfeit.

Such poems are generally designated "to imperial command" (ying-chih 應制). In some cases the courtiers would "respectfully follow the rhymes" (feng-ho 奉和) of His Majesty's poem, while in other cases the emperor would set the topic and give different rhymes to different poets, including himself (fen-yün 分韻). Prefaces were probably added to all the series; one survives written by Chung-tsung himself. Ordinarily such prefaces would set the scene, bring up some of the allusions used, and enumerate the poets.

We do not know if poems were chanted aloud as they were completed or simply handed in for judgement, but in many of the series we can see poems that seem to respond to one another; for example, they will contain couplets of the pattern "Who would say X? [something said in another poem of the series]/Rather we should say Y." This would suggest that poems were recited upon completion. The same myths, allusions, and themes will be used throughout a series, and the ability to pilfer from follow-poets surely facilitated quick composition.

Both the list of the members of the Hsiu-wen kuan and the elegiac memoir of Chung-tsung's court outings come from a long prose passage under the poet Li Shih in the Records of Occasions in T'ang Poetry. There is no apparent reason for its inclusion at that point. After the passages already quoted, there follows a short chronicle of over forty occasions of the court between 708 and 710. Along with the date and the occasion, there may be appended

a noteworthy couplet or a mention of who finished their poem first or last. We have more poems preserved from these occasions than from any other similar period of court occasions in the T'ang. Almost all the extant poems of these occasions are preserved in the Records of Occasions and in the Wen-yüan ying-hua. It seems likely that the compilers of the Wen-yüan ying-hua and Chi Yu-kung 計有功, the author of the twelfth-century Records of Occasions, had available a collection of imperial poem series between the years 708 and 710. The prose passage mentioned above was probably the preface to that collection.

Many of these poem series are too long to quote in their entirety, while others have only a few poems surviving. I will translate seven of the eight surviving poems under the title "Early Spring: His Majesty Visits the Southern Villa of the Princess T'ai-p'ing 初春幸太平公主南莊, written on the eleventh day of the second month in 709. I follow the order and attributions of the Wen-yüan ying-hua (176.9a-10b); the order, at least, follows roughly the status of the participants in the Hsiu-wen kuan and may indicate that the order of composition was according to rank. The poem omitted is attributed to both Wei Ssu-li (04838) and Chao Yen-chao (05242).

Li Chiao:

Our host's mountain mansion appears, touching the very sky,	主家山第接雲開
The Son of Heaven on spring excursion comes shaking the earth.	天子春遊動地來
Here and there see Horse Guards circle beyond the flowers,	羽騎參差花外轉
Rainbow banners flap in the breeze, turning beside the sun.	霓旌搖曳日邊回
Have this stony rill play in concert with the tunes of the lute,[15]	還將石溜調琴曲
And take red clouds from peaks to fill our cups of wine.	更取峯霞入酒杯

The bird-belled coach has left the isles of magpies and of rooks,
鸞輅已辭烏鵲渚

Yet sounds of their piping still swirls around Phoenix Terrace.
簫聲猶繞鳳皇臺

[03701]

The "sun" in line four may refer to the emperor as well as to the real sun. "Red clouds" were one of the wondrous foods supposed to confer long life; Li Chiao has the imperial party imbibing them through their reflections in the wine.

Su T'ing:

To our host's mountain mansion early spring returns;
主家山第早春歸

The royal palanquin on spring excursion, surrounded by azure mists.
御輦春遊繞翠微

They purchased the land, spread out gold that was once an enclosure.
買地鋪金曾作埒

Searched the river to get their stones that had held up the loom.
尋河取石舊支機

Among the clouds bright color of trees, with thousands of flowers filled,
雲間樹色千花滿

In the bamboo the voice of a stream, a hundred courses flying.
竹裏泉聲百道飛

Of course we have the tune of the phoenix, melody of the gods,
自有神仙鳴鳳曲

And should all use our songs and dances to repay the radiance of His Majesty's favor.
併將歌舞報恩暉

[05056 under Shen Ch'üan-ch'i]

Notice that Su T'ing uses phrases from Li Chiao's poem in his opening couplet. What the "gold" of line three refers to is unclear, but it may refer to flowers. Reference to the stones that "held up the loom" are made in several of the poems: briefly, the story goes that a man was once searching for the source of the Yellow River and came upon a lady washing silk. He asked her where he was and she told him he was in the "River of Stars,"

the Milky Way. She presented him with a stone, and he returned. Later he asked the diviner Yen Chün-p'ing about the stone and Yen informed him that it was the stone which held up the loom of the Weaving Girl, a personified constellation. Since Princess T'ai-p'ing is connected with "heaven," the court, she has access to such stones. This story is based on an ancient belief that the ocean flows up into heaven, into the "River of Stars," and then back down again in the west forming the Yellow and Yangtze rivers. A second, related story, which merges with the preceding story in some of the poems, concerns a man who lived by the Yangtze, and every year in the eighth month a raft came floating past him, going out to sea. One year he got on the raft. After seeing the dwellings and denizens of heaven (and not knowing where he was), he returned to Szechwan and asked the diviner Yen Chün-p'ing how he got there. Yen Chün-p'ing answered that he remembered there was a wandering star in the Herdboy constellation that year, and the man realized he had made the circuit of the Milky Way.

The song of the phoenix in the eighth line refers to the story of Nung-yü, the daughter of Duke Mu of Ch'in, and the pipemaster. The pipemaster taught her to play the song of the phoenix on the panpipes, then they summoned a phoenix and eloped off to heaven on its back. The "Phoenix Terrace" of Li Chiao's poem may also refer to the same story. Thus Su T'ing and his fellow poets have the music which will carry them to "heaven."

Shen Ch'üan-ch'i:

Our host's mountain mansion's gates rise by the River Pa,	主第山門起灞川
The scenery of the royal excursion enters the new year.	宸遊風景入初年
Beneath Phoenix Hall cross the weapons of the Guard,	鳳皇樓下交天仗
By Magpie Bridge they spread imperial banquet mats.	烏鵲橋頭敞御筵

Everywhere among the flowers we meet with colored stones,
And oftentimes among bamboo we see those streams of red.
This morning the royal retinue is beside a P'ing-yang's Lodge,
None yearn to ride that fabled raft to the cloudy River of Stars.

往往花間逢綵石
時時竹裏見紅泉
今朝扈蹕平陽館
不羨乘槎雲漢邊

[04030 under Su T'ing]

Shen Ch'üan-ch'i draws on even more fabulous lore: The Weaving Girl constellation (mentioned in the story of getting the stones) and the Herdboy constellation (mentioned in the story of riding the raft to the Milky Way) were popularly seen as lovers, allowed to meet only once a year when mapgies would form a bridge for them to cross over the heavens to one another. The "lovers" here are probably Princess T'ai-p'ing and her husband Prince Ting. The "streams of red" are streams filled with fallen flowers. Han Shou, the Marquis of P'ing-yang, was the husband of Han Wu-ti's elder sister and here clearly stands for Prince Ting.

Sung Chih-wen:

The road from Green Gate touches the Phoenix Terrace,
A royal excursion by the pale Ch'an, dragon outriders come.
Brook plants by nature welcome the scented carriage—they bow;
Cliff flowers surely attend on the imperial banquet—they blossom.
Our writings move round the Northern Dipper, form the stars' configurations,
The wine is held toward South Mountain as a wish for long life.
This day too attendant courtiers take a stone away—
All are pleased that our Discerning Prince presents gold on his return.

青門路接鳳凰臺
素滻晨遊龍騎來
澗草自迎香輦合
巖花應待御筵開
文移北斗成天象
酒近南山作壽杯
此日侍臣將石去
共歡明主賜金回

[03312]

The wit of the second couplet is based (1) a visual observation that the plants "fold up," ho 合, seeming to do obeisance to the imperial retinue; and (2) a pun on k'ai 開, meaning both to "blossom" and to "spread a banquet." The fifth line obscurely tells us either that the emperor is the central subject of the courtier's poems or that the emepror's poem (no longer extant) sets the pattern for the accompanying poems of his courtiers just as the Northern Dipper determines the position of the other stars. It echoes Analects, II. 1: "The Master said, 'Who governs by Virtue may be compared to the North Star which maintains its place while other stars do obeisance to it.'" Presumably all the courtiers held their cups in the direction of South Mountain, a traditional symbol of longevity, to convey their wishes to the emperor.

Li Yi:

Beyond P'ing-yang's Lodge there is the home of an immortal,	平陽館外有仙家
In this garden by the Ch'in, nature's beauty is in splendor.	沁水園中好物華
The land rises up from East Moor, turning back the sun's chariot,	地出東郊迴日御
The walls look down on the Southern Dipper, cloud coaches cross over.	城臨南斗度雲車
Harmonies of windblown springs circle bamboo of hidden groves,	風泉韻繞幽林竹
Light shakes on rain and sleet among flowers of different trees.	雨霰光搖雜樹花
Your Majesty has been wished the fortune of a million years span—	已慶時來千億壽
And when you return at sunset, you will indeed be "nine layers" distant.	還言日暮九重賒

[04875]

In his first couplet Li Yi ingeniously brings in a third river of the capital region to vary Shen Ch'üan-ch'i's Pa and Sung Chih-wen's mention of the Ch'an; surely Princess

T'ai-p'ing's villa was far less watery than the scene would suggest. Line three suggests that the mountain region south of Ch'ang-an is so high that it forces the sun-chariot to turn back in its course and it looks down on the constellations. The last couplet depends on a play on the "nine layers," referring both to heaven and to the palace.

Li Yung 李邕:

I've heard of the stone that held the loom in that silvery "river"	傳聞銀漢石支機
And have also seen the golden palanquin emerge from the Tzu-wei star.	復見金輿出紫微
Crows and magpies cross before the Weaving Girl's Bridge,	織女橋前烏鵲起
Over a hall of the immortals, phoenixes fly.	仙人樓上鳳皇飛
A current of wind reaches our seats, the singing fans flutter,	流風入座飄歌扇
A cascade's water encroaches on stairs, splashing the dancing robes.	瀑水侵階濺舞衣
Again today as when someone intruded between Ox and Dipper,	今日還同犯牛斗
And like him, on a raft we will follow the sea's ebb homeward.	乘槎共逐海潮歸

[05522]

The same references are used here as in the preceding poems, with the addition of the Tzu-wei star, where the palace of heaven was supposed to be located.

Shao Sheng 邵昇:

The loveliness of this garden by the Ch'in surpasses P'eng-lai and Ying-chou,	沁園佳麗奪蓬瀛
Azure cliffs and streams of red encircle the capital.	翠壁紅泉繞上京
Our two sages suddenly go travelling from the luan-bird palace,	二聖忽從鸞殿幸
A pair of immortals descends from phoenix hall to greet them.	雙仙正下鳳樓迎

Flowers swallow the foot palanquin as it emerges from the void,
花含步輦空間出

Trees mix with tent palaces, complete as in a painting.
樹雜帷宮畫裏成

There is no way to ride that raft, spy the isles of the River of Stars,
無路乘槎窺漵渚

To no purpose we ask the diviner, go to Yen Chün-p'ing.
徒知訪卜就君平

[03907]

P'eng-lai and Ying-chou were the two islands of the immortals in the Eastern Ocean. The "two sages" are Chung-tsung and Empress Wei, while the "pair of immortals" refers to Princess T'ai-p'ing and her husband, Prince Ting. It must be kept in mind that beneath these dulcet verses, the Princess T'ai-p'ing and her husband were as unscrupulous a pair of ogres as that unscrupulous age produced. Chung-tsung's principal talent was in staying alive, which was no mean feat for a member of the royal house in those days; having survived the reign of his mother, Empress Wu, he might well be treated as "immortal."

The repetition of certain phrases and the repeated use of a limited number of allusions is evident. The first couplets of five of the poems set the scene with the mention of an imperial visit, many using the same phrases; the other two poems begin with a general description of the scenery, tying it in some way to an "immortal" (royal) presence. The poems group themselves by twos and threes. The first three poems all have a variation of the phrase "our host's mountain mansion" in the first line. With Sh'en Ch'üan-ch'i a series of river names begins, each poet trying to work a different river of the capital into his opening couplet. Clearly no strict rules are in operation here: each poem seems to pick one or more strands from the preceding poems until they feel a topic is played out. It is significant that the poem that violates the tripartite form by first describing nature

and then in the second couplet introducing the imperial visit is by Shao Sheng, the least noteworthy of the poets participating; this is his only poem extant. Shao Sheng's poem is weak in a number of ways: he opens with the trite "surpassing" topos, and his closing does not say what he wanted it to say—he probably meant to say what Shen Ch'üan-ch'i said at the end of his poem, that no one needs to visit heaven because the joys of heaven are to be found here on earth. But somehow Sheng's phrasing has him saying the wrong thing: one cannot get to heaven and therefore we ask a Yen Chün-p'ing where we have been in vain.

The middle couplets of the poems are descriptive; the third couplet in particular seems to demand a certain kind of treatment, mentioning several of the following elements: bamboo, clouds, streams, flowering trees, and stones. Sung Chih-wen's marvellously ornate third couplet departs from this pattern. Most of the poems close with some clever twist. At least three of the poems mention the emperor's return, a proper banquet closing.

A nice contrast can be made between the poem of Li Chiao, the grand old man of court poetry, and that of Sung Chih-wen, a member of the younger generation. Li Chiao's poem is gracious and subdued: the wit of Li's third couplet scarcely ruffles the flow of the poem—the reader expects the sounds of water to mingle harmoniously with the banquet music and is accustomed to some play on the idea of reflection. The last couplet leaves the reader with a delicate sense of immortal music lingering in the air with faint hints of the themes of the Herdboy and Weaving Girl and Nung-yü and the pipemaster. It possesses all the decorum of earlier court poetry in the new heptasyllabic regulated verse. Sung Chih-wen's poem is more aggressively clever. The descriptive second couplet has the plants and flowers bowing and spreading banquets in the most contorted syntax. The third couplet

also demands some mental gymnastics on the part of the reader to fill out the metaphor. Finally Sung ingeniously combines allusion to the story of "taking away the stone" with a compliment to imperial largesse. Wit was, of course, desirable to a certain extent in court poetry, but it is not difficult here to sense the rumblings of individuality as the poet truly competes, refuses to lose his identity in the anonymity of convention.

Imperial command poems were not confined to banquet pieces. Official partings and other occasions were also topics on which the attendant courtiers might sharpen their wits. Even the huai-ku could be the topic for a poem series as in "His Majesty Visits Wei-yang Palace in the Old City of Ch'ang-an" 幸長安故城未央宮, written on the thirtieth day of the twelfth month, 708. Wei-yang Palace was a Han palace, then in ruins.

Li Chiao:

A former palace built by a worthy minister,
To the new park here our Sage Ruler comes.
The Cycle moves on, walls and fosses interchange;
Deep in years, the beams and roofs have crumbled.
In its rear pools the water is no more,
The halls in front have long ago turned ashes.
No one can tell where was once the Pavilion to the Winds,
In vain we hear stories of the Plates to Catch the Dew.
Yet royal hearts may meet across a thousand years,
An imperial verse, another Chiu-shao appears.
Today where poem after poem is written,
One might imagine us still on Po-liang Terrace.

舊宮賢相築
新苑聖君來
運改城隍變
年深棟宇摧
後池無復水
前殿久成灰
莫辨祈風觀
空傳承露杯
寤心千載合
睿律九韶開
今日聯章處
猶疑上柏臺

[03705]

The Chiu-shao 九韶 is the music of the sage-emperor Shun, here recreated by Chung-tsung. As mentioned earlier, Po-liang Terrace was the site of a famous party given by

Han Wu-ti at which (Li Chiao would have believed) the emperor and his courtiers each composed a heptasyllabic couplet in the first "linked verse" of Chinese literature.

Chao Yen-chao:

Mounting at dawn, the royal retinue moved forth,
And leaning on railings, we observe the Han capital.
Chill mist recedes from the purple-fringed residence,
Spring's beauty fills the Yellow Plan.
Here ancient histories have left their traces behind,
How former kings lost the hegemon's right.
From mountains and rivers only an inch of earth is gone,
But palaces and pavilions—not a foot of their beams survives.
Greatness resideth in Virtue alone,
How could one scheme for such mighty beauty?
These thatched cottages are a mirror for Your Majesty,
In the "Fragrant Wind" there is much to be considered.

風駕杪天蹕
憑軒覽漢都
寒煙收紫禁
春色繞黃圖
舊史遺陳迹
前王失霸符
山河寸土盡
宮觀尺椽無
崇高惟在德
壯麗豈爲謨
茨室留皇鑒
薰歌盛有虞

[05245]

Chao Yen-chao begins a moralizing approach that is picked up in the later pieces. Line three refers to a purple mist that surrounds a certain star, here indicating the purple aura that surrounds the emperor and departs with him when he goes out on an excursion. The "Yellow Plan" in the following line is a diagram describing the auspicious arrangement of buildings in the palace compound; here it simply stands for the palace area. The "Fragrant Wind," mentioned earlier in conjunction with a poem by Ch'en Tzu-ang, is a song attributed to the sage Emperor Shun that expresses his concern for his people. The last line may suggest that Chung-tsung heed the ancient example

of Shun if he wants to keep his throne; it may also suggest that the courtiers' poems are like the "Fragrant Wind" of old, teaching the same lesson. The latter alternative is indicated in Liu Hsien's response (if we accept the Wen-yüan ying-hua order):

After a thousand years to the palace of Han,
His Majesty's carriage has come for a visit.
Eternally here in its tranquil calm,
But that awesome force of spirit lingers no more.
From the heights an imperial appreciation emerges,
Meditating on the past, Our Sage's heart has seen all.
The chill gathers in toward South Mountain,
Spring passes by the north Wei floating.
The deeds of earthenwork were splendid of old,
Now the flower of mankind visits it today.
Blessed to hear this song of the "Fragrant Wind,"
We now know the shame of the Hegemon's way.

漢宮千祀外
軒駕一來遊
勗蕩長如此
戚靈不復留
憑高睿賞發
懷古聖情周
裊何南山斂
春過北渭浮
土功昔云盛
人英今所求
幸聽熏風曲
方知霸道羞

[03942]

The "Fragrant Wind" song referred to here may be either Chung-tsung's opening piece or Chao Yen-chao's moralizing poem. Liu seems to be taking Chao Yen-chao to task for his comment on the "Hegemon's right" (literally the "Hegemon's tally"): from the context of his poem Chao Yen-chao was probably not casting aspersion on the Han's legitimacy but rather simply referring to their power in his use of "hegemon." The word, however, has very bad moral overtones, suggesting rule by power rather than by right; Liu gracefully suggests that if the T'ang is to be like the Han or better than the Han, it too must reject the "Hegemon's way." Chao's and Liu's moralizing seems to have irritated Sung Chih-wen:

The King of Han had not yet ceased his wars,
When Minister Hsiao constructed this palace.
Yet its mighty beauty was gone in one morning,
Its awesome force of spirit absent for a thousand years.
His Imperial Wisdom grieves for these traces of the past,
He sets out wine to feast his courtiers.
The chill is light beyond the pennoned pikes,
Spring emerges amid the tent city.
Our joyful thoughts turn back the sinking sun,
Our songs continue the "Great Wind."
This morning the glory of our emperor
Has no need of a Shu-sun T'ung.

漢王未息戰
蕭相乃營宮
壯麗一朝盡
威靈千載空
皇明悵前跡
置酒宴羣公
塞輕絲仗外
春發幔城中
樂思回斜日
歌詞繼大風
今朝天子貴
不假叔孫通

[03319]

Sung responds to the preceding poems in a number of ways. Though the Han may have ruled by right, Sung reminds the party that the Han was still at war when this palace was constructed. He continues by reiterating the theme of glory and sudden decline, but in the face of this evidence of impermanence, Sung suggests that the joy of the banquet "turns back the sinking sun." The "Great Wind" was the poem of Han Kao-tsu, expressing self-satisfaction at his new empire and his power. Shu-sun T'ung was the Han ritualist who was largely responsible for Han Kao-tsu's state sponsorship of Confucianism; we may remember T'ai-tsung's irritation at Wei Cheng's remonstrating example of Shu-sun T'ung (see p. 33)—Sung Ch'ih-wen may have also remembered it. Chao Yen-chao and Liu Hsien were beginning to sound like Wei Cheng in their moralizing; Sung reprimands them, reminding them that this is an occasion to celebrate imperial glory as Han Kao-tsu did. Since Chung-tsung already represents Confucian virtue incarnate, he has no need of a pair of Shu-sun T'ung's to remind him about the path of virtue and the

wrong of the "Hegemon's way."

We can see in this exchange something of the tension that surrounded Confucian morality in court literature. The huai-ku, a subgenre with close links to fu-ku sentiments, led Chao Yen-chao irresistably to moralizing. Once the moral-evaluative mode was begun, it was difficult to escape: Liu Hsien was led to "correct" Chao Yen-chao's careless use of the term "hegemon." Sung Chih-wen tried to end the dispute by the oldest argument against constant moralizing, that certain occasions are simply for pleasure, but he is careful to put this argument in a form that is safe from attack: Chung-tsung is enjoying himself like a great Han Kao-tsu and is so moral already he needs no moralists, no "mirror of history."

The courtiers are competing not only in the realm of Confucian platitudes, they are also competing aesthetically. A clear example of this is in the descriptive couplets that match "chill" with "spring"—for example, Chao Yen-chao in an ornate but dull couplet:

Chill mist recedes from the purple-fringed residence, 寒煙收紫禁
Spring's beauty fills the Yellow Plan, 春色繞黃圖

As he "corrects" Chao's terminology, so Liu Hsien cannot resist outdoing Chao's couplet:

The chill gathers in toward South Mountain, 寒向南山斂
Spring passes by the north Wei floating. 春過北渭浮

Sung Chih-wen cannot resist showing off, not only outdoing Liu Hsien in ingenuity, but also putting his couplet in the same position in the poem as Liu's.

The chill is light beyond the pennoned pikes, 寒輕綵仗外
Spring emerges amid the tent city. 春發幔城中

Not only is "light" a more interesting qualification of

the chill than its "receding" or "gathering in," the couplet is more internally coherent, the chill fleeing the circle of springtime warmth which emerges in the camp through imperial effulgence and the brightly colored pennons of the retinue.

I will spare the reader the last extant poem of the series, a generously allusive piece by Li Yi. He seems to do trying to smooth over Sung Chih-wen's excessive rebuttal of his superiors by commenting on the series of poems as a whole:

Each in turn makes a bow to Shu-sun T'ung's rites, 代揖孫通禮
Our court may boast the talents of Chia Yi. 朝稱賈誼才
[04883]

This is a remarkable group of poems for in it we see the influence wielded by the conventions of a given subgenre. The same poets who were accustomed to turn out banquet poems like those on the visit to Princess T'ai-p'ing's villa, now turn their attention to the rule of Virtue and the "mirror of history" which is to be found in the ruins of the Han capital of Ch'ang-an. The capital theme of the 670s has made its way into court poetry along with the fu-ku didacticism that was associated with the huai-ku. Since a relatively plain style is appropriate for the huai-ku, the normal contortions and periphrases of court poetry have been stripped away in these pieces, giving remarkably sober results.

In poetry competitions judgement by quality is mentioned less often than judgement by speed of composition. An interesting passage in the Records of Occasions gives us a notion of what such competitions must have been like.

> On the last day of the first month [709], Chung-tsung visited K'un-ming Pool and composed a poem on the occasion. The courtiers then composed more than a hundred pieces to imperial command. In

front of the royal tent a brightly colored frame tower was set up, and His Majesty commanded Shang-kuan Wan-erh to select one poem as the new imperial composition. He then had his courtiers gather beneath the tower, and in an instant papers started flying down. As each competitor recognized his own poem, he clasped it to him. This went on until only the poems of Shen Ch'üan-ch'i and Sung Chih-wen had not been tossed down. More time passed and a piece of paper came fluttering down. Everyone rushed to look at it and it was Shen's. Then they heard Shang-kuan Wan-erh's evaluation: "Both poems were equally matched in craftsmanship, but Shen's last couplet went:

This humble courtier would carve rotting stuff, 微臣彫朽質
And is shamed to perceive the material of Camphor Terrace. 羞覩豫章材

[In vain I labor at poetry: considering my lesser talent, it is like carving rotten wood—the craft is there but the genius is not. Thus I am ashamed before the others here, including His Majesty, who possess more talent—better timber—than I.]

In my opinion the energy of his lines stops here. Sung's poem closed:

I do not grieve that the bright moon is gone, 不愁明月盡
For the pearl that shines by night comes in its stead. 自有夜珠來

[Even though the moon is gone, the luminous genius of the verses composed here may take its place.]

This ends the poem on the upbeat." Shen Ch'üan-ch'i submitted and did not dare contest the matter.[16]

T'ang evaluative and descriptive comments on poetry often sound strangely rarified to us, though they are relatively crude compared to the subtle judgements in Japanese utaawase. The tradition of such poetic evaluations in the eighth and particularly the ninth centuries may well have begun with the competitions of court poets. Another thing we learn from this passage is the importance of the last couplet, the "point" of the poem. The "craftmanship" in which the two poets were equal may refer to

their adherence to tonal regulations, although it may also refer to the craft of the middle couplets. As long as the "craft" was perfect, the clever twist at the end of the poem was more susceptible to judgement.

17

A PRIVATE BANQUET AT MR. KAO'S PAVILION

By the end of the seventh century the tradition of Chinese banquet poetry was already very old. Legend carried this tradition back to the parties of King Hsiang of Ch'u and his honey-tongued courtier Sung Yü; most of this legend is imaginative extrapolation from frames of fu written during the Han. The early Han prince Hsiao of Liang and his courtiers Tsou Yang, Mei Sheng, Chuang Chu, and Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju form another legendary banquet party; whatever truth there may have been to their meetings, their revels were blown out of all proportion by later embellishments. There is even an apocryphal collection of short yung-wu fu supposedly written at their banquets.[17]

The earliest banquet collection of shih of which we have firm knowledge is the early third-century "Gathering in Yeh" (Yeh-chung chi 鄴中集) with a preface by Ts'ao P'i 曹丕. The collection itself does not survive, but an imitation of it by Hsieh Ling-yün is preserved in chapter 40 of the Wen-hsüan. If Hsieh is holding faithfully to the form of the original, as seems likely, then we know that the essential elements of the banquet collection were present by the third century. There is a preface followed by a series of poems, one by each of the men present. In Hsieh's imitations the poems use different rhymes, and this common feature of banquet poems probably did not appear until the Southern Dynasties.

The Chin dynasty produced two collections famous for their prefaces, the "Golden Valley Garden Poems" 金谷園詩, with a preface by Shih Ch'ung 石崇, and the "Orchid Pavilion Collection" 蘭亭集, with a preface by the famous calligrapher Wang Hsi-chih 王羲之. A few of the poems

survive. The prefaces to such banquet collections were often more enduring works of literature than the poems themselves: one does not invite friends to a party on account of their poetic talents, but one does choose the most gifted among them to write the preface. These prefaces usually take the form of first setting the occasion, then describing the joys of the party, often followed by a meditation on the impermanence of the beauty and pleasures they are then enjoying, the desire to preserve these moments of joy in writing, and closing with the details of who was present or how many were present, and, in later times, what rhyme was used. The prefaces to the "Golden Valley Garden Poems" and the "Orchid Pavilion Collection" were not only the prime models of later prefaces, they provided a storehouse of allusions for both the prefaces and the poems themselves. I quote an abridged version of the "Golden Valley Garden Poems" as an example:

> In the sixth year of the Yüan-k'ang Reign [296]. . . . I have a villa in the Golden Valley of Ho-yang County. There are clear streams and thick, burgeoning woods, orchards, groves of bamboo and cypress, and all kinds of herbs. Perfect indeed this place is as something to give the eyes joy and the heart pleasure. At this time Wang Hsü, Libationer and Grand General of the Western Campaign, is about to return to Ch'ang-an, and I, along with a group of other worthy gentlemen, am sending him off. We have gone into the stream valley, strolling and feasting day and night. Frequently we move along—at times climbing high places to look down, at times sitting in a row along the river bank. Then sometimes we take our zithers, our mouth-organs, and lutes together in coaches and play them in concert on the road, or halting we play them in alternation with fifes and drums. At this point everyone is writing a poem to describe his innermost feelings, and when someone cannot, he is obliged to pay the forfeit of drinking three pints of wine. Stirred that life does

not last forever, fearing the unpredictability of ruin, I have set forth the date, the official titles and names of the men present on this occasion. I have also copied out the poems as follows. I hope those who take an interest in such things in later ages will look them over. In all there were thirty participants.[18]

The "Golden Valley Garden Poems" belong to an important subcategory of banquet collections, those composed for parting banquets. Though they conventionally brood over the impermanence of the world, such banquet collections are themselves notable for their impermanence. From scattered prefaces and single poems throughout the T'ang, we know that there were once hundreds, perhaps thousands, of such collections for parties and partings. It is unlikely that more than a few ever achieved wide circulation. The quality of the vast majority of such occasional poems cannot but make us grateful for the disappearance of these collections, but they are an important fact in the composition of T'ang poetry. Any number of surviving parting poems and banquet poems might be far more comprehensible if we possessed the collection of which they once formed a part. Again thanks to the Records of Occasions we have one such collection, though it has also survived independently.[19] This collection consists of the works written at three parties held at the forest pavilion of one Kao Cheng-ch'en 高正臣. Ch'en Tzu-ang wrote the preface (04445).

PREFACE FOR A BANQUET ON THE LAST DAY OF THE MONTH AT MR. KAO'S FOREST PAVILION

Since ancient times the excursions, banquets, and pleasures have been many indeed, on the fine mornings and in the lovely scenes of this world, among its gardens and groves, pools and pavilions. So if a place be secluded and solitary, one cannot spy the glory of the Royal Dwelling and occasions are missed, friendships

perish, and the roads of an age of peace are usually blocked. How can such a situation compare with the brilliant opening of the dawn, enjoying the pleasures of court and wilds. . . . The choicest delicacies are laid before us on finely wrought mats—pearls, kingfisher, and onyx; strings and pipes are played in the fragrant gardens—the dulcimers of Ch'in and the zithers of Chao. A stately multitude of caps and ribbons, many guests have been invited from the In-laws Ward; luan-birds and phoenixes ring out, there being present visitors who are among the masters of literature. They describe a view that takes in all the capital domain, on through to the towers and terraces of the Park of Han; glancing to the side they rein in the Yi and Lo, looking down on the shores of gods and immortals. Then there are the men and ladies of the capital, wandering bravos and catamites who emerge, riding bit to bit from out of the Golden Market, four-horse terms entering the avenues of the Bronze Camels. Carriages of aromatic woods, brocaded hubs, breezes rising in gauze and damask, jeweled awnings, wrought saddles, pearls sparkling like the sun.

At this time the t'ai-tsu pitchpipes are ending [that is, the close of the first month]; the air is fresh and clear in the capital, mountains and rivers are showing the spring, and the weather is clearing over the splendid scene. The walls and palace towers are beautiful, and the year's radiance is at its fullest. Here we linger to take our pleasure, enjoying the flowers and birds so much we forget to return; we never weary in our appreciation, finding some personal satisfaction facing the woods and brooks. Magnificent indeed!—surely this is the grandest scene of the Royal Domain. How can we allow those talents of the Chin capital alone, Wang Hsi-chih and Shih Ch'ung, to set the standards for visits by the River Lo, or let the many grandees of the House of Wei, Ts'ao P'i and his group, monopolize parties in Yeh? Best that we should express what is on our minds to commemorate this fine excursion. Together we chose a single rhyme, hua.

I will quote just a few of the extant poems, the first by

Kao Cheng-ch'en (03952):

The First Month accords with a fine festival, 正月符嘉節
In spring we enjoy the flowering of things. 三春玩物華
Forget our cares in a goblet of wine, 忘懷寄尊酒
Mold our characters growing used to this mountain home 陶性狎山家
Willows azure, leaves holding in the mist, 柳翠含煙葉
Plums fragrant, flowers bearing snow. 梅芳帶雪花
But passing time will do us no favors 光陰不相借
And gradually the sinking light slants downward. 遲遲落景斜

Ch'en Tzu-ang (04445):

Searching out spring, we strolled up the highroad; 尋春遊上路
Seeking a banquet, we enter this mountain home. 追宴入山家
A lord's mansion filled with hatpins and ribbons, 主第簪纓滿
The scene of the Royal Domain is splendid. 皇州景望華
Jade pools first spurting out their currents, 玉池初吐溜
Pearled trees beginning to open their flowers. 珠樹始開花
Our pleasure is not yet at its fullest, 歡娛方未極
When from over the forest tower lingering red clouds scatter. 林閣散餘霞

Ts'ui Chih-hsien 崔知賢 (03954):

The premier month in the land of Ho-yang, 上月河陽地
On this fragrant morning the scene is splendid. 芳辰景物華
With cheeps and flutters, birds of the season change, 緜蠻變時鳥
Sparkling bright, spring's red clouds rise. 照曜起春霞
Willows wave their beauty where the wind is, 柳搖風處色
Plums scatter their flowers before the sun. 梅散日前花
Lingering here, evening by Lo-yang's walls, 淹留洛城晚
Songs and piping in Shih Ch'ung's home. 歌吹石崇家

Han Chung-hsüan 韓仲宣(03958):

If you wish to know the joys of excursions,
Our fragrant goblets face the flowering of things.
This land touches P'an Yüeh's county,
The garden is of Shih Ch'ung's home.
Where the willows are, clouds seem to be leaves;
Among the plums, snow resembles the flowers.
As the sun sets the homeward road is far,
But we linger, companions of mists and red clouds.

欲知行有樂
芳尊對物華
地接安仁縣
園是季倫家
柳處雲疑葉
梅間雪似花
日落歸途遠
留輿伴煙霞

The similarity of these poems to court banquet poems is inescapable, though they are hardly as well-wrought as the works of a Shang-kuan Yi or Sung Chih-wen. The language is simpler, the range of allusion narrower, and there is no attempt at great cleverness. These and the many other poems of Mr. Kao's three banquets are far more significant as documents of literary sociology than as literature: they represent the quality of average occasional poetry in the T'ang, fully competent but utterly uninspired. The majority of poets participating in the three series that comprise this banquet collection have no other extant poems: they were ordinary educated men, middle-level bureaucrats and certainly not the sort to be found in court competitions. They were invited to a party and expected to turn out a poem. They ran through a base of conventional images and ideas on which great poetry had been written before and would be written again later, but they make no attempt to use this conventional base for their own ends. Except for Ch'en Tzu-ang's poem, the third couplet in each of the poems (and in other poems in this series) set a line on willows against a line on plums: willows are always mixed with mist or resemble mist; plum blossoms always seem like snow. Had

we discussed all the poems of this series, we could have taken out all the clichés and, reserving certain topics for certain couplets, could have tossed them together at random to turn out a credible addition to the series.

Ch'en Tzu-ang's poem presents the picture of a major poet writing a poem every bit as vapid as those of the other officials at the party. This poem is not included in the earliest form of Ch'en's collected works; that is, it was included in an appendix, and it source was probably this banquet collection. While poets did preserve many of their occasional poems, they probably willingly left the majority to the ravages of time. But the poem does show us the power of a subgenre to subvert originality and bring those of great talent and those of no talent to about the same level. Indeed, a virtuoso piece by a poet like Sung Chih-wen would have sounded a discordant note in the series as a whole, which flows from poem to poem with a harmonious blandness.

THE COURTLY YUNG-WU

Yung-wu 詠物, "poetry on things," was one of the most stable and enduring of the poetic subgenres. Because yung-wu were more closely associated with fu than other subgenres, the rigid conventions of the yung-wu fu carried over into the yung-wu shih. During the first half of the Six Dynasties the allegorical element in yung-wu poetry had been dominant, but in the hands of late fifth-century poets such as Hsieh T'iao 謝朓 (464-99) the traditional allegorical associations of objects were reduced to mere attributes of the thing itself. The yung-wu became simply a descriptive poem, for example, the bamboo would no longer stand for a man of resolute integrity, but associations of resolution and integrity would play a role in the description of bamboo. Allegorical yung-wu were still written, but they were a relatively minor tradition. During the sixth and seventh centuries yung-wu were usually rhetorical exercises, often delightful ones. As the scope of poetry broadened in the latter part of the seventh century, the old yung-wu tradition was also put to new uses. Ch'en Tzu-ang returned to allegory; other poets liberated themselves from the rigid conventions of description and turned out imaginative yung-wu ballads: Lu Chao-lin's "Hard Travelling" looks forward to these in its treatment of the withered tree theme. Still other poets took the cleverness expected in yung-wu and tried to make it intellectually significant as well as entertaining.

Even more than the banquet poem, yung-wu provided a poet an excellent opportunity to display his ingenuity. Throughout the T'ang one finds anecdotes in which a poet's talents are tested by being asked to compose an

extempore poem about some object. The following anecdote about Su T'ing may be apocryphal, but it gives a good indication of the kind of cleverness demanded in yung-wu:

> Su Kuei [a minister in Chung-tsung's reign and Su T'ing's father] at first knew nothing of Su T'ing's talent. One day a guest arrived at Su Kuei's and was waiting in the guest room when Su T'ing came along the veranda plying his broom. A scrap of writing fell from Su T'ing's robes, and the guest picked it up to look at it. It was Su T'ing's "On a Black Slave Boy," and contained the lines:
>
> His fingers are like ten black ink-sticks, 指如十挺墨
> His ears are like a pair of wide spoons. 耳似兩張匙
>
> The guest thought this was exceptional. After a while Su Kuei came out and lingered with his guests, chatting and chanting poems. The guest then asked who was the person responsible for the poem he had found, sure as he was that it must be one of Su Kuei's kin, whether a legitimate son or a concubine's child. Su Kuei then told the guest about the boy, and the guest expressed surprise and admiration, asking Su Kuei to treat the boy with more respect and to recommend him, for he was certainly an outstanding child of the Su family. Little by little Su Kuei grew more fond of him. Someone presented the family with a rabbit and it was hung on the porch. Su Kuei summoned Su T'ing to write a poem about it, and T'ing wrote:
>
> The rabbit died, its spirit spent, 兎子死魂彈
> They brought it slung on a bamboo pole. 將來掛竹竿
> Just hold it to a mirror. 試將明鏡照
> And its no different than what you see in the moon.[20] 無異月中看

It should be explained that the Rabbit was one of the several mythical denizens of the moon; it was a rabbit form rather than an "Old Man" that was seen there. The function of this Rabbit-in-the-Moon was to pound the elixir of immortal life. The comparison of a dead rabbit in the mirror to this Rabbit-in-the-Moon—the moon was

often compared to a mirror and vice versa—is ingenious enough to delight any reader, but it serves no more complicated function in the poem. The potentially rich irony of a dead piece of game becoming the immortal Rabbit who grinds the elixir of immortality is not exploited. If it is genuine, this poem probably dates from the late 680s or early 690s. We might contrast it with a poem written in 713 by the fifteen-year-old Wang Wei, "On a Friend's Mica Screen":[21]

Take your mica screen,
Set it up in your wild courtyard:
Mountains and streams will merge with it naturally,
Coming not on account of the brightly colored painting.

君家雲母障
持向野庭開
自有山泉入
非因采畫來

Like Su T'ing's youthful effort, this unassuming poem by Wang Wei depends on a clever twist: the art of the landscape screen is so close to nature that it will merge with the real landscape and become one with it. This is hardly a startling notion in Chinese theory of art and it becomes a commonplace in later poetry on painting, but in this poem the wit is functional, as it was not in Su T'ing's poem. At its best art was supposed to lose its artifice, to intrude into the real world. We may remember that in landscape couplets a spatial continuity is often expressed verbally as an "entering" 入; Wang Wei breathes life into this dead metaphorical verb—"merge" is literally "enter"—as the outlines of the real mountains and rivers actively link with their counterparts in the painted screen. The landscape actively "comes," forming a unit with the screen because it is not aware of the screen's artifice. Likewise, in this poem the artifice of Early T'ang wit disappears in the comment Wang Wei is making about art and nature.

In the Early T'ang yung-wu topics are amplified in a

predictable number of ways. Descriptive techniques were the most important. Four of the most common of these are: (1) enumeration of attributes, paired in couplets (the simplest of the techniques); (2) resemblances—either metaphors or similes marked by the rich vocabulary of simile, ju 如, ssu 似, jo 若, lei 類, t'ung 同, and yi 疑 ("one wonders if it might not be . . ." or "it seems to be . . . "); (3) contextual descriptions which seek the unusual "wonders" of the thing in some setting; and (4) description through effects, in which case the name of the object is usually avoided. In the couplets these descriptive techniques can be divided up into cumulative descriptions (X; and Y) and transitional descriptions (X; then Y). In most couplets these two forms are difficult to distinguish, but often transitional descriptions are marked by stock pairs of grammatical particles; for example, cha 乍 . . . , huan 還 . . . , "suddenly (it seemed X), but then (it seemed Y)."

The second important technique of amplification was the use of historical, mythical, or intellectual associations of a given object. In the case of some common topics, a set of associations will be so strong that a poem which ignores them seems somehow wanting. An example might be the association of bamboo with integrity, in which the fact that it stays green through the winter should be mentioned, often with a pun on its chieh 節, "joints" or "integrity." Another example, which we shall see later in this chapter, is the necessity of mentioning the statues of the bronze immortals and their dew pans when writing a poem on dew. These commonplace associations made up a body of literary "lore," which was set forth neatly in encyclopedias such as the Ch'u-hsüeh chi. Occasionally a poet will display his erudition by coming up with a particularly recherché reference to his object. Often, couplets using the proper poetic lore will be mixed with the descriptive techniques mentioned above.

Most yung-wu contain only one or two such lore couplets, but some, including many by Lo Pin-wang, are made up entirely of historical and mythical associations.

These techniques of amplification were to continue through the eighth and ninth centuries, but in better poetry they were integrated into some unified interpretation of the object. In contrast, Early T'ang yung-wu tend to be paratactic, filling out the required space with an unsubordinated itemization of descriptions and associations. In the ninth century this enumerative technique reappeared as a subform of yung-wu, the most famous examples of which are Li Shang-yin's "Tears" (29411) and Peonies" (29260). These poems closely resemble the yung-wu of Lo Pin-wang, but put the density to more sophisticated literary ends.

Another Early T'ang subform which can also be found in later centuries is the yung-wu made up entirely of the effects of the object; these sound somewhat like riddle poems in the medieval West and have a Chinese antecedent in some of the fu of Hsün-tzu. The following example (03729) is by Li Chiao:

WIND

It knows how to bring down late autumn's leaves,
And can make mid-spring's flowers open.
When it passes the river, thousand-foot waves—
When it enters bamboo, thousands of stalks slant.

解落三秋葉
能開二月花
過江千尺浪
入竹萬竿斜

Generally, the yung-wu of the second half of the seventh century are more dense, ornate, and artificial than those of the first half of the century. As might be expected, the first poet in whose work this appears is Lo Pin-wang. Lo has one yung-wu series and some other yung-wu that may or may not form a series. These are masterpieces of dense, precious Early T'ang rhetoric.

I will give a literal translation of one (04193), followed by a paraphrase.

SNOW

Dragon clouds: jade leaves rise,
Crane snow: auspicious/jade-tally blossoms/flakes renew.
Its shadows in confusion: the Bronze Raven blowing,
Its light melts: Jade Horse Ford.
Full of radiance, it brightens white-silk seal-script,
Hiding its traces, it shows the well-omened orb.
One cannot pair the Secluded Orchid with it,
In vain it would avoid Bright Spring.

龍雲玉葉上
鶴雪瑞花新
影亂銅烏吹
光銷玉馬津
含輝明素篆
隱迹表祥輪
幽蘭不可儷
徒自繞陽春

Dragon-shaped clouds [or clouds which follow dragons] resembling leaves of jade, rise, and then snow renews in blossom-flakes which take the shapes of jade tallies or auspicious signs. This is a "crane snow," a snow like the one about which two crows chatted under a bridge in A.D. 374, one saying to the other, "The cold this year is not a bit less than it was the year Yao died." [A Taoist joke, of sorts: cranes, being immortal, could make weather comparisons across two and half millennia.] The shadows of the snowflakes are scattered in disorder on the Bronze Raven weathervane of the Imperial Observatory; the weathervane shakes in the wind. However, the bright snowflakes melt when they touch water such as that at White Horse Ford [here called White-Jade Horse Ford to provide a better parallel for the "Bronze Raven"]. The reflected light which seems to be given off by the flakes could illuminate seal characters inscribed on white silk such as might have been read by Sun K'ang, who was so poor that his family could afford no oil for his lamp and therefore he studied at night by moonlight reflected on the snow. Yet its very traces disappear, and that fact is revealed when the auspicious orb of the sun appears. When it appears in an ancient song entitled "The White Snow," the snow should not be paired with the

> Hidden Orchid melody, as was done in the "Snow Fu" by Hsieh Hui-lien and earlier in the "Fu of Criticism" by Sung Yü: this is wrong because the context of the "Fu of Criticism" is lascivious, while "The White Snow" is a virtuous ancient song. Furthermore, the real white snow does not belong in the same season as the real hidden orchid. On the other hand, "The White Snow" tries in vain to avoid being paired with the song "Bright Spring"—the two songs are often spoken of together, both being virtuous ancient songs. "White Snow" tries to avoid it because "Bright Spring" will cause it to melt.

Such an involute interweaving of allusions, associations, wit, and metaphors is the hallmark of Lo Pin-wang's distinctive, if painful, talent. The parts do not form an integrated whole, but they are not really expected to; the interest of the poem lies in dazzling the readers line by line. The nine poems that comprise Lo's "On an Autumn Morning: following the rhymes of Administrator Mao of Tzu-chou" (04196-04204) are equally memorable pieces of allusive periphrasis, treating nine objects of autumn: wind, clouds, cicadas, dew, moon, water, fireflies, chrysanthemums, and wild geese.

The Early T'ang poet whose name is most strongly linked with yung-wu is Li Chiao. Li Chiao has an independent collection of one hundred and twenty yung-wu entitled the "Miscellaneous Songs," Tsa-yung 雜詠 arranged roughly according to the classification system of the encyclopedias: celestial phenomena, terrestial phenomena, "fragrant plants," "fine trees," "wondrous birds," and "auspicious beasts." The "Miscellaneous Songs" has been preserved independently in Japan, with a preface by Chang T'ing-fang 張庭芳 dated 747.[22] Chang's preface is one of the rare examples of a High T'ang writer giving his opinion on the work of a court poet. He praises the collection in terms of poetic rhetoric, diction, and euphony and emphasizes its pedagogic value:

> I hope that it will be of aid in the crafting and polishing of verse, so that one may avoid sluggishness. I would have it shown to youths, but would not dare offer it to future worthies.[23]

The disclaimer that a work is only for students and not for discriminating readers is a prefatory trope (for example, Li Po's preface to the "Fu on the Great Bird" 大鵬賦), but one which applies when offering one's own work to the public and not that of another. Chang T'ing-fang seems to be serious here. The implication is that poetry as a learned craft is appropriate for students, but that serious poetry for mature readers is something more. Behind his gracious praise, Chang T'ing-fang's High T'ang attitude is only slightly less condescending than Li Shang-yin's in the quatrain quoted earlier.

Li Chiao's was probably not the first such collection; we possess what may be a fragment of such a yung-wu collection by Tung Ssu-kung 董思恭, who flourished in the 660s and 670s. This group of poems (03781-03789) represents a good coverage of the heaven section: sun, moon, stars, wind, clouds, snow, dew, fog, and rainbows. Since Li Chiao was active during the same period, the two series may be roughly contemporaneous: Li Chiao's yung-wu in the "Miscellaneous Songs" sound very much like youthful exercises and show none of the masterful grace of his poetry written during Chung-tsung's reign. Tung Ssu-kung's yung-wu are generally superior. Both collections may be something in the nature of exercise books, either to try one's hand at a full range of yung-wu topics or present a group of textbook examples to other poets. It is possible that, like banquet collections, there were once many such yung-wu collections which now survive only in scattered fragments.

I will quote three poems on dew, by Lo Pin-wang, Tung Ssu-kung, and Li Chiao respectively. All three poems allude to the statues of the bronze immortals, set up by

Han Wu-ti; in their hands these statues held pans to catch dew from which an elixir of immortality was to be made. Lo Pin-wang:

At Jade Pass the chill air comes early,
To Golden Basin the colors of autumn return.
Floating on palms of immortals, its light gets ever purer;
Filling the lotus, its dripping is still faint.
Changing to frost, the dawn spittle hardens;
Receiving the moonlight, it casts a circular reflection.
But it also appears on the Terrace of Wu,
Where it must be soaking the Ch'u courtier's robes.

玉關寒氣早
金塘秋色歸
泛掌光逾淨
添荷霤尚微
變霜凝曉液
承月有春輝
別有吳臺上
應溼楚臣衣

[04199]

After describing the haunting physical beauty of the dew, in the last couplet Lo introduces a menacing vision of the dew, alluding to the story of Wu Pei, a courtier of the Han Prince of Huai-nan. When the prince was plotting a rebellion, Wu Pei warned him that he had a vision of the thorns growing in the prince's palace and the dew soaking his old robes. Tsung Ssu-kung:

Its night color freezes on the immortals' palms,
Its morning sweetness descends in the emperor's courtyard.
Before we know it, the last month of autumn has come,
And far away it falls at Three Perils.
On reed isles the flowers are just turning white.
In gardens of mallow the leaves are still green.
It dries in the sunlight, once its largesse is sprinkled,
And then wishes to swell the dark sea.

夜色凝仙掌
晨甘下帝庭
不覺九秋至
遠向三危零
蘆渚花初白
葵園葉尚青
晞陽一灑惠
方願益滄溟

[03787]

Among the commonplaces used in this poem is the reference

to the "sweet dew" 甘露, a sign of heaven's favor and imperial benevolence. Likewise, the sunlight in which the dew dries is a sign of imperial favor. Three Perils is a place where the most beautiful water in the world is supposed to be found. Li Chiao:

Dripping it brightens the flower garden,
Rolls sparkling down lush clumps of bamboo.
Jade—it hangs beneath cinnabar thorns;
Pearls—it is heavy on the green lotus.
By night it startles the thousand-year-old crane,
By dawn it dries in the wind of the eighth month.
It longs to freeze in the palms of the immortals,
To serve forever at Wei-yang Palace.

滴瀝明花苑
葳蕤泫竹叢
玉垂丹棘下
珠湛綠荷中
夜警千年鶴
朝晞八月風
願凝仙掌内
長奉未央宮

[03586]

The first couplet consists of effects; the second is metaphorical. The last couplets play on traditional associations. The immortal crane of line five is frightened by the dew, associated with autumn, the season of destruction. In the last couplet if the dew freezes, it will not evaporate, thus approximating the immortality it is supposed to confer. Its "service at Wei-yang Palace" may simply be expanding the theme of immortality from the preceding line, but it may also refer to the "sweet dew" that fell at Wei-yang Palace during the reign of Han Hsüan-ti; at this sign of heaven's favor, the emperor proclaimed a general amnesty. "Sweet dew" is another commonplace association, given in the Ch'u-hsüeh chi.

Lo Pin-wang's poem is by far the most original and learned, and its closing couplet shifts perspective on the dew. The speculative "it must be" (ying 應) provides an element of personal reaction on the part of the poet. Both Tung's and Li's poems are more conventional, and

both close with a common variety of yung-wu closure, a wish on the part of the object described.

By the time of Sung Chih-wen we can already see the old treatment as rhetorical exercise giving way to a new symbolic treatment. In contrast to the consciously wooden allegories of Ch'en Tzu-ang, the symbolic yung-wu retains its identity as a "thing" as well as signifying something more. A beautiful example of this is Sung Chih-wen's "On Old Chang's Pine Tree" 題張老松樹(03189); the pine tree had long been a symbol of solitary rectitude, but Sung Chih-wen handles the theme with exceptional power.

The year grows late beneath the eastern cliff,
I peer all around—how desolate it seems!
The sun sinks in the shadows of western mountains,
And from all plants rises the visage of the cold.
In their midst there is a tall pine,
Which brings me to heave a long sigh.
A hundred feet up without a single branch,
By nature a lifetime straight and alone.
[03189]

歲晚東巖下
周顧何悽惻
日落西山陰
衆草起寒色
中有喬松樹
使我長歎息
百尺無寸枝
一生自孤直

Fifty years later a poem like this would be undistinguished, but in the context of the period it is exceptional. The first two couplets fall comfortably into the tripartite form, but Sung interjects a personal reaction in the third couplet, and closes with one of those descriptive couplets designed to stir the reader's emotions. Sung's use of the plain style is effective and contrasts sharply with the ornateness of the preceding poems.

Yung-wu quatrains, which had relied on wit even more than longer yung-wu, also show this tendency to complex symbolization during the last decades of the seventh and first decade of the eighth centuries. There are seven particularly fine quatrains attributed to Kuo Chen 郭震

(d. 713) which exemplify this change.[24] Each of following three poems treats a different aspect of the theme of the unappreciated man of virtue, part of the hsien-jen shih-chih theme.

FIREFLIES

螢

When autumn winds are biting chill and the moonlight's faint,
They fly past in the shadow of the tall plane tree;
Where it's darkest they seem to teach others of their kind—
In this world they struggle to make someone know of them.

秋風凜凜月依依
飛過高梧影裏時
暗處若教同衆類
世間爭得有人知

[03844]

CRICKETS

蛩

You deeply sadden whoever has left his home, who hasn't reached his goal;
Your every note reaches his pillow to be heard.
But don't take your bitter chanting to the red gates of the rich—
Songs and piping fill their ears—they will not listen to you.

愁殺離家未達人
一聲聲到枕前聞
苦吟莫向朱門裏
滿耳笙歌不聽君

[03845]

A WELL IN THE WILDS

野井

Even though no one draws from it, its taste is fresh and clear,
Its chill soaks the cold sky and the orb of the moon.
But if they had dug it beside some important highway,
For its lord it might serve to aid the men who come and go.

縱無汲引味清澄
冷浸寒空月一輪
鑿處若教當要路
爲君常濟往來人

[03847]

In the following brilliantly descriptive poem on clouds (03846), Kuo Chen fuses perfectly a complex visual scene

and echoes of several traditional themes. Foremost among these is the image of the solitary wanderer as a cloud.

CLOUDS

雲

In the emptiness they cluster and scatter,
go off, return again,

聚散虛空去復還

A man of the wilds leans calmly on his staff
watching them.

野人閒處倚節看

He never knew a body could be such a rootless
thing—

不知身是無根物

Hiding the moon, covering the stars from
thousands of different directions.

蔽月遮星作萬端

19

OTHER OCCASIONAL SUBGENRES

The vast majority of informal occasional poetry from the reigns of Wu and Chung-tsung has been lost. Most of what survives is in the large collections of Li Chiao, Sung Chih-wen, and Shen Ch'üan-ch'i, and to a lesser degree in the smaller collections of Tu Shen-yen, Yang Chiung, Ts'ui Shih, and others. Yet there were any number of literary figures who once had collected works in ten or twenty chüan, at least a few chüan of which must have been poetry, and who now have less than twenty poems extant. The majority of those extant poems are banquet poems and poems to imperial command. The anthologists of the Wen-yüan ying-hua, the primary source of much of the poetry of the period, strongly preferred court poems to informal occasional poetry when selecting poems from this period; this is quite the opposite of their practice when anthologizing the poetry of the eighth and ninth centuries.

Parting poems are an interesting case in point since they constitute the largest of the Wen-yüan ying-hua categories of shih: in this section the Early T'ang is very poorly represented in comparison with parting poems of the eighth and ninth centuries. Yet it was in the Early T'ang that the basic characteristics of the T'ang parting poem were taking form. Parting poems (sung 送 "sending off," pieh 別 and liu-pieh 留別 "parting from," and chien 餞 "holding a parting banquet for") are one of the easiest subgenres to characterize. The pentasyllabic regulated verse and its earlier "imperfect" forms are the preferred genre, forming a slight majority over all other genres combined. There is a wide stylistic range, and not unexpectedly, the elaborateness of the

style increases in direct proportion to the formality of the occasion and the distance in rank of the addressee above the poet. Very formal parting poems tend to be ku-shih or p'ai-lü.

Many of the conventions of later T'ang parting poems developed during the three decades from 680 to 710. The tripartite structure is strong in such poems. As in banquet poetry the most common way to open a parting poem was with a general description of the scene, but the subgenre was already evolving some of its own opening conventions, all of which set different kinds of general contexts for the specifics of the rest of the poem. Here are examples of some of the more common openings:

1. The cause for leaving:

The Northern Barbarians wish an alliance, 北狄願和親
And from the Eastern capital an envoy emerges. 東京發使臣

Tu Shen-yen, "Sending Off Chamberlain Kao on His Mission North" [03753]

His Majesty worries for the northern commanderies, 帝憂河朔郡
And in the south opens up the Hai-ling granaries. 南發海陵倉

Sung Chih-wen, "Sending Off Yao of the Censorate on a Mission to Chiang-tung" [03271]

2. Here versus there—the starting point and destination of a journey:

At the crossroads, parting in late autumn, 岐路三秋別
The Yangtze fords are ten thousand miles far. 江津萬里長

Yang Chiung, "Sending Off Magistrate Fang of Lin-chin" [03164]

3. The hardships of the journey ahead:

I would ask of the roads of Liang's mountains— 借問梁山道
Jagged peaks in how many layers? 嶔岑幾萬里

Sung Chih-wen, "Sending Off Yang Wang to Chin-shui" [03330]

4. "Take consolation in this moment":

At the crossroads you are now a traveller, 岐路方為客
Let this sweet cup of wine cheer your face for a while. 芳尊酩解顏

Li Chiao, "Again Parting" [03560]

Typically the middle couplets of the parting poem will describe particular aspects of the scene at hand, aspects which involve the emotions stirred by parting. But there is more liberty in the parting poem to explore the emotions of those present, to elaborate on the causes of the journey, or to speculate on the future. A few conventional juxtapositions begin to emerge such as a line on the wine set in parallel with a line on songs or parting poems in the third couplet of a regulated verse.

The varieties of poetic closure are more numerous than opening conventions; and are often more relevant to the particular situation; for example, the official going to take his provincial post will be encouraged to govern well (03264) or the person going on a diplomatic mission or military campaign will be wished successful completion of his mission (03721, 03733) or that he return victorious, entering the passes or capital with "songs and dances" (03262, 03715). The traditional response of tears was a popular form of closure in parting poetry, as in Yang Chiung's "Sending Off Tutor Li on His Retirement" (03173):

Once I send you off by the pools of the Pa, 灞池一相送
Facing mist and roseate clouds my tears will stream down. 流涕向煙霞

We may remember Wang Po's famous inversion of the response of tears in one of his parting poems (03456):

Let us not, at this crossroads, 無為在岐路
Like a young boy and girl soak our robes with tears. 兒女共霑巾

Here we can see how a convention grows: Wang Po's original invension of a very old response becomes itself a convention of closure, usually in the form of an admonition. With no little incongruous humor Shen Ch'üan-ch'i admonishes a military man not to weep on his armor (05095). Reasons for this closing admonition are elaborated in later poetry, as in Kao Shih:

Those with talent must always use it, 有才無不適
So go on then! Don't trouble yourself in vain. 行矣莫徒勞
[10445]

The admonition may be transferred to other subgenres, as in Han Yü:

Let us not behave like some young boy and girl, 無為兒女態
All depressed, brooding over poverty. 憔悴悲賤貧
[17811]

The closing may leave the friends staring at the landscape, emptied of the traveller who is then out of sight, as in Li Chiao:

After parting, out beyond the green mountains, 別後青山外
I gaze toward you among the white clouds. 相望白雲中
[03714]

This is much the same thing that Lo Pin-wang saw earlier in one of his parting poems:

I gaze back, out beyond Green Gate, 還望青門外
And see only the white clouds drifting. 空見白雲浮
[04185]

These are, of course, all <u>natural</u> responses to the situation of parting, but they are hardly the only responses possible. Some responses we might expect such as "When will I see you again?" become conventional closures for

parting poems only in the High T'ang.

Since many travellers journeyed by boat, it is not surprising that water metaphors were a common form of closure in parting poems and that the metaphor was so successful that it was used whether the traveller was going by water or not. The inexorable eastward movement of the waters suggests impermanence and the thought that one may never see one's friend again; that the waters flow on forever is like the sorrow that the men parted will feel. Since one can go either direction on the waters, they stand for the "parting of ways" and the ancient "division of the Way" theme:

I heave a great sigh at the eastward flowing waters— 太息東流水
What now fills my cup can never be lifted again. 盈觴難再持
Shen Ch'üan-ch'i, "Sending Off a Friend to Take His Post in K'uo-chou" [04969]

The bitterness of parting is, it seems, endless: 別恨應無限
Before my gate the Cassia River's waters slant away. 門前桂水斜
Yang Chiung, "Sending Off the Recluse Yang" [03168]

Inexorably the waters of the royal moat, 殷勤御溝水
From this point on go either east or west. 從此各東西
Li Chiao, "Sending Off Li Yung" [03359]

I cannot gaze at the parting pavilion— 離亭不可望
There the moat waters go either west or east. 溝水自東西
Yang Chiung, "Sending Collator Liu Off on a Campaign" [03170]

Moonlight is another popular closing image: the poet may speculate that he will at least share the moonlight with the person leaving (03553), or it may be combined with the water imagery:

As I send you off, back to your home district, 送君還舊府
The bright moonlight fills the river before me. 明月滿前川
Yang Chiung, "By Night: Sending Off Chao Tsung" [03183]

Verse letters, being less specific in content than parting poems, cover an even wider range of topics. There can be elaborate autobiographical sketches, requests for preferment, praises, and self-justifications, addressed to high officials and friends of equal status alike. The Wen-hsüan tradition was particularly strong in this subgenre, especially in elaborate pieces addressed to those of higher rank. But in some cases verse letters left more room for personal sentiments than prose letters, and among them can be found some of the most beautiful poems of the age. Leaving office Kuo Chen writes:

TO COLLATOR LIU

寄劉校書

A low clerk for three years—why even mention it?
俗吏三年何足論

Ever knowing glory or shame could fall in the space of a day.
每將榮辱在朝昏

When talent is slight, it's easy to grow old in the wind-blown dust,
才微易向風塵老

When your state is low, you cannot repay a dear friend's kindness.
身賤難酬知己恩

The last orioles in the royal park sing in the setting sun,
御苑殘鶯啼落日

A fine rain by Yellow Mountain Palace soaks my homeward carriage.
黃山細雨溼歸軒

I look back to the Minister's Bureau of the Great House of Han—
迴望漢家丞相府

Since yesterday I wonder who has been sweeping the tiers of gates.
昨來誰得掃重門

[03830]

The psychological subtlety of the last line, lying between amusement and regret, is close to that of the best High T'ang poetry. Kuo wonders about his successor sweeping the gates to success, pitying his wasted efforts but wondering if he, the succeeding sweeper, will be the one to find success in the "space of a day."

Because the verse letter was one of the most appropriate outlets for intense personal emotion, its quality soared

when poets had some serious personal matter to communicate. Such an occasion was offered in 705 when Chung-tsung assumed the throne, and the Chang brothers, favorites of the empress, fell from power. Most of the empire's best poets had been associated with the Chang brothers, and in the ensuing purge of their entourage, South China received more than its share of poetically gifted administrators. Men such as Su Wei-tao, Ts'ui Jung, Tu Shen-yen, Sung Chih-wen, and Shen Ch'üan-ch'i all were banished to the far south. Those who survived the arduous journey were soon recalled, to be banished again some five years later. We will discuss some of these verse letters in later chapters.

Travel poems were often also verse letters, but many were written for the poet himself. Like the verse letter, travel poetry became a principal outlet for the impulse to personal poetry. Otherwise undistinguished poets might rise occasionally to greatness in such poems: a case in point is that of the Auxiliary Scholar, Liu Yün-chi, though it is perhaps unfair to compare his travel poems with his other poetry in that only four poems survive out of his ten chüan collected works. However, both his travel poems are excellent. The following poem (03797) is hardly typical of the subgenre but merits inclusion for its unusual topic.

SEEING A DEAD MAN BY THE ROADSIDE[25]

A brooding chill—in vain you see the sun;	陰涼徒見日
A dark silence—how could you tell the year?	冥寞詎知年
Your soul I cannot ask what happened,	魂今不可問
But I'm sure you were straight as a bowstring.	應為直如弦

His other travel poem represents another extreme: it is a magnificent, formal ninety-six line descriptive poem (03794) that is too long to quote here.

Although travel poetry could be as elaborately descriptive

as any court poem, it was also the subgenre in which we most often find the fu-ku attempt to recapture the plain style of the Chien-an and Wei. We may remember that many of Ch'en Tzu-ang's fu-ku poems were technically travel poems. A typical case is that of the Auxiliary Scholar Hsüeh Chi (649-713). Most of Hsüeh's fourteen surviving poems are court and banquet pieces; however, a poem by Tu Fu, "Viewing a Wall with the Calligraphy and Painting of Hsüeh Chi, Junior Guardian of the Crown Prince" (10715), begins:

The Junior Guardian had the "old style"
To be found in his poem on Shan Moor;
But alas, fame and fortune were perverse,
And now we see only his paintings and calligraphy.

少保有古風
得之陝郊篇
惜哉功名忤
但見書畫傳

We have few enough references as to exactly what constituted the theoretical "old style"; the poem Tu Fu is referring to is Hsueh's "Returning to the Capital on an Autumn Day: written ten miles west of Shan-chou" 秋日還京陝西十里作 (04914).

I drive my carriage across the moors of Shan,
Look back north over the Great River.
As I gaze toward my home beyond the river,
Autumn winds raise waves on the water.
To the west I mount the Hsien-yang road,
Toward sunset my melancholy brooding grows.
Fu Cliff twists windingly upward,
Shou-yang Mountain also juts high.
Gone is the old man who labored at building,
But the song "Picking Bracken" survives.
On my journeys the seasons revolve—
How long can human life last?

驅車越陝郊
北顧臨大河
隔河望鄉邑
秋風水增波
西登咸陽途
日暮愛思多
傅巖既紆鬱
首山亦嶢峨
操築無昔老
採薇有遺歌
客遊節回換
人生能幾何

The last line of this poem is a conscious use of a Chien-an and Wei formula. The story of Fu Cliff alluded to is

of the Shang king Wu-ting (reigned 1324-1265 B.C.), who dreamed of a sage who said his name was Yüeh. When the king sent his emissaries to look for the old man, they found him in a chain gang, building a rammed earth rampart on Fu Cliff. Wu-ting made him his minister. "Picking Bracken" was the song sung by Po Yi and Shu Ch'i when they refused to serve the Chou, choosing to starve themselves to death by eating bracken on Shou-yang Mountain. Taken together the allusions suggest that Hsüeh sees little hope of preferment and that he is disturbed about serving a new dynasty. This almost certainly refers to Empress Wu's Chou dynasty, though it is possible that it refers to the restored T'ang of 705. This sort of personal meditation on one's position in the political world was out of place in most of the occasional subgenres; the solitude of the travel poem accomodated it easily.

We do not have space here to go into other of the older subgenres such as laments, and many of the newer subgenres such as visiting poems and graffiti (t'i 題) had not yet developed strong subgeneric conventions. In the early eighth century the number of occasions that demanded a poetic response increased—poems on paintings, poems complimenting some object owned by a friend, poems of graditude, visiting someone and not finding them at home, etcetra. Eventually all of these developed their own conventional themes and range of diction.

THE NEW SONGS OF EMPRESS WU'S REIGN

The heptasyllabic meter had more "popular" and fewer literary associations than the pentasyllabic meter. Before the High T'ang the diction of heptasyllabic poetry was generally less ornamented, its syntax more straightforward, and its subject matter often that of yüeh-fu, although as we have seen in the capital poems, it easily accommodated lush, epideictic description. Its intrusion into court poetry proper during the last decades of the Early T'ang suggests a popularization of courtly taste. During the reign of Chung-tsung, the use of the heptasyllabic meter became widespread in regulated verse and became subject to the kind of ornamentation practised in pentasyllabic court poetry. But even before then, during the reign of Empress Wu, the heptasyllabic meter was popular in songs, often with trisyllabic and pentasyllabic lines mixed in. A number of anecdotes survive which suggest that Empress Wu was particularly fond of heptasyllabic songs, and it is not surprising that someone like Empress Wu, who lacked the literary education of an accomplished courtier, would prefer their flashy energy to the stiff formality of pentasyllabic court poetry.

We have one such song to commemorate a visit by the empress to Lung-men, the Buddhist temple complex at Dragon Gates. As a heptasyllabic song to imperial command, it is unique in the period, but an accompanying note suggests that it was one of a whole series of such poems.

> Empress Wu was visiting Dragon Gate and ordered her courtiers to compose poems on the event, promising a brocade gown to the one who finished first. Tung-fang Ch'iu, the Historian of the Left, completed his poem first and took the prize. However, the courtiers

were uneasy about this, and while Sung Chih-wen's poem was finished afterward, it was of great beauty in both style and content. Not one of those present failed to praise its excellence, so they stripped Ch'iu of the brocade gown and clothed Sung Chih-wen in it.[26]

Mercifully Tung-fang Ch'iu's poem has been lost. Ironically Tung-fang Ch'iu's niche in literary history has been assured by Ch'en Tzu-ang's preface to "The Long Bamboo," in which the courtly style is roundly denounced. Sung Chih-wen's poem (03222) survives.

DRAGON GATE	龍門應制
Last night's rain has cleared the pall of dust,	宿雨霽氛埃
And drifting clouds pass over the high gate towers.	流雲度城關
By the river levee willows put on new azure,	河堤柳新翠
On trees in the park the flowers come out early.	苑樹花先發
Flowers and willows of Lo-yang, heavy with moisture this season,	洛陽花柳此時濃
Mountain and river, tower and terrace, shine layer upon layer.	山水樓臺映幾重
A crowd of nobles brushes through fog to the soaring Phoenix's court,	羣公拂霧朝翔鳳
Her Majesty takes advantage of spring to visit the dragon caves.	天子乘春幸鑿龍
The dragon caves are right close by, just out of the royal city,	鑿龍近出王城外
A swollen stream of feathered guards crowds in on the carriage awnings.	羽從淋漓擁軒蓋
When the cloudlike retinue had just come to the bridge over royal waters,	雲蹕纔臨御水橋
Her Holy Robes had already reached the party on Fragrance Mountain.	天衣已入香山會
Mountain cliffs, steep and craggy, breaking off, then continuing,	山壁斬巖斷復連
Clear streams, transparent and pure, looked down into the Yi.	清流澄澈俯伊川

Pagodas' reflections far, far in the distance
over the green waves,

Niches sparkling like stars
at the edge of the blue mists.

Layered ridges where long had grown
those thousand-foot trees,

Remote valleys into which first fly
hundred-yard cascades.

Now pennoned pikes and rainbow banners
circle the fragrant towers,

She alights from Her palanquin, climbs a high
spot to gaze on the Yellow River and Lo.

Tower and palace of the Eastern City
seem as stars in their turnings,

The canals and banks of the South Fields
interlock in arabesques.

In the groves a holy fragrance
from the Terrace of Seven Precious Things,

On the mountains, spring wine,
cups for toasts—"Live Forever!"

Once the faintest breeze rises,
auspicious flowers fall,

And when immortal music begins to play,
portentous birds come.

The birds come, the flowers fall
in their endless bounty,

We raise our cups to wish Her long life
in the scented roseate clouds.

And our songs and dances linger on
as the sun begins to sink,

While among the stones there still remain
immortal coaches of five-colored clouds.

Bird-banners soar and flutter,
stay in the scented grass,

Dragon outriders charge on past,
shine among evening's flowers.

With a thousand carriages, ten thousand riders,
the ringing palanquin goes forth,

Waters calm, mountains deserted—
a stern ban clears commoners,

But beyond the capital moors
a tumult draws the onlookers,

雁塔遥遥綠波上
星籠爽爽翠微邊
層巒舊長千尋木
遠壑初飛百丈泉
絳仗蜺旌遶香閣
下輦登高望河洛
東城宮闕擬昭回
南陌溝塍殊綺錯
林下天香七寶臺
山中春酒萬年杯
微風一起祥花落
仙樂初鳴瑞鳥來
鳥來花落紛無已
稱觴獻壽煙霞裏
歌舞淹留景欲斜
石間猶駐五雲車
鳥旗翼翼留芳草
龍騎駸駸映晚花
千乘萬騎鑾輿出
水靜山空嚴警蹕
郊外喧喧引看人

The whole capital fixes its gaze southward
on the dust of the carriages. 傾都南望麾車塵

Boistrous sounds roll in the wind,
hearing the Course of Yellow Radiance, 簫聲引曜閒黃道

The royal aura circles about
and enters the Purple Mist Residence. 王氣周迴入紫宸

Former kings took the Tripod,
our mountains and rivers secure, 先王定鼎山河固

Now the Precious Mandate falls to Chou—
all things are renewed. 寶命乘周萬物新

Our Empress has nothing to do
with the pleasures of Jasper Pool, 吾皇不事瑤池樂

With the seasonal rains she comes to observe
the springtime of the farmers. 時雨來觀農扈春

A few terms require explanation: the "Course of Yellow Radiance" is the course of the sun and therefore of the ruler; the tripod is the symbol of dynastic legitimacy. Jasper Pool was where King Mu feasted with Hsi-wang-mu and suggests here either the quest for excessive splendor or sexual indulgence.

Sung Chih-wen uses much the same technique to praise the empress' outing as was used earlier in the songs on the capital; however, Sung's use of the epideictic descriptive style is more sophisticated as he strings it into something like a narrative. In borrowing fu structure for their poems on the capital, the poets of the 670s rounded off their praises of sensual beauty with some sort of remonstrance or negative reaction. Clearly such a closing would be out of place, even dangerous, here; however, the need remains for the poet to end the piece with some sort of ethical comment. Thus Sung Chih-wen closes with praises for the legitimacy and moral force of the empress' Chou dynasty.

We can also see the habits of the courtly banquet poem appearing here and there in the poem: the first heptasyllabic couplet (lines five and six) is not parallel, but as the poet begins to describe the landscape, the couplets

are perfectly matched. Nor can Sung resist a long description of the end of the banquet, setting sun and lingering delight, as is appropriate in the banquet poem. This lush, sensual descriptive style must have been immensely entertaining, and when Tu Fu recalled the lost splendor of the T'ang after the An Lu-shan rebellion, he would often echo elegiacally this courtly descriptive style.

Another, widely anthologized heptasyllabic song is said to have received the direct praise of the empress in a rather amusing anecdote. The poem is "The River of Light" (03221), the Milky Way, using the conventional identification of the court and heaven.

> At that time Sung Chih-wen had wanted the post of Scholar of the North Gate, but the Empress would not grant it. Thus we find in the poem allusion to "riding the raft" and "visiting the diviner" [the story of the man who voyaged through the Milky Way on a raft and eventually returned to Szechwan]. When the empress saw his poem, she told Ts'ui Jung, "I had no idea he was so talented; I refused his request only because he had such bad teeth." Sung Chih-wen felt humiliated by this to the end of his days.[27]

THE RIVER OF LIGHT	明河篇
Chill wind in the eighth month, the air in the heavens is crystal,	八月涼風天氣晶
No clouds in the sky for thousands of miles, the river of stars is bright.	萬里無雲河漢明
At dusk it appears by the southern towers, shallow it is and clear,	昏見南樓清且淺
Toward dawn it sinks into western mountains, spreads north and south and up over.	曉落西山縱復橫
The walls and towers of Lo-yang rise up into the heavens,	洛陽城闕天中起
And every night that long river runs through the palace's thousand gates.	長河夜夜千門裏
Tiered walkways, layered tiles, hide it, cover it over,	複道連甍共蔽虧

The painted halls and marble gates are set just right for it.	畫堂瓊戶特相宜
There on the mica screens, the "river" first floods over,	雲母帳前初汎濫
And beyond the crystalline latticework it gets further and further away.	水精簾外轉逶迤
Wondrous, those shining revolutions, blanched white as silk,	倬彼昭回如練白
Then again coming out of the Eastern City and touching the southern paths.	復出東城接南陌
On the southern path a traveller goes off, not to return,	南陌征人去不歸
In whose home tonight are they pounding the winter clothes?	誰家今夜擣寒衣
Over mandarin ducks on the loom, sparse fireflies pass,	鴛鴦機上疏螢度
Past the magpie bridge, a lone goose flies on.	烏鵲橋邊一雁飛
The goose flies on, the fireflies pass— sorrow without end,	雁飛螢度悠難歇
And now I see that river of light gradually dimming, sinking.	坐見明河漸微沒
It has been able to grow and shrink at the will of the drifting clouds,	已能舒卷任浮雲
And does not begrudge that its radiance must yield to the bright moon.	不惜光輝讓流月
You can gaze at the river of light, but you cannot approach it,	明河可望不可親
Though I wish to find the raft to ride and ask the way over.	願得乘槎一問津
Then shall I take the stone that supports the Weaving Girl's loom,	更將織女支機石
And return to search out the man who sells auguries in Ch'eng-tu.	還訪成都賣卜人

As allusive and laden with traditional allegory as the poem is, it is an excellent description of the Milky Way over the capital. Sung was the most ingenious of the court poets and works the river metaphor into the poem brilliantly; for example, the light reflected on the mica screens becomes a "flooding over" of the "river." As the poet leaves the capital in despair, he echoes the tradi-

tional metaphor of a man seeking recognition by his ruler as a spurned lover: the mandarin ducks promise "conjugal" bliss; the "magpie bridge" allows the Herdboy star to visit the Weaving Girl across the Milky Way, but he is the lone goose which can only fly past it. Finally he turns to the two stories of riding to the heavens on a boat, used in an earlier chapter in the poems written at Princess T'ai-p'ing's villa.

If the occasion cited for this poem is correct, it is earlier than "Dragon Gate." Though the topic of description is different from that of the capital poems, it follows basically the same formula, closing with a plea for for preferment like that of Lo Pin-wang in "Imperial Capital," rather than moralizing. The style of this poem is close to that of Lo Pin-wang in a number of ways: the compound allusions, the use of fu-ku metaphors such as the lone goose in an elaborate context, and the peculiar combination of stylistic density and personal expression. As such, "The River of Light" is a transition piece between the songs of the 670s and those of the later seventh and early eighth centuries.

Though special conditions might necessitate a change in the closing message of the song, the old form of praise followed by censure lingered on. The unusual topic of the following piece by Shen Ch'üan-ch'i (04987) makes it a historical poem, like the capital poems of Lu Chao-lin and Lo Pin-wang. However, the tradition of such historical poems makes it clear that the referent of Shen's poem is topical, concerning some excess in Wu's or Chung-tsung's court.

AIRING CLOTHES ON THE SEVENTH NIGHT 七夕曝衣篇

Haven't you seen in days of old
by Yi-ch'un Park, by T'ai-yeh Pool, 君不見昔日宜春太液邊

How the painted towers of P'i-hsiang Palace
reached up into the sky? 披香畫閣與天連

There the lamp flames sparkled,
the candelabras shone,

The smoke of incense swelled,
and "compound fragrance" burned.

On this very night when the stars are dense
and the "river" is at its whitest,

People tell how the Herdboy
and Weaving Girl wander.

In the palace there is commotion
on the Clothes-Airing Tower,

And in heaven, there is such loveliness
on the mats where the rouge is applied.

Where do they air the clothes
when the skies are turning orange?—

Where brightly clothed palace maids
are lifting trunks of jade.

Pearled slippers scurry up
the orchid staircases,

Gilded steps wind around and around,
up above plumwood beams.

Into heaven's scarlet river

Emerald smoke rises,

Paired flowers and crouching rabbits
on painted screens,

The four masters and coiling dragons
hold up miniature panels.

They unroll gauze, shake out damask,
clouds and fog appear,

Strung with jade and dangling pearls,
the river of stars turns.

Red clouds of dawn scatter their colors,
shaming the clothesracks,

The evening moon divides its beams,
makes Mirror Terrace seem poor.

Above there is the immortal's gauze sash
of eternal life,

In the middle see an embroidery
where the Jade Girl meets her love.

In the tortoise shell casements
are spring seasons all their own,

And behind the coral windows
it turns dawn instead of dark,

燈火灼爍九微映
香氣氛氳百和然
此夜星繁河正白
人傳織女牽牛客
宮中擾擾曝衣樓
天上娥娥紅紛席
曝衣何許曛半黃
宮中綵女提玉箱
珠履奔騰上蘭砌
金梯宛轉出梅梁
絳河裏
碧煙上
雙花伏兔畫屏風
四子盤龍擎斗帳
舒羅散穀雲霧開
綴玉垂珠星漢回
朝霞散彩羞衣架
晚月分光劣鏡臺
上有仙人長命縷
中看玉女迎歡繡
玳瑁簾中別作春
珊瑚窗裏翻成畫

Into Pepper Chambers and Gilded Rooms
favor has flowed anew,
Manners haughty and wasteful,
not acting on their own.
Wen-ti of Han was right to regret
Dew Terrace's expense,
Wu-ti of Chin has need to burn
the furs before palace halls.

椒房金屋寵新流
意氣嬌奢不自由
漢文宜惜露臺費
晉武須焚前殿裘

The seventh night of the seventh month was when the Herd-boy and Weaving Girl were supposed to meet. Shen Ch'üan-ch'i's frugal closing sounds oddly incongruous after his lush confusion between the "river of stars" and the bright clothing of the palace ladies, which forms "clouds and fog," sparkles like stars, reveals scenes of heaven, and shifts the season and time of day at will. The ability of artifice to invert the natural order (for example, lines twenty-three and twenty-four) is a complex theme in Chinese literature: sometimes it suggests the power of art and human invention, but often it betokens a dangerous perversity. In this poem its use is deliberately ambiguous, standing between admiring description and moral remonstrance. A similar inversion of nature underlies the following poem by Fu Chiao-mo.

Fu Chiao-mo 富嘉謨 was certainly one of the strangest poets of the Early T'ang, and his only surviving poem (of a collection once in ten chüan), "The Luminous Ice," is one of the strangest of the heptasyllabic songs. Fu and his friend Wu Shao-wei 吳少微 were felt to have created an independent style, opposed to the style of court poetry. Though not entirely outside the circle of court poets, Fu Chiao-mo and Wu Shao-wei seem to have had an affinity for the opposition poetics. Chang Yüeh, whose work we shall discuss in the next section, paid a beautiful impressionistic tribute to Fu Chiao-mo's style:

> Like a lone peak, a sheer slope, a mile-high cliff from which dense clouds swell up, from which both thunder and lightning emerge.

Truly terrifying—if displayed in the halls of government, it would cause a shock.[28]

如孤峯絕岸,壁立萬仞,濃雲鬱嶼,震雷俱發,誠可畏也。若施於廊廟,駭矣。

The metaphor of a sheer or precipitous place for an unusually daring poetic style was to become a commonplace of poetic criticism. Wu Shao-wei's work has fared better than that of the more famous Fu Chiao-mo: six poems of his have survived out of a collection once in ten chüan. Two of these poems are romantic ballads much like those of Liu Hsi-yi (04940, 04941); another is a fine piece in the "ruined city" tradition, "On Passing a Former City of the Han" (04939); yet another is a lament for Fu Chiao-mo in which Wu praises his friend as a restorer of Confucius. On one level, Fu's "The Luminous Ice" is courtly celebration, but on its symbolic level, the Yin element of ice suggesting the empress, the poem should probably be read as veiled criticism.

THE LUMINOUS ICE

明冰篇

In the northland's vast reaches
oceans and rivers freeze,

北陸蒼茫阿海凝

South Mountain flashes with ice,
both by day and by night,

南山閃干晝夜冰

A pale radiance looming high
as the bright moon ascends.

素彩峨峨明月升

Deep in the mountains, at the ends of valleys,
not revealing itself,

深山窮谷不自見

How could it know they would chop and gather it
to present to Her Majesty,

安知採斲備嘉薦

Leave it frozen solid in a dark room,
covered by cooling fans?

陰房涸沍掩寒扇

In the second month of bright spring,
just as the dawn first brightens,

陽春二月朝始曒

And spring light rolls in the waves
past the palace's thousand gates,

春光潭沱度千門

Then timely the luminous ice is brought out
and offered to the Most High.

明冰時出御至尊

The vermilion courtyard flashes,
the nine grades of officers there,
Dazzling dangling of jade from waists
as the thousand courtiers serve,
Luminous ice the whole year through,
ever in its place.
Remember before in the sandy north
where the chill winds overflowed,
On the long Yellow River by Mount K'un-lun
the ice first hardened,
Vast stretches of sheer craggy tiers
swelling with watchtowers.
Now the wild geese give their mournful cries
coming over the Yangtze,
On the pooled terraces of the royal park
the ice thaws again,
Quaking blue and drenching green
reflect mansions and terraces.
In the Songs of Pin, the "Seventh Month,"
the beginning of the Royal Airs,
There they dug out ice and stored it away,
reflected the order of things,
For the four seasons will not err
for a thousand million years.

形庭赫赩九儀備
腰玉煌煌千官事
明冰晷歲周在位
憶昨沙漠寒風漲
崑崙長河冰始壯
漫汗嶔嶒積亭障
嚶嚶鳴雁江上來
禁苑池臺冰復開
搖青涵綠映樓臺
豳歌七月王風始
鑿冰藏用昭物軌
四時不忒千萬祀

[04935]

Ostensibly this is a descriptive poem marvelling at the practise of storing ice away for springtime; however, contradictory topical impulses lie just beneath the surface. Line twelve, for example, may translate in part "ever in its place," but it also says quite plainly "the Chou is on the throne." The "Seventh Month," Shih 154, does indeed talk of chopping ice and storing it away, but the "beginning of the Royal Airs" (Wang-feng 王風) in the Shih-ching is a lament for the ruins of the Chou capital. And how can "digging out the ice and storing it away," a violation of seasonal progression, "reflect the order of things?" This phrase is as incongruous in line twenty as the "beginning of the Royal Airs" is in the preceding line, and it is tempting to take each half of these lines

as responding to the corresponding half of the other lines: the "reflected the order of things" goes with the lament for the ruins of the Chou capital. Or do they "reflect the order of things" by storing the ice, knowing that spring must surely come. This and a score of other hidden references in the poem point strongly to a topical interpretation, but the poem is frankly baffling: we can not be sure if it is a praise of the Chou, a prophecy of the Chou's downfall, or a praise of Chung-tsung for his sequestration of Empress Wu, as one hides away the Yin element ice in the springtime. One other curiosity of this poem is its unusual form: it is written in tercets.

"The Luminous Ice" is fundamentally a yung-wu poem, and some of the finest yung-wu of the period were written in the heptasyllabic song form. The traditions of the heptasyllabic song allowed more freedom and imagination, and in this form poets were able to transcend the rigid techniques of amplification for pentasyllabic yung-wu. The stilted treatment of the "sword" in Li Chiao's independent collection of yung-wu (03618) contrasts sharply with the energetic treatment of the subject in the following heptasyllabic song (03534):

THE PRECIOUS SWORD	寶劍篇
Wu's mountains open,	吳山開
Yüeh's streams dry up,	越溆涸
Three metals fuse together to form this precious blade,	三金合冶成寶鍔
Tempered in green waters,	淬綠水
Mirroring clouds of red,	鑒紅雲
Five-colored flames rise, light swelling in the stream.	五采焰起光氛氳
On its back an inscription made to last ten thousand years,	背上銘爲萬年字
Its front is marked with the pattern of seven stars.	胸前點作七星文
Mottled like a tortoise shell, White Rainbow's color,	龜甲參差白虹色

Golden ornament twining round as on a well pulley.	轆轤宛轉黃金飾
A startled rhino breaks through the center— no match for its sharpness;	駭犀中斷寧方利
A herd of fine steeds gallops headlong— no peer for its straightness.	驟馬羣騑未擬直
The shivering chill of wind and frost, clear over its scabbard,	風霜凜凜匣上清
Yet its soul lies far, far away, bright in the Dipper.	精氣遙遙斗間明
Fleeing disaster at dawn it pierced the Chin emperor's room,	避災朝穿晉帝屋
Escaping the fight one night it entered the Ch'u king's city.	逃亂夜入楚王城
One morning it found its match, met a great immortal,	一朝遇偶逢大仙
Tigers roared and dragons screamed as it mounted to the skies.	虎吼龍鳴騰上天
The Emperor of the East lifted it at his place in the Tzu-wei Star,	東皇提昇紫微座
The King of the West strapped it on at Red Walls fields.	西皇佩下赤城田
In this age of peace we have long ceased the use of weapons,	承平久息干戈事
But fortunate we are to get this, now all things military and civil are complete.	僥倖得充文武備
It eliminates troubles, averts disasters— fit for a ruler,	除災辟患宜君王
To increase his span and extend his years longer than Heaven and Earth.	益壽延齡後天地

This poem is replete with sword lore. The sword itself is described in terms of, perhaps identified with, one of the three legendary swords forged by Blacksmith Ou, a famous metalworker of the southeast in antiquity. It has the "seven star" pattern of the hero Wu Tzu-hsü's sword; it is like White Rainbow, a famous mythical sword; buried, its spirit shines in the heavens as a portent, the means by which Lei Huan once found two ancient swords. Although more formal yung-wu also use such historical and legendary references, they do not use them in quite such an exuberant

way. Likewise, lines eleven and twelve are "resemblances," but their violent, kinetic mode distinguishes them from the more formal resemblances of the pentasyllabic yung-wu; for example, Li Chiao's pentasyllabic yung-wu on the sword, describes its brightness:

On the blade lotuses stir, 鍔上芙蓉動
In its scabbard, brightness of frost and snow. 匣中霜雪明
[03618]

In the song, Li begins with an imaginative description of the forging of the sword, followed by a description of its appearance; he then tells its fantastic history, culminating in its apotheosis in the hands of the various rulers of the celestial regions. But bringing the sword back to earth, Li must somehow reconcile it with the civil virtues. Schooled in courtly evasions, Li gracefully explains that the sword averts trouble and therefore promises to extend the ruler's life.

Kuo Chen, whose yung-wu quatrains we have discussed previously, has an equally energetic ballad on a sword. This poem was singled out for praise by Tu Fu (10714) and was reputedly a favorite of Empress Wu's.[29]

AN ANCIENT SWORD 古劍篇

Haven't you seen how in K'un-wu they melt the iron, how the flames and the smoke fly, 君不見昆吾鐵治飛炎煙
How crimson light and purple vapors flash brightly together? 紅光紫氣俱蔚然
How many years did it take in all for the master smith to refine it, 良工鍛練凡幾年
To cast himself a precious sword by the name of Dragon Stream? 鑄得寶劍名龍泉
Dragon Stream's appearance was like the frost and snow, 龍泉顏色如霜雪
And the master smith heaved a sigh for its wondrous rareness. 良工咨嗟歎奇絶
Its case of crystal and jade, spurting flowers of lotus, 琉璃玉匣吐蓮花

Its golden guard with the spiral inlay
shines like the bright moon.
Now in a time when the world lacks
the windblown dust of war,
We're lucky to have it to fully defend
a good man's body.
The light of its spirit in darkness
is the blue snake's color,
Its pattern is in scales
like a green tortoise shell.
If it hasn't formed a bond
with some wandering bravo,
Then surely it has been the darling
of some hero of a man.
Who would have thought it would be cast
away in the middle of the road
Or have fallen and been buried beside
some ancient prison?
But though it be buried in dust again,
no place now to be used,
Still night after night it will make its
spirit strike against the skies.

錯鏤金環映明月
正逢天下無風塵
幸得周防君子身
精光黯黮青蛇色
文章片片綠龜鱗
非直結交游俠子
亦曾親近英雄人
何言中路遭棄捐
零落漂淪古獄邊
雖復塵埋無所用
猶能夜夜氣衝天

[03828]

Both this poem and the preceding poem allude to the story of Lei Huan. During the reign of Wu-ti in the Chin dynasty there was a portent of purple mists in the heavens. Lei Huan identified this as the aura of a precious sword lying buried and unappreciated. Digging by the prison wall in Feng-ch'eng, Lei Huan found the two most famous swords of antiquity, Dragon Stream and T'ai-an. Among Early T'ang poets, Kuo Chen's work most strongly foreshadows the High T'ang style: unlike Li Chiao, Kuo does not try to reconcile the clash of values embodied in the praise of a sword in an age of peace. He begins a resolution similar to Li Chiao's in line ten, but moves away from it, leaving the sword's aura striking the heavens in frustration.

The following yüeh-fu by Sung Chih-wen gives some indication why the T'ang felt so strongly that their

poetry had restored the style of antiquity. The original ballad, possibly from the third century, cheerfully described the wanderings of the immortal Wang-tzu-ch'iao up and down through the clouds where he joined a banquet of the gods.[30] This original ballad was written in a combination of tri-syllabic and heptasyllabic lines. There are two rather stodgy versions of the ballad by Southern Dynasties court poets, Chiang Yen and Kao Yün-sheng 高允生, written in pentasyllabic meter. Both are competent pieces of versification, neatly parallel in the middle couplets, describing Wang-tzu-ch'iao's apotheosis with all the poetic lore proper to the subject. A version of the ballad by a Northern Dynasties poet, Kao Yün 高允, returned to the irregular meter of the original and captured something of its exuberance, but also made full use of the lore of heavenly flights as the Southern Dynasties poets did. In the first part of his poem, Sung Chih-wen completely recaptures the energy of the original, but his closing complicates the theme in a characteristically T'ang way.

WANG-TZU-CH'IAO	王子喬
Wang-tzu-ch'iao	王子喬
Loved the immortals—	愛神仙
On the seventh day of the seventh month he went up to visit heaven.	七月七日上賓天
The white tiger strummed the zither, the phoenix blew the mouth organ,	白虎搖瑟鳳吹笙
And he rode along on vapors of cloud sipping the essence of sun.	乘騎雲氣吸日精
Sipped the essence of the moon,	吸月精
Never ever returned,	長不歸
His temple is still here, but the man is gone.	遺廟今在而人非
In vain I gaze at the plants on the hills,	空望山頭草
The dew on the grass soaks a man's robes.	草露溼人衣

[03224]

The original ballad had Wang-tzu-ch'iao soaring around in a "free and easy wandering" before visiting the gods in heaven; Kao Yün's ballad treated Wan-tzu-ch'iao's journey to heaven more strictly as an apotheosis. Sung Chih-wen brings back the casualness of the original as Wang-tzu-ch'iao simply goes to "visit" heaven and chances never to return. However, the closing human perspective changes and complicates the ballad; the dew, a traditional symbol of impermanence, soaks men's robes as a chilling reminder of the difference between ordinary men and immortals.

Both Sung Chieh-wen and Shen Ch'üan-ch'i begin to use the heptasyllabic song for personal poetry and occasional poetry. Sung has a piece in mixed pentasyllabic and heptasyllabic lines on releasing a white pheasant, and Shen uses the heptasyllabic meter for an idyllic travel poem (04988).

ENTERING SHAO-MI CREEK VALLEY

入少密溪

Cloudy peaks and mossy cliffs
surround the creek slanting,

雲峯苔壁繞溪斜

My river road in the fragrant wind,
flowers lining the shore.

江路香風夾岸花

Where the trees are dense, I could scarcely
believe that a bird could get through,

樹密不言通鳥道

Then a cock crowed and I realized
that here was someone's home.

雞鳴始覺有人家

The human dwellings were further on
deep where it opened onto a cliff,

人家更在深巖口

The stream waters flowed all around
in front and behind the cottages.

澗水周流宅前後

Fish flashed darting past
a pair of fisher boys,

遊魚瞥瞥雙釣童

The crack of axe chopping wood—
one old woodcutter.

伐木丁丁一樵叟

They told me they were just fleeing the
bustle and not fleeing Ch'in,

自言避喧非避秦

Hemp robed, plowing, digging their wells—
people of Yao's times.

薜衣耕鑿帝堯人

They asked me to stay, to wait a while
until chicken and wheat were ready, 相留且待雞黍熟
And by evening I rested deep in the mountains
in a spring of moonlight through the vines. 夕臥深山雞月春

Poetry like this is to all intents and purposes High T'ang poetry. Shen echoes a number of pastoral motifs in this poem, but the predominant one is T'ao Ch'ien's "Peach Blossom Spring," which the villagers deny ("not fleeing Ch'in") but fully embody.

The tradition of poetic descriptions of music was old and well established in the fu. Poems on music were particularly popular during the eighth and ninth centuries, and some of them are among the greatest poetry of the T'ang. Since music was a nonverbal medium, description of music allowed the poet a wide scope of imaginative metaphor, describing the scenes evoked or emotions stirred by the sounds. Like the dream poem, the music poem came from a "real" occasion which by its nature demanded imaginative treatment. Shen Ch'üan-ch'i was one of the first T'ang poets to fully exploit the poem on music in the following heptasyllabic song on a lutanist whose music evoked thunder. "The Thunder-rumble Song" was originally a literary yüeh-fu of the Liang which described real thunder; in contrast to Sung Chih-wen's return to the original yüeh-fu in "Wang-tzu-ch'iao," Shen's treatment of his yüeh-fu theme is completely original.

THE THUNDER-RUMBLE SONG 霹靂引

In the seventh month of the year 歲七月
The Fire Element recedes and Metal rises. 火伏而金生
Among my guests was one who had
played the lute at my gate, 客有鼓琴於門者
Who played thunder-rumble on the note
shang. 奏霹靂之商聲
First he tapped the note yü—
things came rending apart; 始叩羽以驚眷

Last he struck the note kung—
there was a peal of thunder.
Lightning blazed and flashed,
dragons leapt through the skies,
Thunder boomed crashing,
and the rains came dark.
Vapors gaped and moaned,
matching his ode,
Music and storm blew in gusts,
rising before me.
And it seemed like a thousand banners
galloping,
All weapons marshalled,
Splitting wild serpents,
Beheading the long leviathan.
Now who would compare this
to Hsi K'ang's lost Kuang-ling song?
And its mood is entirely different
from those spirits, companions of cranes.
But it causes my hero's soul to stir,
Brave men's hair stands on end,
Their thanks for His Grace, not shallow,
For the rules of war men unite in pairs.
Look down on the Tartars as trifles,
Cut through the Chieh as a harvest.
These are not just strong feelings at a
party—
They are the full magnificence of all
pleasure.

終扣宮而砰聆
電耀耀兮龍躍
雷闐闐兮雨冥
氣鳴唫以會雅
態欻翕以橫生
有如驅千旗
制五兵
截荒虺
斬長鯨
孰與廣陵比
意別鸛儔精而已
俾我雄子魄動
毅夫髮立
懷恩不淺
戡義雙輯
視胡若芥
勞羯如拾
豈徒慷慨中筵
備羣娛之翕習哉

[04989]

From summoning up a thunderstorm, Shen's lutanist stirs up all manner of martial feelings among the guests, a music different from the refined music of a Hsi K'ang or of the immortals. By the end of the performance the guests seem ready to go off to the frontiers to obliterate the enemies of the empire in gratitude for the emperor's grace.

One of the staple themes of palace poetry and yüeh-fu

might be best described in its most general form as women without men: this may take the form of a neglected wife or palace lady, a wife whose husband was fighting at the frontier, and other less common subthemes. This theme was quite popular, especially in heptasyllabic songs. Shen Ch'üan-ch'i, for example, has two such poems (04985, 04986). One poet whose work was closely identified with this theme was Ch'iao Chih-chih 喬知之, a contemporary and friend of Ch'en Tzu-ang. One of Ch'iao's poems is a ni-ku 擬古, "imitation of the ancient style," addressed to Ch'en Tzu-ang. Though this does show the association of the "ancient style" with Ch'en, the poem is simply a conventional meditation on the hardships of military campaigns.

Ch'iao Chih-chih is famous because of his tragic experience with his concubine Pi-yü, "Green Jade." Pi-yü caught the eye of a powerful clansman of the empress, Wu Ch'eng-ssu. The story goes that after Wu abducted the girl, Ch'iao addressed the following poem to her. On reading it, Pi-yü killed herself, leaving the poem on her corpse. Wu Ch'eng-ssu found the poem and contrived the death of Ch'iao Chih-chih as a revenge. The female persona that Ch'iao uses is Green Pearl, the concubine of the Chin intellectual Shih Ch'ung, the host of the Golden Valley banquet. When a powerful official maneuvered to obtain the girl, Shih Ch'ung resisted and got in trouble. Green Pearl thereupon committed suicide by throwing herself from a high building. If Ch'iao Chih-chih did in fact write this poem, holding up the example of Green Pearl to Pi-yü was a cruel act, forcing her to choose between humiliation and suicide.

GREEN PEARL 綠珠篇

In the Shih clan's Golden Valley
they love the popular songs, 石家金谷重新聲

And for ten baskets of bright pearls
they bought a fair girl. 明珠十斛買娉婷

"I love this day, sir,
that you promised yourself to me,
I rejoice in this day
that I gained your heart.
The towers and chambers of your home
were never kept locked,
And you always let the others
watch my songs and dances.
Their spirits were haughty and proud,
not men of reason;
They boasted of their power,
attacked you as they pleased.
To leave you, to go from you—
this I could never bear,
In vain I tried to hide behind my sleeves,
ruining my rouge.
A lifetime's parting now,
here on this high tower—
In one morning my youthful face
will end itself for you."

此日可憐君自許
此時可喜得人情
君家閨閣未曾閉
常將歌舞借人看
意氣雄豪非分理
驕矜勢力橫相干
辭君去君終不忍
徒勞掩袂傷鉛粉
百年離別在高樓
一旦紅顏爲君盡

[04298]

As is the case with many famous poems in the T'ang, the biographical, occasional circumstances make the poem interesting and poignant. Without them the poem is simply maudlin.

An unnaturally large proportion of Ch'iao Chih-chih's poetry is made up of yüeh-fu using female personae. Cases like this in which a body of poems neatly conforms to a single, famous biographical incident should make us suspicious. There are three possibilities. The first, which most nearly conforms to the traditional biographical approach, is that Ch'iao Chih-chih had an unusual fascination for women which is revealed in his poetry and which culminated in the Pi-yü episode. A second possibility is that because of the Pi-yü episode, anthologists assigned anonymous poems to him because they believed he was the type to write such poems. The third possibility is perhaps the most plausible: because of the fame of the Pi-yü

episode, anthologists preserved that part of his collection which dealt with women. Not enough of Ch'iao Chih-chih's poetry survives to make any judgement on the basis of style.

One of the best of these poems is the "Ballad of the Singing Girl" 倡女行 (04300):

Pomegranate wine,	石榴酒
The brew of the grape,	葡萄漿
Scent of orchid and cassia,	蘭桂芳
Fragrance of dogwood.	茱萸香
I beg you, sir, to halt your golden saddle	願君駐金鞍
And share a while with me the year's sweetness;	暫此共年芳
I beg you, sir, to take off my blouse of gauze,	願君解羅襦
Get drunk with me and share this couch.	一醉同匡牀
For when Cho Wen-chün was newly widowed,	文君正新寡
She set her mind on being a singing girl.	結念在歌倡
Last night behind my lace curtain, I welcomed Han Shou,	昨宵綺帳迎韓壽
This morning with my gauze sleeves I led in Master P'an.	今朝羅袖引潘郎
I never play the northern flute and wake the neighborhood,	莫吹羌笛驚鄰里
And I won't play the p'i-p'a, make a hubbub in these chambers,	不用琵琶喧洞房
I'll just sing a new song of the night,	且歌新夜曲
Nor strum the "Ming-kuang" song of Ch'u—	莫弄楚明光
This song is sensual and full of bitterness,	此曲怨且豔
And its sad notes will break a person's heart.	哀音斷人腸

The widow Cho Wen-chün later married Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju, while Han Shou was known for eloping with the daughter of his employer. P'an Yüeh was famous for his good looks. But beneath the layer of allusions this poem has an unrestrained sensuality uncommon in this period.

TU SHEN-YEN

After the preeminent Ch'en Tzu-ang, Tu Shen-yen, Shen Ch'üan-ch'i, and Sung Shih-wen were clearly the most talented poets of the last decades of the seventh and first decade of the eighth century. Although none of the three developed a truly personal style, as a group their work shows the growing private side of court poetry. As we said earlier, most of the informal occasional poetry of the period is found in their collections or in Ch'en Tzu-ang's. All three were caught up in the banishments of 705 when the Chang brothers fell from power and Chung-tsung resumed the throne. Most of Tu Shen-yen's surviving works date from before his exile, but Sung and Shen were transformed as poets by the emotional impact of their banishment to the far South.

Tu Shen-yen was born in the mid to late 640s and passed the chin-shih examination in 670. It should be remembered that Tu Shen-yen, Sung Chih-wen and Shen Ch'üan-ch'i were roughly contemporary to the "Four Talents," but did not achieve fame until several decades later. With the possible exception of Sung Chih-wen's "River of Light," the three have no datable poems of the 670s, and the bulk of their work belongs in the first decade of the eighth century. All three began in minor official posts and rose to prominence through the patronage of the Chang brothers.

Tu Shen-yen began his career as a ninth-grade chief of employees (wei 尉) in Hsien-ch'eng county in modern Shensi. Next he held a somewhat higher post in Lo-yang, but became embroiled in a factional dispute and was exiled to a provincial administrative post in Chiang-hsi. After his recall to the capital, he attracted the attention of the

Chang brothers and held several middle-level posts in the capital. Little is known of Tu Shen-yen's character except that he had a reputation for exceptional arrogance. By this time Tu already had achieved some fame as a poet and was known together with Li Chiao, Ts'ui Jung, and Su Wei-tao as one of the "Four Friends of Literature" 文章四友. In 705 Tu Shen-yen was exiled to the far South, farther than most of his friends, but not quite as far as Shen Ch'üan-ch'i. Tu was sent to Feng-chou, just upstream from modern Hanoi. In the general amnesty declared shortly thereafter, Tu returned to the capital to serve as a registrar in the Academy and, of course, as an Auxiliary Scholar in the Hsiu-wen-kuan.

Tu Shen-yen is often given special consideration in histories of T'ang poetry because he was the grandfather of Tu Fu. In his preface to Tu Shen-yen's collection, Yang Wan-li 楊萬里 cites numerous parallels between the poems of the grandfather and those of the grandson.[31] It is probably no great exaggeration to say that Tu Fu's unusual fondness for the style of court poetry has something to do with his admiration for his grandfather. But though Tu Shen-yu represents a transitional style between the Early T'ang and High T'ang, he is certainly not the first figure in a Tu Fu "school" as some anthologists would place him.[32]

Tu Shen-yen was something of a genius in a narrow scope. Had he lived in a period when the range of poetry was broader, or had he possessed a more rebellious and adventuresome poetic personality, he might well have become a major poet. As it stands, he managed to infuse his works with an openness and grace that few other court poets possessed. Above all, Tu Shen-yen was a stylist, and the particular virtues of his work—well-chosen words and slight syntactic shifts—do not come through in translation. Even his formal occasional court poems sparkle with a fludity that makes many other court poets seem wooden.

MATCHING THE RHYMES OF WEI CH'ENG-CH'ING'S "VISITING PRINCES YI-YANG'S MOUNTAIN POOL" [second of five]

和韋承慶過義陽公主山池五首之二

The path twists as sheer peaks press on it,
The bridge slants down and the gaping bank blocks it.
Jade streams shift wine's flavor along,
Stalactites in exchange for the scent of rice.
Green twigs supplely bind the fogs,
Purple vines long to drag up the winds.
And as, in this way, our joy in the feast grows less,
We go off instead to the rear pool and ponds.

逕轉危峯逼
橋斜欹岸妨
玉泉移酒味
石髓換粳香
綰霧青條弱
牽風紫蔓長
猶言宴樂少
別向後池塘

[03742]

The first couplet of this poem was cited as an exemplary couplet in the "Couplet Construction of T'ang Poets," T'ang jen chü-fa 唐人句法, preserved in the Sung critical anthology Jade Chips of the Poets, Shih-jen yü-hsieh 詩人玉屑.[33] As an opening couplet it is startling; its style and subject, the dominance of the forms of the landscape over human construction, would be more appropriate in a middle couplet. The second couplet moderates Tu's initial daring, bringing in the party, where wine cups are floated in the stream, and the theme of immortality, stalactites being boiled for an elixir of eternal life—at least this is what Tu Shen-yen imagines as he sniffs the scent from the rice cooker.

The third couplet has willow fronds or insect floss hanging in the fog, seeming to "bind" it, while the hanging vines, fluttering in the wind, seem to be pulling the wind along. This metaphorical inversion of causality was to be a popular technique in regulated verse and was used frequently by Tu Fu. The last couplet is a disappointingly conventional closing. With the exception of the last couplet, each couplet in the poem is a gem, but

the couplets are unrelated gems, strung together by rhyme and the actual circumstances of the banquet.

The fourth poem of the series (03644) is another unusually graceful and clever court poem.

Masses of stone lean just at the balustrade,
A waterfall passes the window in flight.
Fawns butt against the mats of the singing girls,
Baby cranes tug at the servant boys' robes.
Fruits in the orchard—hard to taste them all;
Lotus in the pond—plucked but not yet few.
Now we raise curtains, await the moon before it rises,
When we should be returning home in our drunkenness.

攢石當軒倚
懸泉度牖飛
鹿麑衝妓席
雛子曳童衣
園果嘗難遍
池蓮摘未稀
卷簾先待月
應在醉中歸

This poem also opens with a couplet that would be appropriate in a middle position (though it might be pointed out that the first poem of the series has a proper opening couplet). The closing couplet here inverts the conventional "now it is evening and time to return" closing; rather the partygoers cannot bear to leave the scene though they know they should.

The most famous of Tu Shen-yen's poems is a pentasyllabic regulated verse "Matching the Rhymes of Assistant Lu of Chin-ling's 'Early Spring Excursion'" 和晉陵陸丞早春遊望 (03746). Although this poem is also attributed to the eighth-century poet Wei Ying-wu 韋應物, it is not part of the main body of Wei's collection and the Wen-yüan ying-hua clearly attributes it to Tu Shen-yen. The stylistic play and certain phrase patterns which recur in Tu Shen-yen's other poems suggest that it is indeed Tu's. It is an anthology piece, but justly so.

Alone, men on official journeys
Are most startled by the renewal of things and the season:

獨有宦遊人
偏驚物候新

Rose and white clouds, the brightness emerging from the sea,
Plum and willow, springtime crossing the river.
The clear air urges on the orioles,
And the sky's light makes the green watergrass coil.[34]
Suddenly I hear an old melody sung,
And thought of return makes me ready to soak my kerchief with tears.

曙海出霞雲
春江渡柳梅
黃鳥催氣淑
綠蘋轉光晴
忽聞歌古調
歸思欲霑巾

The sense of displacement that men on official travels feel upon seeing the springtime is a consequence of their realizing that another year has gone by and that they, unlike the year, have not "come full circle." The very freshness of the natural world makes them feel a singular oldness and brings on longing to return to their homes. The second couplet of this poem is a particularly fine example of ambiguous syntax and can be understood in a number of ways, of which the translation above offers only one. Here the descriptive central couplets are justified in the overall unity of the poem; they are that "wondrous" beauty of the new year that so disturbs the traveller. The songs of the birds, associated with spring, are contrasted to the "old melody." The standard "response of tears" is subtly varied by Tu's use of "ready to" 欲; like some other sophisticated forms of poetic closure then developing, "ready to" avoids the finality of poetic closure and casts the reader forward to a time beyond the text of the poem. The tripartite structure is particularly strong in this poem: the general case of "being startled" is not made an intense personal response until the last line where the poet is about to weep. But this transition from simply being amazed to weeping is a natural outcome of what the poet sees in the middle couplets, viewed in the context of the "old melody."

A wittier treatment of the theme of return can be found in the following heptasyllabic regulated verse

(03764), anthologized by the famous Ming critic Chin Sheng-t'an 金聖歎 in his Sheng-t'an hsüan-p'i T'ang ts'ai-tzu shih 聖歎選批唐才子詩:[35]

MY FEELINGS ON A SPRING DAY IN THE CAPITAL 春日京中有懷

This year in my travels I travel alone in Ch'in,
今年遊寓獨遊秦

Viewing the spring with sad thoughts, I cannot face this spring.
悠思看春不當春

In the emperor's Shang-lin Park flowers blossom in vain,
上林苑裏花徒發

In front of Thinwillow Camp leaves pointlessly renew.
細柳營前葉漫新

By the young nobles' south bridge, I'm sure their pleasure is fulfilled,
公子南橋應盡興

And in the generals' western mansions, how many guests are detained?
將軍西第幾留賓

I send word to Lo-yang, to roads of fine scenery—
寄語洛城風日道

Next year spring's beauty will doubly bring the man home.
明年春色倍還人

Tu is in Ch'ang-an, longing to return to Lo-yang. The ornamental repetitions of the first couplet are characteristic of Early T'ang heptasyllabic verse, which we have seen earlier in Wang Po's quatrains and in the capital poems. The second couplet uses the popular theme of nature's indifference to the feelings of men, renewing itself without bringing any joy to the poet. The disharmony between the poet and the season resolves itself in the last line into a pressure which the spring scene exerts on the poet to return to Lo-yang: undissipated, the pressure will be "double" next year, driving the poet home under its force.

Tu Shen-yen is particularly well represented in the mid-eighth century anthology, the Kuo-hsiu chi 國秀集. The five poems there (03747, 03749, 03755, 03758, and 03772) show elements of Tu Shen-yen's work that look forward to the High T'ang style. Four of the five poems

are pentasyllabic regulated verses.

ON A SUMMER DAY, PASSING BY THE MOUNTAIN LIBRARY OF MR. CHENG

夏日過鄭七山齋

To share this joy in the cup
I have come seeking the mouth of your valley.
Through layers of hanging vines the mountain path enters,
Amid lotuses in the creek your pavilion appears.
The sunlit air holds the last of the rain,
And the shade of clouds sends off evening thunder.
But when the bells and drums of Lo-yang reach me,
Carriage and horses turn back slowly, unwilling.

好中樽有待
來口谷尋言
入逕山羅薜
開亭水芰荷
雨殘含氣日
雷晚送陰雲
至鼓鐘陽洛
回遲繫馬車

[03755]

"The mouth of your valley" (ku-k'ou 谷口) plays on the toponymn "Valley-mouth", associated with another Cheng, the Han recluse Cheng Tzu-chen 鄭子眞.

Though this poem is far more direct than the average formal banquet poem, we might notice Tu Shen-yen's use of the standard banquet closing—"now it is evening and I must go home."

ON AN AUTUMN NIGHT: BANQUETING AT THE COTTAGE OF MAGISTRATE CHENG OF LIN-CHIN

秋夜臨津鄭明府宅

Moving or resting in a palce so high there is nothing below,
To invite or visit there is only you.
In our wine we endure this string of months,
Beyond us are only the drifting clouds,
The dew is white—night bells pierce through;
The wind clear—the waterclock's drip can be heard at dawn.
We sit hand in hand till the last of our pleasure is gone,
And it seems once again we had never left the crowd.

地無皆止行
君有獨尋招
月累堪中酒
雲浮卽外身
徹鐘宵白露
聞漏晚清風
往興餘攜坐
羣離未似還

[03747]

In contrast to the preceding poem and Tu's formal banquet pieces, the couplets of this poem form a narrative unity, first setting up their past friendship and then indirectly describing the passage of the night until they "wake up" at dawn and return to the ordinary world. The dreamlike unity of mood is partially achieved by eliminating precise description of the physical scene: there is only the dew and wind in "a place so high there is no land below" (wu-ti 無地, literally "no land"), making their party strangely ethereal.

Tu Shen-yen's gift as a stylist was such that he could write powerful and moving poems even when he was not personally engaged. In the following piece Tu Shen-yen molds the conventions from P'an Yüeh's "Lament for my Wife" (Tao-wang 悼亡) into a very moving poem written on behalf of a higher official for a deceased lover.

LAMENT FOR A LOVELY GIRL: ON BEHALF OF CHANG THE CENSOR

代張侍御傷美人

At sixteen the gates of the Yellow Springs have closed,
Behind the bedcurtains the fondness and love is gone.
Traces as of tears melt away the night's candle,
Skeins of sorrow tangle the spring wind.
With her coy smile she seems yet to survive,
In fresh makeup her songs weren't yet finished.
I know you must feel sorrow for scent of powder and oil in the air,
Still lingering on her dancing robes.

二八泉扉掩
帷屏寵愛空
淚痕消夜燭
愁緒亂春風
巧笑人疑在
新妝曲未終
應憐脂粉氣
留著舞衣中

[03752]

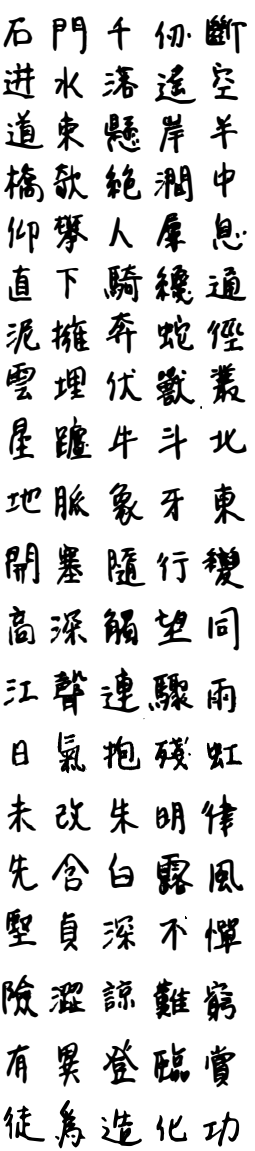
"Skeins" 緒 of line four probably refers to the willow floss or insect silk fluttering in the breeze, but it also suggests "something that touches one," an occasion for an emotion.

In some of the poems of Wang Po and Ch'en Tzu-ang we have seen the new beginnings of a descriptive landscape poetry. Experiencing the spectacular landscapes of South China in their various exiles, Tu Shen-yen, Shen Ch'üan-ch'i, and Sung Chih-wen wrote a number of dazzling descriptive landscape poems. The following piece (03768) is from Tu Shen-yen's first exile in Chiang-hsi.

CROSSING STONEGATE MOUNTAIN



Stonegate—a straight drop a thousand feet,
Where spurting waters fall in the distant sky.
The road binds half the overhanging slope,
And bridges slant into sheer ravines.
When scaling this, a person often rests,
Now straight below a rider comes through.
Mud packs the paths where serpents dart,
Clouds bury the brush where wild beasts crouch.
The stars' path: north of Dipper and Ox;
A vein of the earth: east of Elephant's Tusk.
Opening, then blocking, changing as I move on;
Heights and depths alike, wherever my gaze alights.
The sound of the river joins with a sudden shower,
Sunlit air embraces the last of a rainbow.
And before red and brilliant summer changes on the calendar,
The winds bear autumn's white dew.
If firm and pure of heart, no terror at these depths,
Yet it seems this rough country will never end.
Here there's a difference from the pleasure of high vistas—
Simply because of Creation's great deeds.



Despite the brilliance of many of Tu's couplets, the landscape here has no philosophical significance as did Ch'en Tzu-ang's description of Gorge-mouth Mountain. Tu is simply crafting the "wonders" of the landscape into fine parallel couplets and letting us know that travelling over such a landscape is no easy matter. The following landscape poem (03732) was written by Tu during his exile of 705.

WRITTEN AT JUMBLE-ROCK MOUNTAIN BY THE SOUTH SEA

南海亂石山作

The Sea of Chang swells to the very sky,
And a host of mountains rear up high from the earth.
They tell me this place is called Jumble-rock,
The charts and classics tell nothing of it.
Its sheer overhangs are all frightening,
Great or small, none of ordinary kind.
At once it will reach out to cloudy isles,
Then back up to link with the river of stars.
Suddenly jutting up as though in flight,
Then hanging over sharply on the point of falling.
Dawn's glow makes it blush purple and crimson,
And in moonlight it gleams blue and turquoise.
On the towering summits fog and rain gather;
Sequestered there, fairies and spirits hide.
Ten thousand yards up a crane's nest hangs,
A gibbon's arm dangles over a thousand-foot drop.
When I left home before, seasonal winds moved forth;
By the time I've reached here, the third month has come.
Observing this place, I sing my song,
For long I'll imagine the strangeness of its spirits.

漲海積楷天
羣山高業地
相傳稱亂石
圖典失其事
懸危忽可驚
大小都不類
乍將雲島極
還與星河次
上聳忽如飛
下臨仍欲墜
朝曒絶丹紫
夜魄炯青翠
穹崇霧雨蓄
幽隱靈仙閟
萬尋挂鶴巢
千丈垂猿臂
昔去景風涉
今來姑洗至
觀此得詠歌
長時想精異

As in the preceding poem, the tripartite form is strong here. Since the description of awesome landscapes played little role in court poetry, a poet may borrow from earlier poetry and fu to reorganize his piece: Sun Ch'o's 孫綽 fourth-century fu "Wandering on Mount T'ien-t'ai" 遊天台山賦, preserved in the Wen-hsüan, provided an excellent source for landscape poetry. In this fu Sun Ch Ch'o makes a point to tell the reader that the canonical geographical treatises do not describe T'ien-t'ai, giving his imagination free reign by permitting him to avoid the requisite list of traditional associations proper in writing about a given location. Through Tu Shen-yen's poem or perhaps directly from Sun Ch'o's fu, this convention returns to T'ang landscape poetry. Han Yü, for example, uses it in his long poem "South Mountains" (17790).

A large part of Shen Ch'üan-ch'i's and Sung Chih-wen's poetry comes from their periods of exile in the South. Their exile poems mark a clear turning point in their work to a bolder, more personal style. In contrast, Tu Shen-yen has relatively few exile poems, and these are a culmination of his earlier work rather than a change. The counterexample which Tu's exile poetry offers is helpful in showing that Shen and Sung were, in fact, being original and personal in their exile poems and not simply following a tradition of "exile poetry" (though such a tradition became firmly established later). Tu Shen-yen is decorous, descriptive, and firmly in control.

LODGING IN ANNAM 旅寓安南

In Chiao-chih the weather is strange,	交趾殊風候
The cold comes slowly, the warmth hurries back again.	寒遲暖復催
In mid-winter mountain fruits are ripe,	仲冬山果熟
In the first month wildflowers blossom.	正月野花開
Dusky fogs arise from the monsoons,	積雨生昏霧

Light frosts bring down peals of thunder. 輕霜下震雷
My homeland, over ten thousand miles away— 故鄉踰萬里
Thoughts of it twice what they once were. 客思倍從來

[03750]

The opening of this poem is an excellent example of an Early T'ang rhetorical exposition of a topic. We have seen a similar rhetorical order in Ch'en Shu-pao's "Watering My Horse by the Great Wall." This system, which might be called a "breakdown amplification," fits smoothly into the first two parts of the tripartite form. The poet gives an initial statement, then divides it into parts with ever greater specificity. The first line sets forth a general proposition, that the "weather is strange": the second line gives two specific examples. Each half of the second line, the slow coming of the cold and quick return of warm weather, is expanded to a full line in the second couplet, giving a more specific example. It is not clear in what season the "monsoon" belongs, but the third couplet may be an inversion of the antithesis, the early warmth and late cold; in any case it offers yet another example of the "strangeness" of the weather. The personal response to this strangeness is longing to return, an emotion quite natural whenever the poet is away from home, but have doubled by the alienness of this landscape. As we saw earlier in "My Feelings on a Spring Day in the Capital," "doubling" is a decorous intensification of emotion, easily calculable and contrasting with the "grief without limit" one finds so often in High T'ang poetry.

If anything sets Tu Shen-yen's exile poetry apart from his court poetry, it is a heightening of the tendency toward simplicity, already apparent in contrasting his work with those of other court poets. He retains much that is good in court poetry, the syntactic complexity and careful choice of words; on the other hand, he rids

his work of the excessive and ornamental periphrasis that was the base of court poetry.

LONGING TO RETURN ON A SPRING DAY

春日懷歸

The heart is wounded by my homeward gaze,
Spring's arrival is different from years past.
Mountains in rivers seem to mirror the gate of Wei,
The mulberries, the catalpa remind me of Ch'in's streams.
Flowers mingle with birds in the budding garden,
Winds join the mists over green plains.
Again I long for the land of joy and pleasure,
The houses and carriages of the Lo River Bridge.

心是傷歸望
春歸異往年
河山鑒魏闕
桑梓憶秦川
花雜芳園鳥
風和綠野煙
更懷歡賞地
車馬洛橋邊

[03751]

The "gates of Wei" refer to the capital, but it is unclear whether Tu is longing for Ch'ang-an (suggested by line four) or for Lo-yang, suggested in the last line. In the first case, it is his first exile; in the second case, his exile of 705. Although exile did not change Tu's poetry, it sobered it; the Early T'ang poet looked over the landscape for some element to fashion a witty metaphor, but in exile the landscape sends less cheerful messages:

ON CROSSING THE RIVER HSIANG

渡湘江

As the sun sinks amid groves and gardens I grieve for travels past,
But this spring the birds and flowers make the grief of the frontier.
Alone, I yearn for the capital as I hide out in the South,
I am not like that River Hsiang whose waters flow ever northward.

遲日園林悲昔遊
今春花鳥作邊愁
獨憐京國人南竄
不似湘江水北流

[037773]

The translation of the third line of this poem is a sad

compromise that destroys the beautifully ambiguous syntax of the original. With a strong caesura violation the line becomes, "Alone I pity that a man of the capital must hide out in the South." Another way to interpret the line is with zeugma, the verb lien 憐 accounting for both his "longing" for the capital and his "pity" for his own condition: "Alone I yearn for the capital, pity myself that I must hide out in the South."

SHEN CH'ÜAN-CH'I

Shen Ch'üan-ch'i (ca. 650-713), the second figure in our triad of late seventh- and early eighth-century court poets, passed the chin-shih in 675. Shen rose through a series of minor posts until, like Tu Shen-yen, he became a favorite of the infamous Chang Yi-chih in the first years of the eighth century. With the fall of the Chang brothers and the empress, Shen was banished to Huan-chou in Vietnam, even further south than Tu Shen-yen. In the general amnesty that soon followed, Shen returned to the capital to take the post of Diarist under Chung-tsung, serving also as Auxiliary Scholar in the Hsiu-wen kuan. Eventually he rose to the post of Grand Secretary in the Secretariat and later held a position in the bureaucracy of the heir apparent.

Shen Ch'üan-ch'i's name is traditionally associated with the perfection of the heptasyllabic regulated verse. Although Shen does have one of the few perfect heptasyllabic regulated verses datable before the eighth century, he probably did not "invent" the form, but was simply the most talented of its early practitioners. His "Banquet at Hsing-ch'ing Pool," which we have discussed at length in an earlier chapter, represents the court poem at its best. In this form at least, Shen is superior to his friend and rival Sung Chih-wen, to whom Shang-kuan Wan-erh gave the "brocade prize" for his pentasyllabic poem.

Shen's lone seventh-century heptasyllabic regulated verse is interesting in that its topic conforms to the notion of heptasyllabic verse as a popular form; later, in the first decades of the eighth century, heptasyllabic regulated verse becomes strongly associated with formal

court poetry with a few fine exceptions. The seventh-century example is a ku-yi, "old theme," concerning a woman whose husband is fighting on the frontier. The poem (05065) is addressed, appropriately, to Ch'iao Chih-chih, whose work so often uses a female persona.[36]

OLD THEME: TO THE REMINDER CH'IAO CHIH-CHIH

古意呈補闕喬知之

A young wife of the Lu household in her turmeric chamber,
盧家少婦鬱金堂

Sea seallows roost in pairs on her tortoiseshell inlaid beams.
海燕雙棲玳瑁梁

Late autumn when chill washing blocks speed the leaves of trees falling,
九月寒砧催木葉

Ten years of campaign duty—she remembers Liao-yang.
十年征戍憶遼陽

From north of White Wolf River the news is cut off;
白狼河北音書斷

Here south of the red phoenix walls, autumn nights are long.
丹鳳城南秋夜長

Who understands the grief she bears?—"alone, not seeing him";
誰謂含愁獨不見

Then she lets the bright moonlight shine on the "flowing yellow."
更教明月照流黃

Shen weaves together numerous yüeh-fu associations of frontier warfare and the deserted wife. The "Lu household" simply stands for a wealthy household; even there the pairs of swallows remind the solitary woman of the absence of her mate. The "red phoenix walls" refer to the palace. The phrase "alone, not seeing him" (tu pu chien 獨不見) is a yüeh-fu title and may refer specifically to a song she sings or hears. The enigmatic last line contains another echo of the yüeh-fu in the "flowing yellow," a kind of silk associated with women with absent husbands. Though it follows the rules of middle couplet parallelism and tonal anthithesis, this poem is much closer to yüeh-fu than it is to regulated verse; it is a mood piece, evoking the ambiance of the

deserted wife, rather than an attempt to describe a physical world and a personal response to it.

Sung Chih-wen and Shen Ch'üan-ch'i were the dominant figures in court poetry during the reign of Chung-tsung. Of the two, Sung had the more complicated intellect; he was a wit and a master of courtly rhetoric whose genius was less at ease within the rules. Shen had a richer imagination, greater stylistic control and powers of description, and was ultimately a better poet than Sung Chih-wen. In Shen's descriptive court poems much of the stilted periphrasis of earlier court poetry disappears, leaving something far closer to private nature poetry.[37]

RESPECTFULLY FOLLOWING THE RHYMES OF "ROYAL VISIT TO SPRING-VIEW PALACE ON A SPRING DAY": TO COMMAND

奉和春日幸望春宮應制

Fragrant meadows and green plains,
strewn with spring light,
芳郊綠野散春晴

Around tiered walkways and detached palaces
the mist and fog rise.
複道離宮煙霧生

A thousand branches of willow fronds—
on the point of fraying;
楊柳千條花欲綻

A hundred yards of grape vines,
their tendrils beginning to wind.
蒲萄百丈蔓初縈

The scent of the forest, aroma of wine
merge together as one;
林香酒氣元相入

Birds' warbling and singers' voices
each stand separate.
鳥囀歌聲各自成

Surely this season's beauty will draw us
from nightlong drunkenness,
定是風光牽宿醉

And with dawn we shall set forth again,
this time to K'ung-ming Pool.
來晨復得幸昆明

[05057]

During the reign of Hsüan-tsung much of the sensuality disappears from court poetry. The descriptive delicacy that often appears in the court poetry of Chung-tsung's reign contrasts sharply with the energy and emphasis on the imperial theme of the following poem (05059), written

in 712 when Hsüan-tsung assumed the throne.

DRAGON POOL

龍池篇

The leaping dragon of Dragon Pool—
the dragon has flown;
The Dragon-virtue foreknew Heaven,
and Heaven does not err.
This pool reveals the river of stars,
discerns the Yellow Course,
Its dragon heads to Heaven's gates,
enters the Tzu-wei.
Lodge and mansion, terrace and tower,
full of spirit and color,
Our Prince's ducks and wild geese
possess His radiance.
To requite Him the waters of all
the streams of the world
Come to dawn court at this very spot,
and none go off eastward.

龍池躍龍龍已飛
龍德先天天不違
池開天漢分黃道
龍向天門入紫微
邸第樓臺多氣色
君王鳧雁有光輝
爲報寰中百川水
來朝此地莫東歸

"Dragon Pool" is fraught with imperial symbolism: the dragon is the young Hsüan-tsung who has emerged from his growth phase and "taken flight," ascended to Heaven and the throne. As in Shen's poem on Hsing-ch'ing Pool, the pool's reflection allows the poet to confuse the terrestrial palaces and the world of heaven. The "Yellow Course" is thus that of sun and the emperor, who moves into the palace or the Tzu-wei constellation. The imperial effulgence and the aura of the sun illuminate the surrounding palaces and denizens of the pool alike. The last couplet plays on the traditional metaphor for assuming the throne as apotheosis: the streams flow into Hsüan-tsung's pool rather than following their accustomed paths to the sea; thus the streams show not only their respect for the emperor, they also defy the laws of change and impermanence, represented by the eastward flow of all waters.

Sun Ch'üan-ch'i's official career lacks a well-documented itinerary of provincial posts to faciliate the

dating of his poems. We know that Shen was in Szechwan, probably before 705. The opening of the following poem (04973) is reminiscent of the descriptive landscapes of Tu Shen-yen's first exile.

PASSING DRAGON-GATE IN SHU

過蜀龍門

This Dragon-Gate was not the one cut by Yü;
An uncanny wonder which must be Nature's work.
To the southwest it comes out of the Wu Gorges,
Not the same as ordinary mountains.
Long channels crisscross for five miles,
As it twists and turns, then thrusts into the sky,
Dipping torrents make hidden stones sparkle,
Crashing waters give rise to whirlwinds....

龍門非禹鑿
詭怪乃天功
西南出巴峽
不與衆山同
長竇亙五里
宛轉復歊空
伏湍照潛石
瀑水生輪風

Shen begins his poem by dissociating the Dragon-Gate of Szechwan from the Yellow River Dragon-Gate which was believed to have been cut by the mythical emperor Yü. This disavowal serves much the same function as the rejection of traditional geographical sources in Sun Ch'o and Tu Shen-yen: it emphasizes the strangeness of the place, the uncommon "wonders" which the poet will describe.

Even before his exile, Shen was a master of the less formal subgenres such as visiting poems. The following pentasyllabic regulated verse (05036), anthologized in the Southern Sung Poems in Three Genres (San-t'i shih 三體詩), was written while Shen was in Lo-yang.

VISITING SHAO-LIN TEMPLE

遊少林寺

Singing long I visit the precious land
And pace about, facing its trees of pearls.
Wind and frost of the past on Wild Goose Pagoda,
Its Dragon Pool too is deep in years.

長歌遊寶地
徙倚對珠林
雁塔風霜古
龍池歲月深

The skies of its purple gardens clear in evening,
And its emerald halls cast autumn shadows.
A homeward road through a night of mists and rose clouds,
The mountain cicadas chanting everywhere.

紺園澄夕霽
碧殿下秋陰
歸路煙霞晚
山蟬處處吟

Poems on visiting Buddhist temples had their own conventions and formed virtually an independent subgenre—indeed, the Wen-yüan ying-hua treats them under a single heading. Certain kinds of references to Buddhist lore, such as the "precious land" and the "trees of pearls" here, were expected. The use of such references varies from the abstruse (for example, 04230) to poems like the above, which is not much different than a banquet poem. The closure here is essentially a transformation of the "let's go home; it's evening" closing of the courtly banquet poem; however, this is achieved through an objective scene which evokes solitude and autumnal melancholy. The culmination of the poet's experience in the temple is one of clarity (line five) associated with enlightenment, but soon afterward the poet faces the growing darkness and lengthening shadows of evening, finally moving home into an isolating world of mists and clouds.

Many of the conventions of formal court poetry were taken over and transformed in informal occasional poetry and in personal poetry. The court poem was the poet's basic material. The poet-courtier constantly beheld heaven's manifestation here on earth in the persons of the emperor and his court; looking into a mirroring pool, Shen could conveniently confuse the reflected image of the skies and that of the setting of the banquet. Spending the night alone on his travels, Shen might experience the awe and wonder of his high mountain lodging: this feeling of transcendence becomes an intrusion of heaven into the world of earth, just as the "River of Light" flowed into the palaces of Lo-yang.

I wandered alone across a thousand and more miles,
Slept high, west of Seven-Twist Ridge.
The dawn moon looked down on my window, nearby,
And the river of heaven flowed low into my door...

獨遊千里外
高臥七盤西
曉月臨窗近
天河入戶低

[05039]

In the courtly banquet poem, the poet is fascinated by the point of contact or the fusion between human things and things of the natural world, how the forest's scent merges with the aroma of wine or how the songs of the birds are juxtaposed with those of the singing girls (05057). In the following poem (05035) Nature merges with a Buddhist temple rather than an aristocratic outing, forming a complex consolation for the poet in exile.

WHITE CRANE TEMPLE IN LO-CH'ENG

The sutra library opens onto the emerald sea,
A "wild goose" hall rises into blue clouds.
The surf's voices greet the dharma drums,
And rain-filled air soaks the holy incense.
Its trees join the darkness of mountains ahead,
Its creek receives the chill of a cascade's waters.
Let us not speak of banishment to a far land—
Purified, I have found the Lord of the Void.

樂城白鶴寺
碧海開龍藏
青雲起雁堂
潮聲迎法鼓
雨氣溼天香
樹接前山暗
溪承瀑水涼
無言謫居遠
清淨得空王

The courtier in Shen cannot resist having a "wild goose hall" actually "rise" into the clouds as though it were flying away. Later in T'ang poetry one finds similar temples that seem to take flight (with their "wings"), representing their aspiration toward transcendence (for example, 19761).

In addition to the personalization of courtly tropes, there is another aspect of Shen's poetry that points

strongly to the High T'ang: this is the range of his poetry. The thematic and stylistic range of most court poets was severely limited; poets like Wang Chi who reacted against the courtly style either did not or could not write court poetry. Even the great Ch'en Tzu-ang did not have mastery over a full range of contemporary styles. Shen Ch'üan-ch'i and Sung Chih-wen, like the great High T'ang poets, could be courtiers, bucolic poets, song writers, or fu-ku moralists at will. The dissociation of literary style from life style was an important factor in a poet's ability to gain mastery over conventional styles, most of which involved a distinct role or persona. As they gained distance from their poetic personae, they were able to shape them for their personal needs. Here I am not suggesting that poets were not sincerely engaged in the poetic persona they chose, but simply that they had more mobility between them. Like other poets of his day, Shen firmly mastered the most decorous and formal style of court poetry (for example, 05081 or 05082), but he also could write poems with some of the playfulness of a Wang Chi.

FISHING POLE

The sun gathers in the red mists at dawn,
And I dangle my line here by the dark green stream.
The man seems to be sitting in heaven,
While the fish seem hung in a mirror.
Now and then they leap up to avoid the oars,
They're suspicious of the hook—I always tug it too soon.
The torrent bank was steep, my carriage hard to control,
Then placid pools which try to make my boat linger on.
In vain, sir, are you fond of fishing for wealth,

釣竿篇

朝日斂紅煙
垂竿向綠川
人疑天上坐
魚似鏡中懸
避檝時驚遠
猜鉤每誤牽
湍危不理轡
潭靜欲留船
釣玉君徒尚

I find no virtue in the quest for gold.
Just watch now how the fragrant bait sinks—
They take it greedily, but can they miss the trap?

徵金我未賢
爲看芳餌下
貪得會無筌

[05078]

Set in this leisurely, gently humorous personal narrative, even Shen Ch'üan-ch'i's favorite witty mirror illusion in line three does not seem out of place. The prefect parallelism of the second, third, and fourth couplets does not fragment the poem into disparate scenes, but rather the poem unfolds in a smooth linear progression. The closing moral which the poet draws from his fishing scene is more playful than grimly Confucian. Descriptive couplets like the third and fourth are not conventions but are based on observation of nature.

At other times Shen can put on the robes of the fu-ku poet and write with the moral indignation of the Kan-yü.

WRONGFULLY IMPRISONED [first of two]

I love that child of the Tseng household
Whose mother threw down her shuttle when he was doubted.
I love the Chi clan's Duke of Chou
Who didn't lack a poem on the owl.
The subject expends his loyalty, the son, his filial love,
Yet ruler and parent are deluded by falsehood.
A tissue of lies splits flesh and blood—
Holding in my sorrow, I am stirred to these verses.

拘繫二首之一
吾憐曾家子
昔有投杼疑
吾憐姬公旦
非無鴟鴞詩
臣子竭忠孝
君親惑讒欺
驂旻離骨肉
含愁興此辭

[04980]

Although Shen uses lien 憐 rather than ai 愛("love"), in the opening of this poem, we hear clearly an echo of the eleventh Kan-yü. The first couplet refers to a story about Confucius's disciple Tseng Shen: another man by the same name had committed a murder, and the authorities

mistakenly went to tell Tseng Shen's mother; at first she refused to listen, then threw down her shuttle and fled the house, unwilling to hear lies about her son. When the Duke of Chou's brothers were executed for plotting rebellion against King Ch'eng of Chou, suspicion fell on the Duke of Chou; in response he wrote a poem entitled "Owl" protesting his innocence and loyalty—this is the traditional topic allegorical interpretation of Shih 155.

In his quatrains Shen can display the "closed" ending of earlier court poetry (for example, 05111) and put witty closure to personal ends.

COLD FOOD FESTIVAL

寒食

Everywhere under the sky flames are extinguished,
All around the earth smoke is hidden.
So I know not then from whence this fire
Comes to set a wanderer's heart ablaze.[38]

普天皆滅焰
匝地盡藏煙
不知何處火
來就客心然

[05106]

The fireless festival should mean joy and companionship; to the wanderer it only emphasizes his isolation. Not only is his "burning" a metaphor for his misery, the disparity between this state and that of the rest of the world parallels his external condition. But Shen can also use the more modern "open" closure, a suggestive descriptive ending.

MOUNT MANG

邙山

On North Mang Mountain the tombs and graves are ranged,
For all times, a thousand autumns facing Lo-yang.
When the sun goes down songs and bells ring out in the walls,
But on the mountain hear only the sound of wind in the pines.

北邙山上列墳塋
萬古千秋對洛城
城中日夕歌鐘起
山上唯聞松柏聲

[05115]

North Mang was the traditional burial spot in Lo-yang. The poet leaves it to the reader to define the relation between the last two lines, the sounds of revelry in the city and the chill wind over the tombs. A similar juxtaposition was employed in many of the capital poems, but the brevity here gives quite a different effect: the capital poems must resolve the ambiguity which this poem, with its undefined juxtaposition, allows to remain—one may read it as a comment on the foolishness of human life in face of the inevitability of death or as carpe diem (in the later case, we remove "but" from line four).

In his yüeh-fu Shen Ch'üan-ch'i was at his most conservative; although many are particularly fine examples of late seventh-century yüeh-fu, their style is indistinguishable from that of poets like Yang Chiung or Sung Chih-wen. In fact, a number of Shen's best yüeh-fu are also attributed to Sung Chih-wen. If anything distinguishes them from the yüeh-fu of the sixth and early seventh centuries, it is a unity of argument replacing the older unity of rhetorical amplification, which we saw earlier in Ch'en Shu-pao's yüeh-fu and in Tu Shen-yen's exile poem. In the older form the poet generates a series of independent, descriptive scenes out of an opening line or couplet; in the newer form each line is a precondition for what follows.

LUNG-T'OU'S WATERS

隴頭水

On Lung Mountain the leaves flutter and fall,
As the geese of Lung Mountain cross the cold sky.
In grief he sees the waters of late autumn
Split into streams running through two lands:
One flows west into barbarian commanderies,
The other, down east to the rivers of Ch'in.
The campaigner turns his head again and again,
His heart full of helpless sorrow.

隴山飛落葉
隴雁度寒天
悠見三秋水
分為兩地泉
西流入羌郡
東下向秦川
征客重回首
肝腸空自憐

[05013]

In the following poem (05014) the course of the moon on one night strangely parallels a Chinese military victory.

MOON OVER THE PASSES

關山月

A Chinese moon rises over the Sea of Liao,
Faintly growing a half radiance emerges.
At dusk it is over Black Rabbit Commandery,
By midnight above the Po-teng Siege.
Then its halo sinks far behind western passes,
Frost and sleet bear the faintest of its beams.
When the general hears the dawn bugle blow,
The battle steeds are on the point of returning southward.

漠月生遼海
朧朧出半暉
合昏玄菟郡
中夜白登圍
暈落關山迥
光含霜霰微
將軍聽曉角
戰馬欲南歸

The tranquility of the moon's silent passage over the violent battlegrounds of the North creates a ghostly mood. The moon is a "Chinese moon" because it is the same moon seen in China, observed both by the frontier soldier and his wife back in her chambers at home.

UNCLASSIFIED POEM [last of three]

雜詩三首之三

I've heard tell that at the Yellow Dragon garrisons
War has not stopped for several years now.
Alas, that the same moon over the lady's chamber
Hangs ever over the camps of the House of Han.
The young wife's thoughts this spring,
Her husband's emotions last night.
Who can take those banners and drums
And once and for all take Dragon City?

聞道黃龍戍
頻年不解兵
可憐閨裏月
長在漢家營
少婦今春意
良人昨夜情
誰能將旗鼓
一為取龍城

[05024]

The older, more fragmented structure did survive and often proved a better medium for descriptive couplets. In such

poems a unity of mood rather than rational argument was developing.

GOING OUT THE PASSES

出塞

Ten years through the Great Desert,
Ten thousand miles from Ch'ang-p'ing.
A cold sun grows over halberds and swords,
Dark clouds brush the pennons and banners.
Hungry crows scream over the ancient forts,
Weary horses yearn for the deserted walls.
Bitter suffering, north of the Kao-lan garrison,
Where Tartar frosts have crushed the troops of Han.

十年通大漢
萬里出長平
寒日生戈劍
陰雲拂旆旌
飢烏啼舊壘
疲馬戀空城
辛苦皋蘭北
胡霜損漢兵

[05020]

There are difficulties in dating Shen Ch'üan-ch'i's poems written in the capital; it is often impossible to tell whether a poem was written before his 705 exile or after his return. However, as is the case with Sung Chih-wen, the style of Shen's exile poems is radically different from his capital style. After Shen and Sung returned to court, they fell easily back into graceful court poetry, but the poems written on their exiles are very much in the energetic, personal High T'ang style. On his way to exile in Huan-chou, Shen wrote the following poem (04972), impressive of its kind but little different than the poem quoted earlier from his journey to Scechwan.

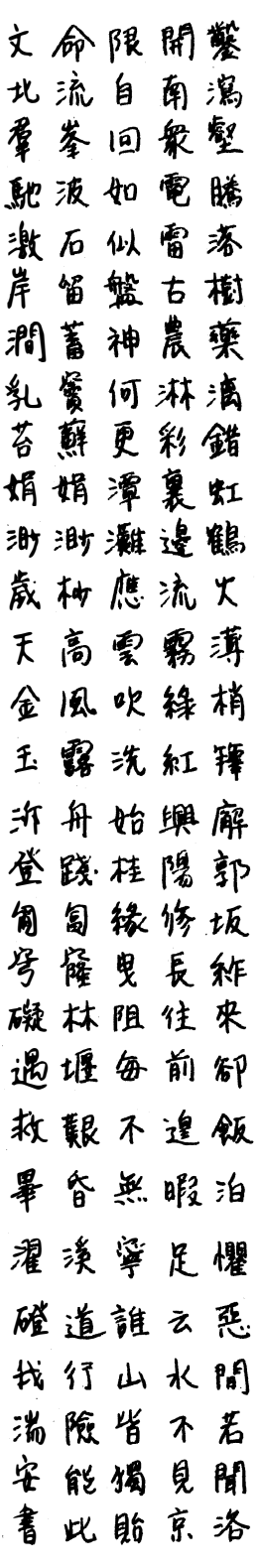
UPSTREAM FROM CH'ANG-LO COMMANDERY TO WHITESTONE PEAK, THEN DOWN TO LIN-CHOU

自昌樂郡泝流至白石嶺下行入郴州

This mountain is a border between barbarian and Chinese,
Nature's sheer barrier stretching across vast space.
The Grand Historian failed to climb and investigate,

茲山界夷夏
天險橫寥廓
太史漏登探

Here King Yü was halted when he opened
our Chinese land.
A northward current drains up from the south
Through a crowd of valleys winding around
many peaks.
Rushing waves leap like lightning,
Strike against stone like claps of thunder.
On its slopes trees linger from the age
of Chaos,
Its torrents swell with Shen-nung's herbs,
Here stalactite caves drip steadily,
And moss and lichens swirl bright colors
The graceful curves of a rainbow in a pool,
The vague forms of cranes beside rapids.
Toward the end of the year when the Fire
Star sinks,
The skies are high, the clouds and mist
look frail,
Metallic west winds blow the green treetops,
Jade drops of dew wash over red sheaths of
bamboo.
Our boat moves upstream to Shih-hsing yamen,
Then an overland climb to Kuei-yang's walls
Grapevines trail along the long slopes,
Dome melons dangle long skeins.
Forests in our path obstruct all travel,
We meet embankments, have to advance and
go back.
Escaping such difficulties, we've no chance
to eat;
Until it's entirely dark there's no time to
moor.
I'm not at all afraid to bathe my feet in
these creeks,
Nor could anyone say I hate mountain paths,
But walking among these rivers and mountains,
The steepness and swirling waters are unlike
any others.
How can I keep these experiences to myself?—
I write this and send it to the capital.



A few references require explanation: Shen-nung was a mythical emperor of antiquity whose name is associated with herb lore. The Fire Star sinks in the seventh month, indicating the beginning of autumn. "Bathing one's feet" suggests reclusion, a phrase derived from the song of the fisherman in "The Fisherman," quoted earlier.

The poem above should sound familiar; we have seen very similar writing in Wang Po's "Mud Gulch" and Tu Shen-yen's "Written at Jumble-rock Mountain." As in the latter poem, Shen disavows traditional geographical lore in line three and describes a fantastic landscape of bright colors, swirling waters, and overhanging cliffs. As in Wang Po's poem and Tu Shen-yen's "Crossing Stonegate Mountain," Shen concludes by saying that this landscape is so difficult that it denies the enjoyment one finds in simpler landscapes. The last line, of the "and-so-I-write-this-poem" variety, is particularly unsatisfying and suggests that the poet simply could not think of anything else to say.

"Upstream from Ch'ang-lo Commandery" was written on Shen's way into exile; the following poem (04975) was written on his return: its energy, imagination, and unity set it clearly apart from the earlier poem and place it in the High T'ang.

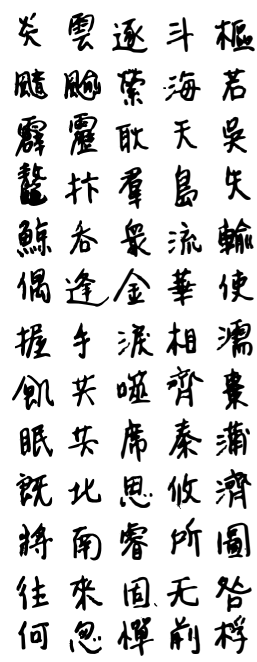
MOORING BY NIGHT AT YÜEH-CHOU: MEETING AN ENVOY FROM THE NORTH

夜泊越州逢北使

The universe sends down its thunder and its rain;
Once banished, I return to the capital.
Again I busy myself with winds and tides,
Though the month of the year warns against turning the prow.
My appearance has grown old out there in the wilds,
My thoughts and fancies, turned foolish in the outlands.
As I moor and rest on this very night,

天地降雷雨
放逐還國都
重以風潮事
年月戒回艫
容顏荒外老
心想域中愚
艤泊在茲夜

Blazing clouds pursue the Dipper's pivot,
A cyclone swirls around the Sea God,
Thunder crackles about T'ien-wu,
The Earth-Turtle claps, a crowd of isles are lost,
A leviathan swallows the concourse of many rivers.
By chance I have met an envoy from the palace,
We join hands, soak each other with our tears.
In our hunger we gnaw the dates of Ch'i,
Sleeping, share the rushes of Ch'in.
I, going north, brood on being saved;
You, sent south—Imperial wisdom planned it.
One going, one coming—let's have no reproaches—
Why should we shrink from the journeys ahead?



The opening theme of the rainstorm combines two contradictory associations, one for each of the travellers: on the one hand, there is the "rain" of imperial favor; on the other, the idea of the storm as adversity. Shen then continues to build a monstrous vision of the storm, populated by mythical denizens of the oceans and the Turtle that carries the earth. Finally, Shen calms the poem with his message, the bonds among men and the equanimity with which they should face their various fortunes. Of course, it is much easier for Shen to speak of equanimity on his return to the capital and it is perhaps not out of place to detect a note of perverse pleasure in the fact that someone else is going south now. The structure of this poem is fundamentally tripartite, like "Upstream from Ch'ang-lo Commandery," but the "scene" to which the poet responds is itself made up of several independent situations.

One of Shen Ch'üan-ch'i's most famous poems (05066), a heptasyllabic regulated verse, was probably written in 705 as Shen and Tu Shen-yen were going into exile by different routes.

FROM AFAR FOLLOWING THE RHYMES OF ASSISTANT TU'S "CROSSING THE SOUTHERN PEAKS"

遙同杜員外審言過嶺

Heaven is long, Earth is vast:
the Peaks divide them;

天長地闊嶺頭分

Leaving both family and state,
you see the white clouds.

去國離家見白雲

What use to speak of the pang the heart
feels for the bank of the Lo?

洛浦肝腸無用說

And I can't bear to hear of Ch'ung Mountain,
of its plague and pestilence.

崇山瘴癘不堪聞

Floating on the Chang Sea to the south,
where is the man?

南浮漲海人何處

Gazing north Heng-yang—
how often the flocks of geese?

北望衡陽雁幾羣

Spring wind in both places,
ten thousand miles between,

兩地春風萬餘里

When again shall we give greetings
to our glorious Lord?

何時重謁聖明君

Heng-yang was reputedly the furthest point south in the yearly migration of the wild geese. The calm and control of this poem is unusual for Shen's exile poetry. As we trace Shen's journey south in the year 705, we can see a growing bitterness and irony in his poetry. The poetic conventions first come under attack. In the following poem's closing, Shen refuses all the appropriate responses—weeping, refusal to weep, or consolation in the landscape.

SETTING OUT EARLY FROM CH'ANG-P'ING ISLE

早發昌平島

I loose the mooring after the spring wind
starts up,

解纜春風後

Make the oars sing before the dawn's high
waters.

鳴榔晓漲前

Then the sun's raven comes out from the
oceanside trees,

陽烏出海樹

And geese in the clouds descend in the
river mist,

雲雁下江煙

Swelling vapors dash against long isles,

積氣衝長島

Rippling light overflows the great stream.

浮光溢大川

I cannot long for the capital's gates—
All alone, the heart's pleasures are an icy chill.

不能懷魏闕
心賞獨泠然

[05038]

Shen's descriptive genius in the first six lines makes the closing all the harsher. The harshness intensifies and irony, uncommon in Chinese poetry, begins to appear, as in line three of the following poem (05097).

ENTERING HELLGATE PASS

入鬼門關

I've always heard of the road to the rivers of plague,
Now I myself have come to Hellgate Pass.
In this land no man ever grows old,
How many of the exiles here ever return?
Ever since I have left the capital,
My hair is falling, my face shrivelling.
By evening I lodge among poisonous insects,
By dawn I walk over mountain roads.
My horse stands poised over thousand-foot ravines,
My boat is menaced by ten thousand bends.
If you would ask me where my exile is—
In the southwest, where all are barbarians.

昔傳瘴江路
今至鬼門關
土地無人老
流移幾客還
自從別京洛
頹鬢與衰顏
夕宿含沙裏
晨行阻路間
馬危千仞谷
舟險萬重灣
問我投何地
西南盡百蠻

With no little black humor, in line three Shen plays on the convention of the landscape as a world of immortals, where the recluse "never grows old" by avoiding the contention of public life. In the South also "no man ever grows old," but for different reasons. The plainness of Shen's diction in this poem is effective; courtly ornament would be out of place. The court poet could compact lines like the fifth one here into one or two characters, but the expanded forms, rich in particles, are appropriate for poetry of self-expression—the "old style."

By the time Shen reached Huan-chou, he was in complete

despair, certain that his place of exile had been chosen with singular malice.

FIRST REACHING HUAN-CHOU 初達驩州

Banished travellers—eighteen of us— 流子一十八
But the decree for me was unlike the others. 命予偏不偶
I was exiled the furthest—to the world's very end— 配遠天遂窮
And took longest to arrive, the last of them all. 到遲日最後
By water I went through the Tan-erh's lands, 水行儋耳國
Then overland through jungles of tatooed savages. 陸行雕題藪
My soul wandered to the very gate of the ghosts, 魂魂遊鬼門
And my skeleton will be left in Leviathan's mouth. 骸骨遺鯨口
Bearing with my hunger I lie down by night, 夜則忍飢臥
At dawn move on swiftly, carrying sickness. 朝則抱病走
I scratch out my hair in this southern wilderness, 搔首向南荒
Brush away tears gazing at the northern Dipper. 拭淚看北斗
Oh, what year will reprieve arrive, 何年赦書來
That I may once again drink the wine of Lo-yang? 重飲洛陽酒

[04978]

The "gate of the ghosts" is translated above as Hellgate, the entrance to the underworld that lent its name to a pass in the southwest.

The harshest charge that can be levelled against the court poets is that their verse is bloodless. This was no season for graciousness, and in Huan-chou Shen began to use the regulated verse as it had not been used before.

GAZING BY NIGHT IN THE SOUTH PAVILION OF HUAN-CHOU 驩州南亭夜望

Last night as I gazed from the South Pavilion, 昨夜南亭望

I dreamed clearly I was in Lo-yang. 分明夢洛中
Who could claim I had ever left home? 豈家誰道別
I was together at the table with my children. 兒女宴嘗同
I awoke suddenly, still believing it real, 忽覺猶言是
Then after deep thought, understood its emptiness. 沈思始悟空
How many inches of my writhing innards survive? 肝腸餘幾寸
I brush away tears sitting in the spring wind. 拭淚坐春風
[05043]

Parallelism is violated in the second couplet, while in the third it is purely a formal device underlying a hypotactic sentence. Still, the response of tears returns, a traditional echo in an untraditional poem.

Shen vented his bitterness in Huan-chou with a vigor completely unlike his poetry of the capital.

By life and death, split from flesh and blood, 死生離骨肉
By glory and shame, rived from former companions. 榮辱間朋遊
Cast off, my body alone survives, 棄置一身在
All the troubles of my former life are finished. 平生萬事休

"Moving from the Official Residence of Huan-chou to a Creek Pavilion in the Mountains: to Governor Su" [05099]

My soul grows weary of the roads of mountain cranes, 魂疲山鶴路
My heart is drunk from the springs where the hawks swoop. 心醉跕鳶溪
....
Who tells us the "blazing land" is broad?— 炎方誰謂廣
Here Earth ends and one feels that Heaven is low. 地盡覺天低

"A Reprieve Comes but I May Not Return: written on a rock over the river" [05100]

Phrases such as the "spring where the hawks swoop" were probably local place names, but they take on a violent

significance for the poet in exile. But even in the power of these lines, Shen is working through a particular syntactic form which we have seen earlier in a milder form in Tu Shen-yen's "Crossing Stonegate Mountain":

Mud packs the paths where serpents dart, 泥壅乔蛇徑
Clouds bury the brush where wild beasts crouch. 雲埋伏獸叢

Shen achieves a poetic identity, but he achieves it through a poetic tradition he had received from others. The cosmology which describes the heavens as a vast dome becomes vividly real as Shen imagines the sky over Huan-chou to be unnaturally low.

It was natural for a poet exiled to the South to turn to the models of Ch'ü Yuan and Chia Yi. Shen Ch'üan-ch'i echoes Chia Yi's "The Owl," in which the Han poet questioned an owl about the vicissitudes of fate. Shen, instead, is himself questioned by an ogre, and the poet responds with his life's story.

ANSWERING THE OGRE: WRITTEN FOR SOMEONE AT HOME 答魑魅代書寄家人

An ogre came to ask after me, 魑魅來相問
How I came to stray from the Royal Domain; 君何失帝鄉
How, wizened with years, I left the palace gates, 龍鐘離北闕
And tottering, stumbling, keep to this southern wilderness; 蹭蹬守南荒
How I came to pity my white hair in the mirror, 覽鏡憐雙鬢
To regret these countless streams of tears that soak my robes; 沾衣惜萬行
Why I left my home, cradling my sorrows, 抱愁那去國
On the point of old age, donning the robes of government. 將老更垂裳
My shadow answered, "In former years I 影答余他歲
Enjoyed special favor in service in Lo-yang..." 恩私宦洛陽

In the remainder of this very long poem, Shen reviews his past experiences, his exile, and his present state of mind with elegant diction.

Among the poems of Sung Chih-wen and Shen Ch'üan-ch'i written during the 705 exile, there was a group which began a new subgenre, the elegiac description of the poet's youth and better times. The tradition of the personal narrative plays some role in this subgenre, but the strongest influence is the tradition of the capital poem. Rather than a Han past which points to the universal processes of glory and decline, these poems elegiacally celebrate a more recent past, embellished by the vagaries of memory in adversity. Tu Fu, Li Po, and many other High T'ang poets wrote such poems after the An Lu-shan rebellion.

ON THE THIRD DAY OF THE THIRD MONTH: SITTING ALONE IN HUAN-CHOU REMEMBERING PAST TRAVELS

三州思憶舊遊

In the two capitals, much to see and do in season,
兩京多節物

The Third Day is the best for excursions.
三日最逍遊

The wind slowly rolls up under a lovely sun,
麗日風徐卷

The rain gradually retires from the petal-strewn dust.
香塵雨暫收

Red peach blossoms begin to fall to earth,
紅桃初下地

Green willows half cover the canals.
綠柳半垂溝

Then servant boys wear full spring livery,
童子成春服

And palace ladies leave off their archery guards.
宮人罷射韝

The Lustration Hall leads through to the Han Park,
禊堂通漢苑

Purification mats circle the halls of Ch'in.
解席繞秦樓

Here rhetoricians like Shu Hsi, their discussions subtle,
東皙言談妙

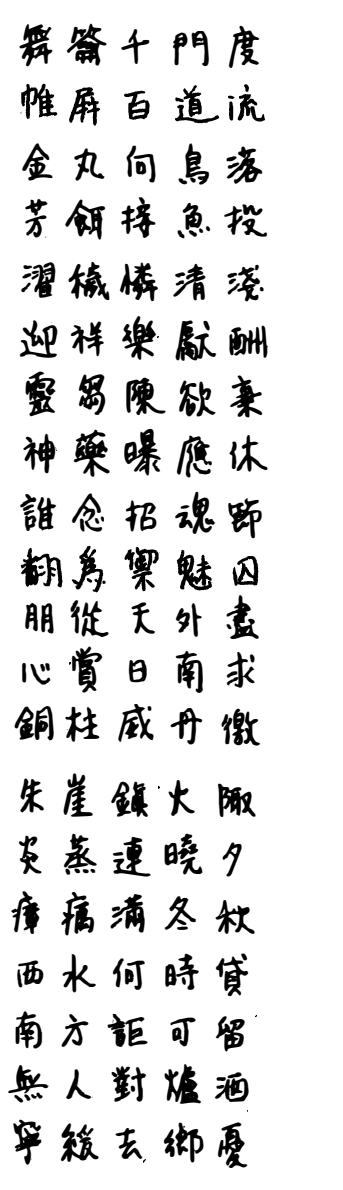
And writers like Chang Hua, their histories vigorous.
張華史漢遒

Not a pavilion without a horse tied to it,
無亭不駐馬

Not a bank without some boat crossing over.
何浦不橫舟

Sounds of dance-flutes cross the thousand gates of the palace
On the screens and hangings painted watercourses flow.
A golden shot arcs toward a bird,
The sweet bait is cast to meet its fish.
The clear and shallow is loved for bathing impurities,
Meeting good fortune, they rejoice in offerings and toasts.
Sacred straw strewn to be cast away,
The drying of the holy herbs must be finished.
Who would have thought in this season for summoning souls,
I would be a prisoner fending off ogres instead?
My friends are gone, beyond the horizon;
My heart's pleasure must be found south of the sun.
The Bronze Pillar stands awesome over the Red Frontiers,
Where crimson slopes stand guard over fiery nooks.
Blazing vapors steam from dawn to evening,
The fogs of pestilence fill winter and autumn.
When shall I be pardoned from over the western waters?
How can I linger here in the southland?
And with no one to face me over the wine brazier,
How can I ease the melancholy of leaving home?

[05098]



We need not go into the extensive references made to the purification ceremonies of the Third Day festival, but obviously the ceremony has special meaning to Shen, dwelling in the fetid south and longing for his crimes to be "bathed away." Although the poem begins by "remembering past travels," it modulates into speculation on what is being done that very day in the capital (made

explicit in line twenty-two), then contrasting their joy with his own misery. The capital poem juxtaposition of glory and decline is here transposed to a spatial relationship, being in the capital set against being at the edge of the world.

When Shen's reprieve came at last (he was first transferred to a post further north before being recalled to the capital), his joy was no less exuberant than his misery at exile had been intense.

REJOICING AT A REPRIEVE

Last year, a wanderer lodging in the wilderness;
This spring, pardon granted, I return.
When the orders came through, dark valleys were warmed,
The bowl was lifted, the bright sun radiant.
A joyous spirit met a wronged spirit,
An official's green robes repaid the commoner's whites,
So let me join the leaves of Ho-p'u
And together we'll fly north to Lo-yang.

[05050]

喜赦

去歲投荒客歸暖輝
今春肆眚回太陽氣
律通幽谷舉盃迎冤白
喜氣青衣報浦鴻
還俱何將合洛城

Having a bowl over one's head was a cliché metaphor for imperial disfavor, since it stopped one from seeing "heaven" and the "bright sunlight" of imperial favor.

During his stay in Huan-chou, Shen Ch'üan-ch'i paid a visit to the nearby Shao-lung Temple. The equanimity which Shen shows toward his fate in this poem is quite different than the intensity of his other exile poems. The poem is a consolation and shows that exile had done more for Shen's work than simply helping him break free of conventional poetic restraints. The poem tries to make a unified statement, integrating landscape and emotion in a way that court poetry never could.

SHAO-LUNG TEMPLE 紹隆寺

Preface: Shao-lung is the most wondrous temple of the far south and is located some twenty-five miles from Huan-chou. About to journey north, I spent the entire day visiting it, burning incense according to custom, and wrote this poem as I went back on the boat.

Long have I followed Sakyamuni—
Nothing greater than to be a student of Nirvana—
I sought the Way for thirty years,
Found the Way on the world's southern edge.
Nothing is better than going to some strange place—
Where a clamor rises, turning to Truth is hard.
Thus being banished turned out a good Cause,
Worldly cares never bother me here.
Precincts of incense circle the isles to the North,
Pagodas like flowers shade the south peaks.
Sheer and high, the stones beneath the stairs,
As mountain torrents sweep past the windows.
When clouds cover it over, look at the tree-tops rising tall;
When the sky is empty, see the encircling vines.
Dwelling amid crudeness, strive to sit in meditation;
Living in poverty, store merit by circumambulation.
And through this carnal body of passions
Let me form awhile the outlook of "Nonlife."
In the end I will have investigated all the classes of things,
And fully realized the peace of those who find stillness.

吾從釋迦久
無上師涅槃
探道三十載
得道天南端
非勝適殊方
起誼歸理難
放棄乃良緣
世慮不曾干
眷界縈北渚
花龕隱南巒
危昂階下石
演漾窗中瀾
雲蓋看木秀
天空見藤盤
處俗勤寧坐
居貪業行壇
試將有漏軀
聊作無生觀
了然究諸品
獨覺靜者安

23

SUNG CHIH-WEN

The political career of Sung Chih-wen was much like that of Shen Ch'üan-ch'i: Sung also passed the chin-shih examination in 675 and later achieved prominence as a favorite of the Chang brothers. In 705 Sung was banished to Shuang-chou in Kwangtung Province. After the general amnesty he held several good posts, including Auxiliary Scholar in the Hsiu-wen kuan. Sometime after Jui-tsung took the throne, in 710, Sung was again banished, first to Yüeh-chou in Chekiang, then further south to Ch'in-chou in Kwangtung. In the year 712, Sung Chih-wen was kindly granted permission to commit suicide by the emperor. Though eighth- and ninth-century poets sometimes refer to him with fondness, Sung Chih-wen's reputation has been very low among historians because of his association with the Changs.

Although Sung Chih-wen's reputation as a poet exceeds that of Shen Ch'üan-ch'i, his work is perhaps less interesting than that of Shen. Along with Shen, Sung Chih-wen is credited with the perfection of the rules of regulated verse, but his treatment of the standard themes is somewhat more conservative and his exile poems are less violently intense. His most original poems are his heptasyllabic songs, which we have treated earlier, and his "Ch'u Songs," which seem to have been popular in his own day. Sung's "Ch'u Songs" are distinguishable from heptasyllabic verse only by the exclamatory particle hsi 兮 in the fourth position in the line and certain thematic conventions. The most famous of Sung's "Ch'u Songs" was his "Song of Going Down the Mountain" (03227), which was widely imitated.

I go down Sung Mountain,
    full of brooding,
Take a Fair One by the hand,
    pace slowly, slowly.
The bright moon among the pines
    will ever be like this,
But when you go off wandering again
    when shall you return?

下嵩山兮
多所思
儻佳人兮
步遲遲
松間明月
長如此
君再遊兮
復何時

Notice that Sung slips easily into a standard heptasyllabic line in the third line of this short poem. The "Ch'u Song" was associated with an emotional effusiveness that might be called "romantic." We can sense some of the changes in literary taste in the first decade of the eighth century in the very fact that Sung Chih-wen uses the Ch'u meter and that his Ch'u songs were imitated. Another such poem (03228) was dedicated to the Taoist Ssu-ma Ch'eng-chen, who left the court of Jui-tsung in 710:

SONG OF A WINTER NIGHT

There is ice on the river,
    there is snow on the mountains,
Cracks plastered in northside doors,
    the travellers are gone.
I sit alone in the mountains,
    facing the moon in the pines,
I think on the Fair One,
    waxings and wanings frequent.
The bright moonlight sparkles
    in the cold pools,
Green pines secluded and dark,
    the strong winds moan.
This feeling I have shall never be told
    to an ordinary man.
To love and not to see
    is a sorrow without end.

贈司馬承禎
冬宵引
河有冰兮
山有雪
北户墐兮
行人絕
獨坐山中兮
對松月
懷美人兮
屢圓缺
明月的的
凝潭中
青松幽幽
吟勁風
此情不向
俗人說
愛而不見
恨無窮

Ssu-ma Ch'eng-chen's reply (46721) survives.

ANSWERING SUNG CHIH-WEN

答宋之問

The season approaches its close,
    spring has almost returned,
The mountain forests are silent,
    I think on the Secluded one there.
I climb strange peaks,
    gaze on the white clouds,
I brood disconsolate,
    their forms are about to scatter,
White clouds going on and on,
    off and never returning,
Cold winds howl,
    blowing the sun to setting.
Not seeing that person,
    with whom shall I speak?
I go back, sit, and strum my lute,
    thoughts growing ever further.

時既暮兮
節欲春
山林寂兮
懷幽人
登奇峯兮
望白雲
悵緬邈兮
象欲紛
白雲悠悠
去不返
寒風颼颼
吹日晚
不見其人
誰與言
歸坐彈琴
思逾遠

The use of the "Ch'u Song" genre, popular during the Han dynasty, parallels Ch'en Tzu-ang's resurrection of the poetic style of the third century. The genre's stylized but intense language of love-longing answered the need felt for a poetry of direct emotion. Sung's formal parting quatrain (03359) to Ssu-ma Ch'eng-chen on his departure from the capital in 710 makes a nice contrast with the poems above.

SENDING OFF THE TAOIST SSU-MA ON HIS JOURNEY TO T'IEN-T'AI

送司馬道士遊天台

Feathered Wanderer and mouth organ songs
  here must stray apart,
Here and there above parting mats
  white clouds fly.
Beneath the palace gates of P'eng-lai,
  eternal remembrance,

羽客笙歌此地遠
離筵數處白雲飛
蓬萊闕下長相憶

To a mountaintop of wu-t'ung and cypress
you go off, not to return. 桐柏山頭去不歸

This is an example of the court poet's art: Ssu-ma Ch'eng-chen is to be complimented as a Taoist immortal and is therefore named by the traditional kenning "Feathered Wanderer."

Ssu-ma Ch'eng-chen is not simply going to "leave" the parting banquet; rather he will go "astray" of the mouth organ music being played there. Such an elaborate phrasing of a simple situation is characteristic of court poetry. The parting itself is referred to by the conventional synecdoche "parting mats," and the capital is replaced by the palace, itself referred to conventionally as "P'eng-lai," a Han palace and the island where the immortals dwell. Although Sung Chih-wen and Shen Ch'üan-ch'i were both exploring new modes of poetic expression, neither poet rejected the older, more formal style when the occasion demanded.

Sung Chih-wen's innovations were not only in the revival of old forms like the "Ch'u Song." He also shows interest in setting up complex psychological situations, an interest which was to become characteristic of some of the best High T'ang poetry. The following poem (03348), if genuine, was written on Sung's return to the capital from his first exile; in its style and its concerns it is indistinguishable from poetry written in mid-eighth century.

CROSSING THE HAN RIVER 渡漢江

Beyond the Southern Peaks,
news of home was cut off, 嶺外音書斷

There I passed through winter
and forged again through spring. 經冬復歷春

Now nearing my home my heart
is struck with dread, 近鄉情更怯

And I dare not ask news
of men coming from there. 不敢問來人

This poem antedates the preceding quatrain by some four or five years; the new style which appears in Sung's exile poem was largely a function of the situation rather than any permanent change to a new kind of poetry. The subtle psychological vignette was common in quatrains on palace ladies and lonely women; here the psychological acuity is transferred to personal poetry. Some of the most famous quatrains of the eighth and ninth centuries were just such psychological vignettes. Whatever psychological acumen there is in Sung's observation that he no longer dares to ask what he had previously yearned to know, there is still a certain "cleverness" to the idea: like courtly wit, it is based on an inversion of expectations—instead of eagerly asking, he will not ask. In the hands of the best High T'ang poets, the wit of the Early T'ang quatrain is put to serious purposes. The Early T'ang poet was always seeking the anomalies or "wonders" of the world; the High T'ang poets sought significant anomalies which revealed something about the human condition. A few decades after Sung Chih-wen's poem above, Ho Chih-chang 賀知章 writes:

EXTEMPORE: RETURNING HOME [first of two] 回鄉偶書 二首之一

I left my home when I was a youth,
now aged I return,
My local dialect can't be changed,
but my hair has turned white.
The little children see me,
don't recognize me,
And laughingly ask—"Stranger,
where do you come from?"

少小離鄉老大回
鄉音難改鬢毛衰
兒童相見不相識
笑問客從何處來

[05446]

Even closer to Sung Chih-wen's inversion of expectations is the following famous quatrain (09877) by Ts'en Shen 岑參:

MEETING AN ENVOY ON HIS WAY TO THE CAPITAL 逢入京使

Looking eastward toward home, the road stretches far, 故園東望路漫漫
My two sleeves soaked, the tears never dry. 雙袖龍鍾淚不乾
I meet you on horseback—no paper, no brush, 馬上相逢無紙筆
But I trust you to take them word—tell them I am fine. 憑君傳語報平安

Of course, Ts'en Shen is not "fine" at all, the reader is left to draw the inference that Ts'en is so miserable that he feels his primary duty is to reassure his family rather than worry them.

Sung Chih-wen's court poems are somewhat more elaborate then Shen Ch'üan-ch'i's, though this is only a slight personal variation on what is, basically, a uniform style. Sung's finest court poem (03242) does not seem to be an imperial command poem at all, but rather a spontaneous outburst of graciousness on an imperial trip in 696.

WRITTEN WITH THE IMPERIAL RETINUE ON THE ROAD TO TENG-FENG 扈從登封途中作

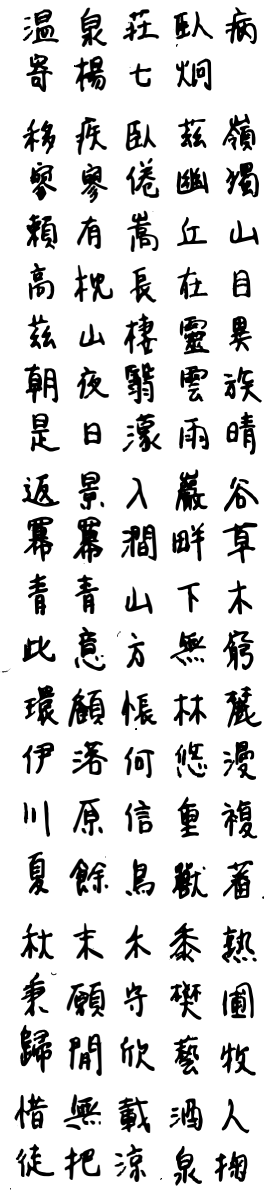
Tent palaces swell on the towering cliff, 帳殿鬱崔嵬
Mighty, indeed, the wanderings of immortals. 仙遊實壯哉
Morning clouds link with the curtains rolling up, 曉雲連幕捲
Fires by night mix with the stars in the circuits. 夜火雜星回
Through the dark of the valley a thousand banners emerge, 谷暗千旗出
The mountains sing as ten thousand coaches come. 山鳴萬乘來
The retinue's progress is truly worth a poem, 扈從良可賦
But I lack that talent to light up the heavens. 終乏掞天才

The "ten thousand coaches" of line six is a conventional kenning for the emperor, "lord of ten thousand coaches." Here, however, the descriptive context restores something

of the original force of the phrase. More interesting are Sung's personal poems from the 690s. The following piece (03198) is typical of the complicated social poetry that appears often in the High T'ang.

LYING SICK AT WARMSPRING VILLA: TO YANG CHIUNG

Taking sick leave, I rest on this peak,
In utter stillness, I weary of solitude, seclusion.
But I do have Mount Sung to depend on,
From my high resting place, ever in my eyes.
Wonders and spirits lodge on that mountain
Shaded day and night by the tribes of clouds.
Just today a drizzling rain has cleared,
Late sunlight falls back on the cliffs and valleys.
The grasses are thick by mountain torrents,
And green are the trees at the mountain's foot.
My mood at this moment seems endless,
Gazing around, I'm disturbed by the wooded foothills.
The Yi and the Lo flow off forever,
Streams and plains, doubling one after another.
In the last of summer, birds and beasts teem,
And at autumn's end the grain is ripe.
Maintaining my desires, I keep to my fenced garden,
Returning to calm, I rejoice in planting and herding.
But I regret there is no one to bring wine—
All I can do is take a handful of water from the cool spring.



Hsieh Ling-yün's philosophical closure, that he lacks an appreciative friend to join him in his enjoyment of the landscape, here is put to persuasive, social purposes:

Yang Chiung can hardly miss the point that he is being invited to visit Sung. We may well wonder how Sung can be so weary of his seclusion and delight in it so thoroughly at the same time. The logical contradiction is subordinate to the social purpose of the poem: "I'm bored to death here, and this is a lovely spot—so come visit me."

There is a strong eremitic strain in Sung Chih-wen's poetry. The following poem (03185) probably also comes from before Sung's first exile in 705.

FIRST ARRIVING AT MY MOUNTAIN VILLA IN LU-HUN	初到陸渾山莊
Presented winter clothes, I am stirred by the season's end,	授衣感節序
And whip on my horse, up over Yi Pass.	策馬凌伊闕
Return accords with my heart's inclination,	歸齊逸人趣
Aware how each day my autumn lute plays more peacefully.	日覺秋琴閒
Cold dew withers the northern hill,	寒露衰北阜
Evening sunlight shatters the eastern mountains.	夕陽破東山
With a wild song I pace through thick shade,	浩歌步檉樾
And the evening birds follow me home.	棲鳥隨我還

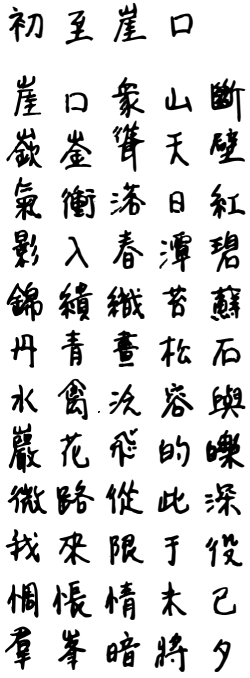
The presentation of winter clothes is associated with the ninth month, late autumn. Despite the poem's weak opening, it is one of Sung Chih-wen's finest pieces. The metaphorical verb in the third position in a line was a characteristic device of court poetry, but Sung's bold and violent use of "shatters" in line six is something most court poets would not have dared.

Sung Chih-wen wrote a rather large number of landscape poems during his exile. These typically take the form of a description of the landscape followed by a meditation on the poet's experiences. In some cases (for example 03206) the landscape is only an excuse for the extended

personal narrative. In other cases (such as the following poem, 03193) the landscape dominates, and the poet's response is brief and emotional. This latter form is the characteristic Early T'ang landscape, yet the unity of description in the following poem makes it much closer to the High T'ang.

FIRST REACHING YA-K'OU

A Ya-k'ou a host of mountains sheer off
And raise a cliff-wall looming to heaven.
Their vapors strike the red of the setting sun,
Their reflections fall in emerald of springtime pools.
The moss is woven to embroidered brocades,
Pines and rocks painted in polychrome.
Waterbirds drift leisurely with the current,
As flowers fly sparkling from the cliffs.
The faint road enters deep from this point on,
And I have come constrained in service.
Deeply grieved, and the mood not yet over,
The clusters of mountains darken in the growing evening.



Tu Shen-yen's two landscape poems quoted earlier, "Crossing Stonegate Mountain" and "Written at Jumble-Rock Mountain," resemble earlier landscape poems by Wang Po in their fragmentation of description. By mixing descriptions of day and night, rain and clear weather, they do not build any coherent scene. Ch'en Tzu-ang's "Crossing Gorge-mouth Mountain" is a different kind of landscape: it does not describe a scene but a rather a passage through a landscape whose form parallels an intellectual principle. In contrast to these, Sung Chih-wen's poem above is relatively unified in visual terms: he builds one scene at one time of day, Ya-k'ou in the growing darkness. The following poem (07631) by Meng Hao-jan shows a High T'ang

treatment of a landscape, similar to Sung Chih-wen's but more sophisticated. The tenth line of Sung Chih-wen's poem is identical to the thirteenth line of Meng Hao-jan's, and both echo Shih-ching, no. 14. Both poets observe a landscape changing in the moving sunlight; both poets admire what they see but are forced to move onward.

ON P'ENG-LI LAKE, GAZING AT LU MOUNTAIN

彭蠡湖中望廬山

When in the void a halo grows round the moon,
太虛生月暈

The boatman knows there'll be a wind from the heavens,
舟子知天風

So he hoists his sail, awaiting the break of day,
挂席候明發

Which gradually spreads over the vastness of the level lake.
眇漫平湖中

Then in mid-current I can see K'uang's hill,
中流見匡阜

Which stands pressing down on the power of Nine Rivers.
勢壓九江雄

Its murky blackness opens to the bright heavens
黯黕容霽色

Until it stands towering in the morning sky,
峥嶸當曉空

And when the sun first rises over Incense Burner Peak,
香爐初上日

Its cascade spurts into a rainbow.
瀑布噴成虹

Long have I wished to follow Shang-tzu,
久欲追尚子

And here, still more, I am moved by Hui-yüan.
況茲懷遠公

I have come, constrained in service,
我來限于役

Without the leisure to give myself ease.
未暇息微躬

My journey to the Huai and the sea, almost half over,
淮海途將半

From frost and stars I can tell the year soon ends.
星霜歲欲窮

I send word to those roosting on these peaks—
謝言巖棲者

When my pleasure changes, I'll come and join you.
畢趣當來同

Meng Hao-jan's poem is even more unified than Sung Chih-wen's: he describes the process of sunrise with symbolic

implications of "illumination" as it reveals Lu Mountain to the poet. As a famous abode of monks and recluses, Lu Mountain's appearance leads directly to Meng's inner conflict between government service, which has brought him to the spot, and the desire to live the life of a hermit.

The theme of facing a grand landscape and feeling one must "change one's life" appears in the following exile poem (03196).

TUNG-T'ING LAKE

洞庭湖

The Earth is gone, Heaven and water merge,
As by dawn I came to Tung-t'ing Lake.
The first sunlight bubbled out of its midst,
Nor could I see the east or west shore.
In its crystalline sparkling on what could my eyes rest?
In its glitter and gleam, my heart almost fled.
A holy radiance bathed the Sea God,
Drifting vapors made T'ien-wu sparkle.
Here the Yellow Emperor came to set out his orchestra,
Campaigning against the Miao, King Yü of Hsia marched through.
Sung Yü, Ch'u's courtier, here lamented falling leaves,
And Yao's daughter wept for Shun at Ts'ang-wu.
Its plain gathers in the moisture of Nine Rivers,
Its mountains let through a picture of the Five Peaks.
The winds are cheerful, the fish leap up,
Then clouds turn evening and wild geese call to each other.
Alone here, looking down in these gentle waves,
In its vast floods the generations of men change.
I will wash from me all foulness forever,
And to the end of my days find pure delights.

地盡天水合
朝及洞庭湖
初日當中涌
莫辨東西陽
晶耀目何在
澄熒心欲無
靈光晏海若
游氣耿天吳
張樂軒皇至
征苗夏禹徂
楚臣悲落葉
堯女泣蒼梧
野積九江潤
山通五嶽圖
風恬魚自躍
雲夕雁相呼
獨此臨泛濫
浩將人代殊
永言洗氛濁
卒歲爲清娛

If you would retire only after doing great deeds, 要使功成退
You suffer as needlessly as that great lord of Yüeh. 徒勞越大夫

The "great lord of Yüeh" is Fan Li, who set off on the lake in a boat after helping the kingdom of Yüeh conquer the kingdom of Wu in the Warring States period. As the morning light spreads over the lake, it summons up the images of the legendary figures associated with Lake Tung-t'ing. Sung's poem is the first memorable example of a whole series of poems on Lake Tung-t'ing during the T'ang. Although Sung's poem is bolder than anything Tu Shen-yen could have done, we might compare the poem above with the opening of a ninety-two line poem (17825) on Tung-t'ing, written by Han Yü early in the ninth century when he was returning from exile.

AT YÜEH-YANG TOWER: PARTING FROM TOU HSIANG 岳陽樓別竇司直

Within China's nine provinces, Lake Tung-t'ing, 洞庭九州間
In its largeness, to what would it yield? 厥大誰與讓
To the south converge streams from a crowd of slopes, 南匯羣崖水
In the north they gush out, how swift and free! 北注何奔放
It amasses them into seven hundred miles, 瀦爲七百里
Swallowing them in, each in a different form. 吞納各殊狀
Since ancient times never clearing, 自古澄不清
Whirling around, mixing, no place to go. 環混無歸何
Parching winds agitate it each day, 炎風日搜攪
Weird things hidden therein are tediously many. 幽怪多兄長
High upward huge waves rise, 軒然大波起
Even the sky's vault is too narrow and blocks them. 宇宙隘而妨
Wavecrests above Sung and Hua Mountains, 巍巍嵩華
They spring upward like strong youths. 騰踔健壯

How its sounds echo and resound!—
The crash and rumble of thousands of chariots.
And it seems as though the Yellow Emperor
Had come to these vast and empty spaces to play his music,
Dragons appear as his chime-frames,
White-silken foam blows as his tent tassels.
Gods and demons, not of the human world,
Whose rhythms are wild and erratic.

聲音一何宏
轟轕車萬兩
猶疑帝軒轅
張樂就空曠
蛟螭露筍虡
縞練吹組帳
鬼神非人世
節奏頗跌蕩

Han Yü repeats in an expanded form many of the allusions and topics of Sung Chih-wen's poem. The theme of the lake's cleansing purity, which is the center of Sung's version, is treated later in Han Yü's poem. In the context of his own age, Sung Chih-wen's poem is boldly imaginative, yet compared to Han Yü's torrent of metaphor and energetic description, Sung's style seems tightly controlled. The tripartite form lies strongly beneath Sung's version, whereas Han Yü's poem is a complex interweaving of past and present visions of the lake, past and present crossings and life experiences. Though the contrast might seem to make Han Yü's poem more attractive, it would be the balance between freedom and control in Sung Chih-wen's poem which would strike later critics, such as the Ming neoclassicists, as most characteristically T'ang.

One of Sung's most famous regulated verses (03284) was composed as he crossed Ta-yü Peak, going into exile.

CROSSING TA-YÜ PEAK

As I cross this peak, I leave my native land,
Halt my carriage, gaze continually toward home.
My soul follows the southward winging birds,
My tears last as long as the northside branches' flowers.
Now a clearing appears in the mountain rain,
And the river's white clouds almost changed to rose red.

度大庾嶺
度嶺方辭國
停驂一望家
魂隨南鴈盡
淚盡北枝花
山雨初含霽
江雲欲變霞

I pray only that there will be a day of return— 但令歸有日
I do not dare be bitter at Ch'ang-sha. 不敢恨長沙

According to legend, when the plum blossoms on the north slope of Ta-yü Peak were just coming out, those on the south slope were already falling. This suggests a major climatic division, and line four suggests an awareness on the part of the poet that at this point he is leaving China proper. In the last line Sung echoes the story of Chia Yi, exiled to Ch'ang-sha.

In a court poem, where the response is simply one of appreciation, it was required that the scene of the middle couplets only be "beautiful." Poems with more complex responses tend to demand that the scene somehow "signify," that it stir the response which the poet gives. The thematic diversification of poetry in the second half of the seventh century naturally created more complex responses in the closing couplets of regulated verses and other strictly tripartite poems. This, in turn, put a pressure on the middle couplets to form a tighter intellectual unity.

The two solutions to this demand that the middle couplets "signify" appear in the poem above. The simplest of these is represented in the second couplet: the poet intrudes himself into the scene. The solution that appears in the straight description of the third couplet is more complex and tenuous: because the last couplet is somehow a response to the third couplet, we are directed toward its possible symbolic implications. This does not mean that all straight descriptive middle couplets are intentionally symbolic; rather, the need that the response follow naturally from them directs us to seek out such implications, if we can find them. There is a "pressure for meaning" in the middle couplets of tripartite poems, a phenomenon which is very strong in eighth- and ninth-

century poetry. In the above poem "clearing" suggests the restoration of imperial favor; the "rose clouds" (hsia 霞) suggest immortality and thereby the court.

The third couplet of the following poem (03219) is another example of the poet starting to describe the scene but feeling the need to integrate it with situation he describes.

REACHING THE POST STATION AT TUAN-CHOU: THERE I SEE POEMS ON THE WALL BY TU SHEN-YEN, SHEN CH'ÜAN-CH'I, YEN CHAO-YIN, AND WANG WU-CHING: I WRITE THIS SONG IN SORROW.

至端州驛見杜五
審言沈三佺期閻
五朝隱王二無競
題壁慨然成詠

Officials of the northland, put under severe banishment,
逐臣北地承嚴譴

But we assumed that in the South we could always see each other.
謂到南中每相見

Who would have thought that in the South the crossroads would be so many?
豈意南中岐路多

A thousand mountains, ten thousand streams divide our posts.
千山萬水分鄉縣

Clouds quiver, rain scatters—each flies dispersing;
雲搖雨散各翻飛

The ocean vast, the heavens long—letters are so rare.
海闊天長音信稀

What we share at each place in this landscape is malarial fogs,
處處山川同瘴癘

And I worry about how many of us will ever be able to return.
自憐能得幾人歸

The "each" of line five is the point of transition in the line between the landscape and the exiles: it can refer to the clouds or to the men. The reader's expectation is that it refers to the landscape, but the imperfect parallel in line six suggests that it refers to the men. The ambiguity tends to identify the men with the clouds, echoing the traditional association of wanderers and drifting clouds.

The complex associative development of the following poem (03197) written in 710 shows that Sung Chih-wen had

progressed well beyond the mechanical strings of couplets which make up most Early T'ang landscape poems. A ceremony performed during his exile leads the poet to think of the gods and then to the quest for the immortals; in turn, the natural association of the immortals with the court drives the poet to review his experiences, which first brings consolation and then leads to an ambiguous state of uncertainty. Though the poem lacks the symmetrical balance of rhetorical amplification, the associative unity tries to reflect natural processes of thought, and this in turn makes the poem seem "natural" in comparison with earlier personal narratives. But even beyond this structural advantage, which places the poem in the High T'ang, the poem is an example of how poetry was again moving away from a purely public function to serve as a vehicle for private meditation.

A SACRIFICE TO THE SEA: THE FOURTH YEAR OF THE CHING-LUNG REIGN

景龍四年春祠海

A stern matter, the sacrifice to the sea in spring,
I fast by night to cleanse away my cares.
When the cock crows, I see the sun come out,
Egrets come down and are frightened by the swift breakers.
The land is vast, the ends of the earth are near,
As the sky turns, the hundred streams swell.
The edge of my mat touches a deserted cove,
Where beyond my eyes is only the thick fog.
Then in the warm air the images of things appear,
As I stroll around dark and light alternate.
The beast I have brought is not the proper "black offering,"
But in this pure sacrifice I hope for divine radiance.
The birds sparkle by the waves' margin,

肅事祠春深
宵齋洗蒙慮
雞鳴見日出
鷺下驚濤驚
地闊八荒近
天回百川漲
筵端接空曲
目外唯霧霧
暖氣物象來
周遊晦明互
致牲匪玄享
禮潔期靈照
的的波際禽

Isles of trees amid the frothing, swirling waters.

But where now is the immortal An-ch'i?

There's no path to seek Fang-chang, the immortal isle.

The affairs of immortals are cut off from man's world,

Searching out such mysteries is usually vain.

Four-Light Mountain turns its back on usual peaks,

None know where its old hermits are found.

Deeply stirred, I now soothe my heart,

Since youth I've enjoyed increasing favor

And three times held a literary man's post,

Twice accepted office with the gods and immortals.

I do sigh at having left the passes so far behind,

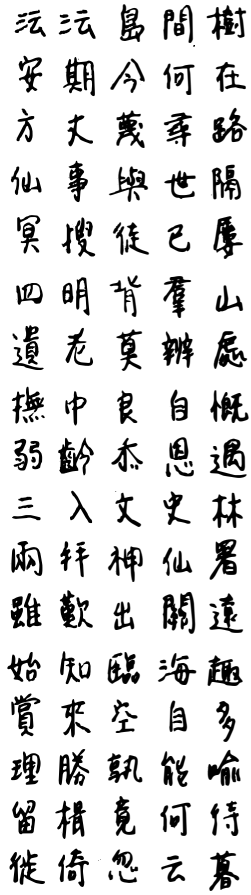
But now begin to understand the joy by the sea.

Appreciation comes, often and to no purpose,

Truth wins out—who can make a metaphor for it?

I rest my oars, what am I waiting for?—

Lingering here, suddenly it's evening.



PART FIVE

CHANG YÜEH AND TRANSITION INTO THE HIGH T'ANG

INTRODUCTION TO PART FIVE

Period styles may change in a number of ways. A change may come about in the course of a few years with the introduction of some new literary theory or the affirmation of an older, neglected one: such was the case in the 790s with the development of the Mid-T'ang style. In other cases, the change over several decades may occur so slowly and subtly that it is impossible to draw a clear line of demarcation: such is the case in the transition from the Early T'ang period style to the High T'ang period style.

A change in styles clearly did occur. If we compare almost any good poem of the 740s with a poem of the 640s, the difference is immediately apparent. The difference is in part a function of the individuality of the poets involved and in part a function of a process of continuous change, occurring through the entire century. But it is also a change in period styles, and many of the general elements of differentiation can be traced to the three decades between 690 and 720, which we have already examined in our discussions of Ch'en Tzu-ang, Shen Ch'üan-ch'i and Sung Chih-wen.

Many attempts have been made to isolate the differences between the poetry of the Early T'ang and that of the High T'ang. In most cases, those traits which are ascribed to the High T'ang can be traced back to the Early T'ang or Southern Dynasties. Though genuine differences exist, the Early T'ang and High T'ang styles are more closely related than is generally believed.

The High T'ang period style is built upon an Early T'ang base: the High T'ang grew out of the Early T'ang and did not react against it. With their fu-ku pronouncements, many High T'ang poets may have believed they were reacting against the Early T'ang, but in practice they

were dependent upon Early T'ang norms of treatment. If anything, the High T'ang was a liberated version of the Early T'ang. Early T'ang poems often wrote themselves: the conventions and techniques of amplification were so firmly entrenched that many court poets could have been replaced by well-programmed computers. In the High T'ang, poets had greater mastery over both their language and the topics; they were able to use the conventions rather than used by them. The number of private poems and informal occasional poems increases dramatically: High T'ang poets seem to be writing because they want to rather than because they must. Formal court poems and ornate pieces dedicated to high officials continue to be written throughout the T'ang, but good poets show less interest in them. We might best express this new situation in the social aspects of poetry by saying that the center of interest in poetry had shifted and its scope had broadened.

The tripartite structure lingers on, even though poets are capable of varying it to suit their needs or rejecting it completely. Still, when poets were called upon to turn out a quick occasional poem, as they often were, they had the tripartite structure to fall back on. In the hands of the best poets, the tripartite form was used with great sophistication, its parts integrated into increasingly complex works of art. Likewise, the old poetic conventions are still used in the High T'ang, but poets show a greater tendency to play with them, to twist them, and to put them to a new purposes. We saw this, for example, in Shen Ch'üan-ch'i's exile poem in which the landscape is one in which "no one grows old."

The kind of landscape description in parallel couplets, developed between 670 and 710, remained relatively stable in the High T'ang; as we saw in the last section, poets were beginning to learn to integrate these couplets into unified descriptions and to use them to echo the human condition. As poetry became less and less a rhetorical

exercise, coherence and universal significance became increasingly important to poets, and to this end poets became increasingly bold in their innovations.

On certain occasions, most High T'ang poets were easily capable of the wit and ornamented diction of the Early T'ang. However, they also developed a much simpler form of poetic diction and learned to use it effectively along with typically Early T'ang phrases. They learned that good poetry is not necessarily synonymous with the elaborate, the rhetorically complex, and the clever. This trend toward stylistic simplification began as early as the 670s and gradually evolved into what might be called the T'ang "grand style." Like the famous Greek "grand style," this suggests deep thought said simply and with dignity. For an example one could not do better than to quote one of Wang Wei's most famous poems (05811):

PARTING	送別
I get off my horse, offer you wine,	下馬飲君酒
Ask you where you are going.	問君何所之
You say there is something troubling you	君言不得意
And go home to rest at the edge of southern hills.	歸臥南山陲
Be off then—I'll ask no more—	但去莫復問
White clouds for eternity.	白雲無盡時

Such a poem is inconceivable in the Early T'ang: the language has been completely stripped of all decorative frills, and the complexity has been transferred from the diction to the situation. What is not said is both the subject of the poem and its internal aesthetic center. The conventional association of the hermit and white clouds achieves a new dignity and depth. The generality of the treatment reflects the traveller's failure to give details and the poet's unwillingness to receive them. The emphasis on what is unspoken in the relationship

between the two men leaves the poem "open."

The style of surviving High T'ang court poems is close but not identical to that of seventh-century court poems: the mannered, periphrastic style continues, but the imperial theme is given far more weight than pure description. This version of the courtly style was still required of candidates for the chin-shih examination, and the fact that young poets, in their desire for public careers, received their early training in this style kept the mannered courtly style as a constant. It is not surprising that we find the least sense of restraint in poets such as Li Po who disdained careers in government. The formal, public style remained a contextual background to give meaning to the innovation and freedom which one finds in the best High T'ang poets.

In the following chapters we will examine first the work of Chang Yüeh, a figure whose work spans the first three decades of the eighth century. Then we will look at some poetry of the first decades of the High T'ang to see the fulfillment of those changes begun in the last part of the Early T'ang.

CHANG YÜEH

Chang Yüeh 張說(667-730) was more important as a political figure than as a poet, though if we consider him to be an Early T'ang poet, he is the most prolific of the period. His collected works survive in twenty-five chüan, which include 352 poems. Because of the respect accorded their collections, it is often the case that great ministers leave more poems to posterity than the most famous poets of the day. Of Chang Yüeh's time, Chang Hsü 張旭 and Chang Jo-hsü 張若虛 are only shadowy figures whose fame has far outrun their surviving works, while Chang Yüeh, virtually ignored by T'ang anthologists, has a complete collection surviving. As a favorite of Hsüan-tsung, Chang Yüeh has a large number of court poems and ceremonial songs, but in his more private poetry can be seen the growth of the new High T'ang style.

A native of Lo-yang, Chang Yüeh came from a relatively poor family, unlike the great courtiers of the early seventh century. In 688 Chang passed one of the empress' special examinations, designed to seek out fresh talent for her bureaucracy: her antagonism to the great ministerial families did much to promote social mobility in the bureaucracy of the late seventh century. At first, Chang Yüeh held several respectable, but low positions in the central bureaucracy. He came to fame when the Chang brothers (of whom he was no relation) tried to make use of him to discredit the empress' favorite, Wei Yüan-chung. Chang Yüeh agreed to testify against Wei at court, but when the time came, he changed his mind and instead publicly denounced the Chang brothers and revealed the pressures they had put on him to testify against Wei. Wei was saved for the moment, but for his efforts, Chang

Yüeh was banished to Ch'in-chou in Kuang-tung.

When Chung-tsung took the throne and the empire's poetic talent was sent en masse to South China, Chang Yüeh was recalled to the capital. He held several middle level posts in the central government, and was supposed to have been a member of the Hsiu-wen kuan, though he is not mentioned on our list of the members of the office. When Jui-tsung took the throne, Chang rose even higher to ministerial positions in the Secretariat and Chancellory.

During the reign of Hsüan-tsung, Chang was made President of the Secretariat and enfeoffed as the Duke of Yen. However, at the height of his career, he became involved in a factional dispute with Yao Ch'ung and was made Governor of Hsiang-chou in Ho-nan and, later, Governor of Yüeh-chou even further south in Ho-nan. In 716-717 Chang was transferred north to be the Governor General of Yu-chou. As is so often the case, it was during his tenure at provincial posts that Chang wrote most of his best poetry. With the death of Yao Ch'ung, Chang resumed his post as President of the Secretariat, and after a few more ups and downs in a struggle with the infamous Li Lin-fu, Chang died in 730 at the age of sixty-three.

Although Chang Yüeh was a political figure, he, like many of the great T'ang ministers, exercised no little influence on the world of literature. He and Su T'ing dominated the literary establishment of the court during the first part of Hsüan-tsung's reign. These were the men whom young poets seeking recognition had to please.

For all the excellent qualities of his poetry, Chang Yüeh clearly lacks the "knack for parallelism," which Li Shang-yin so condescendingly saw in Chang's predecessors. In his early poems and consistently in his court poems, Chang Yüeh can be as formal and periphrastic as any court poet, but he simply could not master the descriptive ingenuity which was the measure of genius in poets such as Shen Ch'üan-ch'i and Sung Chih-wen. Chang's

deficiencies as a craftsman saved his work from the paratactic fragmentation we find in many of his earlier contemporaries, and his more smoothly flowing style answered the changes in literary taste which were occurring in the 710s and 720s; however, it seems that the ineffectiveness of Chang's parallelism was a genuine inability rather than a conscious stylistic trait. Chang compensated for his disability in a number of ways: sometimes he approaches the grand style of later decades, but more frequently he replaces the middle, descriptive couplets of tripartite poems with parallel couplets stating emotion or advancing the narrative.

The reputations of poets like Sung Chih-wen and Shen Ch'üan-ch'i rested largely on their excellent regulated verse, and to a lesser extent on their heptasyllabic songs. Chang Yüeh's production of pentasyllabic regulated verse was voluminous, though it contains little that can equal the best of Sung or Shen. Chang Yüeh wrote relatively few heptasyllabic regulated verses, though two of those he did write are minor classics. Chang Yüeh was a very different kind of poet from Sung or Shen, and while he could not equal them in stylistic grace or descriptive genius, he compensated for his deficiencies by his personal treatment of the regulated forms.

The following regulated verse (04641) was written in 703 or 704 when Chang was exiled for his part in the Wei Yüan-chung affair. It is a conservative parting poem, differing very little from the standard tripartite form.

TUAN-CHOU: PARTING FROM KAO CHIN

端州別高六戩

Both forced into hiding on alien soil,
But happy that we've passed each other on the road.

異壤同羈窹
途中喜共過

When sorrows are heavy, we often lift our wine,
Our toiling done, we might still sing long songs.

悠多時舉酒
勞罷或長歌

By the South Seas, winds and tides are strong, 南海風潮壯
By western rivers, miasmal vapors thick. 西江瘴癘多
Alas, our hands unclasp once again, 於焉復分手
And with this parting, how much pain? 此別傷如何

The second couplet contains the standard wine-song opposition of the parting poem, while the descriptive third couplet makes Chang's weakness in that area apparent. Exile worked its usual salubrious effects on Chang Yüeh's poetry; in 705 as Chang returned to the capital, he passed Tuan-chou again and remembered his former meeting with Kao Chin, who appears to have died in the South.

ON MY WAY HOME I REACHED TUAN-CHOU: WHERE PREVIOUSLY I PARTED FROM KAO CHIN

還至端州驛前與高六別處

The old post house where the rivers divide, 舊館分江口
In melancholy I gaze on setting sunlight. 悽然望落暉
When we met, we gave each other food for travel, 相逢傳旅食
And about to part, exchanged clothes for the road. 臨別換征衣
The mountains and streams I remember are these, 昔記山川是
Now feel pain that a generation is no more. 今傷人代非
All who come and go follow this road, 往來皆此路
But living and dead do not return together. 生死不同歸

[04666]

The complex emotions stirred by exile put new pressures on the tripartite form. The opening couplet provides a general setting for the occasion, but the image of dividing rivers, which remind the poet of his parting with Kao Chin, is a metaphorical use of the landscape usually reserved for the middle couplets of the regulated verse. The second couplet is a narrative flashback to the time Chang was parting with Kao Chin and suggests the mutual regard the two men had for one another. The idea of

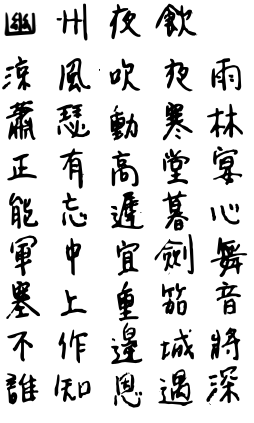
exchange here echoes in the closing theme of disparity (one returning alive, the other dead in the South): it is as though Kao's death were in some way a substitute for his own. All the other couplets are unified by the theme of radical division; only the second is about sharing and exchange.

The fifth line unifies the flashback and the present by the landscape, which remains unchanged, in contrast to the man who is gone. Direct statement of emotion is shifted up to the sixth line, while the closing couplet suggests emotion without stating it. Playing on the word "road" as both a physical entity and the course a person travels in his life, Chang fuses the physical scene before him with a maxim. On the physical level Chang is saying that all who go to south must take this road, but only those alive, like himself, return by it. On the metaphorical level the "road" is the path through life on which man "returns" to nonlife, death. All men follow this road, too, but in this case it is Kao Chin who has "returned" and not Chang Yüeh.

Chang also compensated for his weaknesses in the descriptive couplet by a genius for endings. The following pentasyllabic regulated verse (04621) is an example of Chang Yüeh's mature art, written almost fifteen years after the preceding poems, during his tenure as Governor General of Yu-chou.

DRINKING BY NIGHT IN YU-CHOU

A chill wind blows the night rain,
And the cold forests moan swaying.
Just now I feast in the high hall,
Which helps me forget a heart growing old.
In the army sword dances are proper,
On the frontier they honor the fife's song.
If you've never been general of a border fort,
How can you know the depths of royal favor?



The last couplet is easy enough to translate, but its significance is complex. Chang may be using one of the conventions of military poetry, that being sent on campaign is a sign of exceptional imperial favor which the soldier is bound to "requite." While this may be appropriate enough for a common soldier, it is difficult to avoid feeling it is ironic coming from a man who had been President of the Secretariat. Another possibility, inconsistent with poetic convention but consistent with Chang Yüeh's experiences, is that Chang is contrasting his present situation with his previous post in the capital, now understanding the depths of favor which he once enjoyed. The third interpretation is dangerous and not the sort of thing that is usually said in poetry, but it is inescapable under the circumstances: Chang may be being ironic, at worst sarcastic, saying that his present post is hardly a sign of imperial favor. Most likely Chang is juggling all three of these possibilities, though the last one must be kept in the background.

The structure of this poem shows wide divergence from the tripartite form. The abrupt shift in mood in the second couplet is particularly uncharacteristic. Later theorists of regulated verse felt that if a shift in mood was to occur, the third couplet was the proper place for it. The poet begins with a nonparallel descriptive couplet setting the dreariness of the external scene outside; this serves only to heighten the pleasure of the banquet within. The phrase "a heart growing old" (ch'ih-mu shih 遲暮心), literally "a heart approaching its sunset" with seasonal associations, echoes the gloomy landscape outside and supports the last two, negative interpretations of the final couplet. The third couplet, introducing the military theme, seems at first out of place, but as the last couplet unfolds its ambiguities, we can see the third couplet as the context which might make the poet genuinely appreciate the frontier, the "depths of royal favor" which have sent

him here. This is a necessary context for such appreciation, just as the gloomy scene outside is a necessary context for appreciating the banquet. Instead of a tripartite structure, this poem divides into two four-line halves.

There is a striking simplicity in many of Chang Yüeh's regulated verses. Part of this may be due to Chang's difficulty with the parallel descriptive couplet, but it may also reflect the influence of relatively plain style of poets like Ch'en Tzu-ang.

IN THE SOUTH: PARTING FROM CHIANG CHIN ON HIS WAY TO CH'ING-CHOU

南中別蔣五岑向青州

My aging parents rest by northern seas,
Their poor son, cast off in this southern wilderness.
Tears there are, always mixed with blood,
Not a sound but comes from a broken heart.
In this place I meet an old friend,
To that land I send you off homeward.
I wish I were the leaves of the maple trees,
To follow you, crossing over Lo-yang.

老親依北海
賤子棄南荒
有淚皆成血
無聲不斷腸
此中逢故友
彼地送還鄉
願作楓林葉
隨君度洛陽

[04642]

The simplicity of the third couplet is so extreme that it can only be conscious; it is hardly successful enough to be called the "grand style," but it is aiming for just such simple dignity. One might quote one of Wang Wei's most famous parting couplets (06139) here as an example of what Chang Yüeh was aiming for:

I urge you, sir, take one more cup of wine—
Once you go out Yang Pass, no more old friends.

勸君更盡一杯酒
西去陽關無故人

We have seen the wish to go north with the leaves in Shen Ch'üan-ch'i's poem on his reprieve. It is impossible to say which poem was written earlier, but Chang Yüeh's

poem consciously echoes the Chien-an and Wei closure "I wish I were ..." as Shen's poem does not.

Many of Chang Yüeh's poems show the influence of the fu-ku inclination to the style of Chien-an and Wei poetry and the old yüeh-fu. The following opening passage (from 04535) very clearly evokes the yüeh-fu manner:

A single goose came flying above the snow,	一雁雪上飛
It met me on the Heng-yang road;	值我衡陽道
In its beak it held words of separation,	口銜離歸字
Sent afar, a plant called "must-return."	遠寄當歸草

This narrative manner was closely associated with fu-ku moralizing as in the following passages from another poem (04536):

A lone goose came flying east,	孤雁東飛來
Sending me silk letters, plain and striped.	寄我紋與素
.....	
When the year is cold, all other trees change,	歲寒衆木改
But the heart of pine and cypress stay ever firm.	松柏心常在

The theme of the wild goose as a messenger was also used by the poets of the sixth and seventh century, but more typically they would treat the theme indirectly, saying, for example, that they long for home and see a wild goose in the sky, leaving it to the reader to make the connection. Chang Yüeh's direct, narrative treatment echoes the old yüeh-fu, just as the closing evergreen metaphor was the kind of emblematic allegory that T'ang poets associated with the Chien-an and Wei.

Extended bird metaphors were used by Lo Pin-wang and Ch'en Tzu-ang and had strong associations with fu-ku primitivism. Chang Yueh "domesticates" them in informal occasional regulated verses.

THE FRONT POOL IN HSIANG-CHOU: PARTING FROM THE TWO JUDGES HSÜ CHING-HSIEN AND CHENG SHEN-LI

相州前池別官
許鄭二判
景先神力

A few paces out on the water of the circular pool
A pair of wild geese fold their wings:
One flies to the top of a tall tree,
One returns to the edge of its former woods.
Pale waters hold the autumn scene within,
Its empty brilliance embraces the disk of night.
I have no way to detain those wings leaving me,
Over the cloudy seas their thoughts are at odds with mine.

數步圓塘水儀
雙鴻戢羽
一飛喬木上垂
一返故林
澹泊含秋景
虛明抱夜規
無因留絕翰
雲海意差池

[04633]

The descriptive third couplet of this poem is certainly one of the best Chang Yüeh ever wrote, but in the context of the poem it is completely incongruous and disrupts the continuity of Chang's argument. Many of Chang's poems have relatively complex arguments, and descriptive couplets are largely ornament in them. The "disk of night," the moon, is a kind of kenning that is characteristically Early T'ang. Chang probably invented it himself for the sake of rhyme.

Here and there among Chang Yüeh's poems we come across informal occasional poems in the balanced and graceful manner of Sung Chih-wen or Shen Ch'üan-ch'i. These are exceptions to be rule, and I quote the following (04668) to serve as a contrast to the preceding poems.

THE NORTH PAVILION AT HSIANG-CHOU

湘州北亭

Few are my duties in the south pavilion,
Wind and mist, full in my northern garden.
Mountain flowers hide the roads and paths,
Pond water brushes the vines and hanging moss.
Pond lilies scatter as fish leap up,
Where the woods are secluded, a bird will suddenly sing.

人務南亭少
風煙北院多
山花迷徑路
池水拂藤蘿
萍散魚時躍
林幽鳥作歌

Endless, this white-cloud mood of mine— 悠然白雲意
I follow my whim, passing by, lute in arm. 乘興抱琴過

This piece is a masterpiece of smooth competence. The tripartite form is followed exactly, the middle couplets are correct but uninspired parallelism, and the closing response is entirely expected. The inversion in line five, in which the pond water "brushes" the vines rather than vice versa, is a characteristic device of courtly wit. Chang is "performing" a style perfected by Sung and Shen.

Chang is at his best when he allows himself to complicate his closing couplets. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the following heptasyllabic regulated verse (04704), anthologized in the T'ang shih hsüan.

MOUNTAIN TEMPLE AT LAKE YUNG 湓湖山寺

In the stillness of deserted mountains forms a heart devoted to the Way, 空山寂歷道心生
While far away in the empty valleys the wild birds are singing. 虛谷迢遙野鳥聲
Always this meditation hut has brought appreciation of things beyond the world's dust, 禪室從來塵外賞
Nor are there any secular emotions to be found in this fragrant temple. 香臺豈是世中情
Among the clouds a thousand yards of eastern ridges emerge, 雲間東嶺千尋出
Within the trees the lake to the south is a whole sheet of light. 樹裏南湖一片明
If the hermits Ch'ao-fu and Hsü Yu had shared what I feel, 若使巢由知此意
Would they not have taken robes of vine in exchange for these hatpins and ribbons? 不將蘿薜易簪纓

Robes of vine stand for the eremitic life, just as the hatpins and ribbons stand for the life of an official. By the interpretation implied in the translation above, the poet does not feel he yet possesses the courage to give up office, a courage which would have been shown by

the ancient hermits Ch'ao-fu and Hsü Yu. Interpretation of anything written depends largely on the expectations of the readers; particularly in the case of Chinese poetry, one makes sense of a poem by knowing what the poet ought to be saying and construing the words accordingly. The preceding translation and interpretation of the last couplet are what most readers of poetry would have expected Chang to say, and, indeed, many commentators take the lines this way. However, if we read the lines without those fixed expectations, we come up with exactly the opposite interpretation:

If the hermits Ch'ao-fu and Hsü Yu had had shared what I feel, 若使巢由知此意
They would not have taken the robes of vine in exchange for the hatpins and ribbons. 不將蘿薜易簪纓

or, retaining the question:

Would they not have taken their robes of vine and exchanged them for hatpins and ribbons? 不將蘿薜易簪纓

In the first of these alternatives Chang is saying that since he, as an official, is so deeply affected by the temple, there is no real need to become a hermit; had the hermits of antiquity understood this, they would not have needed to renounce public service. The last version of the line is even more shocking and perverse: in public service one may feel such scenes all the more deeply because one longs for the hermit's life; had the ancient hermits understood this, they would have willingly become officials in order to more deeply appreciate such scenes. Even though both of these interpretations are contrary to the reader's thematic expectations, they do answer the reader's generic expectations: the reader will know that the closing couplet may contain a clever twist.

Early T'ang poets were accustomed to ingenious description and witty metaphor but the range of responses was

fixed; the closest they came to manipulating the response element was in choosing a response cleverly contrary to what might be expected from the scene. Choosing a contrary response is different from inventing a new one, and this is exactly what Chang Yüeh has done in both secondary interpretations of the last line. A poet is supposed to look at a beautiful landscape and long to be a hermit; he is not supposed to say that an official appreciates the landscape even more because of his longing to escape into it. This sort of manipulation of the cognitive element of a poem is related to the growing psychological subtlety in T'ang poetry, which we saw earlier in Sung Chih-wen's quatrain on returning from exile. Although it develops out of the tradition of the witty closing, it uses the tradition of wit, the perversion of expectations, to achieve mastery over the conventions and to represent more completely the full range of human responses.

The regulated quatrain, the chüeh-chü 絕句, became increasingly popular during the eighth century. Chang Yüeh's collection contains over fifty quatrains, and Chang's success in this genre is not surprising if we consider that the quatrain may rely far more on an ingenious idea than on descriptive technique. Thus in the quatrain Chang can show his strengths and disguise his weaknesses. Perhaps the most famous of Chang's quatrains is "On the Roads of Shu" Setting a Date for Return" 蜀道後期 (04777):

The traveller's heart competes with sun and moon,	客心爭日月
In his goings and comings, sets dates for his journeys beforehand.	來往預期程
But the autumn wind will not wait for him	秋風不相待
And will be first to reach the walls of Lo-yang.	先至洛陽城

The "sun and moon" with which the traveller competes are also "days and months." Although this poem is probably from early in Chang's official career, it is characteristically High T'ang in its psychological subtlety, complexity of significance, and simplicity of diction. In what sense does the poet compete with the sun and moon? One implication is that he competes with them in regularity, trying to set fixed dates for reaching his destination and coming home (line two). But this level is undercut by an inescapable feeling that the traveller is "racing" time, trying to get his assignment done and return home as swiftly as possible. The second line responds to the first of these implications, that of regularity, while the last two lines respond to the idea of a race with time. Though the idea of a race contradicts that of regularity, the two implications are united in the sense of loss and failure in the last couplet. On the one hand, the autumn wind speeds ahead of the regularity of the days and months, and on the other hand, it is identified with them as Time which speeds past, defeating the traveller's desire for an early return. The autumn wind comes from the west, like the returning poet, but reaches Lo-yang ahead of the poet, winning the "race."

Occasional poetry was the most common form of poetry throughout the T'ang. Instead of abandoning it in favor of nonoccasional poetry, the High T'ang poets raised the occasional poem to a new level of significance. With most such poems, beneath the complexities you find a simple occasional message. Poems manage to exist simultaneously in the realm of literature and in the realm of society, as a gesture of communication. Here, underneath the "race with time," lies a poem which Chang might have sent back to a friend in Lo-yang: the message is "I'll be back sometime after the beginning of autumn; I'm trying to keep a strict schedule."

The cleverness in the last line of the following quatrain

(04821) is even less obtrusive.

FOLLOWING THE RHYMES OF YIN MOU'S "FLOATING ON LAKE TUNG-T'ING" 和尹從事懋泛洞庭

A continuous gaze over the level lake, stretching upward to the heavens, 平湖一望上連天

The autumn scene falls a thousand feet piercing the streams. 秋景千尋下洞泉

Then suddenly I am startled at how light fills the water, 忽驚水上光華滿

And it seems I'm riding my boat to the very edge of the sun. 疑是乘舟到日邊

Courtly wit had been a decoration; it was usually tacked on to the end of a poem with little or no regard to its function in the poem as a whole. Chang Yüeh shows a High T'ang sense of poetic unity here: he builds the scene carefully for his final image. In the first line he sets up one of the most venerable of descriptive conventions, that the waters of the lake seem to merge with the sky on the horizon; in the second line he brings in the theme of darkness as the autumn landscape casts a shadowy reflection down into the lake. These shadows prepare for the sudden illumination in line three. As the sunlight suddenly fills the water, the boat ride on the gleaming lake becomes a journey through the heavens to the edge of the sun. The convention of the first line takes on a new significance as the poet echoes the stories of boat rides through heaven, so popular in court poetry. As Chang transformed a simple message into a meditation on time in the preceding quatrain, here he transforms a simple ride on the lake into a transcendent experience. Yin Mou's bland, courtly original (05138) belongs in a different age.

During the High T'ang there was also a revival of the casual, spontaneous manner so successfully assumed in the poetry of Wang Chi. With the exception of Wang Chi this style had virtually been ignored in the seventh

century; however, some of the greatest High T'ang poets (for example, Li Po, Wang Wei, and Meng Hao-jan) were fascinated by it. The revival of this style went hand in hand with a revival of the poetry of T'ao Chien. Although we cannot date Chang Yüeh's poems in this style, he was surely one of the earliest eighth-century poets to use it.

DRINKING ON A CLEAR NIGHT

清夜酌

In autumn's darkness a man feels many stirrings,
The rain lets up, no dust this night.
A clear goblet, just right for the bright moon,
What's more, my most familiar friends.

秋陰士多感
雨息夜無塵
清樽宜明月
復有平生人

[04770]

WRITTEN WHEN DRUNK

醉中作

I'm drunk—my joy is boundless,
So much better than when I'm not drunk.
Every time I move my body, it's a dance,
Every time I speak I make a poem.

醉後樂無極
殫勝未醉時
動容皆是舞
出語總成詩

[04771]

Drunkenness is an important component of the spontaneous manner as it had been for T'ao Ch'ien and Wang Chi.

Chang Yüeh's transition from an Early T'ang to a High T'ang style can be seen in the following four quatrains, written on New Year's during his various provincial exiles. The first (04781) is from the 703-05 exile in Ch'in-chou.

NEW YEAR'S EVE AT CH'IN-CHOU

欽州守歲

The old year will be gone this night,
Tomorrow at dawn the new one comes.
In sorrow my heart follows the Dipper's handle,
And I too hope for spring return to the northeast.

故歲今宵盡
新年明旦來
愁心隨斗柄
東北望春回

Like Tu Shen-yen's "On Crossing the River Hsiang," the last couplet here is a piece of typical courtly cleverness put to relatively serious purposes: the poet, like the Dipper's handle, has turned south this winter, and if the analogy holds, spring will carry him north again. The next two quatrains are from early in Hsüan-tsung's reign when Chang Yüeh was Governor of Yüeh-chou.

NEW YEAR'S EVE AT YÜEH-CHOU: TWO POEMS

岳州守歲二首

The night winds blow my drunken dance,
The yard gate faces my tipsy songs.
My sorrow diminishes with the passing year,
My joy increases greeting the new one.

夜風吹醉舞
庭戶對酣歌
悵逐前年少
歡迎今歲多

[04782]

As in the preceding poem, Chang feels some personal correlation with an element of Nature, but in this case the wit is underplayed and inobtrusive: his increasing joy and drunkenness are superimposed on the change of the year, and this augurs well for the future. The second poem reads:

Peach branches can ward off evil,
Blazing bamboo wake one swiftly from sleep.
Songs and dances to protract this evening,
As though one were sorry that last year is passing.

桃枝堪辟惡
爆竹好驚眠
歌舞留今夕
猶言惜舊年

[04783]

The first lines refer to New Year's customs to ensure good fortune. The second couplet is an excellent example of courtly wit grown mature and subtle. Since he is in exile in Yüeh-chou, Chang is not at all sad to see the year pass, and he notes the incongruity between this feeling and the night's revelry which suggests that he wants the old year to stay, to "protract this evening." The following poem (04784) on New Year's morning is dated

in some texts to Ch'ang's year in Yu-chou.

NEW YEAR'S MORNING	元朝
My joy this New Year's day	元日今歲樂
Yields nothing to last spring's.	不謝往年春
I do know the path my heart has always followed,	知向來心道
But who was that person I was last night?	誰為昨夜人

The third line of this poem contains a strong caesura violation: it divides 1:2:2 rather than the proper 2:3. Notice the enjambment of the first two lines, in contrast to the strong line divisions in the first couplet of the preceding two quatrains. There is a wry gentleness to the second couplet which characterizes some of the best High T'ang poetry. The poet feels that the joy which he feels this New Year is as great as any the preceding year; furthermore, he is aware of some inner identity, some continuity in his life, the "path he has always followed." Yet imagining himself the night before, Chang feels he is a different person. But the ending is open; we are left with questions. Is the poet commenting humorously on his drunkenness the night before? Is he making a serious statement about the continuousness of change in human beings, that he is growing older? Is he saying that like the year he is "renewed," or is he commenting on some emotional change, either happier or more pensive, which occurred over the course of the night? The surface of the poem is clear but the deeper references are not.

During his 703-05 exile and during his governorship of Hsiang-chou, Yüeh-chou, and Yu-chou, Chang Yüeh wrote many long poems combining landscape description and meditations on his experiences. Since these are quite similar to the landscape poems of Shen Ch'üan-ch'i and Sung Chih-wen, it is not necessary to discuss them in detail. Chang wrote relatively few yung-wu, but one of them (04571) is a delightful combination of Early T'ang playfulness and

the philosophical interests of poets like Ch'en Tzu-ang.

THE GOURD

詠瓢

Fine wine poured into a hanging gourd,
One pure, one natural—both shining brightly.
A snail's shell—its hanging head curls up;
A crane's neck—it sprouts a long handle.
Tasteful colors—the pale white and yellow;
An empty heart, making it light and strong.
Surely there are those who could decorate it,
But in respect left it in its natural state.

美酒酌懸瓢
眞淳好相映
蝸房卷墮首
鸛頸抽長柄
稚色素而黃
虛心輕且勁
豈無雕刻者
貴此成天性

Chang has a number of huai-ku and one poem in the ruined capital tradition. This latter poem on Yeh, the former capital of the Three Kingdoms state of Wei, has an economy and sentimentality that separate it from the elaborate descriptive rhetoric of the earlier capital poems.

SONG OF YEH

鄴都引

Haven't you seen how
When Wu of Wei began his struggle for heaven's throne,
Bands of heroes fought like dogs, galloped in pursuit?
By day he would lead his strong knights and smash phalanxes,
By night he would invite poets to write of the splendid chambers.
His capital wound around the south side of West Mountain,
Mulberry, elms, stretching far off in floods by the River Chang's bends.
The city, its districts turned wastelands, men's generations changed,
Only the bright moon of the western garden endures.
By Yeh are the high mounds where lie many noble courtiers,
And the lovely brows, the darting glances—all dust and ashes.

君不見
魏武草創爭天祿
羣雄睚眦相馳逐
晝攜壯士破堅陣
夜接詞人賦華屋
都邑繚繞西山陽
桑榆漫漫漳河曲
城郭爲墟人代改
但有西園明月在
鄴傍高冢多貴臣
蛾眉曼睩共灰塵

Just climb Copperbird Terrace, to the palace of song and dancing,
There is only the autumn wind and unbearable sorrow.

試上銅臺歌舞處
唯有秋風愁殺人

[04583]

Copperbird Terrace, where Ts'ao Ts'ao (Wu of Wei) ordered his palace ladies cloistered after his death, was a popular yüeh-fu topic during this period, but in a pentasyllabic meter rather than a heptasyllabic song like the poem above. Chang's poem is relatively concise in contrast to the lushly epideictic capital poems of the 670s. Like Li Chiao's "Ballad of Fen-yin," of which Hsüan-tsung was so fond, we have here the melancholy ubi sunt of the huai-ku rather than the moralizing ending of the capital poems. Because of Yeh's proximity to Lo-yang, this poem may have been written during Empress Wu's reign, in which case it probably reflects a royal preference for the heptasyllabic song.

In Chang Yüeh's poetry we begin to find large numbers of poems on indefinite occasions; that is, poems whose titles (and often whose texts) lack reference to specific persons or places which fix them at a given historical moment, for example, "Early Thunder and Spring Rain" (04762). This reflects the increasing freedom from generic convention in eighth-century poetry. Such poems on indefinite occasions do appear here and there in earlier poetry, particularly in the poetry of T'ao Ch'ien; however, the vast majority of poems stay strictly within the subgeneric classifications. The tradition and conventions of these subgenres served as limiting factors in the treatment of a topic. To give an example—if a poet felt melancholy hearing the rain, he had a wide variety of subgeneric options: he could write an elegiac tsa-shih 雜詩, a k'u-yü fu 苦雨賦 ("Fu on Suffering from the Rain," which often carried political implications), a verse letter, a visiting poem on the place where he was

lodging, and so on. Writing a poem simply entitled "Depressed at the Rain" was much less likely. When a poet chose to write in one of the established subgenres, he was committed to a certain kind of treatment which might have very little to do with his original intention in writing the poem. For example, if a poet chose to confide his feelings in a verse epistle to a friend, he had to put in a bit of biographical background and add a few lines relating his mood and circumstances to the addressee of the poem. This is what we mean when we say that conventions controlled the poets rather than vice versa.

The gradual breakdown of the rigid subgeneric system led to an individuality of treatment which contrasts sharply to poems in the established subgenres. During the second half of the seventh century such poems on indefinite occasions (basically "personal poems") become increasingly common; an excellent example is Wang Po's "In the Mountains." In Chang Yüeh's poetry they comprise some of his best and most original work.

HEARING BELLS BY NIGHT IN THE MOUNTAINS

Lying down by night I hear night's bells,
A night so still the mountains resound with them.
A frosty wind blows the cold moon,
Far and deep away it rises in the emptiness.
The first notes have been struck,
Then the later notes sweep flashing over.
I listen for them as though I could see them.
Try to pinpoint them—no fixed form.
Now truly I understand that ultimately we
  stand at the edge of Nothingness,
But futile fantasies of life and death
  linger in my mind.

山夜聞鐘
夜臥聞夜鐘響
夜靜山更響
霜風吹寒月
辭籟虛中上
前聲既眥容
後聲復見澧
聽之如可見
尋之定無像
信知本際空
徒掛生滅想

[04568]

The sounds of a Buddhist temple bell were reminders of

the vacuity of existence. The strange indefiniteness of these sounds as they are echoed in the mountains enforces the lesson on the poet; the sounds are both there and not there, possessing a peculiarly spectral existence which represents the insubstantiality of human life. The remarkable synaesthesia of the fourth couplet, by pretending to make the sounds visible, points up that insubstantiality.

One might compare the above poem with another famous High T'ang visiting poem (06891), also on the sounds of a temple bell. This piece is by Ch'ang Chien 常建 and is curiously traditional and conservative in comparison to Chang Yüeh's poem.

WRITTEN IN THE MEDITATION GARDEN AT THE REAR OF BROKEN MOUNTAIN TEMPLE

題破山寺後禪院

On a clear morning I entered this ancient temple,
When first sunlight shone on the high forest.
Twisting paths took me to hidden spots,
To a meditation hut deep in the flowering trees.
Mountain light delights the nature of the birds,
Reflections in a pool void men's hearts.
Here all Nature's sounds grow silent,
And I hear only the notes of a temple bell.

清晨入古寺
初日照高林
曲逕通幽處
禪房花木深
山光悅鳥性
潭影空人心
萬籟此都寂
但餘鐘磬音

The theme of hearing music by night from an unseen source was to become a stock theme in eighth- and ninth-century poetry. Besides Chang Yüeh's poem on the temple bell, another early example of this theme is by the problematic figure Liu Hsi-yi.

HEARING A MOUTH ORGAN ON MOUNT SUNG

嵩嶽聞笙

The moon emerges east of Sung Mountain,
As it brightens the mountains seem still more deserted.

月出嵩山東
月明山益空

A mountain man, I love this cool scene,
Let my hair down and lie in the autumn wind.
When the wind stops, the river of stars is clear,
A solitary night when insects sing in the grasses.
I cannot see the immortal,
But in the moonlight I come nearer to his playing.
Crimson lips inhale the magic air,
Marble fingers tune the perfect sound.
What melody lies in this perfect sound?—
Hearts of phoenixes and cranes on magic mountains.
Long ago I fell into the common world,
I wish then I could have heard this song.
Now I rest on the peak of Mount Sung,
What good fortune to hear these secluded notes!
The gods and immortals are pleased with my actions,
And the song is engraved on my preordained heart.

山人愛清景
散髮臥枕風
風止夜河清
獨夜草蟲鳴
仙人不可見
乘月近吹笙
絳脣吸靈氣
玉指調眞聲
眞聲是何曲
三山鸞鶴情
昔去落塵俗
願言聞此曲
今來臥嵩岑
何幸承幽音
神仙樂吾事
笙歌銘夙心

[04315]

Whoever started this theme, it caught the High T'ang's fancy and soon became a commonplace topic in its own right, picking up many of the conventions of poetry on music.

Although the two following poems have the same title, they express entirely different sentiments. They are put together in Chang Yüeh's collected works, but are kept separate in Ch'üan T'ang shih.

HEARING THE RAIN

聞雨

Winter's end, all flowers finish their cycles,
During long nights a hundred troubles gather.
A sheer fortress, immense above the river,
This deserted study, chill with the entering rain.

窮冬萬花盡
永夜百憂攢
危戍臨江大
空齋入雨寒

Screeching gibbons know of frequent parting,
Crying geese sense the futile shot.
My heart faces the brazier's ashes dying,
My face follows the trees in the yard fading.
Yet I feel the favor once showed me unrequited,
And expend all my courage to look in the mirror.

斷猿知屢別
嘶雁覺虛彈
心對爐灰死
顏隨庭樹殘
舊恩懷未報
傾膽鏡中看

[04763]

The intensity of emotion and sincerity of the poet's distress are apparent in this exile poem. Though Chang builds his scene out of fragments related only by mood like an Early T'ang poem, he manages a certain developmental unity as each fragment of the scene adds another level to his unease, leading to the closing statement of public failure, too old to serve the state properly and fearful of seeing himself in the mirror. The tripartite structure is clear though, as he does so often, Chang complicates the closing. The normal subgeneric classification of this poem would be a shu-huai 述懷 "expressing feelings"; however, at this period in the eighth century a shu-huai would demand a rougher, more archaizing treatment of the poet's situation; the relative impersonality of the first three couplets would have been out of place. The indefinite occasion, "hearing the rain," allows Chang to develop his poem in his own way.

The second poem under this title (04566) is quite opposite in sentiment; throughout it echoes phrases and ideas of T'ao Ch'ien's poetry. Although we cannot date it with any certainty, it probably belongs to the T'ao Ch'ien revival in the third decade of the eighth century.

HEARING THE RAIN

聞雨

Much rain severs me from worldly matters,
The gloomy silence leads into the Supreme Mystery.
Shadows on the city walls divide, unite,
Dipping from the eaves ceases, then continues.

多雨絕塵事
寥寥入太玄
城陰疏復合
簷滴斷還連

I brood on how I have troubled Creation—
It has been some fifty years now.
Wrongly I set my heart in search of physical things,
But recently have managed to return to Nature.
I dwell in peace, grass and trees attend on me,
Ghosts and spirits take pity on my deserted rooms.
There are times when fine wines are brought in,
There are times when notes float from my clear lute.
Its sounds are pure, not known to this world,
My heart is drunk—how can I explain?

念我勞造化
從來五十年
誤將心役物
近得還自然
閒居草木侍
虛室鬼神憐
有時進美酒
有時泛清絃
聲眞不世識
心醉豈言詮

Wang Chi's imitation of T'ao Ch'ien was a general stylistic and thematic imitation; he borrowed far fewer specific phrases and themes than this poem. Wang Chi was, in fact, imitating T'ao Ch'ien's whole life style, of which his poetry formed only a part. Chang Yüeh's poem, on the other hand, is truly a literary imitation. The fact that we may therefore lend more credence to Wang Chi's poetry, betrays a prejudice in identifying consistency with sincerity. Like most T'ang poets Chang Yüeh would use a given response to answer a specific situation; it means neither that the great minister of state was determined to give it all up nor that the poem is simply an "exercise" in the T'ao Ch'ien mode. Likewise, the T'ao Ch'ien revival does not suggest that a wide spectrum of official-poets were becoming disgusted with state service. Rather it is an indication of the growing stylistic and thematic scope of poetry, able to answer a greater variety of human situations.

The influence of Ch'en Tzu-ang began to make itself felt in the first decades of the eighth century. Sung Chih-wen, like other friends of Ch'en, turned immediately to an archaizing style when addressing a poem to Ch'en (03260). Chang Chiu-ling, Chang Yüeh's political protégé,

imitated the Kan-yü extensively. Chang Yüeh also wrote a few poems in the style of the Kan-yü, and nowhere can the voice of Ch'en Tzu-ang be heard more clearly than in the following poem (04574).

UNCLASSIFIED POEM [last of four]

雜詩四首之四

In silent brooding a host of doubts arise,
Then understanding the Mystery, all cares are cleared away.
My Original Mind is rid of male pleasures,
And now I see the heart's brightness, clear and empty.
Aware of Extinction, my heart is not exhausted,
Seeking Vacuity, I see a later life.
I must now take the Law of Impermanence
And perfect myself to incomplete Fame.

默念羣疑起
玄通百慮清
初心滅陽豔
復見湛虛明
悟滅心非盡
求虛見後生
應將無住法
修到不成名

This poem is every bit as obscure as the most of the Kan-yü; however, the orientation is clearly Buddhist. Since Buddhism was later considered to be incompatible with fu-ku, it is strange to find Buddhist meditative poems sitting side by side with the other characteristic themes of fu-ku poetry.

UNCLASSIFIED POEM [first of four]

雜詩四首之一

My heart always burns—incense within me;
My heart flutters—a banner raised to the breeze.
Heaven is eternal, Earth endures,
But how many dawns can our pleasure last?
Just look to the trees of Western Mound—
Whom are the songs and dances charming now?
[04572]

抱薰心恒焦
擧旆心恒搖
天長地自久
歡樂能幾朝
君看西陵樹
歌舞爲誰嬌

The closing lines refer to the Copperbird Terrace theme, "Western Mound" being the tomb of Ts'ao Ts'ao. The ubi sunt theme of the second couplet is characteristic of

late seventh- and early eighth-century fu-ku poetry, while the bold metaphors of the first couplet look forward to the fu-ku poetry of a century later.

INTO THE HIGH T'ANG

Many poets continued to write in the mannered Early T'ang style well into the High T'ang, and it is not surprising that these poets usually belonged to the upper echelons of officialdom and capital society. In the court of the Prince of Ch'i 岐王 during the first decade of Hsüan-tsung's reign, old poets from Chung-tsung's Hsiu-wen kuan continued the old style unchanged and taught its lessons in stylistic control to poets of the next generation like the young Wang Wei. One such poet who wrote in both the Early T'ang and High T'ang style was Chang Chiu-ling 張九齡 (678-740), a protégé of Chang Yüeh and an important political figure in his own right. Chang Chiu-ling's career spans the transition between the Early T'ang and High T'ang: he was a friend of Wang Wei and Meng Hao-jan as well as of Sung Chih-wen and Shen Ch'üan-ch'i. The bulk of his poetry was written between 720 and 740, so he should properly be considered a High T'ang poet. Some of his best poems are in the High T'ang style, but taken as a whole his collection is markedly conservative.

Chang Chiu-ling's output of court poetry was prodigious, but it was even more strongly influenced by fu-ku sentiments than was Chang Yüeh's court poetry: the imperial theme, Confucian ethics, and historical exempla often take the place of gracious comparisons of princes to immortals, though the diction remains as formal as ever. In addition to his formal, public poetry and a few pieces of personal poetry in the High T'ang style, Chang Chiu-ling also wrote fu-ku poetry, of which his imitations of Ch'en Tzu-ang's Kan-yü are the most famous. Ch'en Tzu-ang's highly individual style was becoming an accepted subgeneric style, and fu-ku poetry was "domesticated."

The old distinction between the courtier-poet and the outsider was broken down. This in itself may be one of the clearest indications of the end of the Early T'ang: a great statesman and courtier can, when necessary, assume the antithetical role of the hermit.

Fu-ku poetry remained quite distinct from other High T'ang subgenres, most of which were more closely related to court poetry. To show this contrast, I will translate the fourth Kan-yü (02968), a bird allegory, and a more "modern," High T'ang treatment of a similar theme.

KAN-YÜ IV

A lone goose comes over the sea,
Dares not cast his glance on pond or pool.
To one side he sees a kingfisher pair
Nesting in the triple pearl trees.
Though they soar high to the tip of the precious bough,
Can they fail to fear the slinger's shot?
Fine adornment calls calamity, makes men point you out;
The great feel the weight of the gods' hatred.
Now I will wander through the dark reaches of space,
How shall I be desired by the hunter?

感遇四

孤鴻海上來
池潢不敢顧
側見雙翠鳥
巢在三珠樹
矯矯珍木巔
得無金丸懼
美服明艷人
高明遏神惡
今我遊冥冥
弋者何所慕

This poem is traditionally interpreted as topical allegory: Chang is the lone goose, while the two kingfishers represent his political enemies Li Lin-fu and Niu Hsien-k'o, who forced Chang out of office.[1] While I would not deny the possibility of topical references, there are serious problems with this interpretation: as President of the Secretariat, Chang Chiu-ling had just been on the "pearl trees" himself, rather than coming in from over the sea; furthermore, it seems improbable that Chang would be warning his enemies of the perils of office since they had been the ones who had so recently taught him that

hard lesson. A pair of kingfishers whose beautiful adornments call down calamity comes directly from Ch'en Tzu-ang's Kan-yü XXIII, so the fact that there are two of them was to be expected and need not indicate topical allegory. The poem seems rather to be general allegory, contrasting the freedom of being out of office with the perils of state service.

This somewhat stilted, archaizing treatment of the theme was the legacy of the opposition poetics. The development of the High T'ang style is often associated with Ch'en Tzu-ang and fu-ku; in some ways fu-ku did aid the growth of the T'ang style, and fu-ku poetry was an important part of it. However, the following poem (03069) is a characteristically High T'ang treatment of a similar theme, and it is much more in the tradition of yung-wu court poetry.

ON THE SWALLOWS

Look to those tiny sea swallows
Which come so suddenly with the spring:
They know nothing of the vileness, the filth,
See only marble halls open to them.
Often they enter the broidered doors in pairs,
Circle splendid balustrades round and around each day.
Heedless, they compete with all things,
And when the hawks gather, worry not at all.

詠燕

海燕何微眇
來春亦暫來
豈知泥滓賤
祇見玉堂開
繡戶時雙入
華軒日幾回
無心與物競
鷹隼莫相猜

There are several significant points of contrast between the fu-ku allegory and the High T'ang yung-wu treatment. First, "On the Swallows" follows basically the tripartite form; the last couplet is the "open" closure, discussed earlier, which seeks to stir a response in the reader rather than stating a response on the part of the poet. Kan-yü IV, on the other hand, is structured more like a narrative and closes with an abrupt shift to the counter-

example of the goose. The yung-wu treatment is more symbolic than allegorical: the swallows are treated as real birds in a real scene, while the wild goose and kingfishers are emblems in an emblematic setting. The High T'ang style yung-wu betrays court poetry's preference for indirection: moralizing is kept largely out of the surface of the poem (except in the third line), and a dramatic suspense is generated by the ominous last couplet. In contrast, the Kan-yü's fourth couplet states the moral plainly, and when the counterexample of the wild goose's freedom is given, the poet does not fail to point out what its significance is: the hunters will not chase it. As far as "On the Swallows" has evolved from the courtly yung-wu, its origins lie there rather than in the fu-ku poetry of a Ch'en Tzu-ang.

High T'ang poetry is often called "popular." Although "low" topics such as farmers, fishermen, woodcutters, and soldiers were common, High T'ang poetry was not really popular poetry in any proper sense of the term. It is true that many of the greatest High T'ang poets did not follow the usual ladder of bureaucratic success and spent most of their lives out of service; however, the great majority of poets were officials in the central government. Furthermore, if a poet's works circulated and survived, it was because he had the appreciation and support of officials in the capital. At the very lowest, such poetry was appreciated and composed by singing girls who served the official class or circulated in wineshops that catered to them. There probably was a certain amount of interaction between official poetry and truly "popular" poetry, a borrowing of themes and diction by both. However, it was not "popular" in the sense that a Yangtze merchant or Shensi peasant would go about their work singing the poems of Wang Ch'ang-ling. If such an event occurred, it was a phenomenon of sufficient rarity to merit comment in one of the numerous anecdotal collections that circulated

during the T'ang.

Nevertheless, in comparison to the seventh century, the High T'ang definitely saw a broadening of the social base of poetry, shifting away from the great courtiers and the select poetic entourage of the emperor to middle and sometimes lower level officials. The High T'ang style had its origins outside the court, in private poetry and in poetry between friends of equal rank where the strictures of courtly composition could be ignored. It began with courtiers in exile, with poets whose position was such that they would never be called upon to compose at a court banquet, and with poets who had never served until their works attracted the notice of patrons in the capital.

The fact that such poets were not great officials creates problems in tracing the origins of the High T'ang style: for most of them we do not possess the kind of precise biographical information that we have for important political figures, and thus most of their works are undateable. Many of the poets who were active in the transition period lived well into the High T'ang: for example, Chang Hsü 張旭 was well known around 720, but it is impossible to tell whether his few surviving poems date from that period or from several decades later.

Chang Hsü was one of a group of poets known as the "Four Gentlemen from Wu" 吳中四士, including Pao Jung 包融, Ho Chih-chang 賀知章, and Chang Jo-hsü 張若虛. One of Ho Chih-chang's poems has been quoted earlier as an example of the High T'ang style, but it dates from late in his life, probably in the 740s. Chang Hsü was a calligrapher and well-known eccentric, much admired by the famous poets of the following decades. The following poem of his (05558), if not from the transition period, is at least characteristic of the new High T'ang style.

THE STREAM OF PEACH BLOSSOMS 桃花谿

Shadowy, a bridge soars beyond the mist of the moors, 隱隱飛橋隔野煙

At the west edge of the stone jetty, ask the fishing boat. 石磯西畔問漁船

All the day long peach blossoms drift with the current— 桃花盡日隨流水

"Now where on this clear stream lies that famous cave?" 洞在清谿何處邊

The poem is based on T'ao Ch'ien's fable of Peach Blossom Spring, in which a fisherman follows a trail of blossoms upstream to a cave, in which he finds a utopian society of simple peasants. Once the fisherman leaves the village, he can never find it again.

Many characteristics distinguish this poem from the majority of Early T'ang poems. First, we might note the nature of the occasion: it would not be at all uncharacteristic for a court poet, attending an imperial banquet in a misty landscape, to suppose that he saw the signs of Peach Blossom Spring appearing there. However, what would have been for the court poet a gracious compliment, subordinate to the celebratory ends of the poem, is here the organizing theme of the poem. Chang's closing is deliberately simple; he avoids wit but instead resolves the situation by articulating the question at which the preceding lines had been hinting. Everything is uncertain: forms seem to appear in the mist; an unknown speaker either asks an unknown fisherman or of a fisherman; the trail of peach blossoms in the water seems to be leading somewhere. The title and the second and third lines hint at Peach Blossom Spring without referring to it directly. Even if the question cannot be answered—and the beauty of the poem is that it cannot be—the reader is at least given the question. The mythical world intrudes just enough into this world that the reader can wonder about its presence. The poem enacts the uncertainty of the

theme, a state between knowing and not knowing, between being able to find one's way to the immortal world and not being able to. Like Chang Hsü, Shen Ch'üan-ch'i perceives the world of immortals appearing on earth, but in the court poem the theme is merely stated: the illusion is not integrated into the form and mood of the poem.

Wang Han 王翰, another poet of the transition period, died in the later 720s. The following yüeh-fu, on the border region of Liang-chou, makes a strong contrast with the border yüeh-fu of the Early T'ang. The poem (07557) dates from the 720s.

SONG OF LIANG-CHOU	涼州詞
Fine wine of the grape, cup of phosphorescent jade,	蒲萄美酒夜光杯
Ready to drink, the p'i-p'a plays wildly on horseback.	欲飲琵琶馬上催
And if I lie drunk in this desert, sir, don't you laugh at me!—	醉臥沙場君莫笑
Since ancient days men have marched into battle, and how many have returned?	古來征戰幾人回

The exotic grape wine of the northwestern frontiers and the barbarian p'i-p'a are modal elements of frontier poetry. More often than in Early T'ang frontier poetry, the troops of High T'ang poems feel the influence of Central Asian civilization, here in a wild drinking bout while p'i-p'a music is played on horseback. But what really separates this poem from an Early T'ang border poem is the energy, the wildly unconventional behavior which incarnates the combination of desperation and carefreeness of the soldiers on campaign. The emotions are not stated directly, but are rather implied in the actions. Given form in actions, the emotions of the soldiers can become more complex and contradictory than any limiting statement of emotion. Midway, the poem switches to the imperative: it addresses a "you" ("sir"),

who is partially identified with the reader. The third-person distance which we have seen in many Early T'ang border poems disappears, and a new kind of relationship is created between the reader and the persona of the poem, who speaks to the reader half-jokingly, half-violently. The situation is both laughable and deadly serious. Like Chang Hsü's poem, "Song of Liang-chou" acts out a situation, and the highly conventional closing line ceases to be merely a poetic cliché, but becomes instead a simple truth.

At least two of the major High T'ang poets were beginning to achieve recognition during this transition period: Meng Hao-jan 孟浩然, the eldest of the major poets, and Wang Wei 王維, a precocious favorite of the aristocrats in Ch'ang-an. The following heptasyllabic "old style" poem (07659) by Meng Hao-jan may be from the transition period.

SONG: RETURNING BY NIGHT TO LU-MEN MOUNTAIN	夜歸鹿門山歌
The bell rings at the mountain temple, daylight turns to dusk,	山寺鐘鳴晝已昏
At the ford by Fishbridge Isle, the clamor of the ferry.	漁梁渡頭爭渡喧
A man follows the sandy shore to a village by the river,	人隨沙岸向江村
I too get in my boat to return to Lu-men Mountain.	余亦乘舟歸鹿門
The moon over Lu-men shines, revealing trees in the mist,	鹿門月照開煙樹
And at once I'm where P'ang-kung lived as a recluse long ago.	忽到龐公棲隱處
My gate on the cliff, my path through the pines, deserted forever—	巖扉松徑長寂寥
Only the man who lives apart comes and goes as he wills.	惟有幽人夜來去

The theme and the relaxed manner of Meng Hao-jan's poetry appealed to the busy officials in the capital in the 720s.

At this time there was a revival of interest in the poetry of T'ao Ch'ien, and while Meng Hao-jan's style is peculiarly his own, he shares a casual simplicity with the style of T'ao Ch'ien.

Since this poem is technically "old style," parallelism is not mandatory in the middle couplets; however the third and fifth lines of Meng's poem are just the sort of descriptive lines which would make the reader expect a parallel matching line. In both cases Meng refuses to give the reader what he expects. Although elsewhere in his poetry Meng Hao-jan is perfectly capable of writing parallel couplets, in this poem he is gently unlearning the artifice of court poetry, passing by opportunities to display poetic craft. The theme is the coincidence of freedom and what is natural; an "evening return" is natural, shared with other persons and nature, yet in following this natural law, the poet manifests his freedom, his ability to come and go as he pleases. In refusing to bow to the artifice of the courtly style, Meng acts out that freedom in the form of the poem: the poet writes "as he wills."

In many ways the poem above represents the negative use of the Early T'ang style. Other poets chose to transform it, accepting its conventions and its technical artifice, but giving them depth and handling the artifice so that it sounds natural. The following poem by Wang Wei (05982), from the early 720s, shows the High T'ang style in its full naturity.

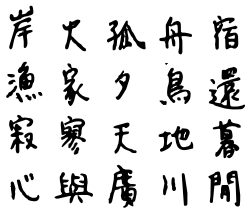
WRITTEN ON THE WALL-TOWER OF HO-PEI

登河北城樓作

A hamlet atop Fu's cliff,
A pavilion for travellers in the clouds and mist.
From high on this wall I gaze on the setting sun,
And the far shore reflects the blue mountains.

井邑傅巖上
客亭雲霧間
高城眺落日
極浦映蒼山

A fire by the bank, a lone boat spending the night,
Fishermen's homes, evening birds return.
In empty stillness Heaven and Earth turn evening,
My heart is as calm as the broad stream.



Wang Wei is writing a meditative poem which is, until the last couplet, purely descriptive. Ch'en Tzu-ang, Sung Chih-wen, Shen Ch'üan-ch'i, and Tu Shen-yen encountered marvellous landscapes and drew conclusions from what they saw: they interpreted, sighed, or vowed to change their lives. As Wang Wei views the landscape from the top of the wall, he is already "as calm as the broad stream." His eye passes impersonally from one scene to the next, including the scene of his own landscape-viewing.

The opening presents two "items" in the poet's field of vision, first a village on a cliff associated with the famous Fu Yüeh (see p. 302), followed by a solitary pavilion in the mists. The parallelism here is not merely artifice: it is rather a full use of the technique in which two entities define one another by their relationship. Associations of society and state service in the first line are set in parallel with a scene suggesting solitary travels, Wang Wei's own situation at the time. Parallelism creates meaning by providing two mutually defining contexts; imagine that the pavilion was placed in parallel with a journey alone by night: in that case the juxtaposition would make the pavilion suggest something altogether different—lodging, security, evidence of human presence. The two "items" of this couplet are in the opening position of the tripartite form, which should define the poet's situation in the most general terms. As fragments of the scene in the impersonal surface of the poem, these lines are not the expected general opening; however, in the associations created by their juxtaposition, they do indeed define the poet's

main concerns, whose dichotomy the heart, "as calm as the broad stream," overcomes.

In the second couplet the act of viewing is placed in parallel with the reflection of the mountains, not only associating the poet's vision with the passivity of the reflecting surface of the river, but also objectifying it by placing it in the descriptive middle couplets of the tripartite form. The third, beautifully parallel couplet brings all things home, to stability and security—to shore, to their roosts. Everything is quiescent and stable but the poet, who possesses a different kind of quiescence and stability, "still," but drifting on tranquilly like the great river. All the little things, the "items" of vision, are gone and the poet is left alone with the mighty elements of the universe—Heaven, Earth, the great river that flows on and on, and his impersonal heart/consciousness in the growing darkness.

This is great poetry, and the tradition of court poetry provided Wang Wei with most of the inert elements of this poem: the tripartite form, the craft of parallelism, the rich associations of many of the images. But it also provided something of equal value, something which is absent in most poetry before the age of court poetry: it gave the poet control, a sense of distance from his art which allowed him to see it as art. Only with this distance could a poet avoid simply stating his message and learn to enact in the poem the truth he wanted to convey.

APPENDIX 1

A "GRAMMAR" OF COURT POETRY

The conventions, norms, and rules of decorum of court poetry constitute a narrow semiotic system, whose violable laws were to make up the basic "language" of High T'ang poetry. Throughout this book we have been treating court poetry as a "language" (langue) which we have been trying to reconstruct from its multiple "utterances" (paroles), the individual poems. In reading poetry we must understand the "language," not only the broad language which it shares with other forms of speaking and writing, but also its structural language.

Most Chinese poems of this period have four parts: a title and the tripartite form. The title is of great importance because it signals to the reader the relevant dialect, the subgenre. The title sets up certain expectations in the reader which will either be satisfied or frustrated in an interesting way. Those expectations are as much a part of what is said as the actual text of the poem: Wang Po's famous refusal to weep at the end of a parting poem signifies fully only when the reader knows that one is supposed to weep at the end of a parting poem.

Most systems of order are built upon linguistic analogues. The tripartite form is itself constructed on the model of a Chinese sentence--a topic and a comment which together form the topic of a second comment. As in the Chinese sentence, the logical relationship of the comment to the topic is usually implied rather than stated. Also as in the Chinese sentence, there is a great deal of latitude in how open and how precise that relationship is: some poems have a clear, implicit argument, while other poems demand that the reader make great effort to relate the various parts.

In the macrolinguistic aspect of poetic structure, the topic-comment construction is essentially backward-looking. Almost every couplet is a small closure of the poem, looking back to what was said before. Along with the fact that most lines are complete

predicates, this feature makes many poems static. Here we can begin to see the necessity of external structural principles like the tripartite form: without such a priori expectations, there would be no sense of being "in the middle" or "at the end of" a poem; that is, the possibility of the reader structuring a poetic argument is only realized through the tripartite form.

The second effect of the topic-comment model is that the topic is contingent, of less significance itself than the comment. The topic is always subject to radical revaluation in the comment; it is not, as in much Western poetry, a necessary cause that precedes an effect. The reader of this book may have noticed a tendency of many poems to reverse themselves at the end or to make seemingly incongruous statements in the middle which can be related to what went before but which do not follow from it. On an even larger scale, this principle appears in some ninth-century poem sequences in which almost every poem contradicts, revaluates, the preceding poem.

The tripartite form is a positional grammar in which we expect certain kinds of comments to occur at fixed positions in the poem. In the middle couplets the reader expects to be told some specifics as a comment on the general, opening topic; at the end the reader expects an "I-comment" on the poem as a whole. Variations on this structural grammar of a court poem are like the rhetorical trope of positional inversion in a poetic sentence. As in ordinary grammar there is a law of positional primacy, creating an interesting tension between the demands of a positional syntax and usual word class. In poetic diction we have the common courtly variation 見花紅 "to see the red of the flowers" instead of 見紅花 "to see the red flowers."

Positional primacy also applies in the tripartite structure. The reader expects an "I-comment" in the final position of a poem; therefore he will personalize even an objective closing and read it differently than he would read the same line in the middle of a poem. We might try reading the beautiful closing of Wang Po's "Parting by Moonlight in a River Pavilion" II—"Mountains and rivers cold this night"—as though it were in the middle of an eight-line poem; what is hauntingly effective at the end is quite ordinary in

the middle. The reason for this curious phenomenon is that at the end the line is supposed to sum up the poet's intense, emotional response to parting: we sense that the emotion is projected onto the scene, that the chill is too powerful to express directly. In the middle of a poem, the cold is simply cold, carrying only faint suggestion of the loneliness of parting. Likewise, an I-comment transposed into the middle of the poem is deprived of much of its impact.

Parallelism is the antithetical principle to the topic-comment construction: instead of "about X we may say Y," parallelism sets up the pattern "X exists somehow in relation to Y; Y exists in relation to X." Unlike the topic-comment construction, neither is subordinate to the other. The relationship between the two halves of the topic-comment construction may be open, but it is still propositional (it seeks a single resolution); the relationship between parallel lines is usually nonpropositional and therefore complex in the extreme. However, both the topic-comment construction and parallelism tend to close poems and parts of poems off, so that poems tend to become closed units, vivified by internal tensions.

In making a parallel the poet selects from a very limited range of choices. Such limitation of choice is necessary: the possibilities of implied relationships in a parallel couplet are so open that there must be immediately some common term to keep the juxtaposition intelligible. One may not put Heaven in parallel with "ear."

The syntagmatic (structural, syntactical) and the paradigmatic (topical, lexical) rules of poetry all served the single purpose of limiting the choices available to the poet. Earlier in the text we suggested that one social motive for such limitation was the facility of composition—making poetry a "learnable art." A second reason is that the new aesthetics bases on the dynamics of relationships <u>within</u> the poem raised an inherent multitude of possibilities which demanded a compensating reduction of the possibilities of the <u>langue</u>. The interest and focus of a poem is primarily on the <u>parole</u>, on how one part may relate to another. The familiar structuralist chess analogy applies here with particular force: an inexhaustible number of games are possible, and interest never wanes, but to make the game possible

fixed, arbitrary rules are necessary, setting the space, the players, the possible moves. Furthermore, there is a tendency to limit the performance even further, to invent new quasi-rules, such as chess openings or the habits of court poetry; for example, putting Heaven and Earth, land and water, in parallel or juxtaposing wine and song in the third couplet of a parting poem.

Poetry is not chess, and the gamelike aspect of court poetry succumbed to two pressures. First, a game is an end in itself, but language is referential; it is contingent on something it talks about. The more court poetry tended toward game, the more inadequate it appeared as a sign system in comparison to language as a whole. Second, unlike chess or most games in which the rules are fixed, court poetry continued to invent more and more rules until the possibilities of the form were almost exhausted. The result was the expansion of the langue during the second half of the seventh century and the first decades of the eiththh, subverting the limiting rules and breaking them down. By the mid-eighth century there is a balance of interests between the "language" and the "utterance" in a poem.

APPENDIX 2

TONAL PATTERNS

The development of the tone patterns of regulated verse has always been a primary subject of interest in the study of Early T'ang poetry. In the present book I have virtually ignored the problem for several reasons: first, in the Early T'ang we are not dealing with clearly defined genres, but rather with flexible rules of tonal propriety which ultimately evolved into genres; second, there have been several excellent studies of tonal patterns in the final fixed form; and, third, the tones are only one aspect of the "new style" which ultimately became regulated verse. In the following comments I am not trying to make any definitive statements on the development of pentasyllabic regulated verse, but simply suggesting the way it may have evolved. I confine my discussion to pentasyllabic regulated verse because that is the most common and influential of the "new style" forms.[1]

The renowned complexity of pentasyllabic regulated verse is deceptive. Tonal violations in the first and third positions in the line are common and will often require compensating violations in the following line, but since the pattern tones for the first and third positions are only habits rather than rules, I will ignore them. The regulated verse thus comes down to three basic tonal rules:

1. The nonrhyme lines must end with deflected tones: the rhyme lines must end with level tones.
2. The basis of tonal alternation is the couplet of which there are two forms: the "A form" couplet in which the second and fourth line positions are - / , / - ; and the "B form" couplet which is / - , - / .
3. The A and B forms of the couplet must alternate.

If there is one proposition I might argue for it is that the tonally balanced couplet is the primary unit of all regulated forms. This

is true of the fixed genres, but it is even more true developmentally.

In studying the use of tones in Early T'ang poetry or in any later poetry, it is of crucial importance not to use anthologies or individual collections reconstituted from anthologies. Particularly in anthologies from the thirteenth century onward, tonal correctness is a criterion of choice. For example, of Wang Chi's four eight-line pentasyllabic poems (02612-02615), the poem chosen by the T'ang shih hsüan (02612) is tonally correct; two of the others are not, yet they are "regulated" in the Early T'ang sense, as we shall see shortly.

I have examined the thirty poems listed specifically as lü-shih in the Sung collection of Wang Po's works (SPTK). The Wang Po collection survived independently of the anthologies (Tu Shen-yen's collection, for example, was reconstituted in the Sung), so we know that someone in the T'ang or Early Sung considered these thirty poems to be regulated verse, lü-shih. The proportions I get below have been confirmed by random samplings of other poets before Sung Chih-wen and Shen Ch'üan-ch'i.

What we find is that while the first two rules of regulated verse given above are followed fairly consistently, the third rule—that the two couplet forms must alternate—is only a tendency. Futhermore, we find that every failure to alternate is with A form couplets; never do you find two B form couplets in succession.

Of the thirty poems ten always alternate. Poems opening with B form couplets form the slight majority: 03446 (A); 03449 (B); 03450 (B); 03451 (B); 03456 (B); 03466 (B); 03469 (B); 03772 (A); 03773 (A); 03774 (A). Of these three have a strong tonal violations in the seventh line, which is a line that permits such: 03456, 03773, 03774.

Fourteen poems of the thirty fail to alternate couplet forms once. Only one of these, 03455, opens with a B form couplet and therefore fails to alternate after the second couplet (BAAB). Of the form AABA: 03447, 03452, 03458, 03459, 03461, 03471. Of the form ABAA: 03448, 03453, 03454, 03457, 03463, 03464, 03475. A strong tonal violation in the first couplet is found in 03464.

Three poems fail to alternate twice and all have the form BAAA: 03460, 03465, 03467. One poem does not alternate at all (AAAA) but

contains a strong tonal violation in the first line: 03468. Two of the poems do not follow the tonal rules for couplets in at least one couplet: 03462, 03470.

Other seventh-century "regulated" verses have roughly the same proportions, AABA and ABAA forming a slight majority over the consistently alternating forms. For example, in the Wang Chi poems omitted by the T'ang shih hsüan, one (02614) is a perfect ABAB, but it is also a dull poem. The two which fail to alternate are 02613 (AABA) and 02615 (ABAA); both are among Wang Chi's best works.

The predominance of alternating poems and poems which fail to alternate only once tell us that alternation was a strong tendency if not a rule. By the early eighth century and the poems of Sung Chih-wen and Shen Ch'üan-ch'i, alternation occurs consistently, and we have "regulated verses" in the pure sense.

APPENDIX 3

NOTES ON BIBLIOGRAPHY, DATING, AND THE SELECTIVITY OF SOURCES

I must apologize for the lack of a true bibliography in this volume, but such a task is best left to a more competent bibliographer than myself. There is not an extensive literature on Early T'ang poetry. I have found that those secondary sources which deal to some degree with critical and literary historical problems are either so general as to be useless for my purposes here or treat problems of a different sort than those with which this volume is concerned. I have found that the most useful secondary sources are those which deal with the problems of biography and the chronology of works: this historical framework is the backbone that makes literary history possible. In parts two and three such secondary, historical studies have been of great importance. For "The Four Talents of the Early T'ang," the most useful work has been Liu K'ai-yang 劉開揚, "Lun Ch'u-T'ang ssu-chieh chi ch'i shih" 論初唐四傑及其詩, T'ang-shih lun-wen chi 唐詩論文集 (Shanghai: Chung-hua, 1961), pp. 1-28. For Ch'en Tzu-ang, two studies have been of great use: first, Wang Yün-hsi 王運熙, "Ch'en Tzu-ang ho t'a-te tso-p'in" 陳子昂及其作品, T'ang-shih yen-chiu lun-wen chi III 唐詩研究論文集三, Chung-kuo yü-wen hsüeh-she (1970), pp. 1-30; and second, Suzuki Shūji 鈴木修次, "Ron Chin Sugō" 論陳子昂, Tōdai shijin ron 唐代詩人論 (Tokyo: Ōtori, 1973), vol. II, pp. 47-74. In the same volume, pp. 1-46, Suzuki Shūji also has a fine essay that tries to isolate some features of Early T'ang poetic rhetoric in heptasyllabic songs. In other cases, except where cited in notes, I have relied on primary sources and devised my own rough chronology of works from them.

There remains the serious problem of the selectivity of sources for poems. For the Early T'ang we have relatively few collections of poetry intact: the collections of "The Four Talents," Ch'en Tzu-ang, and Chang Yüeh are surely intact; the collections of Wang Chi, T'ai-tsung, Li Chiao, Sung Chih-wen, and Shen Ch'üan-ch'i either probably

intact or largely so. For other poets we must depend on anthologies or on collections reconstructed from anthologies (for example, the collection of Tu Shen-yen). The large number of court poems from the period is primarily due to their inclusion in the Wen-yüan ying-hua and to a lesser degree in the T'ang-shih chi-shih (probably from the Wen-yüan ying-hua.) The danger is that we get a distorted view of the period because the WYYH compilers may have overrepresented court poetry, either because of its imperial aura or because they felt that court composition was the most significant kind of composition during the age. Of these two possibilities, the second seems the more likely: the "imperial aura" did not provoke the WYYH compilers to preserve many court compositions of later reigns.

It would seem we could look to those collections which are intact to get a clearer notion of the approximate generic and subgeneric distribution of poems in the age, but we should note that most of the complete collections are in one way or another anomalous: Wang Chi was never really "in court" (though he did serve in the central government), and T'ai-tsung was almost never out of it. Ch'en Tzu-ang and "The Four Talents" (with the exception of Yang Chiung) owe their preservation largely to the interest of later ages, and that interest was in turn due to the fact that they had complex, private poetry outside the context of the court. Too much of Chang Yüeh's poetry falls in the K'ai-yüan reign to be of great use, and the majority of the datable poems of Li Chiao, Sung Chih-wen, and Shen Ch'üan-ch'i are late, from the early eighth century (which casts doubt on their completeness). Furthermore, the survival of Sung's and Shen's exile poetry involves the same difficulties in regard to later preference for private poetry that we find in the collections of Ch'en Tzu-ang and "The Four Talents". Li Chiao's collection, if we exclude the separate collection of yung-wu poems, is about half court composition; but even there we have doubts about its completeness considering the Hsin T'ang shu bibliography notice of a collection originally in fifty chüan. There are other factors that make a clear picture of the distribution of poetic composition complex; for example, there is the real possibility that in the Early T'ang, when poets were preparing their own collections or those of their predecessors, they

themselves tended to overrepresent court composition. In short, the problem is so complex and the number of unknown, but potentially determinate factors so great that the issue cannot be resolved in the realm of literary sociology. No doubt there were a large number of private and informal occasional poems which do not survive, but we also know from the survival of single poems from series that a large number of court and formal occasional compositions have been lost.

Ultimately, the issue of distribution, however interesting in its own right, is not crucial to the question of the primacy of court poetry and the courtly style. Since we have seen the close relationship between private poetry and court poetry time and again in this volume, the question is whether private poetry and informal occasional poetry grew out of the courtly style or whether the court poem itself is an elaboration and ornamentation of less formal compositional conventions practiced elsewhere. A number of factors suggest that the former is the more accurate possibility. First, the conventions of composition which inform both formal and informal poetry belonged to capital society: outsiders like the young Ch'en Tzu-ang did not follow them. Second, in the Early T'ang we do not find the same value placed on the poet as an artist that we find in the High T'ang and afterward: with the exception of figures like Wang Chi, court service is the dominant social goal. The idea of "being a great poet," which we find in the self-image of later poets like Li Po and the image others had of them, is not well developed in the Early T'ang. If poetry is largely subordinate to social goals of court preferment, then the courtly style will be primary. Third, the rules of composition were generated by social exigencies which would be keener on court and formal occasions than on solitary or informal occasions. Thus the extent to which private poetry unconsciously follows those rules or uses them as a basis for personal variation reveals the extent to which court and formal composition are the norm of poetry. Fourth, the fact that most poets would choose contemporary norms in private composition rather than earlier, more appropriate models of private poetry shows that poets had not yet become as "bookish" as they were to become in later poetry. To a Ch'ing poet, "poetry" is a vast array of written texts and past

styles; to an Early T'ang poet, "poetry" is primary a social practice. In this book we have dealt at length with notable exceptions like Ch'en Tzu-ang, but the norm is Sung Chih-wen, who in the private poetry of his exile varies the courtly norms but bases his work upon them.

NOTES

Introduction

1 See Cheng Hsi-hsien, Analyse formelle de l'oeuvre poetique d'un auteur des T'ang: Zhang Rou-xu (Paris: Mouton & Co., 1970), pp. 12-13.

Part One

1 Ch'üan Liang shih, 11.12b.

2 Liang shu, 25.3b. The Liang History, which praises Hsü Mien for his rectitude and learning, uses this anecdote in a positive Confucian sense, to show Hsü's wu-ssu 無私, "lack of favoritism."

3 Ch'üan Sui wen, 20.9a.

4 The term court poetry properly describes the occasional circumstances of a poem's composition; here we are using the term loosely to denote a period style, that of the late fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries when the court was the center of poetic activity in China. A substantial proportion of the surviving poetic corpus was written either for the court or in the distinctive courtly style that evolved. "Court poetry" is to be clearly distinguished from "palace poetry," kung-t'i shih.

5 Chin-lou-tzu (Taipei: Shih-chieh, 1957), 4.13a.

6 Ch'üan Sui wen, 20.9a.

7 For a fuller treatment of the formal and thematic conventions of the court poetry, see pp. 234-73.

8 Wen-hsin tiao-lung (Hong Kong: Commercial, 1960), p. 726.

9 Ch'üan Liang wen, 53.15b-16b.

10 Ch'üan Ch'en wen, 10.9b.

11 Sui shu, 76.2a.

12 Ch'üan Sui wen, 20.8b-9a.

13 Ch'üan Sui shih, 2.2a.

14 Ibid., 2.3b.

15 Shi shu, 15.12b.

16 I am indebted to Arthur Wright for this observation on Yang-ti's relations with his father.

17 Ch'üan Sui shih, 1.1a-b.

18 Ch'üan Ch'en shih, 1.4b-5a. Emending 暢 to 殤 in line eight.

19 Ch'üan Sui shih, 1.2a-b.

20 Ibid., 1.2a.

21 Yüeh-fu shih-chi (SPTK), 47.1a.

22 Li P'an-lung 李攀龍 (1514-70) began his famous anthology of T'ang poetry, T'ang shih hsüan 唐詩選, with "Expressing My Feelings." The Ch'ing critic Shen Te-ch'ien 沈德潛 (1673-1769) claimed that the High T'ang style had its origins in this poem.

23 Ogawa Tamaki, Tōshi Gaisetsu (Tokyo: Iwanami, 1958), pp. 30-31.

24 Wen I-to, "T'ang-shih tsa-lun" in Wen I-to ch'üan-chi (Hong Kong: Yüan-tung, 1968), vol. III, p. 8.

25 Ch'üan Liang shih, 12.6a-7a.

26 See Yen Yen-chih's 顏延之 (384-456) comments cited in Li Shan's commentary to the Wen-hsüan, c. 23.

27 See Chiang Yen's 江淹 (444-505) "Imitations" of poets of that period, WH, 31.

28 T'ang-shih chi-shih (SPTK), 4.9b.

29 Sui shu, 76.1a-b.

30 Ibid., 76.2b.

31 Chiu T'ang shu, 102.8b.

32 T'ang-shih chi-shih (SPTK), 1.7b.

33 Hsü Chien et al., ed., Ch'u-hsüeh chi (Peking: Chung-hua, 1962), p. 748. I use the Ch'u-hsüeh chi rather than the earlier Yi-wen lei-chü because the Ch'u-hsüeh chi contains "anecdotal parallels."

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid., p. 749.

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid.

38 Some difficult theoretical problems are involved here because modern western critics tend to see a poet's literary experience, what he has read, as necessarily the sole or dominant factor in poetic creation. Without getting into a theoretical argument, I should explain that Chinese theorists of the shih played down the element of fictionality in poetry: the poem was supposed to be primarily a record of a real experience with the real world. It

is against this concept of poetry that we may contrast the literarity of court poetry, which often could make no pretensions to the "sincerity" of personal experience.

39 Ch'üan Liang shih, 3.5b.

40 Ch'üan Pei-Chou shih, 2.8b-9a.

41 Ch'üan T'ang shih (Peking: Chung-hua, 1960), p. 20.

42 T'ang-shih chi-shih (SPTK), 1.2b.

43 WH, 11.

44 Ch'üan Sui wen, 9.1a.

45 See Ch'üan T'ang wen, c.131, p. 1661; c.133, p. 1683.

46 Ch'üan T'ang shih, p. 487.

47 Chiu T'ang shu, 105.18b.

48 Shang-kuan Yi is credited with these in the Shih-yüan lei-ko 詩苑類格, which is in turn quoted in Wei Ch'ing-chih's 魏慶之 Shih-jen yü-hsieh 詩人玉屑 (Taipei: Shih-chieh, 1966), pp. 165-66.

49 Ch'üan T'ang shih-yi in Ch'üan T'ang shih, pp. 10, 174.

50 Both Wen I-to and Ogawa Tamaki believe this is a fragment. See Wen I-to, T'ang-shih ta-hsi in Wen I-to ch'üan-chi, vol. IV, p. 164; Ogawa Tamaki, Tōshi Gaisetsu, p. 32.

Part Two

1 Yang Ying-ch'uan chi (SPTK), 3.3a-b.

2 Lo Pin-wang wen-chi (SPTK), preface.

3 Liu K'ai-yang, T'ang-shih lun-wen chi (Shanghai: Chung-hua, 1961), pp. 2-6.

4 See the "Preface to the Collection of the Duke of Nan-yang," Yu-yu-tzu chi (SPTK), 6.3a-6a.

5 Since Lu was never in the Imperial Library, the "Orchid Office," I have taken the variant title.

6 WH, 21.

7 Compare the more delicate, sixth-century versions of the ballad in WYYH, 200.

8 For an example of this earlier treatment of the ballad, see Pao Chao's version, Ch'üan Sung shih, 4.5b.

9 WYYH, 195.

10 Wang Ching-hsien, "Towards Defining a Chinese Heroism," JAOS 95 (January-March 1975), pp. 29-32.

11 Ch'üan Hou-Chou wen, 9.5a-b; Yu-yu-tzu chi (SPTK), 1.7a-9b.

12 Wei Ch'ing-chih, Shih-jen yü-hsieh (Taipei: Shih-chieh, 1966), p. 72.

13 The "narrow lanes" are associated with the brothels and entertainment quarters.

14 Liang Yi's famous tower, referred to in several other poems in this section, was painted with pictures of the immortals.

15 The "golden columns" were erected by Han Wu-ti; they supported pans to collect the dew, from which an elixir of immortality was to be made.

16 The first story referred to here is that of Hsiao-shih, the master of the panpipes, who was engaged by Duke Mu of Ch'in to entertain his daughter. The pair fell in love; Hsiao-shih taught her to play the pipes, and they flew off together on a phoenix. The second story refers to Chao Fei-yen, a favorite of Han Ch'eng-ti, who studied the dance in her youth and thus attracted the attention of the emperor.

17 The pi-mu, conventionally used as a metaphor for lovers, was a legendary fish with two bodies and one eye shared between them.

18 Mandarin ducks were traditional symbols of conjugal fidelty and happiness.

19 Swallows were traditionally associated with marital and sexual love.

20 Cloudlike coiffures, "cicada-wing" curls, and "new moon" eyebrows are the T'ang equivalents of "lips like cherries," "teeth like pearls," and "eyes like stars"—the metaphorical itemization of feminine beauty.

21 What 屬豚 refers to in this line is uncertain; I have taken one of the numerous speculations.

22 Crows crying by night in the Censorate, evolving from an incident in Han omenology to a popular song to a yüeh-fu title, may suggest that the Censorate, charged with ferreting out official corruption, is idle.

23 Sparrows roosting in the Constabulary suggests corruption and idleness similar to that of the crows crying in the Censorate.

24 Peach and plum, here used in reference to the singing girls, comes from a much repeated Han proverb that, though peach and plum do not speak, a path forms to them; that is, people come to admire their beauty.

25 "Northern hall" refers to the women's quarters which were ritually located on the north side of a house. The young gallants are "like the moon" in that they come out by night and retire in the morning.

26 Kuan-fu was a Han general known both for his moral uprightness and arrogance.

27 A reference to Hsiao Wang-chih, a powerful minister at the time of Han Yüan-ti.

28 Yang Hsiung, one of the most outstanding Han writers and intellectuals, appears after the Han as an archetypal scholar-hermit.

29 For a more detailed and somewhat different interpretation of this poem see Hans Frankel, The Flowering Plum and the Palace Lady: Interpretations of Chinese Poetry (New Haven: Yale, 1976), pp. 130-43.

30 Yang-tzu Fa-yen (SPTK), 2.1a.

31 When the mythical Yellow Emperor was carried to his apotheosis on the back of a dragon, as many of his retinue as could hold on to the dragon accompanied him.

32 T'ang-shih chi-shih (SPTK), 10.21a-b.

33 The usual title of this poem is "Parting from Hsüeh Hua"; however, the WYYH gives "Parting from Hsüeh Sheng-hua on an Autumn Day." The Chūgoku Koten Shishū, vol. II, p. 16, points out that Hsüeh Hua lived in the eighth century and was an acquaintance of Li Po and Tu Fu. This poem was probably to Hsüeh Sheng-hua, to whom Wang Po also addressed a parting preface; see Wang Tzu-an chi (SPTK), 7.8a-b.

34 For example, T'ai-tsung's "On a Candle," p. 54.

35 WH, 19.

36 For a fuller and rather different treatment of this poem see Edward Schafer, "Notes on T'ang Culture III," MS 30 (1972-73),

pp. 108-16.

37 Yü Tzu-shan chi (SPTK), 3.17b.

38 I am grateful to Professor David Knechtges for urging me to reconsider the importance of "Long Ago."

Part Three

1 Yi-shan hsien-sheng wen-chi (SPTK), 11.4a.

2 Besides hints in his own works, the first person to claim a unique status for Ch'en's work was his friend Lu Ts'ang-yung in the preface to Ch'en Tzu-ang's collected works: "The Way had perished for some five hundred years, and then there was Master Ch'en." Such fu-ku tributes were, however, relatively common in prefaces, and do not constitute serious literary historical evaluations. The only person who dissented from the majority opinion was the late eighth-century poet and calligrapher Yen Chen-ch'ing 顏眞卿, who thought it overstated. See Yen Lu-kung wen-chi (SPTK), 12.1a-b.

3 Ch'en Po-yu wen-chi (SPTK), preface.

4 From Tu-yi chi 獨異記, preserved in T'ang-shih chi-shih (SPTK), 8.2a.

5 See Robert Hightower, "Some Characteristics of Parallel Prose," Studies in Chinese Literature, ed. John L. Bishop (Cambridge: Harvard, 1966), pp. 118-24.

6 It is impossible to say to what extent examination poems had to approximate what we now call "perfect" regulated verses (see appendix 2). Clear tonal proprieties did exist, and what later became a true tonal "violation" probably struck the ear of the examiner of the 680s as an awkwardness, varying in degree with the nature of the slip.

7 For example, 04448 and 04449.

8 A good example here might be the difference between the Chien-an "Parrot Fu" by Mi Heng, a topical allegory in which the poet compares his position with Huang Tsu to the captivity of the parrot, and the Western Chin "Wren Fu" by Chang Hua, a general allegory in which the wren represents the Taoist value of in-

significance. Attempts to interpret the latter topically are singularly unconvincing.

9 For this observation I am indebted to Professor Frank Westbrook.

10 Ch'u-tz'u pu-chu (SPTK), 5.2a.

11 Ch'üan San-kuo shih, 5.4b.

12 Preserved in several sources, the most complete being the K'ung-tzu chia-yü (SPTK), 8.7a.

13 Ch'en Po-yü wen-chi (SPTK), preface.

14 Ch'en Hang, Shih pi-hsing chien (preface dated 1854; reprinted Taipei: Yi-wen, 1963), 3.2b.

15 Cited in ibid., 3.4b. This appears in the Shih-wen-ch'üan-lou ts'ung-shu five chüan edition of the Shih-shih, 3.1a-1b. It does not appear in the shorter versions, and therefore there are questions as to its authenticity.

16 Ch'en Po-yü wen-chi (SPTK), 7.1a-3b.

17 For example, the poetry of Sun Ch'o 孫綽, Ch'üan Chin-shih, 5.12a-15a, and of the monk Chih-tun 支遁, Ch'üan Chin shih, 3.4a-b.

18 Chiang Wen-t'ung wen-chi (SPTK), 4.9b-10a.

19 Shih pi-hsing chien, 3.4a-b.

20 Another example of a poem in a style similar to the Kan-yu is 04443.

21 The term hsien-jen shih-chih comes originally from Liu Hsin's 劉歆 Shih-fu lüeh 詩賦略. In the Han, the theme primarily refers to political frustration—see Hellmut Wilhelm, "The Scholar's Frustration: Notes on a Type of Fu," in J. K. Fairbank, ed., Chinese Thought and Institutions (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957). Though the political dimension never entirely leaves the theme, in many T'ang poets and particularly in Ch'en Tzu-ang the "frustration" (shih-chih) becomes a more general "disillusionment" with the present world, its impermanence and the corruption of its society.

22 The text here has yi-yi 嶷嶷 which is neither an existing compound nor does it rhyme. The compound should perhaps be yi-yi 矣矣. If we assumed that Ch'en used the mouth radical intentionally, he may have meant ch'i-yi 嘆嶷, a compound used in

the T'ai-hsüan meaning "to make noise without making any sense." The meaning would fit here, and Ch'en might have mistaken the rhyme. I have taken the level tone yi-yi instead.

23 Irony and parody depend on an acute sense of the propriety in what is said. Ch'en's overuse of Buddhist terminology here seems to lie on the edge of parody, and if it is parody, then the "doctrine of names" in the last line would refer back ironically to the preceding abstractions.

24 Shih pi-hsing chien, 3.7a.

25 Li Sao, 1.151.

26 See Kuo-yü, 17, "Ch'u-yü" I.

27 Mu T'ien-tzu chuan (SPTK), 3.1a-b.

28 Shih chi, 38. This story is clearly related to the Mao interpretation of Shih 65 as a lament for the ruined Chou capital.

Part Four

1 The distinction between "formal" and "informal" occasional poetry is not hard and fast; however, it represents a genuine stylistic and often generic distinction. Social convention demanded a poem no less when sending a friend of middle rank off to a provincial post than when attending a banquet given by Princess An-lo, but the difference in rank of the addressee meant a great difference in the level of diction.

2 Ch'üan T'ang shih-hua, in Li-tai shih-hua, 1.20a.b. T'ang-shih chih-shih (SPTK), 9.1b-2a.

3 There are numerous other groupings of writers, most following the formula, "The X (number word) Y (a descriptive term, such as "talents: or "friends") of literature." These groupings are very problematic: we do not know when they were applied to what period they refer, nor do we know whether the grouping is literary, social, or simply because those poets happened to be the best-known poets of a certain era (as with "The Four Talents of the Early T'ang". One of the most interesting poetic groupings during the last years of Empress Wu's reign is that of the Chu-ying scholars, treated at length in an unpublished manuscript of

Hellmut Wilhelm. Professor Wilhelm has reconstructed the group of scholars who compiled the religious encyclopedia San-chiao chu-ying 三教珠英 for Empress Wu and has treated them as a poetic group for their inclusion in the lost anthology, the Chu-ying hsüeh-shih chi 珠英學士集, compiled in one chüan by Ts'ui Jung.

4 For example, in Fan Kuang 范況, Chung-kuo shih-hsüeh t'ung-lun 中國詩學通論 (Hong Kong: Shang-wu, 1959), pp. 252-56.

5 Ch'üan San-kuo shih, 2.13b.

6 Ibid., 5.1b.

7 Ch'üan Sung shih, 3.14a.

8 Ibid., 4.26b.

9 Ch'üan Liang shih, 7.8b.

10 Emending 云 for 己.

11 Wen-hsin tiao-lung (SPTK), 7.8a.

12 Ch'üan Han shih, 1.2a.

13 I use the term subgenre to designate the classification by subject matter and occasion and the term genre for the formal, metrical classification.

14 T'ang-shih chi-shih (SPTK), 9.2a-b.

15 The phrase shih-liu 石瀨 should mean "stony land," but it is clear from the context that Li Chiao is referring to the sound of water running over stones.

16 T'ang-shih chi-shih (SPTK), 3.6b.

17 Hsi-ching tsa-chi (SPTK), 4.3a-6a.

18 Ch'üan Chin wen, 33.13a. See Hellmut Wilhelm, "Shih Ch'ung and his Chin-ku-yüan," MS 18 (1959), pp. 315-27.

19 Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu tsung-mu, c.186.11a-13a. The SKCSTM editors explain that the collection's absence in early bibliographies by saying that banquet collections were preserved privately and not listed.

20 T'ang-shih chi-shih (SPTK), 10.24a-b.

21 The poem is so dated in Wang Wei's collected works; however, it is possible that he revised it later to leave a good impression of his youthful talents.

22 Reprinted in Yu-ts'un ts'ung-shu, 1882.

23 Ibid., preface.

24 These quatrains are preserved in the Wan-shou T'ang-jen chueh-chü; their style is so advanced that I have some doubts as to their authenticity.

25 There is some problem with the attribution of this poem.

26 T'ang-shih chi-shih (SPTK), 11.18a.

27 Ibid., 11.17b-18a.

28 Ibid., 6.12a-b.

29 Ibid., 8.10b.

30 Yüeh-fu shih-chi (SPTK), 29.11b-12a.

31 Ch'eng-chai chi (SPTK), 82.6a-8a.

32 For example, Hsü Wen-yu 許文雨, T'ang-shih chi-chieh 唐詩集解 (Taipei: Cheng-chung, 1954), vol. 2, p. 131.

33 Wei Ch'ing-chih, Shih-jen yü-hsieh (Taipei: Shih-chieh, 1966), p. 59.

34 If we accept the Tu Shen-yen attribution, then we probably should read 照, "shines," rather than the more interesting 轉, "makes coil." 照 is given both in the Wen-yüan ying-hua and in the Ming collection of Tu's poetry, but the San-t'i shih reads 轉 and attributes the poem to Tu Shen-yen.

35 Chin Sheng-t'an, Sheng-t'an hsüan-p'i T'ang ts'ai-tzu shih (Taipei: Cheng-chung, 1956), p. 1.

36 The dedication to Ch'iao Chih-chih is found in the late T'ang anthology Ts'ai-tiao chi, but not in the early eighth-century anthology Sou-yü hsiao-chi.

37 The distinctive fluidity of Shen Ch'üan-ch'i's courtly style appears clearly in the contrast between this poem and the other pieces of the series quoted in WYYH, 176.

38 In the TSCS this poem is attributed to Li Ch'ung-ssu 李崇嗣 who flourished during Empress Wu's reign and who was known by Ch'en Tzu-ang (04423). This quatrain does resemble other quatrains of Li. From its position in the CTS arrangement of Shen's poems, we may presume that the quatrain was also in the main body (rather than the addenda) of Shen Ch'üan-ch'i's Collected Works, which is unfortunately impossible to find now, apart from its inclusion in the CTS.

Part Five

1 This interpretation appears in Shih pi-hsing chien, c.3.26b-27a, and has recently been repeated in Daniel Altieri, "The Kan-yü of Chang Chiu-ling: Poems of Political Tragedy," Tamkang Review 4, no. 1 (April 1973), pp. 63-73.

Appendix 2

1 In my observations here I am indebted to Hugh Stimson for his numerous discussions with me on the subject of tone patterns and for his treatment of the subject in his Fifty-five T'ang Poems (New Haven: FEP, 1976).

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