

# BAI JUYI AND THE NEW YUEFU MOVEMENT

by

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## THESIS ABSTRACT

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Centering my focus on a detailed translation of the poetry of Bai Juyi's New *Yuefu*, I will reconstruct the poet's world on the foundation of political allegory found within his verse. Bai Juyi once said that there are four elements that compose poetry as a whole: Likened to a blossoming fruit tree, the root of poetry is in its emotions, its branches in its wording, its flowers in its rhyme and voice, and lastly its final culmination in the fruits of its meaning. Moreover, I will carefully research Bai Juyi's correspondence with other members of the New Yuefu Movement such as Yuan Zhen. As a whole, the aim of this thesis is to illuminate what I view to be Bai Juyi's own unique brand of poetic theory as well as the sociological philosophy behind its creation.

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Dedicated to my Grandmothers Bonnie Smith and Dorothea Gwyther

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Bai Juyi's New Yuefu poems may not be amongst his most famous body of work, but to the author himself these poems are the most precious. Bai Juyi crafted these poems in such a delicate fashion that he expertly used the past to precisely criticize problems in the present. He risked his career and livelihood to make a political point and still managed to remain employed as a devoted vassal of the Tang kingdom.

Over time Bai Juyi's poetry becomes less and less political. Eventually he comes to the realization that it is not quite practical to continue writing poems with such obvious underlying themes of veiled criticism of the Tang government. Although it can be said that it was just old age that eventually softened his political outlook, I will argue that before he quit writing New Yuefu poetry, Bai Juyi had already written a great amount to rectify the social ills he witnessed in the world around him. By making sure each poem was easy to read and musical in nature, he worked hard to ensure that his New Yuefu poems would remain in existence by popularizing them amongst the commoner community. During the years 808-810 of the Yuanhe period (806-820)<sup>i</sup> Bai Juyi composed his New Yuefu poems which were either devoted to enlightening the emperor and those in power or giving vent to the many troubles of the common person. At any rate, during this period Bai Juyi did his utmost to create literature of political and social value.

I would like to note that I chose to translate all fifty of Bai Juyi's New Yuefu poems out of a sense of personal curiosity and challenge. I find it quite odd that Bai Juyi's most sociologically relevant poetry is only given a summary treatment in Waley's body of work; however I must agree with Waley in his assertion that what makes Bai Juyi

so unique is that: “In no Chinese poet’s work does compassion for human suffering play so large a part. The works of his maturity – the ballads, satires, and petitions – are largely grounded on pity, and even at the close of his life, when indifference is apt to set in, we find him in the hard winter of 838 ashamed of the comfort of his stove side when he remembers that at that very moment ‘somewhere soldiers are marching to mount guard, travellers are trudging through the snow, strangers are stranded far from home, without food, without hope; prisoners are shivering in unlit cells.’”<sup>iii</sup>

Therefore to gain a fuller picture of just what Western sinologists have translated of these fifty New Yuefu poems, I took a detailed look at the work of several well-known scholars, yet unfortunately the results of my research were quite unexpected. At the inception of this thesis I was hopeful to find translations of all or a large portion of the fifty New Yuefu poems in English. However, when I began by reading Burton Watson’s *Po Chu-I: Selected Poems*, I noticed that the first New Yuefu poem mentioned is *The Boundless Sea*, and is matched up with a brief footnote speaking of the First Emperor of Qin’s expeditions to find herbs of immortality. Next is *The Broken Armed Old Man of Xinfeng*, and disappointingly so for a poem of such importance and breadth it is treated with a mere three notes regarding the dates, locations, and important names behind the events.

Watson’s translations are solid and easy to read, and I tried to match him in my own renditions of the same poems. However, while striving to create a new translation of these fifty New Yuefu poems, I was left woefully alone with a heap of source material. Fortunately enough, Burton Watson did include three more excellent translations: *The Gray Haired Maiden of Shangyang*, *Twill Weaved Silk*, and *The Elderly Charcoal*

*Monger*. Lastly, Howard Levy in his *Translations from Po Chu-I's Collected Works* includes a rendition of *The Gray Haired Maiden of Shangyang*, as well as a translation of the humorous anti-taxation poem *An Old Man of Tu-ling*.

In terms of methodology, I will rely on the translations of the poems I have prepared and offer commentary on them myself. I will also pair one of my translations with Eugene Feifel's work *Po Chu-yi as a Censor*<sup>iii</sup> which contains translated memorials by Bai Juyi presented to Emperor Xianzong (778-820) in the 808-810 period. As this is the same period as his New Yuefu poems, I intend to draw on one of these memorials in my interpretation of the New Yuefu poems. The New Yuefu movement was largely a two person effort with Bai Juyi leading and his counterpart Yuan Zhen following. The movement itself totals fifty poems for Bai Juyi. Yuan Zhen follows up on Bai Juyi's work by taking up a few of the same title poems and writing his own ones. It should be noted that the other members of the movement are extremely hard to come by and so will not be included in this thesis. My own translations focus on the first person perspective and are written slightly in a more forceful tone than other translations I have encountered.

At this juncture I will list the fifty poems that I have translated and include a brief description of the contents of each poem. Although it may seem repetitive before we go further it is quite necessary to know how the poems were ordered originally and a little about the contents therein.

The first poem is "Qi de wu" 七德舞 and is translated as The Dance of Seven Virtues. This poem is about the deeds of the founding emperor of the Tang Dynasty.

The second poem is "Fa qu" 法曲 and is translated as Model Music. This poem is a description of the Tang dynasty's rise to prosperity and subsequent fall into chaos.

The third poem is "Er wang hou" 二王后 and is translated as Two Kings Descendants. This poem is a description of the changes that occur from one dynasty to the next.

The fourth poem is "Hai man man" 海漫漫 and is translated as The Boundless Sea. This poem is about the uselessness of ancient (and contemporary) kings' search for herbs of immortality.

The fifth poem is "Li bu ji" 立部伎 and is translated as Standing Section Players. This poem is about traditional court music and its downward trend.

The sixth poem is "Hua yuan qing" 华原磬 and is translated as The Chime Stone of Hua Yuan. This poem is about ancient musical instruments and their effect on society.

The seventh poem is "Shangyang baifa ren" 上阳白发人 and is translated as The Gray Haired Maiden of Shangyang. This poem is a narrative story of a woman who has spent her entire life locked behind the doors of the emperor's rear palace.

The eighth poem is "Hu xuan nü" 胡旋女 and is translated as The Nomad Whirling Dancer. This poem is a description of a popular foreign dance and its effect on society.

The ninth poem is "Xinfeng zhebi weng" 新丰折臂翁 and is translated as The Broken Armed Old Man of Xinfeng. This poem is the story of an old man who broke his arm as a youth so that he could avoid serving in a war in Yunnan.

The tenth poem is "Tai hang lu" 太行路 and is translated as The Grand Pass. This poem uses the analogy of husband and wife to illustrate the relationship between ruler and minister.

The eleventh poem is "Si tian tai" 司天台 and is translated as The Court Astronomers. This poem is a description of court astronomers at work observing the night sky for celestial portents.

The twelfth poem is "Bu huang" 捕蝗 and is translated as Catching Locusts. This poem is a description of a farming community dealing with a natural disaster of locusts.

The thirteenth poem is "Kunming chunshui man" 昆明春水满 and is translated as The Swelling Spring Waters of Kunming Pool. This poem sings of the many benefits of a pond in the city of Chang-an.

The fourteenth poem is "Cheng yan zhou" 城盐州 and is translated as Wall Yanzhou. This poem is about building a wall around Yanzhou to protect it against bandit incursion.

The fifteenth poem is "Dao zhou min" 道州民 and is translated as The People of Daozhou. This poem tells the story of a community of dwarves and their prefect who saved them from slavery in the imperial court.

The sixteenth poem is "Xun xi" 驯犀 and is translated as The Tame Rhinoceros. This poem tells the story of a tame rhinoceros that was given to the court of the Tang as a gift and later died during an unusually cold winter.

The seventeenth poem is "Wu xian tan" 五弦弹 and is translated as Five Strings Plucked. This poem is about the drastic changes in court music and how they constitute a severe downward progression.

The eighteenth poem is "Man zi chao" 蛮子朝 and is translated as Barbarians of the South. This poem tells the story of the barbarians from the south coming to pay tribute to the Tang emperor.

The nineteenth poem is "Piao guo yue" 骠国乐 and is translated as The Musicians of Burma. The poem is about the emperor enraptured while watching the Burmese musicians perform for his court.

The twentieth poem is "Fu rong ren" 缚戎人 and is translated as The Bound Captive of Rong. This poem is the story of a conscript and his experiences following the Tang army that conscripted him.

The twenty-first poem is "Li gong gao" 骊宫高 and is translated as Lofty the Li Palace. This poem is about how Emperor Xianzong forgoes the pleasures of the rear palace and instead cares about people's labor and money.

The twenty-second poem is "Bai lian jing" 百链镜 and is translated as The Hundred Linked-chain Mirror. This poem describes one of the prized possessions of the emperor.

The twenty-third poem is "Qing shi" 青石 and is translated as The Limestone. This poem is about the varied sayings that could be carved into a limestone tablet.

The twenty-fourth poem is "Liang zhu ge" 两朱阁 and is translated as A Pair of Crimson Pavilions. This poem is about the ever increasing number of Buddhist temples.

The twenty-fifth poem is "Xi liang ji" 西凉伎 and is translated as This Actor of Xiliang. This poem is the retelling of an opera in which the western garrison is overrun by barbarian tribes.



The twenty-sixth poem is "Ba jun tu" 八骏图 and is translated as The Painting of Eight Stallions. This poem scathingly retells the legendary entourages that former emperors take on retreats.

The twenty-seventh poem is "Jian di song" 涧底松 and is translated as A Pine at the Bottom of a Gully. This poem is a lamentation of forgotten scholars who never rise to prominence.

The twenty-eighth poem is "Mu dan fang" 牡丹芳 and is translated as Peony Fragrance. This poem uses flower imagery to show the emperor's exceptional worry for the farmers of his kingdom.

The twenty-ninth poem is "Hong xian tan" 红线毯 and is translated as Crimson Threaded Carpet. This poem shows the author's concern for everything involved during the wasteful production of silk and the weaving of carpets that cover not people but the ground.

The thirtieth poem is "Du ling sou" 杜陵叟 and is translated as The Old Man of Duling. This poem is a scathing and humorous attack against the taxation of farmers.

The thirty-first poem is "Liao ling" 缭绫 and is translated as Twill Weaved Silk. This poem is about the incredible skill that goes into crafting this particular type of silk.

The thirty-second poem is "Mai tan weng" 卖炭翁 and is translated as This Elderly Charcoal Monger. This poem is about the sufferings of a poor old charcoal monger whose charcoal is requisitioned by the eunuchs for nothing but a piece of silk.

The thirty-third poem is "Mu bie zi" 母别子 and is translated as A Mother's Farewell with a Son. This poem is about a mother losing her grandsons when her own son remarries someone else.

The thirty-fourth poem is "Yin shan dao" 阴山道 and is translated as The Path at Yinshan. This poem is about the buying of specialized commodities and the sending off of a princess to the barbarian tribes.

The thirty-fifth poem is "Shi shi zhuang" 时世妆 and is translated as The Fashions of the Times. This poem explains the various shocking fashions in makeup that were popular during the time.

The thirty-sixth poem is "Li fu ren" 李夫人 and is translated as His Lady Li. This poem is against the favoring of wives and the various acts of mourning that go along with losing once loved beauties.

The thirty-seventh poem is "Ling yuan qie" 陵园妾 and is translated as The Concubines of the Mausoleum. This poem is about the plight of women serving the imperial mausoleum.

The thirty-eighth poem is "Yan shang fu" 盐商妇 and is translated as The Salt Merchant's Wife. This poem is about the material excesses of a certain salt merchant's wife.

The thirty-ninth poem is "Xing wei liang" 杏为梁 and is translated as Apricot Wood Beams. This poem is a satire of extravagant buildings made for the upper class of society.

The fortieth poem is "Jing di yin yin ping" 井底引银瓶 and is translated as From the Bottom of a Well to Pull up a Silver Pail. This poem is the story of a young woman's illegitimate marriage into the family of an already wed rich man.

The forty-first poem is "Guan niu" 官牛 and is translated as The Minister's Ox. This poem is a satire of how an official poorly treats the ox that pulls his cart.

The forty-second poem is "Zi hao bi" 紫毫笔 and is translated as The Rabbit Fur Brush. The poem is about the beauty of the brush and its potential use for the lowly censors of the court.

The forty-third poem is "Sui di liu" 隋堤柳 and is translated as Sui Levy Willows. This poem is a nostalgic look back on a garden that used to be beautiful but is now in complete disrepair.

The forty-fourth poem is "Cao mang mang" 草茫茫 and is translated as The Grasses Boundless. This poem is against the act of holding expensive burial ceremonies.

The forty-fifth poem is "Gu zhong hu" 古冢狐 and is translated as The Old Grave Fox. This poem is against falling prey to old fox spirits and calls instead for falling in love with true beauty.

The forty-sixth poem is "Hei tan long" 黑潭龙 and is translated as Black Pond Dragon. This poem is against people being superstitious and building temples for imaginary creatures.

The forty-seventh poem is "Tian ke du" 天可度 and is translated as Heaven Can Be Guessed at. This poem is a piece that shows disgust for tricksters and their quick mouthed sayings.

The forty-eighth poem is "Qin ji liao" 秦吉了 and is translated as The Lucky Qin Parrot. This poem tells the story of the life of a parrot and how little it knows of the outside world.

The forty-ninth poem is "Ya jiu jian" 鴉九劍 and is translated as Yajiu's Sword. This poem is a brief description of a legendary sword and its one-time use to show to a stranger.

The fiftieth and last poem is "Cai shi guan" 采诗官 and is translated as The Poem Collector. This poem is an argument for the emperor to allow New Yuefu poems to teach him what the world outside the palace is dealing with.

I will rely heavily on the works of the Chinese historian Chen Yinke (1890-1969). Chen has one work that deals primarily with the poetry of Yuan Zhen and Bai Juyi. It is the *Yuan and Bai Poetry Annotation and Evidence Draft*, or *Yuan Bai shi jianzheng gao* 元白诗笺证稿. The second is *The Evidence and History of Yuan and Bai's Poetry*, or *Yuan Bai shi zheng shi* 元白诗证史. The latter is a vernacular rendition of Chen Yinke's lectures and writings of Yuan and Bai's works. I will rely mostly on this source, as Chen Yinke's original comments in the former book are written in Classical Chinese. However, Liu's paraphrasing of Chen's ideas still lends a great amount of useful historical background information to this thesis.

Now prior to delving into the subsequent portions of this thesis, it is essential to give a brief overview of the literary history surrounding the emergence of the New Yuefu movement in the Tang. Moreover, I will discuss how its emergence and development was received in the Yuanhe period of the Tang.

To understand the New Yuefu, it is important to learn of the original Yuefu or Music Bureau (Poetry) which started in the reign of Emperor Wu of Han (156-87 BCE). Since Yuefu poetry is political in nature, it bears mentioning that during this relatively early period in Chinese history also lived Sima Qian (145-86 BC) who was one of China's most illustrious historians, and was also rather politically provocative in his writings of history.

The modern day author Li Tang mentions in his biography entitled: "Han Wudi", "Sima Qian in his writing of history wrote whatever was there, he did not fear violence, and did not even fear the Emperor. When he wrote the biographical history of Emperor Jing of Han, he spoke of Emperor Wu's time, and he took all of his shortcomings and spoke them out. After the document was finished, Emperor Wu saw it and was greatly angered. He immediately ordered that the shortcomings be taken out. A man of the times, writing of the affairs of the times, he did not write of achievements or praise morality. He dared to speak of the Emperor's shortcomings, and this kind of spirit is admirable."<sup>1</sup> Bai Juyi, just like his predecessor Sima Qian took it upon himself to explain the true situation of the times to the common people rather than garner personal praise and fame from those higher above him. Supporting this statement, is his letter to his friend and fellow poet Yuan Zhen he states: "It was in the beginning that I made a name for myself through writing; and it was in the end that I was incriminated by my works, as well I should be."

Regarding the creation of the Music Bureau (which is literally Yuefu), Li Tang states, "The poetry that we call 'Yuefu' can be textually formed into a musical voice, [it is] poetry that can be sung aloud. This is called Yuefu poetry, or Yuefu songs and poems,

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<sup>1</sup> Li Tang, *Han Wudi* p. 107: Chinese original, "司马迁写史是由什么说什么，不畏强暴，连皇帝也不怕。他写汉景帝的本纪，说到武帝时，就把武帝的短处都说出来。书成之后，武帝看了大怒，立命削去其短。一个当事人，当时世事，不歌功颂德，敢于写皇帝的短处，这种精神是可佩的。"

or simply called Yuefu. Yuefu was one of the bureaus that dealt with management of music. In the very beginning it was Emperor Wu of Han that established it, and later generations took on its cause. The post of the Yuefu was to search out the songs of the common people, and arrange them into music. In the time the official that was in charge with adjusting the musical scores was the famous grand musician Li Yannian and his helper Zhang Zhongchun. Yuefu mainly used five-character lines, and the majority [of songs] came from the common people. Then it was the literati that worked to embellish them to become a form suitable to be musical poetry...it was all the way into the Tang Dynasty that these [poems] were still lively in literary circles."<sup>2</sup>

Moving on it must be mentioned that the New Yuefu Movement was not wholly Bai Juyi's own creation, for with the help of his lifelong friend, the poet Yuan Zhen, during the Mid-Tang era they succeeded in promoting this form of *fengyu* (讽喻诗) poetry. Moreover the New Yuefu relied on seven-character verse as opposed to the ancient five-character form. In a few cases Yuan Zhen drafted a poem before Bai Juyi; for example Yuan Zhen wrote the first version of the poem The Gray Haired Maiden of Shangyang 上阳白发人.

Building on the work of the master poets Du Fu (712-770) and Chen Zi-ang (661-702), the two formed a unique type of contemporary New Yuefu poetry that is primarily concerned with educating the populace; through the singing of these particular New

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<sup>2</sup> Li Tang, *Han Wudi* p. 108: Chinese original, "所谓乐府诗歌，是能谱成乐声，唱出来的诗歌，称为乐府诗歌，或乐府歌诗，简称乐府。乐府是汉皇朝掌管音乐的管家府署。最初，由汉武帝设立，后世因之。乐府职务是搜求民间的诗歌，整理入乐，当时主管乐府的协律都尉，是有名的大音乐家李延年，以及助手张仲春。乐府诗歌，大体以五言为主，大多来自民间，再经文士加工润饰，成为一种适合入乐的诗歌。。。到唐代还依然活跃在文坛上。"

Yuefu poems as songs, ideally the ultimate goal was for the core message within these satirical poems to be popularized to such an extent that it will reach the Emperor's ears.

It must also be mentioned that the New Yuefu Movement of the Yuanhe Reign also included the poets Li Shen 李绅 (772-846) and Zhang Ji 张籍 (767-830); however, the complete collection of their New Yuefu poems have long since fallen out of circulation. Nonetheless, as the remaining members of the movement Bai Juyi and Yuan Zhen in their frequent correspondence created the Yuanhe style of poetry which was rooted in the Confucian ideals of society-based allegorical poetry rooted in the Book of Odes *Shi jing*.

#### Notes

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<sup>i</sup> Huang Zhishu, *Bai Juyi Xiangshan ji* p. 12

<sup>ii</sup> Arthur Waley, *The Life and Times of Po Chu-I* p. 17

<sup>iii</sup> Eugene Feifel, *Po Chu-yi as a Censor* p. 1

## CHAPTER II

### THE LITERARY THEORY BEHIND THE NEW YUEFU POETRY

In this chapter, I will analyze two key pieces of writing by Bai Juyi to illustrate the core literary theory behind the conception of his New Yuefu series: Bai's preface to the poems and Bai's letter to Yuan Zhen. His preface displays the fact that Bai Juyi writes all of the New Yuefu primarily for the sake of the people and those in power, including the emperor himself. His letter to Yuan Zhen gives much needed background to Bai Juyi as a poet and his own feelings on poetry and its creation. First, the preface.

"The Preface states: This work is composed of nine thousand two hundred and fifty-two characters and broken into fifty poems. The poems have no set number of lines, and there are no set number of characters in each poem. The poems are connected by the meaning behind the piece and not its literary ornamentation. The first line of each poem marks and explains the title; the last stanza displays the intention of the piece, following the tradition of the Book of Odes. The language is simple and straight to the point in the hope of being easy to understand. The wording is direct and pertinent in the hope that readers will find profound moral instruction within. The events depicted in the poems have been checked and confirmed so that those who transmit them will consider them trustworthy. Its style is smooth, unrestrained, and can be adapted to the tunes of songs and music. In summation, these poems are written for the sake of the ruler, for the sake of the minister, for the sake of the people, for the sake of things, for the sake of events, and not merely for the sake of making literature itself."

序曰凡九千二百五十二言，断为五十篇。篇无定句，句无定字，系于意不系于文。首句标其目，卒章显其志，《诗》三百之义也。其辞质而径，欲见之者易谕



也。其言直而切，欲闻之者深诚也。其事核而实，使采之者传信也。其体顺而肆，可以播于乐章歌曲也。总而言之，为君为臣为民为物为事而作，不为文而作也。<sup>iv</sup>

To gain a fuller picture of the literary theory behind his New Yuefu poems, it is best to read his Letter to Yuan Zhen, which I have translated below. This letter has not been translated in any other English version of Bai Juyi's body of work that I know of. Naturally there was an option to summarize the contents from my own point of view, however I believe that viewing the letter in its original form (although translated) is best to get a deeper view of Bai Juyi's history as a poet, his friendship with Yuan Zhen, and some of the literary theory behind the creation of the New Yuefu series of poems.

The reasoning behind adding the whole letter to this thesis is simply because the fifty New Yuefu poems are also a very long body of work, which as Bai said total to about 9250 characters. This letter adds additional background to how Bai Juyi viewed himself as a poet, and also the type of poems that he prized most of all - the poems of a satirical, allegorical, and didactical nature also known as *fengyu* 讽喻 poetry.

"On This Date, Juyi reports to Weizhi (Yuan Zhen): Ever since you were demoted to Jiangling and up until now – you and I have shared nearly a hundred poems together. Whenever a poem comes from you to me, you would humiliate yourself by accompanying it with a letter or a preface, positioned in front of the work. In it you would state the meaning and moral principles of poems ancient and present, and recount the reasons and circumstances under which they were written and when they were written."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> I would like to reinforce that I have not found any extant mention of this letter in Arthur Waley's *The Life and Times of Po Chu-I*. Nor was the letter mentioned in Howard Levy's *Translation from Po Chu-I's Collected Works*.

月日，居易白。微之足下：自足下谪江陵于今，凡枉赠答诗仅百篇。每诗来，或辱序，或辱书，冠于卷首，皆所以陈古今歌诗之义，且自叙为文因缘，与年月之远近也。

"Having received your poems and apprehended the meaning therein, I had always wanted to respond to you, to outline the basic principles of poetry and songs, and also to explain my own intentions behind my works – all these things in one letter presented to you."

仆既受足下诗，又谕足下此意，常欲承答来旨，粗论歌诗大端，并自述为文之意，总为一书致足下前。

"However, over these years I had been enveloped in work and had very little free time. Whenever I did have time and wanted to do something like this, I did not think I have ever exceeded what you have seen so far. I had written it out on paper perhaps four times, but then again I gave up, leaving my intentions unfulfilled—until now."

累岁已来，牵故少暇；间有容隙，或欲为之，又自思所陈亦无出足下之见；临纸复罢者数四，卒不能成就其志，以至于今。

"Now I have been demoted to a post in Xunyang, and other than staying alive by eating and drinking, there is not much else to do. So, I have taken to looking through the twenty-six works you have left with me since you arrived at Tongzhou. As soon as I opened the scrolls I immediately understood your meaning. It was almost like having a conversation with you in person. My heart filled up with things I wanted to say quickly, but then self-doubt set in, knowing that what I put out in words might be tens of thousands of leagues away from what was on my mind. Then the intensity of my pent-up mind was such that I really wanted to let the dregs out, so I followed out my previous

intentions and worked at writing this letter. I hope that you will read it carefully for the sake of myself, as this would do me a great honor."

今俟罪浔阳，除盥栉食寝外无余事，因览足下去通州日所留新旧文二十六轴。开卷得意，忽如会面。心所畜者，便欲快言，往往自疑，不知相去万里也。既而愤悱之气，思有所洩，遂追就前志，勉为此书，足下幸试为仆留意一省。

"What we speak of as literature is most supreme [or important]. The three cai 才 [Heaven, Earth, and Humanity] all have its literature. Of Heaven's literature, the "Three Lights" are the first; while the "Five Elements" are the first of Earth's literature. Of the literature of man, the "Six Classics" are first, and of those "Six Classics," "The Odes" are first. Why is this so? It is because the sages used poems to move and transform people's hearts, and to bring peace to the world. Of the things that move people's hearts, nothing is ahead of emotion, nothing is quicker than words, nothing is closer than voice, and nothing is deeper than meaning. In a poem, its root is emotion, its branches in its words, its flowers in its voice, and its fruits in its meaning. Above from the worthy and holy, below to the foolish, small like pigs and fish, hidden away like ghosts and gods: the types are different but the airs are the same, the forms are each different but the emotion is as one."

夫文，尚矣，三才各有文。天之文三光首之；地之文五材首之；人之文《六经》道之就《六经》言，《诗》又首之。何者？圣人感人心而天下和平。感人心者莫先乎情，莫始乎言，莫切乎声，莫深乎义。诗者，根情，苗言，华声，实义。上自贤圣，下至愚騃，微及豚鱼，幽及鬼神，群分而气同，形异而情一。

"To receive stimulation of voice and sound, but not produce a reverberation, to come into contact with feeling and emotion yet not be affected in one's heart, this sort of thing simply does not exist. The sages understood this quite well, so they took this language [of poetry] and made it into the Six Meanings [*Liuyi* of the Book of Odes]; and took the voice and made the Five Tones."

未有声入而不应、情交而不感者。圣人知其然，因其言经之以六义；缘其声，纬之以五音。

"The Five Tones each have their rhyming; the Six Meanings each have their categories. When the rhyme scheme is coordinated, the language is smooth; when the language is smooth, its voice can easily move people. When the categories are ordered, the emotion can be seen, and when the emotion of the piece is manifest it can easily reverberate in people's hearts. Therefore those works that greatly contain deep meaning link together the profound and secret, and let pass through up to the ruler and down to the populace, thus the two vapors [i.e., yin and yang] are at peace; and when worries and joys are joined together, then the hundred wills of the people are prosperous. The Five Emperors and Three Kings acted with rectitude, and with little effort bring order to people lies in taking this as their great handle, using this as their primary tool. Thus when we listen to songs such as "The King is Wise; the Ministers are Fine,"<sup>4</sup> we immediately know that Emperor Yu's rule was flourishing. And when one hears "The Five Brothers of Luo-Rui"<sup>5</sup> one immediately knows that the governance of the Xia Dynasty was wasteful.

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<sup>4</sup> Li Min, Wang Jian, *Shangshu Yizhu*, p. 50: This refers to a song in the Yiji 益稷 (Xia Dynasty) section of the Shangshu 尚书, in which a minister named Gao Yao 皋陶 didactically speaks with the emperor and towards the end of the conversation [the emperor] is lauded by another minister by the name of Geng Zai 夔载, who composes a song with the lyrics of "The King is Wise! The Ministers are Fine! The People and their affairs are Healthy!" Or in Chinese, "元首明哉! 股肱良哉! 庶事康哉!"

The speaker has no crime; the listener can take it as an admonition. Therefore, those who speak and hear such admonitions invariably both exhaust the efforts of their mind."

音有韵，义有类。韵协则言顺，言顺则声易入；类举则情见，情见则感易交。于是乎孕大含深，贯微洞密上下通而二气泰，忧乐合而百志熙。五帝三王所以直道而行、垂拱而理者，揭此以为大柄，决此以为大窞也。故闻“元首明，股肱良”之歌，则知虞道昌矣。闻五子洛汭之歌，则知夏政荒矣。言者无罪，闻者作诫言者闻者莫不两尽其心焉。

"Since the Zhou fell and the Qin rose, the post of a Poem Gathering Minister was thusly wasted. The King no longer used poetry to examine the contemporary political situation, and the people no longer used songs to both vent out and give guidance to the people's sentiment. Thus a trend of flattery for the king's accomplishments came into practice, and ways of saving the King from his mistakes and shortcomings were lacking. Thusly in that time, the Six Meanings began to see their undoing in one fell stab. Thus, the "Airs of the States" transformed into Chuci poetry, and five-character poems began with Su Wu and Li Ling. Both the Odes and the Chuci are expressions of frustration and can be tied to their author's aims and ambitions, which are then expressed in words. Thereafter, verses like that composed on the river bridge<sup>6</sup> stopped at expressing the pains

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<sup>5</sup> Li Min, Wang Jian, *Shangshu Yizhu*, p. 92-96: This song refers to the five younger brothers of King Taikang 太康 of the Xia Dynasty. The brothers lead the king to the mouth of the Luo-Rui river and each admonishes him in song to follow the example of the Great Yu 大禹.

<sup>6</sup> Xiao Tong, *Wen Xuan*, vol. 1, p. 637. This refers to a poem composed during the Western Han (206 BC - 23 AD) period by Su Wu and Li Ling. It is a poem of parting that takes place on a river bridge. This poem shows the feeling of resentment and sorrow that parting between friends brings.

of parting; poems like that composed by the marsh<sup>7</sup> returns to mere thoughts of resentment. Poems like these only deal with frustration and melancholy, and have no time for anything else."

洎周衰秦兴，采诗官废，上不以诗补察时政，下不以歌泄导人情。用至于谄成之风动，救失之道缺。于时六义始剝矣。《国风》变为骚辞，五言始于苏 [武]、李 [陵];《诗》《骚》皆不遇者，各系其志，发而为文。故河梁之句，止于伤别；泽畔之吟，归于怨思。彷徨抑郁，不暇及他耳。

"However, their departure from 'the Odes' was still not far off, as its outline was still there. Therefore separation is evoked metaphorically with a pair of wild ducks and a lone goose, and for praising the gentleman or criticising the petty man the analogies of fragrant plants or evil birds are used as a comparison. To satirize the King and petty men, therefore taking vanilla disgusting a bird as a comparison. Even though the categories of the Six Meanings<sup>8</sup> of classical poetry are no longer complete, twenty or thirty percent of the ancient poets' principles still remain. But at this time, the Six Meanings have started to be in lack of something!"

然去《诗》未远，梗概尚存。故兴离别则引双凫一雁为喻，讽君子小人则引香草恶鸟为比。虽义类不具，犹得风人之什二三焉。于时六义始缺矣。

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<sup>7</sup> It is a reference to a portion of Qu Yuan's *Li Sao* 离骚. It describes Qu Yuan's act of composing poems by the marshes as recorded by Sima Qian in the *Shiji*: "Qu Yuan arrived at the river and, with his hair hanging down, while strolling by the marshes, composed poems" 屈原至于江滨，被发行吟泽畔。

<sup>8</sup> Pei Puxian, *Shijing Yandu Zhidao*, p. 15-20. The "Six Meanings" of poetry come from the preface to the *Odes*. The first is Feng 风 or the "musical airs" of poetry (referring to the Guofeng 国风 or airs of the states), the second is the Fu 赋 style of direct to the topic poetry, the third is Bi 比 or poems of analogy, the fourth is Xing 兴 or poems of metaphor, the fifth is Ya 雅, which refers to the proper music of the capital, and lastly, the sixth is Song 颂, which refers to the music and poetry of the ancestral temple.

"Since the Jin and Liu Song dynasties, those who were able to obtain these were even fewer. The profundities of Xie Lingyun were but drowned in the scenery; the highly elegant and ancient simplistic quality of Tao Yuanming's poetry was placed alongside his fields and gardens."

晋、宋已还，得者盖寡。以康乐之奥博，多溺于山水；以渊明之高古，偏放于田园。

"Jiang Yan, Bao Zhao and their group, are in even narrower place than the latter mentioned poets. Poems like Liang Hong's "Five Sighs" are but one or two lone examples among maybe a hundred. At this moment, the Six Meanings were increasingly in decline."

江，鲍之流，又狭于此。如梁鸿五噫之例者，百无一二焉。于时，六义寝微矣。

"This decline continued on to the Liang and Chen dynasties, and it was nothing but just more moaning about the wind and snow or playing with flowers and plants. Alas! These poems of wind and snow, of flowers and plants, are they ever lacking in the Odes? But this just depends on how they are used. Take for example, "The Northern Wind is Cold," which borrows the wind and uses it to satirize the cruelty of those in power; or "The Rain and Snow Fall Heavy," which uses the snow to pity the drafted soldiers; "The White Poplar and Its Flowers," which uses the affective image of the flowers to satirize the relationship between brothers; "Gathering up the Plantain Herb," which is praising a beautiful herb to congratulate one's wife on having a son. All of these metaphors start from "this" and the meaning returns to "that." How could it be the opposite of this! Then there are lines like, "The lingering red clouds part and become a beautiful embroidered

brocade, the limpid river is as clear as white silk"; or, "The fallen blossoms are first touched with dew, the parting leaves suddenly bid farewell with the wind."<sup>9</sup> This kind of wording is ever so lovely! But I am not sure what allegorical meaning is left. Therefore I call this mere "Moaning about the wind and snow, and playing with the flowers and grass." And so, it was in this age that the Six Meanings were gone entirely!"

陵夷至于梁、陈间，率不过嘲风雪、弄花草而已。噫！风雪花草之物，三百篇中岂舍之乎？顾所用何如耳。设如“北风其凉”，假风以刺威虐；“雨雪霏霏”，因雪以愍征役；“棠棣之华”，感华以讽兄弟；“采采芣苢”，美草以乐有子也。皆兴发于此而义归于彼。反是者，可乎哉！然则“余霞散成绮，澄江净如练”，“归花先委露，别叶早辞风”之什，丽则丽矣，吾不知其所讽焉。故仆所谓嘲风雪、弄花草而已。于时六义尽去矣。

"The Tang has flourished for two hundred years, and in that time there have been countless poets. Those that bear mention are Chen Zi-ang, and his twenty *Gan-yu* poems, and Bao Fang's fifteen *Gan-xing* poems."

唐兴二百年，其间诗人不可胜数。所可举者，陈子昂有《感遇诗》二十首，鲍防《感兴诗》十五篇。

"The most outstanding of poets of the Tang are of course Li Bai and Du Fu, whose works show such wondrous talent that no one could ever best! But as for connecting with any of the Six Meanings, in ten poems not one of them is used. Du Fu is the most prolific, with over a thousand poems in circulation. As for his connecting of the past with the present, his carving of the poetic meter, it is detailed and precise, and shows a

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<sup>9</sup> Ye Zhusheng, *Bao Canjun Shizhu* p. 154-155: This refers to a poem by Bao Zhao (d. 466) entitled "Playing with the Moon at the Imperial Offices of the Western Gate". Or in the original Chinese "玩月城西门廨中."



consummate workmanship that exceeds Li Bai. However, if you gather up Du Fu's poems like, "The Officials of Xin-an," "The Officials of Stone Moat Village," "The Officials of Tongguan," "The Gourd Valley Pass," and "Flower Gate," and his lines like "The crimson gates rank with wine and meat, along the road are freezing bones": these are only found in three or four (out of ten) of his poems. If with Du Fu it is like this, what can you expect of those who can never reach his level?"

又诗之豪者，世称李、杜。李之作，才矣！奇矣！人不迨矣！索其风雅比兴十无一焉。杜诗最多，可传者千余首，至于贯穿古今，颯缕格律，尽工尽善，又过于李焉。然撮其《新安》、《石壕》、《潼关吏》、《芦子关》、《花门》之章，“朱门酒肉臭，路有冻死骨”之句，亦不过十三四。杜尚如此，况不迨杜者乎？

"I always feel such pain when I see poetry being ruined; I get so upset and frustrated that I cannot eat or toss about in bed. I am overreaching my talent and wish to bring poetry back up to what it once was. Alas, things go quite against my own wishes, and I cannot express this well enough in one or two sentences, but I just have to crudely say something about it."

仆常痛诗道崩坏，忽忽愤发，或废食辍寝，不量才力，欲扶起之。嗟乎！事有大谬者，又不可一二而言，然亦不能不粗陈于左右。

"When I was just six or seven months old, my nanny took me up to the bookcase and pointed at the character 'zhī' and then at 'wú'; this was before I was even able to speak, but in my heart I silently recognized them. Later on she asked me which character was which, and whether she asked ten times or a hundred, I would always point at the right one. Thus my parents already knew of my destiny to study and of my livelihood in the realm of literature."

仆始生六七月时，乳母抱弄于书屏下，有指“之”字、“无”字示仆者，仆口未能言，心已默识。后有问此二字者，虽百十其试，而指之不差。则知仆宿习之缘，已在文字中矣。

"When I was five or six, I learned how to write poems. By nine, I became familiar with the rhymes. By fifteen or sixteen I started to learn about the *Jinshi* examination, and thusly began to study hard. Since I was twenty, during the day I was practicing writing *fu*, at night I was studying brushwork, and in between I would practice writing poems. I had no time to rest or even sleep! It got so that I had sores on my tongue and my elbow had gone callous. After I grew up, my skin was thin, my body was not strong; before old age, my teeth and hair had already gone white; my eyes were all fuzzy as if tens of thousands of little flies and pearls were flying and falling right in my pupils, moving this way and that. All of this was probably caused from my hard time spent studying!"

及五六岁，便学为诗。九岁谳识声韵。十五六始知有进士，苦节读书。二十已来，昼课赋，夜课书，间又课诗，不遑寢息矣。以至于口舌成疮，手肘成胝。既壮而肤革不丰盈，未老而齿发早衰白，瞽然如飞蝇垂珠在眸子中者，动以万数，盖以苦学力文之所致！

"I felt sorry for myself that my family was poor and had many other problems; that only by the time I was twenty-seven did I begin to take the provincial examination. And after I passed that, even though I was still concentrating on preparing for my tests, I did not neglect my poetry. So by the time I was appointed as an Imperial Collator, I had already composed between three and four hundred poems. Sometimes I would let friends like you take a look at my poetry. Everyone that looked at them say that they were

written very skilfully. At that point I actually had not yet been able to glimpse at the realm of ancient authors."

又自悲家贫多故，年二十七，方从乡赋。既第之后虽专于科试，亦不废诗。及授校书郎时已盈三四百首。或出示交友如足下辈，见皆谓之工，其实未窥作者之域耳。

"Since I started work at the Imperial Court, I had grown older, and also had experienced many more things. Every time that I spoke with someone I would bring up the politics of the times; every time that I read books and histories, I would examine it for ways of governance. So it was in that time that I began to know that literature is written for the sake of the times, and songs and poems are written for the sake of events. At that time the Emperor had just taken the throne, the court was full of upright men, and many edicts were sent down to investigate the people's sufferings and hardships."

自登朝来，年齿渐长，阅事渐多。每与人言，多询时务；每读书史，多求理道。始知文章合为时而著，歌诗合为事而作。是时皇帝初即位，宰府有正人，屡降玺书，访人急病。

"At the time I was promoted to the Hanlin Academy; my position was as an Imperial Censor, with memorials presented to the throne monthly. Between the times I sent my memorials up to the throne, whenever there was something that can provide relief to the suffering of the people and mend the faults and errors of the time, and that was difficult to speak directly [to the throne], I would promptly make songs and poems of them, in the hope that it would quietly reach the Emperor himself. This was done, firstly, to aid the Emperor's knowledge, and to assist him in his worries over ruling the nation; secondly, it was to repay his kindness and perform my role to the utmost; lastly, it was to

realize my lifelong aspirations [in literature]. Yet my aspirations were halted and regrets were thusly borne; my words were not heard [by the Emperor] and instead came the slander."

仆当此日，擢在翰林，身是谏官，月请谏纸。启奏之间，有可以救济人病，裨补时阙而难于指言者，辄咏歌之，欲稍稍进闻于上。上以广宸听，副忧勤；次以酬恩奖，塞言责；下以复吾平生之志。岂图志未就而悔已生，言未闻而谤已成矣！

"I would wish you to let me tell you my whole story to the finish. Everyone that read my "Poem for Thankful Rain" clamored about how it was not at all appropriate. Those that heard "Tears for Kong Kan" their faces were red with anger, and left without the least bit of joy. The ones that read "Qinzhong Yin" were the wealthy and powerful, they looked at each other while their very faces changed color! My poem, "The Leyou Garden," which I sent to you, had those in power claspng at their own wrists in fury! Those that heard my poem, "Staying at Purple Pavilion Village," and who were in charge of military affairs were just about grinding their teeth in indignation! It was all about the same reaction, I cannot count them all out at once. Those that were not in accord with me said that I was trying to garner fame for myself, that I was trying to vilify my subject, that it was just slander. Those who had good terms with me received warnings as in the case of Niu Sengru, and even my own flesh and bones, my wife, my children, they all said that I was in the wrong."

又请为左右终言之。凡闻仆《贺雨诗》，众口籍籍以为非宜矣；闻仆《哭孔戡诗》，众面脉脉，尽不悦矣；闻《秦中吟》，则权贵近者相目而变色；闻《乐游园》寄足下诗，则执政柄者扼腕矣；闻《宿紫阁村》诗则握军要者切齿矣！大率如

此，不可遍举。不相与者，号为沽誉，号为诋訾，号为讪谤。苟相与者，则如牛僧孺之诚焉。乃至骨肉妻孥，皆以我为非也。

"Those that said I was in the right, in the entire world there were only two or three of them. There was Deng Fang, who was joyful when he saw my poems, but before long Fang died. There was Tang Qu, who cried after reading my poetry, but he too, before long, also died. The last one of course, is you. You however for over ten years have suffered a setback like this. Alas! Is Heaven itself about to destroy the tradition behind the Six Meanings and Four Headings to the extent that it cannot go on any longer? I still do not know if it is the will of Heaven that the sufferings of the people not reach the Emperor. If it is not this way then just why poets like us end up in such an incredibly disadvantageous situation!"

其不我非者，举世不过三两人。有邓鲂者，见仆诗而喜，无何鲂死。有唐衢者，见仆诗而泣，未几而衢死。其余即足下。足下又十年来困蹶若此。呜呼！岂六义四始之风天将破坏，不可支持耶？抑又不知天意不欲使下人病苦闻于上耶？不然，何有志于诗者不利若此之甚也！

"But when I think about it all, I realize that I am just a man from east of the pass. Other than being the bookworm that I am, I am totally ignorant of anything else. When it comes to calligraphy, painting, chess, and other board games that everyone loves to play, why I don't know the first thing about it! You can tell how stupid and clumsy I really am! When I first sat for my *Jinshi* examinations, I did not have even one distant relative working in the court; I did not even know anyone that had ever become a court official. As for striving for my scholarly honor, I was not good at running about currying favour with influential people, so I went out for my battle at the testing grounds bare-handed.

Yet in the space of ten years, I passed all three examinations, my reputation spread down to the ears of the masses, and my footprints had begun to get noticed by officials in high and honorable positions. Outside of the Imperial Court I was in correspondence with other worthy and noble gentlemen. Within the Court I was in service to the Emperor. It was in the beginning that I made a name for myself through writing; and it was in the end that I was incriminated by my works, as well I should be."

然仆又自思关东一男子耳，除读书属文外，其他懵然无知，乃至书画棋博，可以接群居之欢者，一无通晓，即其愚拙可知矣！初应进士时，中朝无缙麻之亲，达官无半面之旧；策蹇步于利足之途，张空拳于战文之场。十年之间，三登科第，名落众耳，迹升清贯，出交贤俊，入侍冕旒。始得名于文章，终得罪于文章，亦其宜也。

"Lately I have heard some of my good friends tell me that when the Ministry of Rites and the Ministry of Personnel were holding examinations, my own *fu* compositions were used as the standard. My poetic verse was quickly becoming the talk of the town. At first I felt ashamed of myself, and simply could not believe it. But when I came back to Chang-an, I heard again that there was a General named Gao Xiayu, when he wished to hire a singing courtesan, the courtesan then proudly boasted, 'I can recite all of Scholar Bai's "Song of Everlasting Sorrow," how could I be like any other singing girl?' And so saying she raised her price!"

日者闻亲友间说，礼、吏部举选人，多以仆私试赋判为淮的。其余诗句，亦往往在人口中。仆怍然自愧，不之信也。及再来长安，又闻有军使高霞寓者，欲聘唱妓，妓大夸曰：“我诵得白学士《长恨歌》，岂同他哉？”由是增价。

"I also remember you saying in a letter to me that the day you arrived at Tongzhou, you saw my poems pasted on the columns of a riverside hostel. Now who do you suppose did that? Awhile ago, when I was passing through the south of the Han river I came across someone hosting a party for his guests. When the singing girls saw me coming they said to each other: 'That right there is the author of "Qinzhong Yin" and "Song of Everlasting Sorrow"!'"

又足下书云到通州日，见江馆柱间有题仆诗者。何人哉？又昨过汉南日，适遇主人集众娱乐他宾，诸妓见仆来，指而相顾曰：此是《秦中吟》、《长恨歌》主耳。

"On the three to four thousand-league voyages from Changan to Jiangxi, just about every local school, Buddhist temple, inn, and boat launch I came across seemed to have my poems posted up somewhere; the common people, the monks, the widows, and even the maidens – everyone was reciting my poetry. My play at poetry and prose is so insignificant it does not bear mentioning. However, in these times it also goes to show what people truly attach importance to. Worthy as Wang Bao and Yang Xiong were in earlier times, talented as Li Bai and Du Fu were among our immediate predecessors: all of them were not able to forget about it."

自长安抵江西三四千里，凡乡校、佛寺、逆旅、行舟之中，往往有题仆诗者；士庶、僧徒、孀妇处女之口，每有咏仆诗者。此诚雕篆之戏，不足为多，然今时俗所重，正在此耳。虽前贤如渊、云者，前辈如李、杜者，亦未能忘情于其间。

"The ancients have said: 'Fame is but a vessel of the masses, one must not partake too much of it.' What man am I? At this point in time I already have enough fame, and since I have such fame, I also have been desirous of wealth and influence. Supposing I

was the Creator himself, would I consent to give out both? My current state of being in dire straits is most certainly reasonable. Besides, many a poet has lived impoverished lives. Chen Zi-ang and Du Fu were both low-ranking Censors, and were destitute to the very end. Meng Haoran and Li Bai did not have the good fortune to obtain even the lowest post, and ended their days all poor and haggard. Nowadays, the poet Meng Jiao only when he reached sixty was he tested out for the post of Imperial Musician; Zhang Ji is already fifty, and is but a lowly minister of the Imperial Ancestral Temple. What incredible poets they are! No matter what, my talent could never surpass them. And now even though I have been banished to a faraway district, my official rank is still the fifth, my monthly salary is from forty to fifty thousand. In winter I have warm clothes to wear, when I'm hungry I have food, and other than these daily necessities for myself, I am also able to take care of my family. I can say for certain that I have not disappointed the Bai family lineage! Weizhi, Weizhi! Please do not worry about me!"

古人云：“名者公器，不可多取。”仆是何者，窃时之名已多。既窃时名，又欲窃时之富贵，使己为造物者，肯兼与之乎？今之屯穷，理固然也。况诗人多蹇，如陈子昂、杜甫，各授一拾遗，而屯剥至死。孟浩然辈不及一命穷悴终身。近日孟郊六十，终试协律；张籍五十，未离一太祝。彼何人哉！况仆之才又不迨彼。今虽谪佐远郡，而官品至第五，月俸四五万，寒有衣，饥有食，给身之外施及家人。亦可谓不负白氏子矣。微之微之！勿念我哉！

"Over the past few months, I have been looking through my collections of writings and letters, and I have taken up dividing my poems both new and old, each into separate categories. All those composed since I became an Imperial Censor for whatever I have encountered and discovered, all those that concern praise and criticism,



comparison and satire, together with all those that were written from the Wude to the Yuanhe reigns whose themes are about contemporary events that are entitled “New Yuefu”: their number totals one hundred and fifty and I call them satirical or allegorical poems."

仆数月来，检讨囊帙中，得新旧诗，各以类分，分为卷目。自拾遗来，凡所感关于美刺兴比者，又自武德至元和因事立题题为《新乐府》者，共一百五十首，谓之讽喻诗。

"Whether retiring from a day's work, laid up with illness, or idling by at home – to stay contented and at peace I have composed a hundred poems of a playful nature, and these are called my *Poems of Leisure*. When matters outside my home rile up my heart, then I take those feelings and encounters and sing them out in a series of a hundred poems, entitled my *Poems of Sorrows*. I also have five-character or seven-character long verse or quatrains, ranging from as long as four hundred rhymes to two. These poems number over four hundred and are called my *Poems of Miscellaneous Meter*. My body of work is divided up into fifteen volumes and contains about eight hundred poems. When we meet again, I will certainly give them all to you."

又或退公，或卧病闲居，知足保和，吟玩性情者一百首，谓之闲适诗。又有事物牵于外，情理动于内，随感遇而形于叹咏者一百首，谓之感伤诗。又有五言七言长句、绝句，自百韵至两韵者，四百余首，谓之杂律诗。凡为十五卷，约八百首。异时相见当尽致于执事。

"Weizhi, the ancients have said: 'In poverty, then one must cultivate himself; in success, then one must bring benefits to the world.' Even though I myself am not worthy, I always live by these words. A righteous man abides by this and waits for his own time

to come; and when that time does come, he is like a dragon in the clouds, a roc amidst the winds – ever so suddenly, he displays his strength. And when his time has not yet come, he is like a leopard hiding in the mists, a wild goose in the darkness – so lonesome, so quietly he fulfils his duty and retreats. In service or in retreat, no matter where he goes he will be self-satisfied!"

微之，古人云：“穷则独善其身，达则兼济天下。”仆虽不肖，常师此语。大丈夫所守者道，所待者时。时之来也，为云龙，为风鹏，勃然突然，陈力以出；时之不来也，为雾豹，为冥鸿，寂兮寥兮，奉身而退。进退出处何往而不自得哉！

"My own ambitions are to be of benefit to the world, while my actions are to cultivate myself. My lifelong pursuits follow this principle; the purpose of my poetry is to speak and thereby to elucidate and manifest this. Therefore, what I call my poems of political allegory are intended to benefit the world at large; while my poems of leisure are intended to be for self-cultivation. Henceforth those that read my poems will know my sense of morality."

仆志在兼济，行在独善，奉而始终之则为道，言而发明之则为诗。谓之讽谕诗，兼济之志也，谓之闲适诗，独善之义也。故览仆诗者，知仆之道焉。

"As for the remaining *Poems of Miscellaneous Meter*, they were all composed hastily when I was enticed by some event or object, and then made for a laugh or a song. They most certainly are not included in my most treasured works, but when meeting or parting with friends they can help to either relieve the pain at parting, or add to the joy of getting together. This time while I was sifting through my poems, I was still unable to get rid of them. Yet if in the future someone else is to edit my works, they can most surely omit these few."

其余杂律诗，或诱于一时一物，发于一笑一吟，率然成章，非平生所尚者，但以亲朋合散之取其释恨佐欢，今铨次之间未能删去。他时有为我編集斯文者略之可也。

"Weizhi, nowadays people treasure what their ears hear, and disdain what their eyes see, they praise the ancient and disregard the present, and this is human nature. I cannot seek verification from the far and the ancient; but our contemporary Wei Yingwu can serve a ready example, whose ballads other than being beautiful also have an element of satire, whose five-character verse is both elegant and leisurely with a style all of its own. Can any other poets of our time match him? However, while Wei Yingwu was alive, none cared much for his work; only after he passed away did people start to value his songs."

微之，夫贵耳贱目，荣古陋今，人之大情也。仆不能远征古旧，如近岁韦苏州歌行才丽之外，颇近兴讽；其五言诗，又高雅闲淡，自成一派之体，今之秉笔者谁能及之？然当苏州在时，人亦未甚爱重，必待身后，人始贵之。

"The most beloved of my poetry are limited to some miscellaneous verse and of course, "The Song of Everlasting Sorrow." What other people treasure is just what I tend to ignore. As for my allegorical poems, the meaning is intense, while the wording is simple. My poems of leisure, the thought behind them is light, while the wording is pedantic. To combine the simple with the pedantic is not at all pleasant, and so it is all fitting that people did not love these pieces. Alas, the only person alive that loves my poetry is you. But who knows if hundreds or thousands of years later there won't be someone like you who will show up again and fall in love with my poetry?"

今仆之诗，人所爱者悉不过杂律诗与《长恨歌》已下耳，仆之所轻。至于讽

谕者，意激而言质；闲适者，思澹而辞迂。以质合迂，宜人之不爱也。今所爱者，并世而生独足下耳。然百千年后，安知复无如足下者出，而知爱我诗哉？

"So over these eight or nine years we have corresponded in poems to warn each other while we served our low posts, and while we encountered our meagre poverty, we used poetry to encourage one another. Whenever we found ourselves living alone, we used poetry as a way to both comfort and entertain each other. Whether you knew me or condemned me, it was all because of poetry." 故自八九年来，与足下小通则以诗相戒，小穷则以诗相勉，索居则以诗相慰同处则以诗相娱。知吾罪吾，率以诗也。

"Remember earlier this year when we were out riding south of Changan, each of us was reciting our new short verse, and not mixed with any other style – from Prince's Slope to Zhaoguo Ward we kept on singing in turns for over twenty leagues. The friends that were with us (Pan Zongxian and Li Jingxin) simply had no way to interrupt! Those that understand me would call me a poet fairy, while those that do not understand me would condemn me as a poet devil. Why is this? Working my mind, belabouring my voice and tone, from morning to night without knowing any pain—if I am not a 'poet devil' then what am I?"

如今年春游城南时，与足下马上相戏，因各诵新艳小律，不杂他篇，自皇子陂归昭国里，迭吟递唱，不绝声者二十里余。攀、李在傍，无所措口。知我者以为诗仙，不知我者以为诗魔。何则？劳心灵，役声气，连朝接夕，不自知其苦，非魔而何？

"On occasion to be with like-minded friends in a beautiful place, to have a banquet amidst flowers, or to enjoy wine on a moonlit night – to sing, to chant, to not

notice old age coming. If I were to ride a carriage pulled by phoenixes and cranes all the way to the fairy island of Penglai, even that joy would not be as wonderful as this; so if I am not a poet fairy, then what am I?"

偶同人当美景，或花时宴罢，或月夜酒酣，一咏一吟，不觉老之将至。虽骖鸾鹤、游蓬瀛者之适，无以加于此焉，又非仙而何？

*"Weizhi, Weizhi! You and I exist as bodies outside this world; we have left behind our traces. We disdain the rich and powerful, and look down upon the people of the world. At that moment, you still had energy to spare, and wanted to gather up all the poems of correspondence we had received from our friends, picking out the best of them, like Zhang Ji's Old-themed Yuefu, or Li Shen's New Songs, or Lu Gong, Yang Juyuan's regulated verse, and the quatrains of Dou the Seventh and Yuan the Eighth, bringing all of them together and carefully editing and arranging them into a collection entitled "The Yuan and Bai Collection of Correspondence Poetry." All those who were present and participated in the discussion jumped for joy, considering this as something great. Alas! Before you finished the words you were already demoted and banished away, and not many months later I was demoted as well. My heart breaks, when will we ever accomplish this? It is certainly something that causes me to let out a deep sigh!"*

微之，微之！此吾所以与足下外形骸、脱踪迹、傲轩鼎、轻人寰者，又以此也。当此之时，足下兴有余力，且欲与仆悉索还往中诗，取其尤长者，如张十八古乐府，李二十新歌行，卢、杨二秘书律诗，窦七元八绝句，博搜精掇编而次之，号为《元白往还集》。众君子得拟议于此者，莫不踊跃欣喜，以为盛事。嗟乎！言未终而足下左转，不数月而仆又继行。心期索然，何日成就？又可为之太息矣！

*"I have always told you that when anyone writes anything, they always believe*

that theirs is the best, and cannot bear to omit a word. Even when the mistakes are numerous they are still infatuated with the beautiful words that lie in between. They must wait for their friends who are impartial and who do not have indulgence to appraise it, discuss it and peel it apart, and then they will find a medium between the superfluous and the concise. Moreover you and I in particular worry that our works are a bit too much. We once thought there were defects in our own work, so what did others think? Now for the time being, we are each editing our own works of poetry and dividing them crudely into categories. I would wait until we meet again, so that we could take all our works out at once and complete our prior ambitions. Yet I do not know when we will meet, or where...if suddenly we arrive at our final days, then what shall we do? Weizhi, you must understand my heart!”

又仆尝语足下，凡人为文，私于自是，不忍于割截，或失于繁多。其间妍媸益又自惑。必待交友有公鉴无姑息者，讨论而削夺之，然后繁简当否，得其中矣。况仆与足下，为文尤患其多。己尚病，况他人乎？今且各纂诗笔，粗为卷第，待与足下相见日，各出所有，终前志焉。又不知相遇是何年相见是何地，溘然而至，则如之何？微之知我心哉！

“Residing at Xunyang on this twelfth moon, the winds off the river are bitterly cold. At the end of the year, pleasures are few; the night are long, sleep is little. I take up a pen and paper, and quietly in front of the lamp, I think of you and write. Alas I did not measure my words...Do not tire of my muddled speech, but think of it merely as the words of an evening. Weizhi, Weizhi, you are the one who understands my heart! I, Letian, thusly bid you farewell again.”

浔阳腊月，江风苦寒，岁暮鲜欢，夜长少睡。引笔铺纸，悄然灯前，有念则

书，言无铨次。勿以繁杂为倦，且以代一夕之话言也。微之微之！知我心哉！乐天再拜。 ”

Now that the background of the development of Bai Juyi's New Yuefu Poetry (and other poems) has been established, it is time to take a look at the inception of the movement and its reception in his own time and periods after. In Jin Yazhou's Book, "*Bai Juyi and the New Yuefu*" he states, "The New Yuefu was created together with Bai Juyi and Yuan Zhen as its representatives. It was a type [of poetry] that took on new subjects and wrote about the affairs of the times. With a Yuefu style of poetry written into [a body of work], it was aimed at the old subjects of Yuefu poetry and spoke [for them]." <sup>10</sup> However, there had been limits to what poets could express by using the old and traditional themes of Yuefu poetry. For this reason Yuan and Bai sought to create a new form altogether.

Jin Yazhou makes the point a bit clearer, "Since after the Han Dynasty there were poets that when imitating the making of Yuefu poetry stuck rigidly to old subjects and old melodies. This caused the style of poetry to lose a great amount of its original brilliance. Even though there were a small number of people whose pieces borrowed the old subjects and wrote of the affairs of the times; [but since] the subjects and contents were already not coordinated, they were again limited in reflecting on the scope of reality." <sup>11</sup> The great Tang Dynasty poet Du Fu broke this tradition with his two poems, "The Song

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<sup>10</sup> Jin Yazhou, *Bai Juyi yu xin yuefu* p. 13: Chinese original, "新乐府是以白居易，元稹为代表的唐代诗人共同创建的一种用新题写时事的乐府式的诗歌体裁，它是针对乐府古题诗而言的。"

<sup>11</sup> Jin Yazhou, *Bai Juyi yu xin yuefu* 13-14: Chinese original, "由于汉代以后的诗人在仿作乐府诗时拘泥于旧题旧调，使这一诗体大大失去了原有的光彩，虽然也有少数人的作品是借旧题写时事，但题目与内容既不协调，又限制了反映现实的范围。"

of the Chariot" 兵车行 or "The Song of the Beauty" 丽人行 which as Jin mentions were, "Contemporary realist famous works, that did not rely on complex imitations." 即事名篇, 无复依仿。

As mentioned earlier, it was Bai Juyi's admiration of both Du Fu and Li Bai led him to create his own body of work focused on the harsh reality of the world around him. However so, Bai Juyi was very ambitious in his creation of New Yuefu poetry, writing fifty poems about the general sociopolitical problems of the nation, and ten poems specifically about the excesses of the capital Chang-an entitled *Qin zhong yin* 秦中吟. Jin Yazhou notes that these new poems were "...direct and smooth in their expression, and this made it easy for people to accept them."<sup>12</sup> Moreover Jin goes on to explain "...[This poetry] has still to this day left a shining page on the history of Chinese poetry, and has also had a far-reaching affect for the development and production of poetry of later generation. The late Tang [poet] Pi Rixiu made his "Ten Poems of True Yuefu", and Nie Yi Zhong also wrote many Yuefu poems that reflected on reality. [These men] directly took on the traditions of the New Yuefu Movement."<sup>13</sup> Therefore it cannot be merely argued that Bai Juyi's efforts in his creation of New Yuefu were simply an experiment in a new form of poetry, for to this day all of his New Yuefu poems still exist. And even to this day, many of his New Yuefu poems are still being studied. Although his poems cannot be viewed as a accurate history of the mid-Tang, they do reflect many of the social problems that were happening during the period.

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<sup>12</sup> Jin Yazhou, *Bai Juyi yu xin yuefu* p. 21: Chinese original, "表达直接顺畅, 让人容易接受。"

<sup>13</sup> Jin Yazhou, *Bai Juyi yu xin yuefu* p. 22: Chinese original, "它在中国诗歌史上仍留下了光辉的一页, 并对后世诗歌的发展产生了深远的影响。晚唐皮日休作正乐府十篇, 聂夷中也多写反映现实的乐府诗, 就是对新乐府运动传统的直接继承。"



## Notes

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<sup>iv</sup> Liu Longkai, Chen Yinke: *Yuan Bai shi zheng shi*, p.165

<sup>v</sup> Zhou Zuzhuan, *Sui Tang Wudai Wenlun Xuan* p. 234-240

## CHAPTER III

### THE TRANSLATIONS OF THE POEMS

#### Poem 1. The Dance of Seven Battle Virtues

The first poem of the New Yuefu series is the Dance of Seven [Battle] Virtues.<sup>14</sup> This piece lauds the conquests and virtues of the second emperor of the Tang Dynasty, whose personal name is Li Shimin and is known in history as Tang Taizong.<sup>15</sup> This is one of the few poems that is not full of criticism of the government, the point of the poem being that Tang Taizong's reign was one that should be emulated by future emperors.

One feature of the poem is its specialized wording, which as Bai noted in his Letter to Yuan Zhen is the "branches of poetry."<sup>16</sup> Moreover as Liu Longkai notes: "This poem constantly changes its rhyme scheme, this is related to the thoughts and emotions of the author and cannot be taken lightly."<sup>17</sup> This poem is directly related to an ancestral temple song that originated from Tang Gaozu's founding of the Tang. The song is entitled "The Prince of Qin breaks through the ramparts" 秦王破阵乐. It is also noted that this song was more of a ceremony, or as Liu Longkai describes: "...those in the army performed [this piece], yet no one was willing to watch it, this was not something that the

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<sup>14</sup> Liu Longkai, *Chen Yinke Yuan Bai shi zheng shi*, p. 101: The Seven Battle Virtues refers to a passage in the Book of Documents 尚书 in which the king Chu Zhuang says: "Of the seven battle virtues I have not one therein" 武有七德，我无一焉。Liu Longkai goes on to note that the names of each virtue are as follows: Pacifying chaos, return to justice, maintain grandiosity, establish merits, give peace to the people, harmonize the masses, and accumulate wealth. Or in the Chinese original, "拔乱，反正，保大，定功，安民，和众，丰财。"

<sup>15</sup> Tang Taizong 唐太宗 or the Grand Ancestor of the Tang. His personal name was Li Shimin 李世民。

<sup>16</sup> The branches of poetry are its wording [诗]苗与言。

<sup>17</sup> Liu Longkai, *Chen Yinke Yuanbai shizhengshi* p. 102: Chinese original, "这首诗常换韵，这与作者的思想，情感都有关系，不可等闲置之。"

border generals enjoyed watching, and its performance was merely a kind of formality.”<sup>18</sup>

### The Dance of Seven Battle Virtues

Qi de wu 七德舞

Glorifying the pacification of chaos and praising his kingly achievements

美拔乱，陈王业也<sup>19</sup>

*"The dance of seven battle virtues, the song of seven battle virtues, passed down from the Wude [618-626] to Yuanhe reign. I, Bai Juyi, the minor official, felt true joy when I watched this dance and heard this song. When the song ended I sought out to retell events."*

七德舞，七德歌，传自武德至元和。元和小臣白居易、观舞听歌知乐意乐终稽首陈其事。

*"Our founding king at eighteen raised a righteous army; with white banners and yellow halberds, they pacified the two capitals. Capturing Wang Shichong and felling Dou Jiande, the world to its four seas was then made pure. At twenty-four, his kingdom was achieved."*

太宗十八举义兵，白旄黄钺定两京。擒充戮窦四海清，二十有四功业成。

*"At twenty-nine, he ascended to the throne. At thirty-five he made peace throughout the realm. How was he able to found the kingdom at such godly speed? It was because he had the hearts and minds of the people."*

二十有九即帝位，三十有五致太平。功成理定何神速，速在推心置人腹。

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<sup>18</sup> Liu Longkai, *Chen Yinke Yuanbai shizhengshi* p. 100-101: Chinese original, "军中演奏大家并不愿看，此乐并不为边将所喜，演奏只是一种形式。"

<sup>19</sup> Bai Juyi used subtitles in his New Yuefu poetry to explain the content therein. The subtitles display the overall intention of the piece and enlighten the reader of to what purpose the piece is written for.

*"The remains of dead soldiers he scattered silks to gather. And those that sold their sons and daughters in the famine were given gold to buy them back home. Wei Zheng and Zhang Jin sadly heard and dreamt of the Son of Heaven's mournful tears."*

亡卒遗骸散帛收，饥人卖子分金赎。魏征梦见天子泣，张谨哀闻辰日哭。

*"Three thousand maidens of the palace were released; four hundred prisoners awaiting execution were sent home and all returned to the prison as promised.<sup>20</sup> He cut off his own beard to make tinctures for the heroes of the kingdom. Li Ji, sobbing with gratitude, wanted to die [for him]."<sup>21</sup>*

怨女三千放出宫，死囚四百来归狱。翦须烧药赐功臣，李勣呜咽思杀身。

*"The King sucked the bloodied arrow-wound of his general Li Simo: He cried aloud begging to give his life for his nation. From this we know that he [Taizong] was not merely a good strategist of war, he also understood how to take advantage of the circumstances. He moved the hearts of the people so that they would come back to him in loyalty."*

含血吮疮抚战士，思摩奋呼乞效死。则知不独善战善乘时以心感人人心归。

*"Now a hundred and ninety years have passed, and throughout the realm people still sing and dance this song. Sing the ballad of seven virtues, dance of the seven virtues. The deeds of the founding king extend throughout generations."*

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<sup>20</sup> Chen Yinke, *Yuanbai shijian zhenggao* p.131-132: "The Old Tang Book in the third chapter of Tang Taizong states: In the sixth year of the Zhenguan reign during the end of the twelfth month. It was recorded that prisoners and two hundred ninety of those condemned to death would return to their homes. They were ordered to turn for punishment at the end of the next year's autumn." Or in the Chinese original: "旧唐书叁唐太宗纪下云：贞观六年十二月辛未，亲录囚徒，归死罪者二百九十人于家，令明年秋末就刑。"

<sup>21</sup> Liu Longkai, *Chen Yinke Yuanbai shizhengshi* p. 167: "Li Ji was always sick. The doctor told him to get the ashes of the emperor's beard and his sickness would be healed. Taizong cut off his own beard and burnt it to ash and then gave it to him to heal him. Ji kowtowed to him and cried with gratitude." Or in the Chinese original: "李勣常疾，医云：得龙须灰，方可疗之。太宗自剪须烧灰赐之，服讫而愈。勣叩头泣涕而谢。"

今来一百九十载，天下至今歌舞之。歌七德，舞七德，圣人有祚垂无极。

*"How can it be that the dance was used merely to demonstrate the emperor's godly martial prowess, how can it be that it was used merely to boast of his holy culture. Taizong's intention was to display to his descendants the hardships of the empire's inaugural years."*

岂徒耀神武，岂徒夸圣文，太宗意在陈王业，王业艰难示子孙。<sup>vi</sup>

### Poem 2. Model Music

The second poem is Model Music. The balance of the poem is its main point, as it maintains the seven character line from beginning to end. Many other New Yuefu poems disregard balance in favor of making a point, but Fa qu is the exception to the rule. This poem depicts the gradual weakening of the Tang due to outside influences.

The poem starts at the very beginning of the dynasty and progresses to the Tianbao period [742-756] which suffered through the An Lushan rebellion [755-763]. As it always is, all good things must come to an end. It is outside influence that corrupts the pure voice of the Tang empire. Things should have stayed the same had people had the foresight not to let in outside interference. Now on the cusp of disaster we witness the beginning of the end of the Tang dynasty. By the end of Emperor Xuanzong's reign [712-756], the An Lushan rebellion had already wrought chaos throughout the kingdom.

Chen Yinke explains: "Bai put his emphasis on Xuanzong, Li Shen and Yuan Zhen should have absolutely had the same thought. However, while Bai Juyi started his conversation at Tang Gaozu, Yuan Zhen started with the Yellow Emperor."<sup>22</sup> All things

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<sup>22</sup> Liu Longkai, Chen Yinke Yuanbai shizhengshi p. 107: Chinese original, "白诗重在玄宗，李，元之作想必亦然。不过白氏从高祖谈起，元氏从黄帝谈起。"

considered, this short poem is a warning to future emperors to be very careful when falling in love with new foreign music and customs.

Model Music

Fa qu 法曲

Beautiful and holy, a truly flourishing voice

美列圣，正华声也

*"Fa-qu, Fa-qu: They sang of great peace, amassing virtue, heavy with prosperity, there was more than enough to celebrate. The people of Yonghui [650-655] danced and sang: Fa-qu, Fa-qu, they danced the Rainbow Skirt."*

法曲法曲歌大定，积德重熙有余庆。永徽之人舞而咏，法曲法曲舞霓裳。

*"Harmonious government ordered world. The sound magnificent, the people of Kaiyuan, healthy and happy. Fa-qu, Fa-qu the song dignified, so grand the celebration without end."*

政和世理音洋洋，开元之人乐且康。法曲法曲歌堂堂，堂堂之庆垂无疆。

*"Emperor Zhongzong and Suzong restored the empire. On the throne of the Tang this prosperity was to go on for thousands of years. Fa-qu Faqu and then mixed with barbarian's songs. Those foreign tongues disturbed our beautiful harmony."*

中宗肃宗复鸿业，唐祚中兴万万叶。法曲法曲合夷歌，夷声邪乱华声和。

*"At the end of our Heaven's Jewel reign it was only a year later that the Imperial Palace was sullied with foreign dirt. Thus we know Fa-qu to be a song of prosperous airs. If you understand the music you will find its principles are the same as those for government."*

以乱干和天宝末，明年胡尘犯宫阙。乃知法曲本华风，苟能审音与政通。

*"But since those barbarian songs were wrongfully mixed in no longer could we distinguish between prosperity and decline, sadness and joy. We yearn for the true and flourishing voice of Bo Ya and Shi Kuang, undisturbed by barbarian tongues."*

一从胡曲相参错，不辨兴衰与哀乐。愿求牙旷正华音，不令夷夏相交侵。<sup>vii</sup>

### Poem 3. Two King's Descendants

The third poem is Two Kings' Descendants. Following the traditions of the first two emperors of the Tang Dynasty (Tang Gaozu and Tang Taizong), the current emperor Tang Xianzong [805-820] holds a ceremony for the Dukes of Jie and the Dukes of Xi, descendants of the rulers of the two dynasties that immediately preceded the Tang.

A ceremony not only ensures continuity of lineage, but also shows profound respect for the predecessors of the Tang. Turning potential enemies into friends is not a simple venture. Yet the Tang already has set precedents for dealing with descendants from preceding dynasties. The Tang is all the more safe in honoring the descendants of fallen kingdoms. This act of respect protects both sides from potential enmity and strife.

### Two Kings' Descendants

Er wang hou 二王后

Elucidating the intentions of imperial ancestors

明祖宗之意也

*"Two kings' descendants, who were they? The Duke of Jie and Duke of Xi were imperial guests; they were the descendants of Emperor Wu of Northern Zhou and Emperor Wen of Sui. The ancients once said that the world is not only for one man alone. Zhou fell and then was passed on to the Sui. What the people of Sui lost, the people of Tang gained."*

二王后，彼何人，介公鄴公为国宾，周武隋文之子孙。古人有言天下者，非是一人之天下。周亡天下传于隋，隋人失之唐得之。

*"The Tang has been prosperous for ten generations and two hundred years, and the Dukes of Jie and Dukes of Xi have been for generations imperial guests. When it was time for the sacrificial ceremonies at the Bright Hall and the Imperial Ancestral Temple, they were led and seated at the guest position to complete the imperial ceremony. To complete the imperial ceremony and to help with the suburban sacrifice: this was a rule of conduct passed down from the two founding emperors of the Tang."*

唐兴十叶岁二百，介公鄴公世为客。明堂太庙朝享时，引居宾位备威仪。备威仪，助郊祭，高祖太宗之遗制。

*"Not only for the sake of reviving fallen kingdoms, not only for the continuation of broken lineages [of those conquered kingdoms]. But to let one's heirs in protecting the achievements of their civilizing ancestors to learn a lesson from the descendants of these fallen kingdoms."*

不独兴灭国，不独继绝世。欲令嗣位守文君，亡国子孙取为戒。<sup>viii</sup>

#### Poem 4. The Boundless Sea

The fourth poem is The Boundless Sea. This poem in particular has irregular meter that switches from three to as many as sixteen characters per line. But it is the content that is important, not the number of characters. The poem deals primarily with the emperors' fascination with immortality and the tremendous amount of effort they put into finding tinctures of longevity.

It is common for emperors to desire everlasting life. It is even more common for emperors to believe such fairy tales to be true. In this poem, Bai Juyi is displaying how



foolish monarchs can become, and just what a waste it is to search for immortality when already in power of an entire kingdom. At any rate, the desire to live forever is the same for the common man as it is for an emperor. Burton Watson includes a translation of this poem in his *"Po Chu-I Selected Poems."* His rendition is quite excellent on its own, and I learned much from reading it. However, I felt that reading it, the overall voice of the poem fell flat. In my own version I tried to make the experience of travel, and subsequent failure to find Penglai more vivid.

The Boundless Sea

Hai man man 海漫漫

Against seeking immortality

戒求仙也

*"The boundless sea and straight down to its bottomless depths, then wide across its breadth to fathomless horizons. Deep within those misty waves people have spoke of three godly isles."*

海漫漫，直下无底傍无边。云涛烟浪最深处，人传中有三神山。

*"On these isles grow herbs of immortality in abundance! They say it's just one bite, and you'll sprout wings to become a fairy. Alas, the Emperor of Qin and Wu of Han believed in these tales. Each sending Taoists on yearly expeditions to gather those very herbs."*

山上多生不死药，服之羽化为天仙。秦皇汉武信此语，方士年年采药去。

*"The Isle of Penglai, famous since times immemorial, yet those misty waters it was nowhere to be found. Boundless the sea, great winds blew, but over the horizon the Isle of Penglai never appeared."*

蓬莱今古但闻名，烟水茫茫无觅处。海漫漫，风浩浩，眼穿不见蓬莱岛。

*"Not daring to return home until they found Penglai, young boys and girls still in pigtails grew old on the boat. Xu Fu<sup>23</sup> [and Shaowang of cultured accomplishment<sup>24</sup>] spun many fanciful tales; prayers to Shangyuan<sup>25</sup> and Taiyi<sup>26</sup> were all in vain."*

不见蓬莱不敢归，童男艸女舟中老。徐福文成多诞诞，上元<sup>27</sup>太一虚祈祷。

*"If you were to see the tombs at Mount Li and [Emperor Wu of Han's mausoleum at] Maoling all that is left are weeds blown about by sad winds. In all the venerable sage's five thousand words,<sup>28</sup> not once does he speak of tinctures, nor immortals, nor ascending the blue sky in broad daylight."*

君看骊山顶上茂陵头，毕竟悲风吹蔓草。何况玄元圣祖五千言，不言药不言仙，不言白日升青天。<sup>ix</sup>

### Poem 5. Standing Section Players

The fifth poem is Standing Section Players. This piece lets us take a look at how ceremonial court music is ordered and how the players either sit or stand during the performance. It is truly brilliant to be able to witness how Tang dynasty court music was

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<sup>23</sup> Khoon Choy Lee, *Japan--between Myth and Reality* p. 7-17: Xu Fu (255-210 BC) was one of Qinshihuang's Taoist doctors. He is famed for his knowledge of medicine, astronomy, and boating. Later on he was sent by Qinshihuang to look for herbs of immortality and never returned. Some say he made it all the way to Japan.

<sup>24</sup> Burton Watson, *Po Chu-I Selected Poems* p. 21: As Watson mentions in his footnotes, Wencheng 文成 was a title given to a magician named Shao-wang who promised to "put the emperor in touch with spirit beings." He translates Wencheng as Peaceful Accomplishment, while I render it as "cultured" due to the "wen" 文 character.

<sup>25</sup> Burton Watson, *Po Chu-I Selected Poems* p. 21: Watson mentions that Shangyuan was a female deity worshipped by Emperor Wu of the Han.

<sup>26</sup> John C.H. Wu, *Lao Tzu Tao Teh Ching*: Taiyi refers to the penultimate god of the universe

<sup>27</sup> This is difficult to translate and has been left in pinyin.

<sup>28</sup> John C.H. Wu, *Lao Tzu Tao Teh Ching*: This is a reference to Lao Tzu's Dao de jing (老子道德经)

ordered and played. The poem is so expertly crafted that we can almost feel the music come alive as the orchestra is in front of our mind's eye.

Towards the end of the poem Bai Juyi finally asks the appropriate question. Just who is in charge of this court music and why is the quality steadily decreasing over time? It is a question that only the ministers can answer, and our author may take great personal risk asking about what's going wrong. Moreover, he might be risking his career within the court by asking provocative questions such as this. It took great bravery for Bai Juyi to stand up and give his opinion on the state of court music. Moreover, he argues that the changing of this music weakens the kingdom as a whole.

#### Standing Section Players

Li bu ji 立部伎

Ridiculing the decline in imperial court music

刺雅乐之替也

*"The standing section players, drum and make noise with their flutes. Dancing two-swords, jumping seven-round. Delicate those grand ropes, that let fall those long poles."*

立部伎，鼓笛喧。舞双剑，跳七丸。褭巨索，掉长竿。

*"The Players of Tai Chang each have their rank; those high in order must sit, those low in order must stand. Those high and at their seats - a reed pipe song so pure; those low of the standing - drum and sound their flutes. Once the reed pipes sing, all turn their ears. Yet of the myriad songs of drums and flutes, none were to listen. "*

太常部伎有等级，堂上者坐堂下立。堂上坐部笙歌清，堂下立部鼓笛鸣。笙歌一声众侧耳，鼓笛万曲无人听。

*"Those standing were lowly, those sitting were lofty - till one day the sitting section relegated themselves to standing section performance, banging on drums and blowing reed pipes together with a variety of melodramatic plays."*

笙歌一声众侧耳，鼓笛万曲无人听。立部贱，坐部贵，坐部退为立部伎，击鼓吹笙和杂戏。<sup>29</sup>

*"When the standing section withdrew, to what place did they then serve? They started to go to play solemn court music with the hanging instruments. This downward trend of court music has come to this, to the extent that those lowly standing musicians were asked to be in charge of solemn court music."*

立部又退何所任，始就乐悬操雅音。雅音替坏一至此，长令尔辈调宫征。

*"At the sacrifice on the knoll to the God of the Earth, they said they were to use this music to give thanks to the gods. Wishing by this music to cause phoenixes to come and the hundred animals to dance,<sup>30</sup> just how is this different from driving a cart going north on route to the Chu in the South! The stupidity of the musicians is not worth speaking of. Within the Tai Chang ministry, just who were those dignitaries on high?"*

圆丘后土郊祀时，言将此乐感神祇。欲望凤来百兽舞，何异北辕将适楚。工师愚贱安足云，太常三卿尔何人。<sup>x</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Liu Longkai, *Chen Yinke Yuanbai shizhengshi*, p. 110: Chen Yinke notes that this particular "banging on drums and blowing reed pipes..." originated in the westernmost regions [of ancient China]. Before the Northern Qi [550-577] period it had already been imported into China. Chinese: "击鼓吹笙和杂戏" 源于西域。北齐以前，已经输入中国。" My personal opinion is that Bai Juyi's complaint in this poem is the mixture of Chinese and Western Area (i.e. foreign) music and plays is altogether too awkward and troublesome to continue to go on.

<sup>30</sup> Li Min and Wang Jian, *Shangshu Yizhu*, p. 53: This refers to a celebration of the emperor Shundi 舜帝 of the Xia Dynasty. Paraphrasing the story, a troop of dancers dressed as beasts of birds of a hundred varieties danced alongside pairs of other dancers dressed as pairs of phoenixes. This was to celebrate their guests of dukes from other neighboring kingdoms. Original Classical Chinese: "箫韵九成，凤凰来仪。夔曰：予击石拊石，百兽率舞，庶尹允谐。"

## Poem 6. The Chime-stone of Huayuan

The sixth poem is The Chime-stone of Huayuan. This poem deals with people's infatuation with the music of this particular chime stone. The difference between the present and the past is alarming. For the instruments of the present were not played in the past, and the instruments of the past are not played in the present. Such is the fickleness of trends. Even well over a thousand years ago in China, people still fall in love with odd music.

The fact is there is no inherent difference between people in the present and people in the past. The only difference is how the person chooses to listen to music, do they listen with heart or without. For as Bai Juyi explains, to listen without heart is the same as being deaf. For those that are actual musicians know music to be a process of labor. Beautiful music does not just come out of instruments automatically. It is an acquired skill to be able to produce music.

On another note, Liu Longkai states: "When Bai wrote this particular poem, he had already seen the poetic work of Yuan Zhen and Li Shen; he took the good parts and tossed aside the poor. His own poem exceeds the others."<sup>31</sup> Moreover, Liu Longkai goes on to make the point that: "Within the poem, it is said that the An Lushan rebellion happened because the Si and Bin chime stones were replaced with the [chime] stone of Huayuan. To mix the affairs of men with the changing of changing of chime stones is quite amusing. Actually the change of chime stone was reasonable and necessary. This reflects the difficulties the Court Musicians had in maintaining their position [in

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<sup>31</sup> Liu Longkai, *Chen Yinke Yuanbai shizhengshi* p. 112-113: Chinese original, "白氏写作此诗，已见到元，李二位诗作，取长补短，自有超越。"

government].”<sup>32</sup> The chime stone was changed to that of the stones of Huayuan during emperor Xuanzong's reign. While the Si and Bin stones have a history that carries back to the Xia Dynasty (2070-1600 BC).

### The Chime-stone of Huayuan

Hua yuan qing 华原磬

Ridiculing that the music player is not up to his job

刺乐工非其人也

*"Chime of Huayuan, Chime of Huayuan, ancients never listened, but people nowadays do. Stone of Si and Bin, Stone of Si and Bin, people nowadays never drummed on them, but ancients did."*

华原磬，华原磬，古人不听今人听。泗滨石，泗滨石，今人不击古人击。

*"What is the difference between people modern and ancient? Using or discarding it, all depends on the musicians. If a musician's ears are like walls, not to tell the difference between pure and impure sounds, even if he is playing, he will be considered deaf."*

今人古人何不同，用之舍之由乐工。乐工虽在耳如壁，不分清浊即为聋。

*"The disciples of Pear Garden with twelve bamboo pipes they tuned their instruments. They knew that new sounds are not as good as old. In ancient times it was said that the floating chimes emerged out of Si and Bin<sup>33</sup>, its distinct sound so moving."*

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<sup>32</sup> Liu Longkai, *Chen Yinke Yuanbai shizhengshi* p. 113: Chinese original, "这里面说，因为用华原之石取代了泗滨之石，安禄山才叛乱了，把人事和改磬混在一起，是十分可笑的。其实，改磬是理所当然的。这里反映了雅乐的地位已很难维持。"

<sup>33</sup> Li Min and Wang Jian, *Shangshu Yizhu* p. 61, 63: This is found in the Yugong 禹贡 section of the Xiashu 夏书. The modern Chinese translation reads: "Alongside the banks of the Si river, were stone materials that

梨园弟子调律吕，知有新声不如古。古称浮磬出泗滨，立辨致死声感人。

*"As soon as the palace caught on to listening to the chime stone of Huayuan, the King forgot all about the court and his ministers Not unexpectedly, Northern bandits rose out of Yan, and very few of the generals were willing to die for the glory of his country"*

宫悬一听华原石，君心遂忘封疆臣。果然胡寇从燕起，武臣少肯封疆死。

*"Thus we began to learn that music and governance are one, and that what we hear is not merely its ringing sound. Grand master chime performer Xiang entered the sea, never to return. The sons of Changan's peddlers became master musicians. The chime of Huayuan and stone of Si and Bin, their sounds - pure and impure - who can tell?"*

始知乐与时政通，岂听铿锵而已矣。磬襄入海去不归，长安市儿为乐师。华原磬与泗滨石，清浊两声谁得知。<sup>xi</sup>

#### Poem 7. The Grey Haired Maiden of Shangyang

The seventh poem is The Grey Haired Maiden of Shangyang. In this particularly emotional poem Bai Juyi assumes the voice of the maiden; he writes using her persona to explain her sorrowful tale. To bring in a reader's attention, nothing is stronger than emotion to pull on our collective heartstrings and bring us inside the text.

Bai takes his brush and deftly crafts out a female figure, alone on a moonlit night, with rain pattering on the windowsill. Her soliloquy begins before the scenery is even described. She exists within a space that is wholly centred around her lonely existence. The imagery of being locked away in captivity, quietly growing older is in stark comparison to the life she should be living as a proper consort of the emperor.

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could be made into chimes." Chinese original, "泗水河畔的制磬石料。" Naturally the classical Chinese is even simpler: "泗滨浮磬" or "On the shores of the Si and Bin rivers were floating chime stones".

In this poem Bai Juyi explains just how women are treated like a commodity in Tang dynasty royal society. She was added to the harem just to fill a quota. Her reality is to exist in solitude with no connection left to the world outside the palace. Bai expertly shows how from the girl's perspective it is a most harrowing affair. Her entire life depends on whether or not she can attract the attention of the emperor; she is more like a flower than she is a person.

This poem has a counterpart memorial presented to Emperor Xianzong (805-820) in which Bai Juyi states most clearly the need to send more palace ladies back home:

"I have respectfully observed that since the time of Taizong and Xuanzong, whenever a natural calamity befell our country, many palace ladies were sent home. These acts were recorded in the annals of the country and received the acclaim of the whole empire. I reverently suggest that if [Your Majesty] considered granting freedom to more of them, your august virtue would be pleasing to Heaven and the heartfelt gratitude of the ladies would certainly bring about the harmony of yin and yang."<sup>xii</sup>

As Bai Juyi explains in the above memorial, the act of releasing women brings harmony to the world as a whole. For if so many women are left alone to simply age in confinement, countless families suffer the loss of their daughters. Releasing the women back to their family brings happiness back into the world. For as Bai Juyi has so eloquently just described the world of the rear palace seems more like a prison than anything else.

Lastly, I chose to translate this poem on my own after reading both Watson's and Levy's translations. Watson's translation is quite beautiful but the language is too abrupt and is not very smooth to read. Levy's translation is a little bit rough on the edges but



overall is a good rendition. With my own work, I did my best to give a voice to the gray haired maiden, and to ensure that her story has an extra layer of emotion within the words I chose in translation. Nonetheless, reading and researching these two previous translations helped to shape and form my own work on this piece.

The Gray Haired Maiden of Shangyang

Shangyang baifa ren 上阳白发人

Lamenting lifelong chastity

愍怨旷也

*"I am a maiden of Shangyang, my rouge face is old, my gray hairs are new. Since those green robed eunuchs locked the palace gate, Shangyang has been shut closed for who knows how many Springs... "*

上阳人，红颜暗老白发新。绿衣监使守宫门，一闭上阳多少春。

*"At the end of Xuanzong's final years I was first chosen to enter the palace. I joined his harem at sixteen, alas now I am sixty. At the same time He gathered up and chose a hundred or more other women. And as the years went by, I remained, this body left desolate. "*

玄宗末岁初选入，入时十六今六十。同时采择百余人，零落年深残此身。

*"Remembering the past, how I swallowed my tears and parted with my family, then they stuffed me into a palanquin and told me not to cry. They all said: 'As soon as you're in you'll surely gain the Emperor's favour, with that face of yours like hibiscus and bosom like jade. "*

忆昔吞悲别亲族，扶入车中不教哭。皆云入内便承恩，脸似芙蓉胸似玉。

*"Yet without having the chance to meet the King I was already caught in Consort Yang's indignant stare. It was a jealousy that led me to be secretly put away in Shangyang Palace, to live the rest of my life sleeping in an empty room."*

未容君王得见面，已被杨妃遥侧目。妒令潜配上阳宫，一生遂向空房宿。

*"Those long autumn nights, long sleepless nights, the sky still dark...Dimly my candle flickered, shadows on the wall...the pattering sound of evening rain dripping on my window pane. The spring sunset grew late; I sat alone, painfully waiting on the sun to set. "*

秋夜长，夜长无寐天不明。耿耿残灯背壁影，萧萧暗雨打窗声。春日迟，日迟独坐天难暮。

*"The palace orioles chirped their sweet songs, in my melancholy I was naught to listen. Pairs of swallows perched on my beam; I, already old, had put my envy to rest. The orioles had returned and swallows had left, for so long it was quiet, Spring came and Autumn went for countless years."*

宫莺百啭愁厌闻，梁燕双栖老休妒。莺归燕去长悄然，春往秋来不记年。

*"All alone deep in the palace, gazing at the bright full moon, a moon that had gone from crescent to full, four perhaps five hundred times. Today I am the oldest maiden in the palace, and at a distance the King has given me so lofty a rank."*

唯向深宫望明月，东西四五百回圆。今日宫中年最老，大家遥赐尚书号。

*"Little shoes and slim dress, with long and narrow painted eyebrows. Outsiders never see me, but if they did they would laugh - as my dress is in the fashion of the last years of our 'Heaven's Jewel' reign. This maiden of Shangyang, hardships so many."*

*Hardships at youth, and again at old age. How could one bear hardship when one is both young and old?"*

小头鞋履窄衣裳，青黛点眉眉细长。外人不见见应笑，天宝末年时世妆。上阳人，苦最多。少亦苦，老亦苦，少苦老苦两如何？<sup>34</sup>

#### Poem 8. The Nomad Whirling Dancer

The eighth poem is The Nomad Whirling Dancer. This poem at the height of emotion depicts a beautiful scene of a foreign kingdom dancing girl, whose dance is so enchanting that she enraptures Emperor Xuanzong's mind and soul. The scene erupts into pure action, the girl in the center of the scene, dancing, the world spinning around her as the emperor gazes on excitedly.

Among all of the New Yuefu poems this one in particular showcases Bai Juyi's unique talent in bringing emotion into a scene. The dancing girl speaks through her movements, though she never utters a single word. The description of movement is what is most uncanny in this poem. The dance seems to come to life as Bai Juyi retells the scene. In terms of political meaning, this poem depicts how the emperor ruined the kingdom by adopting foreign customs and neglecting his own royal court. Accepting foreign customs was a cultural defeat that led the Tang to lose power as a kingdom. It should be that the world outside is adopting the customs of the Tang court, and not the other way around.

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<sup>34</sup> Yu Yueheng, *Bai Juyi Ji* p. 45: Bai Juyi also has a note at the end of the poem that reads, "You have not read the work of Lü Xiang, for so long ago he composed his 'Fu on Beauties.' Alas today too, have you not heard 'The Song of the Gray-haired maiden of Shangyang!'" At the end of the Tianbao reign, there was an official called the flower-bird envoy whose duty it was to secretly gather beauties for the King. Lü Xiang wrote the 'Fu on Beauties' to remonstrate the King." Chinese original: "君不见昔时吕向《美人赋》，又不见今日上阳白发歌！天宝末有密采艳色者，当时号花鸟使，吕向献《美人赋》以讽之。"

Liu Longkai makes an interesting note on the origins of importation of the Hu xuan dance into the Tang court. He explains: "In the Biographies of Imperial Relatives chapter of the Old Tang History, it speaks of Empress Wu Zetian's grand nephew Wu Yanxiu once going to visit the Turks and was intimate with them for a long time. When he came back he could already speak the Turkic language, and was also good at the Hu xuan dance. Later on Emperor Zhongzong [656-710] issued court musicians to [accompany] his dance. This was still a few decades before the Tianbao Reign [742-756]."<sup>35</sup> A period in Chinese history that one was of the bloodiest recorded, and also one of the most famous rebellions.

### The Nomad Whirling Dancer

#### Hu xuan nü 胡旋女

Against adopting foreign customs (at the end of the Tianbao reign, the North-western kingdom of Kangqu sent the dancer as a tribute)

戒近习也 (天宝末，康居国献之)

*"Whirling dancing girl, whirling dancing girl. Heart as strings, hands as drums. Strings and drum, with one voice both sleeves raised, spinning round as blowing snow, her skirt fluttering."*

胡旋女，胡旋女。心应弦，手应鼓。弦鼓一声双袖举，回雪飘飘转蓬舞。

*"Spinning left and turning right she never seemed to tire, thousand times rounds ten thousand more, never to stop. Nothing like it in the world of men, like a spinning wheel slow were the winds round her."*

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<sup>35</sup> Liu Longkai, *Chen Yinke Yuanbai shizhengshi* p. 118: Chinese original, "旧唐书外戚传提到武则天侄孙武延秀曾去突阙和亲很久。回来时已能说突阙语，并善胡旋，后来中宗以安乐公主许配给他。这还是天宝以前几十年的事。"

左旋右转不知疲，千匝万周无已时。人间物类无可比，奔车轮缓旋风迟。

*"The song over, she thanked our Son of Heaven twice fold, the Son of Heaven opened his mouth part way to speak of it all. This whirling dancing girl of the Kangqu tribe, she travelled in vain from thousands of miles to the east. Ever since the Central Plains had its own whirling dancing girl, even [generals] of tremendous battle prowess could never compare."*

曲终再拜谢天子，天子为之微启齿。胡旋女，出康居，徒劳东来万里余。中原自有胡旋者，斗妙争能尔不如。

*"In the seasons of the Heaven's Jewel [Tianbao] reign he desired a change, ministers and consorts alike learned this spinning dance. Taizhen [Consort Yang] within the palace, An Lushan outside. These very two their whirling dance so authentic. Amidst the Pear Blossom Gardens she became his queen, and Lushan, ever the Golden Pheasant was adopted as her son."*

天宝季年时欲变，臣妾人人学圜转。中有太真外禄山，二人最道能胡旋。梨花园中册作妃，金鸡障下养为儿。

*"Lushan's whirling dance mystified our lord's eyes, soldiers crossed the Yellow River without resistance. Consort Yang's whirling dance deluded our lord's heart, dead and abandoned at Mawei his yearning only grew deeper."*

禄山胡旋迷君眼，兵过黄河疑未反。贵妃胡旋惑君心，死弃马嵬念更深。

*"Alas, since then the Earth kept on spinning and the Heavens revolved; for fifty years, no imperial edict was ever issued to ban it. Oh whirling dancing girl, please do not dance in vain. Just sing this song a few times to awaken our bright lord."*

从兹地轴天维转，五十年来制不禁。胡旋女，莫空舞，数唱此歌悟明主。<sup>xiii</sup>

## Poem 9. The Broken Armed Old Man of Xinfeng

The ninth poem is The Broken Armed Old Man of Xinfeng. This poem's core meaning is centered around a staunchly anti-war position. Bai Juyi gives the old man a voice of his own, allowing him to tell his own story as a character outside of the basic narration. This is one of the special qualities of New Yuefu poems, they contain characters with actual voices.

Basically speaking, the poem is quite simplistic in its description of the horrors of war with the southern tribes. It cries against the futility of starting conflicts with them in the first place. The position of the character of the old man from Xinfeng is to be the prime anti-war advocate of the poem, while Bai Juyi describes the many terrible events that occurred during these many wars in Yunnan. Altogether, the poem has only two layers, the old man's voice, and Bai's narration. Therefore it is a piece that is straightforward enough to understand without additional help. Moreover, I chose to translate this poem on my own after reading Burton Watson's version, I still felt he neglected to give the old man a full-figured voice. In my version, the old man has a character and soul of his own.

### The Broken Armed Old Man of Xinfeng

Xinfeng zhebi weng 新丰折臂翁

Against border campaigns

戒边功也

*"Old Man of Xinfeng is eighty-eight; head temples, brow, and beard all white as snow. Great grandson walks him to the market, holding him up by his left arm, the right one's broken."*

新丰老翁八十八，头鬓眉须皆似雪。玄孙扶向店前行，左臂凭肩右臂折。

*"If you ask the old man how long since it's broken and ask him the reason why...  
He'll reply: I am a native of Xinfeng that was born into a time of sage rulers that did not  
see military campaigns."*

问翁臂折来几年，兼问致折何因缘。翁云贯属新丰县，生逢圣代无征战。

*"I got used to listening to the pipes of Pear Garden opera, but knew nothing of the  
clamor of spears and bows. It wasn't long until the great conscription of the Heaven's  
Jewel reign; of a family of three, one would have to go."*

惯听梨园歌管声，不识旗枪与弓箭。无何天宝大征兵，户有三丁点一丁。

*"And just where were we forced to march? In May, thousands of miles south to  
Yunnan. I had heard that in Yunnan there was Lu river, when the petals of the prickly ash  
fall, poisonous vapors rise. The army crossed barefoot, the waters almost boiling hot,  
before even ten crossed two or three were already dead. The village at north and south  
ends was all in wailing; sons bade goodbye to grandfathers, husbands parted with  
wives."*

点得驱将何处去，五月万里云南行。闻道云南有泸水，椒花落时瘴烟起。大  
军徒涉水如汤，未过十人二三死。村南村北哭声哀，儿别爷娘夫别妻。

*"They all said that from past to present of those who went off on an expedition to  
conquer the southern barbarians, tens of thousands left, but not one returned. At the time,  
I was just twenty-four with my name already on the roster of troops. Late at night without  
a soul having known, I snatched up a great stone and hammered my arm till broken. Not  
able to launch an arrow or even raise a flag, from then on I was saved from marching on  
Yunnan."*

皆云前后征蛮者，千万人行无一回。是时翁年二十四，兵部牒中有名字。  
夜深不敢使人知，偷将大石捶折臂。张弓簸旗俱不堪，从兹始免征云南。

*“Bones shattered, muscle torn: not that it was not painful; what I got was an escape back to my homeland. This arm has been broken for sixty years; I lost one limb, but the rest of my body is whole. Up till now whenever there was a cold dark night with wind and rain, the pain would be so bad I could not sleep till dawn. So painful I can't sleep, but I'll never regret it. I'm just glad this old body of mine is still here. If things were different, I'd be dead and gone at the Lu river with no one to pick up my bones; I could have become one of those homeward bound lost souls of Yunnan, with tens of thousands of people crying over their tombs.”*

骨碎筋伤非不苦，且图拣退归乡土。此臂折来六十年，一肢虽废一身全。至今风雨阴寒夜，直到天明痛不眠。痛不眠，终不悔，且喜老身今独在。不然当时泸水头，身死魂孤骨不收；应作云南望乡鬼，万人冢上哭呦呦。

*“This old man's words, you sir, please listen carefully. Have you not heard of the prime minister of Kaiyuan reign, His Excellency Song Jing 宋璟, who never rewarded military exploits on the frontier, for the sake of avoiding militarism? Or have you not heard of the prime minister of Tianbao, Yang Guozhong, who curried favor with the emperor by sending all those troops to the frontier? Frontier glories have not been achieved, but resentment has risen. If you wonder their sorrows then please ask the Old Man of Xinfeng.”*

老人言，君听取。君不闻开元宰相宋开府，不赏边功防黠武。又不闻天宝宰相杨国忠，欲求恩幸立边功。边功未立生人怨，请问新丰折臂翁。<sup>xiv</sup>



## Poem 10. The Grand Pass

The tenth poem is The Grand Pass. This poem explains how the relationship between the husband and wife [which is revealed at the end of the poem to be an allegory for emperor and minister] is a distant one. As much as the "female" narrator would love to be heard, she is ignored and sent far off and away. Even when things seem good, somehow they turn to become a disaster. Out of options after trying everything she can to impress her husband, she is remorseful that she has no way to get close to the husband again.

Not a high ranking minister himself, Bai Juyi has no easy way to gain the emperor's attention, and perhaps it is for this reason that he wrote the fifty New Yuefu poems, for if he cannot gain the emperor's attention directly, at least he can gain it indirectly. He desired his poetry to become so popular that even the emperor will hear of it all. For if the most revered emperor cannot hear what he says, at least everyone else in the realm can.

### The Grand Pass

Tai hang lu 太行路

借夫妇以讽君臣之不终也

The timeless allegory of husband and wife to ruler and minister

*"The road on Grand Pass can wreck a cart; compared with human heart it is smooth. The water of Witch Gorge rapids can capsize a boat; compared with the human heart it is a calm flow. The human heart's likes and dislikes never stay the same. When good, it sprouts feathers. When bad, there come the scars. It's been five years since we*

*first married; how could I expect that a cowherd boy and weaver girl kind of love was estranged as the constellations Shen and Shang."*

太行之路能摧车，若比人心是坦途。巫峡之水能覆舟，若比人心是安流。人心好恶苦不常，好生毛羽恶生疮。与君结发未五载，岂期牛女为参商。

*"The ancient saying has it that when one loses her beauty she will be cast off. Even if that is the case [i.e., the abandonment is caused by the loss of her beautiful appearance], still she is able to complain and regret. Alas, now even when I gaze in my phoenix mirror and see that this face has not changed, your heart has. For you, I performed all my dresses, but alas you did not find my wild orchid musk all that fragrant. For you I adorned myself with glamorous jewellery; but you saw gold and jade as if they had no color left."*

古称色衰相弃背，当时美人犹怨悔。何况如今鸾镜中，妾颜未改君心改。为君熏衣裳，君闻兰麝不馨香。为君盛容饰，君看金翠无颜色。

*"This road is hard, as hard as it is old. If you are alive, then don't be a woman. Or else a hundred years of joy and sorrow will depend on how her other feels. This road is hard, its heights daunting, its waters perilous. It is not only between a husband and wife; nowadays it is just the same for a ruler and his minister. Can you not see—There are high ranking ministers at his left and right; at dawn takes favor, at dusk meets with death? This road is hard, not in its waters, or its heights, but only in the very space between your changes of heart!"*

行路难，难重陈。人生莫作妇人身，百年苦乐由他人。行路难，难于山，险于水，不独人间夫与妻，近代君臣亦如此。君不见：左纳言，右纳史；朝承恩，暮承死。行路难，不在水，不在山，只在认清反覆间。<sup>xv</sup>

## Poem 11. The Court Astronomers

The eleventh poem is The Court Astronomers. A redundant position to begin with, court astronomers are not held in very high regard according to Bai Juyi. In this poem he briefly describes the history of the position. If a celestial portent is ever seen, the natural conclusion is to report their findings to the court. However, the reaction of the emperor and the court is something they cannot predict. Generally speaking this poem refers to the futility of the work of the Court Astronomers, as often their observations are generally ignored.

### The Court Astronomers

Si tian tai 司天台

Taking the past to warn the present

引古以儆今也

*"The court astronomers, looking up, and down from on high they examined the borders between Heaven and man. Since [the mother of the ten suns] Xihe<sup>xvi</sup> died, their post was wasted, court astronomers need not be worthy; their position depended solely on their skill."*

司天台，仰观俯察天人际。羲和死来职事废，官不求贤空取艺。

*"I have heard that during Emperor Yuan [76-33 BC] and Emperor Cheng's [52-7 BC] times in the Western Han, order was broken from both above and below, and Heaven sent down punishing signs. The North Star was vague and dim; the Four Stars<sup>36</sup> were brilliant and fiery red."*

昔闻西汉元成间，上陵下替谪见天。北辰微闇少光色，四星煌煌如火赤。

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<sup>36</sup> It is unclear as to which four stars he is referring to here.

*"Light shot down the awning angling toward the Three Towers, the upper tower partially destroyed, the middle tower cracked apart.<sup>37</sup> It is not that there were no court astronomers at the time; they saw it, understood it in their heart but dared not to speak."*

耀芒动角射三台，上台半灭中台坼。是时非无太史官，眼见心知不敢言。

*"The next morning at court, they rushed to the Hall of Bright Light, only to report saying to the king 'Auspicious clouds and the star of longevity have appeared!' Great changes in both the patterns of Heaven and human affairs were like this; the Son of Heave, however, was kept in the dark, never to know. Never to know...then what need was there for such a tower a hundred feet high!"*

明朝趋入明光殿，唯奏庆云寿星见。天文时变两如斯，九重天子不得知。不得知，安用台高百尺为。<sup>xvii</sup>

### Poem 12. Catching Locusts

The twelfth poem is Catching Locusts. This natural disaster of locusts is not easily controlled. Aside from catching them one by one, there is little the farmers can do to save their crops. What we learn from this poem is that catching locusts becomes something like a business and there is a prize to be one for each locust caught.

Even though catching locusts becomes a new source of income, the money earned cannot solve the problem of hunger. The famine continues and though slightly richer, the men of Henan are still left woefully alone with a disaster of locusts. How true it is that good governance can mitigate natural disasters; if a governor or emperor provides good leadership, then the people will find a way to weather any storm.

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<sup>37</sup> At this point to it is also unclear as to what event Bai Juyi was actually referring to. Therefore this translation is also a kind of conjecture.

Catching Locusts

Bu huang 捕蝗

A satire of governors

刺长吏也

*"Catch those locusts, catch those locusts, whose family's son was at work? The days hot and long, so hungry he was starving to death. After the Xingyuan Campaigns [of Emperor Dezong, [742-805] the balance of Yin and Yang was disturbed. Yet in the peaceful airs thereafter, insidious larvae transformed into locusts. Starting from the two rivers they reached Sanpu, consuming everything in sight like silkworm, they flew down like rain. Flying down like rain the pests nibbled away at thousands of acres, not a sprout to be seen. There was only left barren red earth."*

捕蝗捕蝗谁家子？天热日长饥欲死。兴元兵久伤阴阳，和气蛊蠹化为蝗。始自两河及三浦，荐食如蚕飞似雨。雨飞蚕食千里间。不见青苗空赤土。

*"The governor of Henan said: 'I worry for the farmers.' He taught the people: 'At noon and evening, catch locusts.' At the time, the price of a Dou of millet was three hundred cash, but the price of locusts was just the same! Catch those locusts, catch those locusts! What profit does this have? It only forced those in the famine spent heavy an effort in labor. One locust may die but a hundred more will come, how can men alone overcome such a natural disaster?"*

河南长吏言忧农，课人昼夜捕蝗虫。是时粟斗钱三百，蝗虫之价与粟同。捕蝗捕蝗竟何利，徒使饥人重劳费。一虫虽死百虫来，岂将人力定天灾？

*"I have heard that in the past wise governors with good governance were able to drive the locusts out of their land. I have also heard that in the Zhenguan Reign [Tang*

*Taizong, 627-649] of our founding king, He said 'I desire prosperity,' our cultured emperor raised his mouth to the sky and swallowed a locust whole.<sup>38</sup> Once the people have a ruler [of felicitous omens] that they can rely on, then even the locusts of the year will do them no harm."*

我闻古之良吏有善政，以政驱蝗蝗出境。又闻贞观之初道欲昌，文皇仰天吞一蝗。一人有庆兆民赖，是岁虽蝗不为害。<sup>xviii</sup>

### Poem 13. The Swelling Spring Waters of Kunming Pool

The thirteenth poem is The Swelling Spring Waters of Kunming Pool.<sup>39</sup> Revitalizing a pond may seem like a trivial matter, but in this case it means that thousands of fish and wildlife have a chance to live again. There are many more benefits to this new pond as will be shown in the following verses.

As Bai Juyi explains in this piece, mankind too benefits from this new pond. Fishermen and poor people alike can reap the benefits of a pond full of fresh fish and edible grasses. The blessings of this springtime pond are numerous indeed! This poem is simplistic in its meaning and is one of the least critical of the fifty New Yuefu poems.

#### The Swelling Spring Waters of Kunming Pool

Kun ming chun shui man 昆明春水满

Reflecting on the far-reaching grace of the king

思王泽之广被也

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<sup>38</sup> Bai Juyi notes in the poem that this refers to a passage in the True Record of the Zhenguan Reign in which in the second year of his Zhenguan reign emperor Taizong swallowed a locust. In the original Chinese, "贞观二年太宗吞蝗虫事，见《贞观实录》。"

<sup>39</sup> Please note that this poem does not refer to the modern day city of Kunming in Sichuan; but rather refers to the capital Chang-an.

*"Kunming Spring, Kunming Spring. The banks of the old spring pond, this spring, flow new. Shade covers the Southern Mountain, overflowed with bright blue deep waters; the sun sets in the west, red light sinks beneath the depths of the waves. For so many years it dried up in the drought; turtle tails dragged in the sand as the fishes lay dead in balmy beach foam. An edict opened the eight waters that poured gracefully in waves; that same day thousands of fishes could live again."*

昆明春，昆明春，春池岸古春流新。影浸南山青滉漾，波沉西日红齠沦。  
往年因旱池枯竭 龟尾曳涂鱼煦沫。诏开八水注恩波，千介万鳞同日活。

*"Now the clean waters shine on with the sky, swimming fish flutter about lotus plants everywhere. Fragrant are the Pollia [japonica], their sprouts short on the groves of the rivulets; in the warm sands, pairs of mandarin ducks close their wings to sleep. Animals and plants, fly or swim each according to its nature; royal grace is just like the spring, there is nothing that does not benefit from it. Fishermen with their nets full and bountiful, and poor people can benefit from perennial grasses."*

今来净渌水照天，游鱼拨拨莲田田。洲香杜若抽心短，沙暖鸳鸯铺翅眠。动植飞沉皆遂性 皇泽如春无不被。渔者乃丰网罟资，贫人又获菰蒲利。

*"An edict proclaims that since Kunming Pool is close to the imperial capital, officials were not allowed to levy taxes. The perennial grasses were free, the fishes were without tax; those who lived close to the water were grateful for our lord's blessing. Who indeed should benefit from our lord's blessing? I have heard that in all the land, we are all people of the Tang. If people far away are neglected, then how are people close be treated as kin? I wish for this blessing to extend throughout our realm, near or far, we will all share the same joy. That the tea monopoly at Wuxing Mountain, the taxation at*

*Poyang Lake will all be abolished. All across the world, no limitations on profit, everyone would enjoy its blessing, flourishing as Kunming spring."*

诏以昆明近帝城，官家不得收其征。菰蒲无租鱼无税，近水之人感君惠。感君惠，独何人？吾闻率土皆王民。远民何疏近何亲？愿推此惠及天下无远无近同欣欣。吴兴山中罢榷茗，鄱阳坑里休封银。天涯地角无禁利，熙熙同似昆明春。<sup>xix</sup>

#### Poem 14. Wall Yanzhou

The fourteenth poem is Wall Yanzhou. These new walls are certainly beneficial for the city of Yanzhou and the Tang. Protecting them from barbarian incursions and garrisoning new troops, this city is worth more walled in.

Liu Longkai makes the important note that of the subtitle of the poem:

"...Glorifying the emperor's grand plans and mocking the border generals. For the first half he is talking about Dezong, and this is untrue; as for the second part, it talks about the border generals, and this is the truth. The poem and the facts do not match up. The walls were built at the personal request of the border generals; moreover, it was done at the memorialized recommendation of the prime minister Lu Zhi. Even though [in the memorial] he does not speak of Yanzhou, he does indeed speak of the border defense along the northwestern frontier. When taking a look at this, it is [evident] that this walling [of the city] all was certainly related to the border generals, and on this point Emperor Dezong was perhaps moved [to action]. Bai Juyi's mistake was due to the fact that he at that time had not yet participated in the decision of grand military and national affairs and therefore was not aware of the particulars."<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Liu Longkai, *Chen Yinke Yuanbai shizhengshi* p. 128: Chinese original, "美圣谟而诮边将也，前半说的德宗，是虚话；后半指的边将，是实话。诗与事实是不合的。城之筑出于边将自请，再，时为宰相的陆宣公的奏议，虽未谈及盐州，但确乎谈到了西北边防情况。由是观之，此城与边将必定有关，



Wall Yanzhou

Cheng yanzhou 城盐州

Glorifying the emperor's grand plans and mocking the border generals<sup>41</sup>

美圣谟而诮边将也

*"Wall Yanzhou, Wall Yanzhou, the wall on top of Wuyuan fields. Tibetan general Bo Chanbu, all of a sudden saw new walls being built blocking the main road [to the Tang]. The "Golden Pheasant"<sup>42</sup> was flown to send the message to Zanpu [the Tibetan king], who established a command and assembled his ministers. Both king and ministers their brown colored faces were anxious for battle. They all said: "Do not say that the Tang has no men." Ever since this time [since the Tang built the walls of Yanzhou], for ten or more years, those felt and fur coat barbarians out west could never take this strategic pass."*

城盐州，城盐州，城在五原原上头。蕃东节度钵阐布，忽见新城当要路。金鸟飞传赞普闻，建牙传箭集群臣。君臣赧面有忧色，皆言勿谓唐无人。自筑盐州十余载，左衽毡裘不犯塞。

*"At noontime they let out cows and sheep. At night-time they took prisoners alive, venturing often as far as a hundred miles out of the newly walled city [into enemy land]. All the other border generals were on alert busily defending the frontier, while only this strategic pass had not a speck of dust. The prefectures of Ling and Xia were quietly at*

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德宗在这方面也许是被动的。白氏之误仍在于当时他尚未预闻军国大计，对政事不明底细。"

<sup>41</sup> Bai Juyi adds a footnote to this poem before it begins. "On the Ren Shen Year of the Zhenyuan Reign, there was a special edict to wall the city." Chinese original, "贞元壬申岁，特诏城之。"

<sup>42</sup> Patricia Buckley Ebrey, *China: Cambridge Illustrated History* p. 108-136: This refers to An Lushan 安禄山 [703-757]; his rebellion against the Tang was from 755-763.

*peace: who can tell their difference? The plains of Qin were secretly connected: where could they be seen? Good horses flowed in through the way stations of Fuzhou, apothecaries at Chang-an were full with cheap medicines like Yellow Achillea root. Wall Yanzhou, when Yanzhou was without walls, the Son of Heaven worried so. Emperor Dezong [742-805] took a map and planned the spot himself; it was not due to the strategies of any generals or high ministers in court."*

昼牧牛羊夜捉生，长去新城百里外。诸边急警劳戍人，唯此一道无烟尘。灵夏潜安谁复辨，秦原暗通何处见。鄜州驿路好马来，长安药肆黄蓍贱。城盐州，盐州未城天子忧。德宗按图自定计，非关将略与庙谋。

*I have heard that in the age of Emperor Gaozong [628-683] and Zhongzong [656-710], the northern barbarians were at their worst and were hard to control. The duke of Han was in charge of building the walls, three ramparts fully garrisoned with Chinese troops. Stretching out some thousands of miles east to west, even when the ears were cold [meaning deep into the north], naught to hear the sound of barbarian horses hooves. As for now, it is not that the border generals are unable to make such plans, but in their hearts they secretly laugh at the Duke of Han for building such walls. They idly look at each other, thinking only about their own benefits, letting the enemies getting stronger, each holding on to their strong troops to solidify the emperor's favor. We wish to divide up the favor to today's border generals, and to commend and reward the Duke of Han, thusly give rank [and land] to his descendants. Who can take this poem of Yanzhou and turn it into a song to reach our most revered and respected Kingly ears.*

吾闻高宗中宗世，北虏猖狂最难制。韩公创筑受降城，三城鼎峙屯汉兵。东西亘绝数千里，耳冷不闻胡马声。如今边将非无策，心笑韩公筑城壁。相看养寇为

身谋，各握强兵固恩泽。愿分今日边将恩，褒赠韩公封子孙。谁能将此盐州曲，翻作歌词闻至尊。<sup>xx</sup>

### Poem 15. The People of Daozhou

The fifteenth poem is The People of Daozhou. This poem speaks of the story of dwarven people that once given away will live their lives in slavery. They have no choice but to go along with it and go where they are told. As a tribute they are treated like any other commodity sent to the imperial court. That is until a compassionate prefect comes to serve.

For once we see good governance on both sides of the aisle. The new prefect fights for what he believes to be a gross wrongdoing and wins the freedom of the little people. The imperial court finally rectifies its poor policy and cancels a disgusting tribute of slaves. The people now free are overflowing with gratitude to their prefect who has become like family to them. Saved from serving their lives away in slavery, they can now live as they please. Naming their sons after the prefect is the highest honor they can bestow upon their savior.

*"Of the people of Daozhou, many are quite short - not growing taller than three feet high. Sold as short slaves and sent out, they were called the special regional tribute of Daozhou. How come special regional tributes came to be like this? Didn't you hear that it torn families apart; grandfathers cried for their grandchildren, mothers cried for their sons."*

道州民，多侏儒，长者不过三尺余。市作矮奴年进送，号为道州任土贡。任土贡，宁若斯，不闻使人生别离，老翁哭孙母哭儿。

*"Ever since the prefect Yang Cheng came to serve, he did not send in those little slaves as tributes, and repeated edicts were issued by the court to inquire about the matter. Cheng replied: I am only following the Six Books, which stipulates that in presenting regional tributes one should send in what the area has, not what it lacks. Of those that are produced by the waters and lands of Daozhou, there are only short people and no little slaves. Our lord was touched by this and an imperial edict was sent down: The entire tribute of little-slaves would be stopped!"*

一自阳城来守郡，不进矮奴频诏问。城云臣按六典书，任土贡有不贡无。道州水土所生者，只有矮民无矮奴。吾君感悟玺书下，岁贡矮奴宜悉罢。

*"The people of Daozhou, young and old cried for sheer joy. Fathers, sons, and brothers alike were protected; from now on they could live as free men. Oh the people of Daozhou received such a blessing; as soon as they begin to talk about their prefect, their tears would come down first. So fearing that their descendants would forget their lord, many a son was named Yang henceforth."*

道州民，老者幼者何欣欣。父兄子弟始相保，从此得作良人身。道州民，民到于今受其赐，欲说使君先下泪。仍恐儿孙忘使君，生男多以阳为字。<sup>xxi</sup>

#### Poem 16. The Tame Rhinoceros

The sixteenth poem is The Tame Rhinoceros. The fact that this rhino was delivered from ten thousand leagues away goes to show the magnificence of the Tang, yet the fact that the rhino died in the cold shows a certain degree of neglect. The tribute from these southerners was a joyous event indeed. Only to be soured by the death of their prized rhinoceros.

Liu Longkai notes that the death of the rhinoceros was due to Emperor Dezong's lax attitude in government, of which he developed later in his reign. "[It was] because at his start Dezong was full of vigor and careful planning [in government], but later on he was again chasing pleasures. What the poem speaks of is just an example of this. The narrative of Bai's poem is targeted at Emperor Xianzong, in the hopes that Xianzong will not act like this. It is spoken with all sincerity."<sup>43</sup>

### The Tame Rhinoceros

Xun xi 驯犀

On that it is hard to follow a policy through

感为政之难终也<sup>44</sup>

*"Oh tame rhino, tame rhino, this lofty rhinoceros, its massive body frightens people, it's great horn scares roosters. The barbarians of the Southern Sea heard of our illustrious Son of Heaven, so they rode this rhino ten thousand leagues through the post for tribute."*

驯犀驯犀通天犀，躯貌骇人角骇鸡。海蛮闻有明天子，驯犀乘传来万里。

*"One morning they brought it to the Palace of Great Brightness; after joyously saluting the king, prostrating and dancing, they requested for a reward for their great effort. 'This rhino was trained for five years before it could be sent as tribute. Our words had to go over many translations to be understood.' The Emperor recognized with*

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<sup>43</sup> Liu Longkai, *Chen Yinke Yuanbai shizhengshi*, p. 131: Chinese original, "因为德宗在政治上起初还是励精图治的，不过以后又追求享乐。诗里说到的，便是一个例子。白诗的论述，是说给宪宗听的，希望宪宗不要如此，说得是很真切的。"

<sup>44</sup> Bai Juyi has a note at the start of the poem: "On the Bingzi year of the Zhenyuan Reign, Nanhai presented as tribute a tame rhinoceros. An edict ordered it to be placed in the imperial gardens. In the winter of the thirteenth year of the reign, there was a great cold, and the rhinoceros died!" Or in the Chinese original, "贞元丙子岁，南海进驯犀，诏纳苑中。至十三年冬，大寒，驯犀死矣。"

*appreciation that both men and beast came from afar, and therefore ordered the southern barbarians to be housed in the State Guest House and the rhino to be placed in the imperial garden. Its fodder - jasper grass; its lock - gold. Homeland so remote, the imperial palace so deep."*

一朝得谒大明宫，欢呼拜舞自论功。五年驯养始堪献，六译语言方得通。上嘉人兽俱来远，蛮馆四方犀入苑。秣以瑶刍锁以金，故乡迢递君门深。

*"Birds of the sea know not the music of bells and drums; fish of ponds have not the heart for rivers and lakes. This tame rhino was born in the heat of the deep south; in autumn there is no fog, in winter no snow. It has been three or four years since it entered the imperial garden and then it met with this year's bitterly cold month. Drinking ice and sleeping on hail, it bitterly curled up on the ground; its bones and horn frozen, its scale and skin damaged and shrunken in the cold."*

海鸟不知钟鼓乐，池鱼空结江湖心。驯犀生处南方热，秋无白露冬无雪。一入上林三四年，又逢今岁苦寒月。饮冰卧霰苦蜷跼，角骨冻伤鳞甲蹙。

*"The tame rhinoceros died, the southerners cried. They faced the throne, bowed repeatedly, their countenance sullen low. They begged to return home alive, lest they die of the cold like the tame rhino. Have you not heard that at the beginning of the Jianzhong Reign [780-783], tame elephants were sent back to their jungle hamlets. Have you not heard that at the end of the Zhenyuan Reign a tame rhinoceros died in the cold and those southerners did cry. It is truly lamentable how big a difference there is between the Jianzhong and the Zhenyuan reigns: the elephant lied while the rhino died. Alas, what more can be said!"*

驯犀死，蛮儿啼，向阙再拜颜色低。奏乞生归本国去，恐身冻死似驯犀。君不见建中初，驯象生还放林邑。君不见贞元末，驯犀冻死蛮儿泣。所嗟建中异贞元，象生犀死何足言。<sup>xxii</sup>

### Poem 17. Five Strings Plucked

The seventeenth poem is Five Strings Plucked. In this poem we can picture the listener lounging about listening to this famous player perform. Bai Juyi's talents are so refined that he can actually write music by way of words, truly an uncanny feat.

How can it be that music can be so absolutely piercing through the senses of the listener. This is just how Bai Juyi plays with our emotions, throwing us into the scene to hear and see what the characters in the poem are witnessing. Towards the end of the poem, Bai Juyi sets the stage to rectify contemporary music by bringing it back to the way it used to be.

Hopefully by explaining how beautiful it used to sound, people could be swayed to go back to the original style of music. He finishes the piece by describing how the music used to sound. With the correct original music beautifully and deftly described, Bai Juyi takes a beat before ending the scene. The music he used to know and love still remains in his heart; and now that he has written out this poem so beautifully, it is up to the audience to revive the music that once was.

### Five Strings Plucked

Wu xian tan 五弦弹

Disgusted by the degenerate music of Zheng usurping the upright music of the past

恶郑之夺雅也

*"Five strings plucked, five strings plucked, the one who listens his ear turned, his heart so lonely. Zhao Bi [famed five-stringed-pipa player in the Tang] knew you loved this to your bones, so one by one a harmony was played for you."*

五弦弹，五弦弹，听者倾耳心寥寥。赵璧知君入骨爱，五弦一一为君调。

*"The first and second strings as chords, autumn winds picked loosely its unadorned voice falling. The third and fourth strings so cold, at night the crane remembers her children singing in cages."*

第一第二弦索索，秋风拂松疏韵落。第三第四弦泠泠，夜鹤忆子笼中鸣。

*"The fifth string so deep and sullen, like the Long range with its freezing waters that cannot flow. All the five strings were plucked at the same time; you, Sir, try to listen: bitterly cold cutting and clanging."*

第五弦声最掩抑，陇水冻咽流不得。五弦并奏君试听，凄凄切切复铮铮。

*"A steely smashing coral-like sounds were one or two songs, like ice poured down into a jade plate as a myriad voices whole. When its murderous voice entered one's ears both skin and blood turned cold, it's tragic airs crawled up the skin, its melody corroded bone."*

铁击珊瑚一两曲，冰泻玉盘千万声。杀声入耳肤血寒，惨气中人肌骨酸。

*"The song ended and voice quieted for what seemed like half a day; all the listeners were so fixated in their seat, facing each other sadly without a word. Among them was a gentlemen from faraway, chirping about and heaving sighs, his voice incessant."*

曲终声尽欲半日，四坐相对愁无言。座中有一远方士，唧唧咨咨声不已。



*"He sighed and said to himself: 'Only today did I have the good fortune to hear this; only now did I know that for my whole life my ears haven't been treated with anything this good! I only worry that white hairs will grow on Zhao Bi's head soon, and after he dies, we will not be able to ever hear this again.'"*

自叹今朝初得闻，始知孤负平生耳。唯忧赵璧白发生，老死人间无此声。

*"Dear gentleman from afar, you heard these five strings and believed them to be beautiful, but I have heard that the correct original sound was not like this. "*

远方士，尔听五弦信为美，吾闻正始之音不如是。

*"So how did the correct original music sound like? Those crimson strings were far and above, pure as ceremonial songs at ancestral temples. One plucking, one singing, followed by a chanting, the song was light, its rhythm sparse, its sounds few. Happy and harmonious called on back were its original airs, listen to it and be mesmerized with your heart at peace."*

正始之音其若何？朱弦疏越清庙歌。一弹一唱再三叹，曲淡节稀声不多。融融曳曳召元气，听之不觉心平和。

*"People only seem to care for the present and disregard the old. If an old harp still had its strings none would touch it. If we can learn a lesson from Zhao Bi's skills, then twenty-five strings are not as good as five."*

人情重今多贱古，古琴有弦人不抚。更从赵璧艺成来二十五弦不如五。<sup>xxiii</sup>

#### Poem 18. Barbarians of the South

The eighteenth poem is Barbarians of the South. This piece depicts how the barbarians display an increased threat when they join together as one consolidated force. They become a force so strong that the Tang must be cautious when fighting against

them. The Tang was completely overwhelmed by the southerners' forces. The only way for them to win against them is to simply avoid fighting them altogether!

Liu Longkai makes the very important point that, "In this poem Bai Juyi writes about historical facts, but these do not line up at all with the real and true situation."<sup>45</sup>

The politics and battles with the southerners are intricate and are in fact difficult to describe in accurate detail. Nonetheless the poem explains the general situation of the strife between the Tang dynasty and the southern "barbarians."

### Barbarians of the South

Man zi chao 蛮子朝

Satirizing the proud generals impinging upon the power of the ministers

刺将骄而相备位也

*Barbarians of the south, they floated their kayaks and crossed their rope bridges, coming all the way from faraway Xizhou. Entering our kingdom they first passed through the river Shu. The general of Shu took it as his victory and sent a memorial in advance to congratulate the Emperor. 'Your minister has heard that the Six Zhao tribes of Yunnan, their land connects east to Zangke and west to Tibet. The Six Zhao tribes originally consisted of small separated lands. When united as one they became increasingly strong.'*"

蛮子朝，泛皮船兮渡绳桥，来自嵩州道路遥。入界先经蜀川过，蜀将收功先表贺。臣闻云南六诏蛮，东连牂牁西连蕃。六诏星居初琐碎，合为一诏渐强大。

*“Although our Emperor of the Kaiyuan Reign was wise and holy, those obstinate barbarians would not come in tribute. General Xianyu Zhongtong's sixty thousand*

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<sup>45</sup> Liu Longkai, *Chen Yinke Yuanbai shizhengshi* p. 133: Chinese original, "白氏在此诗中写到的历史事实，与真实情况并不相合。"

*soldiers, were all gone fighting these barbarians. Still now alongside the banks of the Xier river, arrow holed and blade scared land full of withered bones.'*<sup>46</sup>

开元皇帝虽圣神，唯蛮倔强不来宾。鲜于仲通六万卒，征蛮一阵全军没。至今西洱河岸边，箭孔刀痕满枯骨。

*"Who would know that today there is a trend there to admire the Tang customs. Without spending one life the court made the barbarians come offering offer themselves. This was truly due to Your Majesty's benevolent and bright virtue; it also relied on this minor minister's effort of urging and instruction.' Emperor Dezong looking at the memorial he knew as much. Laughing he ordered an envoy from the inner palace to welcome the southern barbarians. And just who were those leading the barbarian king's procession? Caressing their feathered garbs were those garnered with pairs of jade disks; his prime minister carried a red rattan cane, his great general's robe was tied by an untreated leather belt."*

谁知今日慕华风，不劳一人蛮自通。诚由陛下休明德，亦赖微臣诱谕功。德宗省表知如此，笑令中使迎蛮子。蛮子导从者谁何？摩挲俗羽双隈伽。清平官持赤藤杖，大将军系金咭嗟。

*"Xungequan, son of the southern barbarian king Yimouxun, with a special edict he was summoned to the Yanying palace. The Emperor took winning the faraway barbarians' hearts and minds as invaluable, and he asked the barbarian's son to be led close to his jade throne so that his heavenly face can be seen. The jade tassels of his*

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<sup>46</sup> Bai Juyi makes the note that: "During the thirteenth year of the Tianbao Reign, Xianyu Chongtong took sixty thousand troops on a punitive campaign against King of Yunnan, Ge Luofeng, at the Xi-er river , and the entire army was annihilated." Or in Chinese, "天宝十三载，鲜于仲通统兵六万讨云南王阁罗凤于西洱河，全军覆没也。"

*crown not hanging he personally rewarded him. He bestowed upon him food and clothing, audience after audience the Emperor summoned him, can't wait even for a short while. Alas, this even the high ministers could not aspire to have, looking at one another their faces colored with greed. What a pity that even a purple-trailing and gold-studded prime minister could not get more than a moment's time with the Emperor at court."*

异牟寻男寻阁劝，特敕召对延英殿。上心贵在怀远蛮，引临玉座近天颜。冕旒不垂亲劳徕，赐衣赐食移时对。移时对，不可得，大臣相看有羡色。可怜宰相拖紫佩金章，朝日唯闻对一刻。<sup>xxiv</sup>

#### Poem 19. The Musicians of Burma

The nineteenth poem is The Musicians of Burma. This poem speaks of visitors from abroad coming in tribute, offering their music to Emperor Dezong of Tang. As we shall soon learn this music is offered as a celebration of the New Year. This piece is truly a beautiful scene. Bai Juyi's description is so complete that the entire scene comes alive in our imaginations. Even godly dragons come alive alongside the music, swaying about amongst pearl tassels.

Placating Emperor Dezong, the Musicians of Burma have made a successful trip to visit the kingdom of the Tang. Not only have they impressed the Emperor himself, the ministers too are enraptured by this beautiful foreign music. Later in the poem Bai Juyi introduces another character to offer a different opinion. This proverbial farmer is nameless, but only because he represents the voice of Bai Juyi within the poem itself. For the remainder of the poem our "farmer" explains how diplomacy should work to the Emperor himself.

As the old farmer explains the Emperor is the heart of the nation. When his ideas are sickened, so too does the "body" suffer. The happiness of the Emperor is dependent on the health of the people of the kingdom. If the people are with ailment there is no way for the Emperor to enjoy the fruits of diplomacy.

### The Musicians of Burma

Piao guo yue 骠国乐

The desire of the king's diplomacy to be first close and later distant<sup>47</sup>

欲王化之先迩后远也

*"Burma, Music of Burma, they came from the Great Sea at its southwest horn."*

骠国乐，骠国乐，出自大海西南角。

*"A son of the peaceful Qiang tribe, Shu Nantuo came offering his southern music to celebrate the New Year. Dezong prepared the ceremony in the royal purple garden, not wearing his yellow ball tassels he listened."*

雍羌之子舒难陀，来献南音奉正朔。德宗立仗御紫庭，毵纒不塞为尔听。

*"Sounding their conch shells they wore towering chignon braids, a thousand beats of the copper drum tattooed dancers leapt. Their pearl tassels dazzling, they spun and shook as constellations, like flowers shaking, and snakes and dragons moving."*

玉螺一吹椎髻耸，铜鼓千击文身踊。珠纒炫转星宿摇，花鬘斗薺龙蛇动。

*"When the song ended the prince of Burma spoke to the King. He said that his father wished to become a vassal of the Tang. The ministers at his left and right cheered, all saying that this shows how far the emperor's virtue and influence have extended."*

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<sup>47</sup> Bai Juyi adds the short note: "During the seventeenth year of the Zhenyuan reign [742-805] they came in tribute." Or in the Chinese original, "贞元十七年来献之."

曲终王子启圣人，臣父愿为唐外臣。左右欢呼何翕习，皆尊德广之所及。

*"In a moment all the hundred officials came to the gate of the palace, prostrating to the King they presented memorials congratulating the supreme monarch. 'Having respectfully watched the musicians of Burma offering the new music, we hereby request that the court historian record it and pass it down to sons and grandsons.'"*

须臾百辟诣阁门，俯伏拜表贺至尊。伏见骠人献新乐，请书国史传子孙。

*"At the time there was an old farmer, who secretly conjectured about the King's mind and in a leisurely manner said to himself: 'I have heard that in state affairs you rule with august wisdom, you wish to move people's hearts to achieve peace.'"*

时有击壤老农父，暗测君心闲独语。闻君政化甚圣明，欲感人心致太平。

*"'Moving people's hearts is achieved when they are close, not when they are far. Peace is about results and not reputation. Observing oneself and ruling a nation is one and the same. You are the heart of the nation and the people are the body.'"*

感人在近不在远，太平由实非由声。观身理国国可济，君如心兮民如体。

*"'When the body is sick and in pain the heart is inconsolable. So when the people are at peace, so is our lord happy and harmonious. If the people of Zhenyuan are not yet at peace, then even if listening to the music of Burma you will not enjoy.'"*

体生疾苦心慙凄，民得和平君恺悌。贞元之民若未安，骠乐虽闻君不欢。

*"'If the people of Zhenyuan are without ailment, then the music of Burma would not have come and you our lord would still be considered a sage.'"<sup>48</sup>*

贞元之民苟无病，骠乐不来君亦圣。

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<sup>48</sup> This marks the end of the farmer's speech. Subsequently Bai Juyi finishes out the poem.

*"Music of Burma oh music of Burma, such noise, its sound was not as good as this woodcutter's words."*

骠乐骠乐徒喧喧，不如闻此刍蕘言！

### Poem 20. The Bound Captive of Rong

The twentieth poem is The Bound Captive of Rong. This poem speaks how all together as one these groups of military service bound folk share the same hardships, yet some hardships are worse than others. Each thinking of his own pain, they have no way to peaceably discuss their own pain and hardship with one another.

Liu Longkai makes a quick point about the matter. "...In this age they did not release [the bound captives] but rather had them banished on the journey southwards. This was not a fair [equal] treatment. When Han Yu was demoted to Chaozhou, he saw this event of banishment happening, and thusly recorded it."<sup>49</sup> At any rate the treatment of these poor folk deserves speaking of, and Bai Juyi did an expert job at explaining their plight to the reader.

### The Bound Captive of Rong

Fu rong ren 缚戎人

Expressing the sentiment of poor people

达穷民之情也

*"A Bound Captive of Rong, a Bound Captive of Rong I am. Ears pierced face cut and forced into the Capital of Qin. The Son of Heaven with pity could not bear to kill us all, and ordered us by edict to march southeast to Wu and Yue."*

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<sup>49</sup> Liu Longkai, *Chen Yinke Yuanbai shizhengshi* p. 136: Chinese original, "这时并不放归，而是配流南方，这不是平等对待。韩愈贬官潮州，在湖南见过配流事，并把它记录下来。"

缚戎人，缚戎人，耳穿面破驱入秦。天子矜怜不忍杀，诏徙东南吴与越。

*"A yellow robed minor official recorded our names; led out of Chang-an we began our march. Blade scars on my body, with a face so pallid, I held up under my sickness, forced to march the full distance of one post per day. At morning's breakfast we were hungry and thirsty, we wasted many cups and plates. And at night our stinky bodies soiled the blanket on the bed."*

黄衣小使录姓名，领出长安乘递行。身被金疮面多瘠，扶病徒行日一驿。朝餐饥渴费杯盘，夜卧腥臊污床席。

*"Suddenly we came across the Yangzi river, which brought back memories of the Jiao river, and standing with our hands hanging down our voices sobbed together the same song. Among us a prisoner exclaimed to the other captives: all of your hardships are not as many as my own. His companions marching along with him thereupon asked him about it; before he ever spoke, his throat was too choked with anger to speak a word."*

忽逢江水忆交河，垂手齐声呜咽歌。其中一虏语诸虏，尔苦非多我苦多。同伴行人因借问，欲说喉中气愤愤。

*"So he said: 'I was originally from the Liang and Yuan area [of the Tang], and during the Dali reign [776-779] was taken by the barbarians into their tribe. It has been forty years since I was taken into the barbarian tribe, and my clothes changed to their style of wearing skinned fur coat and belt.'"*

白云乡管本凉原，大历年中没入番。一落番中四十载，身着皮裘系毛带。

*"I only hoped that they would someday become a vassal of the Tang and change to the Tang style of living. I tied up my clothes, tightened my turban, and shed tears"*



*secretly. At my heart I vowed and secretly planned to return home, keeping my new wife from the barbarian tribe all in the dark. I secretly thought to myself: it was fortunate that I still had this strength left with me; when I got old my return home would be impossible. The generals in the barbarian army were strict with their soldiers and not a bird could fly away; I truly risked my life fleeing off from them.”*

唯许正朔服汉仪，敛衣整巾潜泪垂。誓心密定归乡计，不使番中妻子知。暗思幸有残筋力，更恐年衰归不得。番候严兵鸟不飞，脱身冒死奔逃归。

*“At noontime I hid, by evening I moved across the desert; the clouds were overcast and the moon was black, the wind blew harsh sands. Alarmed, I hid in a tomb amidst the scattered grasses; I secretly crossed the yellow river in the thin frost of night. Suddenly I heard the war drums of the Tang army, and I came out from the side of the road and met with them again with a salute. These scouts could not understand Chinese so the general promptly took me in as a barbarian captive. Banished and sent to the marshy lowlands of Jiangnan, it is certain that they will have no pity on us, only strict surveillance.”*

昼伏宵行经大漠，云阴月黑风沙恶。惊藏青冢塞草疏，偷渡黄河夜冰薄。忽闻汉军鞞鼓声，路旁走出再拜迎。游骑不听能汉语，将军遂缚作番生。配向江南卑湿地，定无存恤空防备。

*“Thinking of this I swallow my voice and they cry out at Heaven itself. Oh how could I suffer the rest of my life in hardships like this! Not only were I unable to see my home in Liang and Yuan, but also my wife and children on that barbarian land are left empty and abandoned in vain.”*

念此吞声仰诉天，若为辛苦度残年。凉原乡井不得见，胡地妻儿虚弃捐。

*“When fallen to and captured by the barbarians I missed the land of the Han. While returning to the Han I was captured and became a barbarian prisoner. If only I had known this would be the case, I would regret coming back; suffering at both places is certainly worse than suffering at one place. Oh bound captives of Rong, of the lot among us, I have suffered the worst. Since times immemorial never has there been such an injustice: A Chinese heart a Chinese voice in a Tibetan body.”*

没蕃被囚思汉土，归汉被劫为蕃虏。早知如此悔归来，两地宁如一处苦？缚戎人，戎人之中我辛苦。自古此冤应未有，汉心汉语吐蕃身。<sup>xxv</sup>

#### Poem 21. Lofty the Li Palace

The twenty-first poem is Lofty the Li Palace. As we see at the start this beautiful palace is devoid of people. Bai Juyi's description of the location makes it seem like a place the emperor would love to frequent. But as we later learn, the palace is left desolate. More description of the scenery leads the reader to desire to hear more about this beautiful palace. However, still we have not witnessed a single person placed within the scenery.

The king sees it fit to not partake in leisurely activities and it is for this reason that he has not frequented the pleasure palaces on Mount Li. It is this in particular that deeply affects the many caretakers and denizens of the Li Palace. Indeed, for the emperor to enter the Li palace would be to surround himself in overseers and guards and courtiers and entertainers. It is for this reason that the emperor decides to avoid such places.

The emperor is more concerned with matters of state rather than personal pleasures. This in many ways is a positive thing; however, neglecting the palaces has its consequences as well. The palaces were described as empty for without the emperor they

are merely background pieces in the grand scheme of the Tang empire. The emperor chooses to not come so that he can take care of his country and its people.

Moreover this poem is in some part related to Bai Juyi's famous Song of Everlasting Sorrow (known as Chang hen ge). The main difference is that while Emperor Xuanzong [712-756] was a pleasure seeker, Emperor Xianzong [805-820] cares more about state affairs than himself. Or as Chen Yinke briefly explains: "This piece was not written by either Li Shen or Yuan Zhen, it was something that Bai Juyi created himself. The title of the piece comes from a line in his Song of Everlasting sorrow, in which he says, 'Lofty the Li Palace placed high into the blue clouds.'"<sup>50</sup> Once again as opposed to the lascivious romance Emperor Xuanzong shared with Yang Guifei,<sup>51</sup> the Emperor Xianzong of Bai Juyi's time (of writing the New Yuefu poems) was comparatively a much more conservative ruler.

Lofty the Li Palace

Li gong gao 骊宫高

Glorifying that our Son of Heaven deeply cherishes people's labor and money

美天子重惜人之财力也

*"Lofty lofty, palace on top of Mount Li, its chambers red, its palace rooms purple  
three to four layers in."*

高高骊山上有宫，朱楼紫殿三四重。

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<sup>50</sup> Liu Longkai, *Chen Yinke Yuanbai shizhengshi* p. 137: Chinese original, "此篇李，元二位均无，此是白氏自创。题名似出自《长恨歌》中“骊宫高处入青云”句。"

<sup>51</sup> Patricia Buckley Ebrey, *China: Cambridge Illustrated History* p. 121: The relationship between Emperor Xuanzong and Yang Guifei is glossed over as follows: "In popular culture Xuanzong is remembered above all for falling in love, when nearly sixty, with the young imperial consort Yang Guifei, a beauty who shared his interest in music and dance but lacked sound political sense..."

*"How late those spring days, the jade brick wells grew warm overflowing into hot springs. How delicate those autumn winds, the mountain cicadas chirped as the palace trees turned red."*

迟迟兮春日，玉甃暖兮温泉溢。裊裊兮秋风，山蝉鸣兮宫树红。

*"The jade blossoms [i.e. the imperial carriage] haven't come for so long; the walls had their drapery, the roof tiles had their pine trees."*

翠华不来岁月久，墙有衣兮瓦有松。

*"My king has been on the throne for already five years. So how come not once has he gone to enjoy himself within? How far indeed do you have to travel to get there from the western gate of the capital city? My king in not entertaining within has shown profound meaning."*

吾君在位已五载，何不一幸乎其中？西去都门几多地，吾君不游有深意。

*"For the single person of the emperor to exit the imperial palace [to visit Mount Li] it is not easy, because all people in the six rear palaces have to follow him and all the hundred government bureaus have to be included in his entourage. Eighty one chariots and thousands of cavalry, splendid banquets in the morning accompanied by luxurious bestowal of gifts in the evening."*

一人出兮不容易，六宫从兮百司备。八十一车千万骑，朝有宴饫暮有赐。

*"Seven hundred middle-income families' income put together would not be able to support the king for a single day. My king cultivates himself and the people do not yet know that he does not partake in leisure or play."*

中人之产数百家，未足充君一日费。吾君修己人不知，不自逸兮不自嬉。

*"My king loves people and the people do not yet know, he does not exert his wealth nor his power. Lofty the Li palace rising into the clouds. When the king comes, alas, it is only for himself, and the king, in not coming shall affect thousands of people."*

吾君爱人人不识，不伤财兮不伤力。骊宫高兮高入云，君之来兮为一身，君之不来兮为万人。<sup>xxvi</sup>

#### Poem 22. The Hundred Linked-chain Mirror

The twenty-second poem is The Hundred Linked-chain Mirror. This poem speaks of the mirror as an incredible piece of work. Made for the emperor, both its design and decoration are impeccable. Liu Longkai makes a brief note about this poem, "As for the mirror, the common people and the ministers or servants could not use it. Only the emperor was able to use this mirror. The mirror was decorated with a dragon, and for the purposes of the monarch [the dragon] had five claws; the mirror presented to the ministers only had four claws and was called a 'Python Jade [mirror],' although actually it was still a dragon. If a minister were to use a five claw mirror, that would be considered to be in breach of imperial regulations."<sup>52</sup> On other levels, the basic meaning of the poem is that the emperor should use the people (and not a mere object) as his true mirror. Moreover, he must consider the condition of his subjects before treasuring objects of great value.

#### The Hundred Linked-chain Mirror

#### Bai lian jing 百链镜

#### Distinguishing the real mirror for the king

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<sup>52</sup> Liu Longkai, *Chen Yinke Yuanbai shizhengshi* p. 138: Chinese original, "镜，人间（民）臣妾（妇女）不能用，皇帝才能用。镜饰有龙，帝用为五爪，赐臣，只四爪，叫蟒玉，其实仍然是龙。臣用若也是五爪，便是违制。"

辨皇王鉴也

*"The hundred linked chain mirror. Its casting was one to break with convention. The date, time, and place [of its making] all divine and regal. Smelted on a boat amidst the waves. In the heart of the river on the fifth of the fifth month at noontime of the day. White fine jade powder and golden paste thoroughly rubbed until lustrous. It was turned into a sheet like the pond waters of autumn."*

百链镜熔范非常规。日辰处所灵且祗，江心波上舟中铸，五月五日日午时。琼粉金膏磨莹已，化为一片秋潭水。

*"The mirror was to be sent to the palace of the immortals at Penglai [i.e. the imperial palace]. The high official from Yangzhou sealed the piece with his own hand. The ministers and maidservants of this world were not appropriate to use it. Because on its back were heavenly dragons in flight. Everyone called it a mirror of the Son of Heaven. I have a word which I hope will reach the ear of Taizong. Our founding emperor liked to say that he took his people to be his mirror. A mirror is for reflecting on the ancient, reflecting on the present but never reflecting on his own appearance."*

镜成将献蓬莱宫，扬州长吏手自封。人间臣妾不合照，背有九五飞天龙。人人呼为天子镜，我有一言闻太宗。太宗常以人为镜，鉴古鉴今不鉴容。

*"The world to its four seas in peace or in calamity is in his palm. A hundred kings' orderly or disorderly governance hung high in his heart. Thus we know that the Son of Heaven has another mirror, and it is not made of the hundred copper linked chains of Yangzhou."*

四海安危居掌内，百王治乱悬心中。乃知天子别有镜，不是扬州百链铜。

## Poem 23. The Limestone

The twenty-third poem is The Limestone. In this poem Bai Juyi speaks for the stone and shows his skill at bringing even the most lifeless of objects to life. How humorous that the stone does not wish to become a spirit tablet in front of a grave. As we read on we discover what other things the limestone is unwilling to do.

The limestone is willing to lay down its life for loyal servants of the empire. However, it is not willing to be the mouthpiece for empty political achievements or average people dead and gone. Liu Longkai notes, "When Bai Juyi was serving in the Hanlin Academy, he saw some meritless people set up stone tablets [for themselves]. For example there was a man who was trying to gain favor with the Zhao Yi border garrison general Lu Congshi so he set up a stone tablet praising his father Lu Qian. Bai Juyi sighed with heartfelt emotion [when he saw this happening]. Bai Juyi believed that the person being praised should be like Yan Zhenqing or Duan Xiushi."<sup>53</sup> In other words, people should not set up tablets just for the sake of vainglory, since those words will carry out for countless years.

The Limestone

Qing shi 青石

On intense loyalty

激忠烈也

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<sup>53</sup> Liu Longkai, *Chen Yinke Yuanbai shizhengshi* p. 138: Chinese original, "白氏作翰林时，见一些无德的人也立碑，如有人为拉拢昭义节度卢从史而立碑褒扬他的父亲卢虔，白氏心里很有感慨。白氏认为，褒扬的人应当像颜真卿，段秀实这个样的。"

*"The limestone came from Mount Lantian, hoisted on a cart and carried all the way to Changan. Artisans cut and polish it but for what end? A stone cannot speak so I shall speak for it."*

青石出自蓝田山，兼车运载来长安。工人磨琢欲何用？石不能言我代言。

*"I am not willing to be used as a spirit tablet in front of someone's grave. Tomb ground not yet dry of tears this name is already extinguished."*

不愿作人家墓前神道碣，坟土未干名已灭。

*"I am not willing to be used as some official's tablet of political achievements alongside the road. Not engraved, the true record. Engraved, empty words. I am willing to be the Yan family and Duan family spirit tablets<sup>54</sup>, engraved [the deeds of] the Supreme Commander and Grand Master. The engraving on these two pieces is one of unyielding integrity. Extolling these two men as figures of utmost loyalty. Righteous hearts like stones, towering and unmoving. Death's season past, their reputation flows on, and their names not to fade."*

不愿作官家道旁德政碑，不镌实录镌虚辞。愿为颜氏段氏碑，雕镂太尉与太师。刻此两片坚贞质，状彼二人忠烈姿。义心若石屹不转，死节名流确不移。

*"It is as if one can still observe them valiantly fighting [the rebel general] Zhu Ci [during Dezong's reign]; it is like one can still see them chiding [the rebel general] Li Xilie. Each had their posthumous titles engraved on them, one was placed on a high mountain, one was sunk in the waters. Even if the mountain and valley were to shift their tablets would still exist. Their bones turned to dust their name shall never die. This will*

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<sup>54</sup> Chen Yinke, *Yuanbai shijian zhenggao* p. 209: "These two men were ministers of utmost loyalty to the Tang...and both [of their deeds] are recorded on page 153 of the New Tang Book. Duan Xiushi died in Zhu Ci's rebellion. Yan Zhenqing died in Li Xilie's betrayal." Or in the original Chinese, "唐世忠烈之臣无过二公，新唐书一五三俱以二公合传。又秀实死于朱泚之乱，颜真卿死于李希烈之叛。"



*forever make those officials who are neither upright nor loyal, when looking at these tablets, they would change their behavior and yearn to be a real man [like these two].*

*Yearn to be a real man; and be encouraged to serve the king."*

如观奋击朱泚日，似见叱呵希烈时。各于其上题名谥，一置高山一沉水。陵谷虽迁碑独存，骨化为尘名不死。长使不忠不烈臣，观碑改节慕为人。慕为人，劝事君。<sup>xxviii</sup>

#### Poem 24. A Pair of Crimson Pavilions

The twenty-fourth poem is A Pair of Crimson Pavilions. This poem speaks of how normal buildings are converted into becoming Buddhist temples and this superfluous transformation goes unabated. These converted Buddhist buildings provide a contrast to the brothels and boudoirs. No longer shall the layperson be allowed to enter for no reason whatsoever.

Liu Longkai makes a note about the opening line of the poem that these two crimson pavilions belong to a pair of princesses rather than princes. "The pair of princesses of the Zhenyuan reign, seem to refer to two of Emperor Dezong's princesses, their names Yiyang and Yizhang respectively. After they died they prepared and received abundant [burial] rites. Many Tang princesses were connected with politics, such as the Taiping princess, the Anle princess, both had rather high status. The history books record many cases of this. After this, many princesses were also sent to marry barbarians [to improve relations]."<sup>55</sup> Other than this, the basic message of the poem is that the overflowing number of Buddhist buildings makes life hard for the average citizen.

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<sup>55</sup> Liu Longkai, *Chen Yinke Yuanbai shizhengshi* p. 139: Chinese original, "贞元双帝子，似指德宗的二位公主，名义阳，义章，死后备受优礼。唐公主多于政治有关，如太平公主，安乐公主，故而地位较

## A Pair of Crimson Pavilions

Liang zhu ge 两朱阁

Satirizing the swelling number of Buddhist temples

刺佛寺浸多也

*"A pair of crimson pavilions, opposite one another from north to south. May I ask whose household this is? It is the two princesses of the Zhenyuan Reign [742-805]. The princesses played their flutes and in a pair they became immortal<sup>56</sup>, five colours of clouds swayed about flying up towards heaven. The mansions and pavilion terraces were not able to be brought with them, thus they changed into Buddhist temples within the world of man."*

两朱阁，南北相对起。借问何人家？贞元双帝子。帝子吹箫双得仙，五云飘摇飞上天。第宅亭台不将去，化为佛寺在人间。

*"Those boudoirs and brothels how lonely and quiet they became. The willow trees like dancing hips, the pond like a mirror. When the petals fall at dusk ever so quiet, no longer hearing songs and flute, only hearing the bells toll so loudly. On the temple gate was an edict written in gold, the nuns quarters and Buddhist courtyards spacious as could ever be. The green mosses and bright moon, a place so carefree. The huddled masses in the neighbouring house have no place to put themselves."*

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高，史书多有记载。其后，公主又常去和亲。"

<sup>56</sup> Qin Jun, *Chunqiu wuba Qin Mugong zhuan* p. 248-249: This refers to half of an idiom, "Nong Yu plays the flute" 弄玉吹箫 which is an allusion to joyous love between a couple. Nong Yu herself was the daughter of Qin Mugong 秦穆公 who was ruler of the State of Qin 秦国 during the Spring and Autumn Period 春秋时代. Her father built her a stage for her to play her music under the stars, and she attracted the attention of a immortal named Xiao Shi 箫史. They eventually married and took residence on Mount Hua 华山 and Nongyu gradually became an immortal.

妆阁妓楼何寂静，柳似舞腰池似镜。花落黄昏悄悄时，不闻歌吹闻钟磬。寺  
门敕榜金字书，尼院佛庭宽有余。青苔明月多闲地，比屋疲人无处居。

*"Remembering the past when Pingyang mansion was just built, it swallowed up  
the land of how many households? When the princesses passed away and became  
immortals, both residences transformed into Buddhist palaces. We begin to fear that the  
world of the common man would be used up for temples."<sup>57</sup>*

忆昨平阳宅初置，吞并平人几家地？仙去双双作梵宫，渐恐人间尽为寺。

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#### Poem 25. This Actor of Xiliang

The twenty-fifth poem is This Actor of Xiliang. At the outset of this poem there is so much action that causes the reader to desire to hear the speech that is about to be performed in the opening stanzas. The speech is about how the bordering lands are overrun with barbarian troops.

The performance at its outset causes the audience to become overwhelmed with sadness. The border lands overrun by barbarians is truly a disaster beyond measure. Still there are some who find the play a comedy rather than a tragedy. At any rate, with the border regions totally overrun (and no practical way of taking the land back) there really is nothing to do but make a play of it.

Liu Longkai makes the short note that, "All that is written in this poem is meant to be about dress-up. The play was made to satirize the western region Tartar (barbarians) and their troubles and pains in not being able return to their homelands, [but instead]

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<sup>57</sup> Bai Juyi makes the poetic note, "...flying up towards heaven as soon as they are made, they greet the skies." Or in Chinese, "飞上天：一作迎上天."

staying in Chinese territory."<sup>58</sup> Liu continues, "The plight of the Tartars left in Chinese land is not to be ignored, and for the reigns of two emperors the Tang was unable to reclaim the lost territories, and during this period of time it was unlikely any were able to return home."<sup>59</sup>

This Actor of Xiliang

Xi liang ji 西凉伎

Satirizing the ministers guarding the borders

刺封疆之臣也

*"This actor of Xiliang, wearing a mask fashioned as a Tartar, and a fake lion. Its head cut out of wood, a tail made from silk, with eyes gilded with gold and teeth with silver. Its hairy coat raised and its ears fluttering, as if following the shifting sands coming from ten thousand leagues away. Violet sideburns and dented eyes, a pair of tartars, clapping and dancing, stepped forth and delivered his speech."*

西凉伎，假面胡人假狮子。刻木为头丝作尾，金镀眼睛银贴齿。奋迅毛衣摆双耳，如从流沙来万里。紫髯深目两胡儿，鼓舞跳梁前致辞。

*"It must be the days before Liangzhou fell and the Governor of Anxi arrived. Shortly thereafter, a report came saying that the road to Anxi had been cut off and no longer can we return home. Crying, they faced the lion and tears fell as a pair. Liangzhou has fallen! Haven't you heard? The lion turned about face and gazed towards*

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<sup>58</sup> Liu Longkai, *Chen Yinke Yuanbai shizhengshi* p. 139: Chinese original, "诗里写的都是假扮的。戏编成是用来讽刺居留中土不能归乡的困苦西域胡人。"

<sup>59</sup> Liu Longkai, *Chen Yinke Yuanbai shizhengshi* p. 140: He notes, "In the time of Dezong, the court once wanted to recover the lost northwestern lands, but they never succeeded. [And] Xianzong also had the idea of recovering [these lands]...but since Xianzong died he did not accomplish this." Chinese original, "德宗时，朝廷曾想恢复西北失地，但未成功。宪宗也有恢复之想，后因宪宗死去而未成。"

*the west, with a mournful howl the audience too grew sad."*

应似凉州未陷日，安西都护进来时。须臾云得新消息，安西路绝归不得。泣向狮子涕双垂，凉州陷没知不知？狮子回头向西望，哀吼一声观者悲。

*"The border generals of Zhenyuan loved this tune; drunk, sitting and laughing, they couldn't get enough! They treated their guests, rewarded their soldiers, and in their banquets for the three armies, the lion and the tartars were always in their eyes. There was one soldier aged seventy who, after seeing this performance of Liangzhou, lowered his head in tears. His tears dry he took up his hand and heralded the general: Sir, when the lord is worried, his ministers should be shamed—this I do know."*

贞元边将爱此曲，醉坐笑看看不足。享宾犒士宴三军，狮子胡儿长在目。有一征夫年七十，见弄凉州低面泣。泣罢敛手白将军，主忧臣辱昔所闻。

*"[The old soldier says:] Ever since our Heaven's Jewel Reign we raised up arms, those packs of dogs spent night and day swallowing up the western frontier. Since Liangzhou has fallen forty years have passed. The Helong region is occupied along seven thousand leagues. Normally the Anxi border should stretch for tens of thousands of leagues, but today our border defense is at Fengxiang."<sup>60</sup>*

自从天宝兵戈起，犬戎日夜吞西鄙。凉州陷来四十年，河陇侵将七千里。平时安西万里疆，今日边防在凤翔。

*"Along the borders, a hundred thousand soldiers are stationed, all in vain. Full in the belly and warm with clothes, they idle away their days. The hearts of the people left*

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<sup>60</sup> Bai Juyi adds the additional footnote: "Usually when setting up watch-posts in far-off regions, it was said that one could go ninety-nine miles out and still be defended. But not ten thousand leagues out, for the truth was that their numbers were multiplying. Currently most diplomacy between China and the Tibetans is situated at Longzhou." Or in Chinese, "平时开远门外立堠，云去安西九千九百里，以示戍人，不为万里行，其实就盈数也。今蕃汉使往来，悉在陇州交也。"

*behind in Liangzhou are broken, but the generals and soldiers have no interest to take the land back. Whenever our Son of Heaven thinks of this he is long deplored; and the general are too ashamed to even bring up the matter. How could one still watch these actors of Xiliang? Laughing, joking, entertaining themselves without a hint of shame! Even if we lack the intelligence and ability to take our land back, how could we bear to make fun of Xiliang with such a play?"*

缘边空屯十万卒，饱食温衣闲过日。遗民肠断在凉州，将卒相看无意收。天子每思长痛惜，将军欲说合惭羞。奈何仍看西凉伎，取笑资欢无所愧！纵无智力未能收，忍取西凉弄为戏？

#### Poem 26. The Painting of Eight Stallions

The twenty-sixth poem is The Painting of Eight Stallions. This poem speaks of how King Mu of Zhou was certainly a fortunate king to have such spectacular stallions to ride. However so, he does not benefit his nation when he goes off riding alone. This selfishness hurts both the kingdom and himself. King Mu of Zhou's hands-free rule is laughable. As he goes cavorting with legendary figures, meanwhile the Imperial Court lacks a king to preside over the affairs of the nation. He only cares to ride away on his eight stallions as if there was not a care in the world. So it is that this famous painting of the eight stallions has another story to tell. The story of a King that ran away from his responsibilities. Not only did he run away from his responsibilities, he left a nation to rule itself without the wise counsel of an emperor.

Chen Yinke makes a interesting comments about this poem and how it relates more directly to the Tang. The first is that, "At Zhaoling for Tang Taizong, there are images of eight stallions carved on a stone, and they can still be seen today. [And] when

Dezong was fleeing [the Capital] he also had eight stallions; for example, he had a horse named Gazing Clouds. Later on when the imperial power of the Tang was daily fading, the eight stallions were painted onto silks." The second comment is by Liu Longkai, "The meaning of the poem is just like 'Lofty the Li Palace' in that it dissuades the Son of Heaven from wanton travels, and it also talks about the contemporary custom of painting horses and using horses as subjects for writing."<sup>61</sup> These travels and excursions only serve to hurt the overall strength of the kingdom.

### The Painting of Eight Stallions

Ba jun tu 八骏图

Against spectacular treasures and wanton travels

戒奇物，惩佚游也

*"King Mu of Zhou had his eight heavenly stallion colts, people that lived thereafter loved them and sketched out this painting. Its back like a dragon, its neck like an elephant. Bone and tendons high and taut, greased flesh strong. In a day these horses could cover ten thousand leagues, a speed like flight. King Mu of Zhou rode them all alone and to what place did he ride? Through the four wastelands and eight poles beyond. Desiring to treat all over this world, those thirty-two hooves galloped on without rest."*

穆王八骏天马驹，后人爱之写为图。背如龙兮颈如象，骨竦筋高脂肉壮。日行万里速如飞，穆王独乘何所之？四荒八极踏欲遍，三十二蹄无歇时。

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<sup>61</sup> Liu Longkai, *Chen Yinke Yuanbai shizhengshi* p.141: Chinese original (first comment), "唐太宗昭陵石刻八骏，今仍可见。德宗逃难，也有八骏，如有望云骓马。唐以后国力日衰，八骏乃绘于绢上。" Chinese original (second comment), "诗意同于《骊宫高》，讲天子不要游幸，还写到当时画马题马的风习。"

*"The carts they pulled could not catch up with the speed, breaking at the axle..  
Grass grew on the yellow roofed palaces, left far behind. He travelled to Jasper Lake to  
dine with the Queen Mother of the West; sacrifices were not offered by his hand to the  
seven ancestral temples for years. South of the Jade Tower he wandered with Princess  
Sheng; at the Bright Hall not again did he preside over the dukes and princes."*

属车轴折趁不及，黄屋草生弃若遗。瑶池西赴王母宴，七庙经年不亲荐。璧  
台南与盛姬游，明堂不复朝诸侯。

*"The White Clouds and Yellow Bamboo - these songs so moving. Yet for one  
man's wasteful pleasure comes the worries of ten thousand men. The Zhou's ancestors  
from Hou Ji to Kings Wen and Wu, their valiant deeds accumulated over the generations  
were achieved with great diligence and pain. How could one know that just four  
generations later their descendants would take light of their kingly exploits as if ashes  
and dirt. Since ancient times, any indulgence, however small, that could cause a king to  
loaf about is harmful."*

《白云》《黄竹》歌声动，一人荒乐万人愁。周从后稷至文武，积德累功世  
勤苦。岂知才及四代孙，心轻王业如灰土。由来尤物不在大，能荡君心则为害。

*"King Wen of the Han declined to ride them, his winged steeds were gone but the  
Han prospered. King Mu received these stallions and did not see them as a warning,  
those eight stallions came and the House of Zhou declined. Till nowadays these things  
are called treasures, and naught did he know that these were the demon spirits of the  
chariot star coming down to wreak havoc on earth. The painting of the eight stallions,  
my lord, you mustn't love."*



文帝却之不肯乘，千里马去汉道兴。穆王得之不为戒，八骏驹来周室坏。至今此物世称珍，不知房星之精下为怪。八骏图，君莫爱。<sup>xxx</sup>

Poem 27. A Pine at the Bottom of a Gully

The twenty-seventh poem is A Pine at the Bottom of a Gully. This poem compares a scholar who never meets with success with a poor tree that lives its life outside the forest of trees. Alone and forsaken, both live out a pallid existence. A life of always having talent, but never being discovered.

Even though the emperor needs fine lumber to build new palaces, this poor pine tree will be forsaken. Just as a scholar who cannot find appropriate work, both pine tree and scholar are fated to be long undiscovered. According to Chen Yinke, since this poem contains the character for the surname Niu (also translated as cow), this poem shows sympathy for Niu Sengru, and was written for him: "The 'Niu' character is actually a hint that this poem is [seemingly] written on behalf of Niu Sengru; it is a piece that lets out a sigh for people like him."<sup>62</sup> At its base, this poem is an outcry for those scholars and gentlemen that cannot find lasting success in the Tang empire.

A Pine at the Bottom of a Gully

Jian di song 涧底松

Lamenting forgotten scholars

念寒俊也

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<sup>62</sup> Liu Longkai, *Chen Yinke Yuanbai shizhengshi* p. 141: Chinese original, "牛字实为暗示，此诗似为牛僧孺而作，是感慨牛氏之作。"

*"There is a pine a hundred feet high and ten yards around, at the bottom of a gully it grows poor and lowly. The gully deep, the mountains steep, a path for man cut off. Old and dying and never to meet with an axe man to fell it."*

有松百尺大十围，生在涧底寒且卑。涧深山险人路绝，老死不逢工度之。

*"The Son of Heaven in need of lumber for palace halls, alas of this demand neither pine nor king knew the other exists! Who understands the creator's intention in making things, a pine is bestowed with substance but is not grown in the right place."*

天子明堂欠梁木，此求彼有两不知！谁喻苍苍造物意，但与之材不与地。

*"The Jin and Zhang families enjoyed prosperity for generations; Yuan Xian however, was poor<sup>63</sup>. A cowherd's garb is lowly but sable furs and cicada-shaped ornaments are lofty."<sup>xxx</sup>*

金张世禄原宪贫，牛衣寒贱貂蝉贵。<sup>64</sup>

*"Sable furs, cicada shaped ornaments, and a cowherd's garb, high and low each has their distinction. Those up high, however, need not be wise, those down low need not be fools. Sir, have you not seen that coral grows deep down in the sea? White elms are planted in heaven row after row?"*

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<sup>63</sup> Liu Longkai, *Chen Yinke Yuanbai shizhengshi* p. 141: "Of Confucius' disciples Zigong was a merchant and was wealthy, Yuan Xian and Yan Hui were very poor." Moreover Liu states, "Jin Richan and Zhang Anshi were two of the major families of the Western Han, both of them were quite wealthy." Or in the Chinese original, "孔子的学生，子贡业商，很富有；原宪，颜回，很贫寒。" The second half in Chinese is as follows, "金日禅，张安世，是西汉的两个世家，都是阔人。"

<sup>64</sup> Bai Juyi lines here are added as an extra portion to th:

<sup>65</sup> Liu Longkai, *Chen Yinke Yuanbai shizhengshi* p. 142: Chinese original, "欣赏牡丹，武则天，杨贵妃都有名声。玄宗时牡丹尚在宫廷。唐时女性喜欢自比牡丹，荷花，花形都是园胖的，这又与佛教欣赏有关。"

貂蝉于牛衣，高下虽有殊。高者未必贤，下者未必愚。君不见，沉沉海底生珊瑚，历历天上种白榆。

### Poem 28. Peony Fragrance

The twenty-eighth poem is Peony Fragrance. This poem contains beautiful flower imagery. It is amazing that Bai Juyi can write fragrance into a poem so deftly that it can almost be smelled. The flower imagery changes to reflect on the emotions of the viewer. Instead of just mere imagery of flowers, each description delves deeper into pure emotion.

Moving away from pure flower imagery for a moment we hear of the pleasures of the ruling class which are as beautifully described as are the peonies. Later on we learn that it is the season of flowers that everyone is worked up about. It is the beauty of these flowers that people are enraptured with. Bai Juyi is not merely writing out flower imagery, he is describing the experience of viewing the flowers themselves. And luckily in the end the Son of Heaven worries for the harvest rather than caring about beautiful peony blossoms. His behavior is like an emperor and not like a common man. He cares for the affairs of the people first and foremost.

Liu Longkai makes a basic note about Peonies in the Tang, "Wu Zetian and Yang Guifei both had a reputation for admiring peony flowers. In Xuanzong's time peonies were still featured in the imperial court. Women of the Tang period loved to compare [themselves] to peonies, lotuses; the shape of both the flower and the garden was always plump; and this is also related to the appreciations of Buddhism."<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Liu Longkai, *Chen Yinke Yuanbai shizhengshi* p. 142: Chinese original, "欣赏牡丹，武则天，杨贵妃都有名声。玄宗时牡丹尚在宫廷。唐时女性喜欢自比牡丹，荷花，花形都是园胖的，这又与佛教欣赏有关。"

Peony Fragrance

Mu dan fang

Glorifying the Son of Heaven's worrying for the farmers

美天子忧农也

*"Peony fragrance, peony fragrance, golden pistil split into a crimson jade room. Myriad red blossoms, brilliant those rosy clouds; a hundred branches fiery red this lamp lit so radiant. Shining on the earth about to open this piece of splendid brocade, facing the wind it does not grow budding sacs like orchids and winter Daphne. Compared to this, the fine jade trees of the immortals are white without color, the peach blossoms of the Queen Mother are tiny and not all fragrant."*

牡丹芳，牡丹芳，黄金蕊绽红玉房。千片赤英霞烂烂，百枝绛点灯煌煌。照地初开锦绣段，当风不结兰麝囊。仙人琪树白无色，王母桃花小不香。

*"Holding its dew so graceful, flooding with an affluent purple, the rising sun illuminating a vivacious and vermillion light. Red and purple the space between these colors such depth. Facing towards or back: high or low it has a myriad temperaments. Its shining blossoms so affectionate belying a shy face, lying there in the thicket unable to conceal an adornment so intoxicated. A lowly meek smile giving the impression that she is about to cover her mouth; frozen in thought, as if a woman full of resentment, her heart breaking."*

宿露轻盈泛紫艳，朝阳照耀生红光。红紫二色间深浅，向背万态随低昂。映叶多情隐羞面，卧丛无力含醉妆。低娇笑容疑掩口，凝思怨人如断肠。

*"Its thick countenance and treasured colors are truly rare. Of all the grasses and scattered flowers none compare. Dianthus and Golden Coin flowers how tiny and in*

*broken bits they are; hibiscus and peonies are rendered too ordinary. Thus causing the aristocracy and officials alike to wander capped with flowery crowns all the day gazing. A low chariot and soft palanquin, hoist the gilded princesses; fragrant coated stallions carry the young men of noble houses."*

浓姿贵彩信奇绝，杂卉乱花无比方。石竹金钱何细碎，芙蓉芍药苦寻常。遂使王公与卿士，游花冠盖日相望。庾车软舆贵公主，香衫细马豪家郎。

*"The eastern quarters of the Wei Mansion are closely shut and quiet; in the deeps of the Ximing temple, the north corridor is opened. Pairs of butterflies dance together, having watched people for so long; the lingering sound of the warblers is a reminder that this spring day is endless. Together they lament that the shining sun will make the fragrance hard to stay, therefore a canopy is spread to make it shady and cool. From the flowers' blossom to flowers' fall twenty days, the whole city, everyone in a craze."*

卫公宅静闭东院，西明寺深开北廊。戏蝶双舞看人久，残莺一声春日长。共愁日照芳难驻，仍张帷幕垂阴凉。花开花落二十日，一城之人皆若狂。

*"After the Three Dynasties substance is overpowered by style; people's hearts value flowery appearance and not the real thing. Valuing flowering appearance all the way down to peony fragrance, it has been like this to this day. The Son of Heaven in his Yuanhe reign worried for the farmer's mulberry trees; his pity for those below moved the heavens above to let fall their blessing. Last year good crops grew nine ears; in the field, left alone, no one arrived."*

三代以还文胜质，人心重华不重实。重华直至牡丹芳，其来有渐非今日。元和天子忧农桑，恤下动天天降祥。去岁嘉禾生九穗，田中寂寞无人至。

*"This year the ears of wheat were auspicious and split in two branches, of just what our King's heart rejoices, however, no one knows. No one knows, alas I sigh. I wish for a brief spell of good fortune bestowed upon me by the Creator, to decrease these splendid colors of the peonies. Take back a little of our officials' love for flowers and be like our Monarch worrisome for sowing and reaping."*

今年瑞麦分两岐，君心独喜无人知。无人知，可叹息。我愿暂求造化力，减却牡丹妖艳色。少回卿士爱花心，同似吾君忧稼穡。<sup>xxxii</sup>

### Poem 29. Crimson Threaded Carpet

The twenty-ninth poem is Crimson Threaded Carpet. This poem describes how such incredible workmanship goes into creating a measure of carpet that it seems superfluous to think of covering an entire palace floor. All this work goes to soften the steps of beautiful maidens. This crimson threaded carpet is a wonder in itself; even to be stepped on is a crime against its makers.

This carpet is far superior to other carpets produced in other places. For this reason this particular prefect sees it necessary to increase the production to please the emperor. Liu Longkai makes a basic note on this poem that, "...the poet believes that [the carpets] if used for the nation are something that should be happening. [But] if one were to use [the carpets] for singing and dancing in rear palaces, then this is not the right thing to do."<sup>66</sup>

### Crimson Threaded Carpet

Hong xian tan 红线毯

Concern over the costs of silkworm breeding and mulberry harvesting

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<sup>66</sup> Liu Longkai, *Chen Yinke Yuanbai shizhengshi* p. 144: Chinese original, "诗人认为：国用是应该的，若用于后延歌舞，便是不对的。"

忧蚕桑之费也

*"Crimson threaded carpet, cocoons are selected, their silk reeling are boiled in clear water, white silk threads chosen to be dyed red and blue. Dyed red threads and red in blue, made as the carpets for the Fragrant Drapery Palace."*

红线毯，择茧缫丝清水煮，拣丝练线红蓝染。染为红线红于蓝，织作披香殿上毯。

*"The Fragrant Drapery Palace is more than ten-zhang across, these crimson threads are sewn together enough to cover the entire palace. Colored silks soft and thick, a fragrant breeze, soft threading and open embroidery a piece unequalled. Beauties step upon it and there comes the singing and dancing. Silk gauze stockings and embroidered shoes sink into the carpet as they walk."*

披香殿广十丈余，红线织成可殿铺。彩丝茸茸香拂拂，线软花虚不胜物。美人踏上歌舞来，罗袜绣鞋随步没。

*"The carpets of Taiyuan are like rough plumage, those wispy threads so hard; the thin bedding from Shu capital is brocaded with flowers and so cold. Not like this carpet so warm and soft, each year in the tenth month they are sent up from Xuanzhou. The prefect of Xuancheng urged to increase the production, saying that being an able vassal one should do his utmost."*

太原毯涩毛缕硬，蜀都褥薄锦花冷。不如此毯温且柔，年年十月来宣州。宣城太守加样织，自谓为臣能竭力。

*"A hundred men at once burdened with carrying it into the palace, threads so thick and silk abundant it could not even be rolled. Does or does not the prefect of Xuancheng know? That one-zhang of carpet is one thousand threads of silk! Alas, the*

*floor does not know cold yet people need warmth, steal less of people's clothes to make garments for the ground!"*

百夫同担进宫中，线厚丝多卷不得。宣城太守知不知？一丈毯，千两丝！地不知寒人要暖，少夺人衣作地衣。<sup>xxxiii</sup>

### Poem 30. The Old Man of Duling

The thirtieth poem is The Old Man of Duling. This poem speaks of how the poor farmers are at the mercy of the government and its terrible taxing policy. Even though they have nothing more to give, they are eaten away by nefarious taxes.

Their livelihood turn asunder by taxes, these poor farmers are left with few options. Bai Juyi is an excellent advocate for the poor and over-taxed. This poem is quite an effective condemnation of taxation in general. The dark humour of the poem lies in the fact that the emperor forgives that years taxes; but what a tragedy it was that there were still quite a few households that had already paid taxes even after the edict from the emperor came about.

Lastly, I chose to translate this poem by myself even after reading an excellent version written by Howard Levy in his *Translations from Po Chu-I's Collected Works*. Levy's translation is completely accurate and I have followed his example. However, I have left a few words in pinyin in my own work. Like all my other translations, my goal has been to give a full bodied voice to the characters featured in the narration.

### The Old Man of Duling

Du ling sou 杜陵叟

The troubles of tax beleaguered farmers

伤农夫之困也



*"This old man of Duling, this cottage of Duling, yearly sowing this barren field a little larger than one Qing. In the third month there was no rain. And up rose the winds of drought, wheat seedling never came up. Alas many died so yellow. In the ninth month came down the frost freezing cold early in autumn. Seedlings and ears of wheat not yet ripened all green and dry. In the ninth month fell the frost and autumn came early, so cold. Those elder officials knew perfectly well of this poor harvest but did not speak up. Hurriedly they collected up rapacious taxes and solicited the farmers with an audit."*

杜陵叟，杜陵居，岁种薄田一顷馀。三月无雨旱风起，麦苗不秀多黄死。九月降霜秋早寒，禾穗未熟皆青干。长吏明知不申破，急敛暴征求考课。

*"Pawn our mulberry trees and sell our land just to pay these taxes. Next year how will we even have food or clothes? Peel the silk off my back, steal the millet right out my mouth! This cruelty to people and ransacking of property. Just like jackals and wolves, how so, with hooked claws and saw teeth do you feast on people's flesh!"*

典桑卖地纳官租，明年衣食将何如？剥我身上帛，夺我口中粟。虐人害物即豺狼，何必钩爪锯牙食人肉！

*"I do not know what person notified the Emperor. For the kings heart held compassion when he learned of the officials dirty deeds. On white hempen paper thus bespoke his moral voice. The capital and its surroundings would be completely forgiven for this year's taxes. Yesterday a low ranking official arrived at the gates, holding the edict in his hands and a list of the villagers. Alas, nine out of ten households had already paid their taxes, and thus, they were omitted from receiving our lords benevolence."*

不知何人奏皇帝，帝心恻隐知人弊。白麻纸上书德音，京畿尽放今年税。昨日里胥方到门，手持敕牒榜乡村。十家租税九家毕，虚受吾君蠲免恩。<sup>xxxiv</sup>

### Poem 31. Twill Weaved Silk

The thirty-first poem is Twill Weaved Silk. This poem speaks of how fine weaving is like creating sophisticated patterns. Just imagine the intricate beauty in one inch of this fabric and one will discover why Bai Juyi sings of this fantastic silken creation. It is the hard labor of the women that wove it that gives the silk its great value.

With just a brief look on the majesty of its creation, this twill weaved silk is indeed a masterpiece beyond all others. Every small detail done by the hands of countless poor maidens. Now the question is, how is it used? It is used by dancers who have little to no regard for its workmanship. These dancers have not seen the incredible amount of work that goes into their springtime dresses so they treat it like any other old piece of clothing.

Liu Longkai notes, "The essence of the government's financial exploitation is that on the surface they did not change the overall number of items, but the lengths were increased. Units of measurement 度量衡 in principle 原则上 changed from small, light, and short to big, heavy, and long. For example, in the Kaiyuan reign [713-741] it was four-zhang for one piece, but in this age it was four-zhang and five-chi for one piece, and this was the method that was used. This was done against the [normal] regulations. The hardships of the common people go without saying. In Bai's poem he is also hinting that the taxes on the common folk were becoming heavier."<sup>67</sup> Generally speaking, the business of twill weaved silk became engrossed with greedy intentions.

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<sup>67</sup>Liu Longkai, *Chen Yinke Yuanbai shizhengshi* p. 145-146: Chinese original, "政府财政的剥削是，表面上数目不改，但尺寸上加大。度量衡原则上由小，轻，短变为大，重，长。如，开元时四丈一匹，如今四丈五尺一匹，便是用的此法。这是违反定制的。对百姓的苦也就不用说了。白诗亦在暗示：对百姓的赋税在加重。"

Lastly, Burton Watson already has a translation of this piece in his *Po Chu-I Selected Poems*. He keeps many of the names of other silks in the original Chinese pinyin, and I felt this was off-putting, and therefore I found their English equivalents. The language of Watson's poem is accurate but the voice falls flat. In my own version, I offer the reader a more lively vision of the labors of women working on this fabulous silk.

Twill Weaved Silk

Liao ling 缭绫

Admiring the labors of women's craft

念女工之劳也

*"This silk, this twill weaved silk, oh what can compare? It is not like light silk gauze and fine damask. It should be like the bright moon atop the Tiantai range. A forty five feet tall waterfall with its spring. Within it are sophisticated patterns ever so rare, lay it down as a blanket, white mists, clusters of flowers amidst the snow."*

缭绫缭绫何所似，不似罗绡与纨绮。应似天台山上月明前四十五尺瀑布泉。中有文章又奇绝，地铺白烟花簇雪。

*"Who is the weaver, who is the wearer? The poor girls of Yue brook and courtesans of the Imperial Palace. Last year an envoy from within the palace made a proclamation: the patterns shall be obtained from Heaven, the weaving shall be done by workers of this world. Embroidered with ranks of migrating wild geese flying above the clouds in autumn, dyed as the spring grass colors of Jiangnan. The length of the sleeves cut broad. The skirt hemmed, flat-ironed, its markings cut by knife. Radiant splendor and curious markings set off one another; turned on its sides, flowers amidst flowers scattered."*

织者何人衣者谁？越溪寒女汉宫姬。去年中使宣口敕，天上取样人间织。织为云外秋雁行，染作江南春草色。广裁衫袖长制裙，金斗熨波刀剪纹。异彩奇文相隐映，转侧看花花不定。

*"The dancers of Zhaoyang are truly and deeply blessed. A pair of spring clothes worth a thousand gold. Dampened with sweat and smeared with powder never to be worn again. Dragged and tromped in dirt and mud without a care. Alas, twill weaved silk is an accomplishment in itself, do not compare it with any of the usual silks."*

昭阳舞人恩正深，春衣一对直千金。汗沾粉污不再著，曳土踏泥无惜心。缭绫织成费功绩，莫比寻常缁与帛。

*"The silk threads so fine, the hemmed stitches, so many. The girl's hand will ache, zha-zha the needle in and out a thousand times and not even cover a foot. Oh dancers of the Zhaoyang Palace, if you were to see when it was sewn you too would cherish it!"*

丝细縠多女手疼，扎扎千声不盈尺。昭阳殿里歌舞人，若见织时应也惜。

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### Poem 32. This Elderly Charcoal Monger

The thirty-second poem is This Elderly Charcoal Monger. This poem speaks of a old man who lives hand to mouth and has no time for anything else, he makes a living just to survive. He is most is certainly strong willed. No matter the weather he must go out to sell his charcoal. Just imagine the biting cold early in the morning. After driving his cart all the way from the mountains along trots a eunuch and his entourage in full garb.

And here is where the tragedy sets in. As a eunuch he does not have to pay for materials in cash. Instead he trades a measure of silk for the entire cart of charcoal. It is

truly a human tragedy that the old man lose all his work in one fell swoop. And so there we have it, the elderly charcoal loses a day of business and is left to freeze alongside the road. Yet still he must return to the mountains and fill another cart just to get by.

Liu Longkai makes a note about the economy of eunuch's requisitioning items by the use of silk cloth as currency. "Commerce among the people was done according to the actual price [of items], it was a real appraisal, and that appraisal was low. But the official price was false, it was a false appraisal, but the silk pieces were still seen as worth a thousand [coins] even though it had already dropped in value, the [official] appraisal was still high. With things like this the common folk lost [a total of] half the value [of the silk pieces]. People were naturally and most certainly not at all satisfied with this."<sup>68</sup> All things considered, this type of commerce between the palace and the common man shows how unfair life can become to those who work hard for a living of basic sustenance.

Moreover, I chose to translate this poem myself because the other versions were lacking force and did not give the old man a voice of his own. The other translations were concerned more with the basic narration. In my own version, I try to show the tragedy of losing a cart's worth of charcoal from the old man's point of view. Something that not only profoundly affected his work, but made him even more destitute. No matter how hard he works the next day, nothing will make up for what he lost so suddenly.

### This Elderly Charcoal Monger

Mai tan weng 卖炭翁

The pains when eunuchs go to market

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<sup>68</sup> Liu Longkai, *Chen Yinke Yuanbai shizhengshi* p. 146: Chinese original, "民间交易按市场实价，是实估，估得低；而官价为虚，是虚估，仍视已贬值的丝织品为一千钱，估得高。这样一来，百姓便吃了一半价格的亏。百姓对此自然十分不满。"

苦官市也

*"This Elderly Charcoal Monger cutting timber and burning it to ash deep in Nanshan. His whole face covered in dust and ash, the color of smoke and fire. The hair on his temples so grey his ten fingers black."*

卖炭翁，伐薪烧炭南山中。满面尘灰烟火色，两鬓苍苍十指黑。

*"Mongering charcoal to gain some cash, just how does business go? "Clothes on the back and food in the mouth..." he replies."*

卖炭得钱何所营？身上衣裳口中食。

*"Such a pity that the clothes on his back are truly so sparse, in his heart he worries for charcoal to sell cheap so he wishes for colder days. Night comes and outside the city a foot of fresh snow. In the morning he drives his charcoal cart tossing to and fro on the icy road."*

可怜身上衣正单，心忧炭贱愿天寒。夜来城外一尺雪，晓驾炭车辗冰辙。

*"His ox tired, himself hungry. The sun already high, he takes a rest in the mire just outside the southern gate. And then two riders come along trotting by... And who is this? A yellow robed eunuch and his white coated page."*

牛困人饥日已高，市南门外泥中歇。翩翩两骑来是谁？黄衣使者白衫儿。

*"In his hands hold official orders. He greets the monger with the edict, "Come around and call your ox. Pull your cart up north." A cart of charcoal over a thousand Jin full, the eunuch gallops off without pity. Half a piece of red gauze, one Zhang of Twill-weaved silk, tied round the ox's neck to make up for the price of this much charcoal."*

手把文书口称敕，回车叱牛牵向北。一车炭，千余斤，官使驱将惜不得。半匹红纱一丈绡，系向牛头充炭直。<sup>xxxvi</sup>

### Poem 33. A Mother's Farewell with a Son

The thirty-third poem is A Mother's Farewell with a Son. This poem speaks about a general who happily welcomes all things that are new, while all that is old is wantonly disregarded. In short, he abandons his former wife so that he can enjoy greater pleasures. And moreover, the social status of the new wife automatically outranks his old wife, since she is of a higher class background. The new wife is happily welcomed, and the old wife is shunned away.

Or as Liu Longkai explains, "The grand general of Guanxi seems to be referring to Yang Chaosheng. The new wife is most certainly [now] his main wife. She [would have] come from a high class household, so she must force out the original wife. Since ancient times, one can only have one wife but may have a few concubines. And concubines cannot steal the position of the [main] wife. China has a system of one wife and multiple concubines, not a system of multiple wives. Once the general was wealthy, he married a beautiful woman from a good household. He certainly had to use a great betrothal gift, and also must have made her into his legal wife. The 'two children' (spoken about in the poem) most certainly referred to boys, for if it had been girls they would have often went with along their mother."<sup>69</sup> In other words, his former legal wife is treated like a concubine or maidservant and is forced out of his household.

#### A Mother's Farewell with a Son

Mu bie zi 母别子

Satirizing the new estranging the old

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<sup>69</sup> Liu Longkai, *Chen Yinke Yuanbai shizhengshi* p. 147: Chinese original, "关西将军似指杨朝晟。新人，一定是正太太。她出自高门第，必须逼走故人。古来，妻只能一位，妾可有几个。妾不能夺妻位。中国是一妻多妾制，不是多妻制。将军阔了，娶门第好又漂亮的女人，一定要用大聘礼，并且一定要奉为正室。两儿，一定是男孩，若是女孩往往也随母遣去。"

刺新闻旧也

*"A mother's farewell with her son, a son's farewell with his mother. In the broad light of the day, a wailing voice so bitter. This grand Galloping Horse general from west of the pass, in the year past he cleaved through the barbarians and was awarded a new rank. An edict bestowed him two million coins, and at Luoyang he welcomed a new bride as lovely as a flower. The new one welcomed, the old one abandoned, a lotus blossom in the hand [versus] a thorn in the eye."*

母别子，子别母，白日无光哭声苦。关西骠骑大将军，去年破虏新策勋。敕赐金钱二百万，洛阳迎得如花人。新人迎来旧人弃，掌上莲花眼中刺。

*"Taking in a new wife and casting aside the old were not yet enough to despair. Sadness was at his home where her two children stayed. One just starting to walk, the other crawling. Sitting and wailing, tottering and hanging onto people's clothes. Alas the love between a husband and his new wife has caused us, a mother and her children, to part forever. It is worse than ravens and magpies in the woods, at least the mother never loses her children and male and female keep company of each other."*

迎新弃旧未足悲，悲在君家留两儿。一始扶行一初坐，坐啼行哭牵人衣。以汝夫妇新燕婉，使我母子生别离。不如林中乌与鹊，母不失雏雄伴雌。

*"It should be like the peach and plum trees in the garden: while blossoms fall with the wind, the fruits remain on the branches. New wife, new wife, hear my words: Luoyang has endless red mansion girls. I wish for our general to win honor once again, so there might be yet another new wife more beautiful than you."*

应似园中桃李树，花落随风子在枝。新人新人听我语，洛阳无限红楼女。但愿将军重立功，更有新人胜于汝。<sup>xxxvii</sup>



### Poem 34. The Path at Yinshan

The thirty-fourth poem is The Path at Yinshan.<sup>70</sup> This poem's core meaning is centered around the practice of "heqin"<sup>71</sup>, or marrying princesses off to barbarian tribes to appease them and improve relations. Liu Longkai simplifies the practice of "heqin" as follows: "Generally speaking, for one thing, Tang dynasty princesses were connected with the yearly tribute system, and therefore [the practice of] heqin was related to both politics and the economy, and the other side used such 'political relations' to demand and thusly obtain economic profits."<sup>72</sup> Just as Bai Juyi describes, these "barbarians" were indeed quite the greedy bunch. And beyond being just greedy they demanded to take women as part of the bargain.

#### The Path at Yinshan

Yin shan dao 阴山道

Condemning the greedy barbarians

疾贪虏也

*"The path at Yinshan, the path at Yinshan, the green fertile grasses of Geluodun, its waters and springs are good. Whenever those men of Rong came along to send off their horses, a thousand miles along that road no short grasses were left. The grasses were gone and springs dried up; what was left of Flying Dragon stallions were skin and*

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<sup>70</sup> Yinshan is an actual place name. It means shady mountain, and in Chinese it is written as "阴山".

<sup>71</sup> Heqin, or "和亲" in the original Chinese means literally to "harmonize relations." As Liu Longkai explains on page 148 of his *Yuanbai shizhengshi*, "The practice of heqin began during the reign of Han Gaozu also known as Liu Bang [256-195 BC]". Or in Chinese, "和亲始于汉高祖时."

<sup>72</sup> Liu Longkai, *Chen Yinke Yuanbai shizhengshi*: Chinese original, "总括起来，一则唐代公主和岁币相连，和亲有政治的还有经济关系，对方利用政治关系求得经济上的利益."

*bones. Fifty rolls of finest silk to buy just one, the silk gone, the horses came, without ever an end.*

阴山道，阴山道，纆遒敦肥水泉好。每至戎人送马时，道旁千里无纤草。草尽泉枯马病羸，飞龙但印骨与皮。五十匹缣易一匹，缣去马来无了日。

*"Raised to be of no use and also no way to get rid of them; every year dead and damaged six or seven out of ten. There was always shortage of silk and the women silk workers laboured hard, neglecting its weaving, cutting short to make up for the number of bolts. Bolts of silk as loose as lotus root threads and spider webs ten yards long, the Uighurs said they were of no use."*

养无所用去非宜，每岁死伤十六七。缣丝不足女工苦，疏织短截充匹数。藕丝蛛网三丈余，回鹘诉称无用处。

*"The princess of Xian-an [who was married off to the Uighur Khan] they called her Kedun; she from far away on behalf of the Khan memorialized the court about this. In the second year of Yuanhe [807] a new edict was issued; the palace would give gold and silk to pay for each horse's price. Still the edict called for the silk from the Jiang and Huai area used for trading horses to not from then on be cut and woven short. The Heluo general cried out: 'Ten Thousand Years to the King!' and respectfully received with both his hands the gold, silver, and colored fine silks [given by the court to cover the cost of the horses]. Who would have known that the cunning barbarians their greed would only start anew, and next year horses to come would double. Alas the better the silk, the more the horses. As for the barbarians of Shady Mountains, what do to with you?"*

咸安公主号可敦，远为可汗频奏论。元和二年下新敕，内出金帛酬马直。仍诏江淮马价贱，从此不令疏短织。合罗将军呼万岁，捧授金银与缣彩。谁知黠虏启贪心，明年马多来一倍。缣渐好，马渐多。阴山虏，奈尔何。<sup>xxxviii</sup>

### Poem 35. The Fashion of the Times

The thirty-fifth poem is The Fashion of the Times. This poem speaks of Bai Juyi's concern for how women use make-up. As a judge of beauty he warns the reader from applying cosmetics in such a fashion. Not only because of the overall aesthetics, but because this type of make-up practice is inherently non-Chinese, and therefore invites barbarian culture to invade the Tang.

Being adequately vigilant against foreign influences is a common topic among his New Yuefu Poems. Liu Longkai adds his voice to this point by saying, "In the poem, the lines '...those round loops without sideburns', or '...and oblique rouge not glowing' both are a description of Tibetan customs, which shows of how the fashion of the Yuanhe period was not of Chinese origin."<sup>73</sup> The adoption of outside make-up and fashions weakens the Tang's own accepted styles, and this is the core meaning of the poem.

### The Fashion of the Times

Shi shi zhuang

A warning

儆戒也

*"The fashion of the times, the fashion of the age. They came from the city and spread to four corners. Trends of the age...a fashion travels to all places, near and far, cheeks not applied with rouge, a face with no powder. Raven black paste smeared on lips,*

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<sup>73</sup> Liu Longkai, *Chen Yinke Yuanbai shizhengshi* p. 150: Chinese original, "诗中所写，圆鬟无鬓，红斜不晕，说明这是吐蕃风俗，表明元和时世妆并非华风。"

*those very lips like mud, a pair of eyebrows painted and made out low as the number 'eight.'*<sup>74</sup> *Beautiful and ugly, black and white, all have but lost their former looks. Made-up to the hilt as if holding in a sorrowful cry."*

时世妆，时世妆，出自城中传四方。时世流行无远近，腮不施朱面无粉。乌膏注唇唇似泥，双眉画作八字低。妍媸黑白失本态，妆成尽似含悲啼。

*"Those round loops of hair without sideburns. Piled like a chignon, an oblique rouge not glowing her face so reddish brown. I have heard that long ago when Xinyou<sup>75</sup> saw people in the Yi river area [the Luoyang area, i.e., capital of Eastern Zhou, heart of civilization] letting their hair loose, he knew that the place was to soon be stormed by barbarians. The style and manner of Yuanhe, you sir, should remember: Piled chignon and this reddish brown face are not the customs of China."*

圆鬟无鬓堆髻样，红斜不晕赭面状。昔闻被发伊川中，辛有见之知有戎。元和妆梳君记取，髻堆面赭非华风。

#### Poem 36. His Lady Li

The thirty-sixth poem is His Lady Li. This poem speaks of how the Emperor Wu of the Han was still enraptured by his former wife after her death, and memorializes her with a portrait, not knowing that this will only prolong his suffering. If only his favor for her could find an end, so too would his long lasting regret and pain.

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<sup>74</sup> The number eight in Chinese characters looks similar to a person's eyebrows, "八".

<sup>75</sup> Liang Kuanzhuang, *Zuo Zhuan* p. 105: "Zuo Zhuan, Xigong Twenty-second Year: In the beginning King Ping moved to the east, and Xin You was moved to Yichuan, he saw people performing sacrifices in the fields and said: "In less than a hundred years there will be barbarians here! This rite must go first!" Or in Chinese, "左传僖公二十二年：初平王之东迁也，辛有适伊川，见被发而祭于野者，曰：不及百年，此其戎乎！其礼先亡矣。"

Going as far as to brew potions to resurrect the spirit of his lost love, Emperor Wu has all but forgotten matters of court. The lady's soul sorrowfully resurrected for but a moment, the king's wishes are granted. But now how will he coax her back to the realm of the living after already dead? This entire affair with these Taoist priests from start to finish is ultimately fruitless.

To bring back someone's soul is an ultimately useless endeavor, but still Emperor Wu of Han would stop at nothing to see his Lady Li again. Even after seeing her, his sorrow goes on unabated. These emperors are looking for signs and portents that their long dead loves still float around the palace just waiting to be called back to the living. Little do they realize that chasing after the dead is a pathetic endeavor with no good end.

His Lady Li

Li fu ren

Against the deluded favoring of wives

鉴嬖惑也

*"Emperor Wu of Han, his Lady Li died young. There was a time when his lady went sick, he refused to part; after her death she so remained in his favour as in life. The monarch's favor never exhausted, his pining for her went on forever. He ordered her portrait be painted in the palace of Sweet Springs."*

汉武帝初丧李夫人。夫人病时不肯别，死后留得生前恩。君恩不尽念不已，甘泉殿里令写真。

*"Alas, for what benefit was that painting made? Not to speak, not to laugh, only making his longing worse. Again he ordered Taoist chemists to brew a miraculous potion, thus jade pots were set boiling and gold furnaces were burning bright."*

丹青画出竟何益？不言不笑愁杀人。又令方士合灵药，玉釜煎炼金炉焚。

*"In the tent of nine flowers deep in the night, so quiet, a spirit descended summoned by the soul-beckoning incense. Where would his lady's soul be allowed to exist? Thus fragrant smoke pulled the lady's soul down onto those burning joss sticks. Since her coming so painful could she not stay but a moment? A spirit so indistinct and melodious only to leave in flames. How could it leave so quickly and come so late? Was it true or false, alas both he did not know."*

九华帐深夜悄悄，反魂香降夫人魂。夫人之魂在何许？香烟引到焚香处。既来何苦不须臾？缥缈悠扬还灭去。去何速兮来何迟？是耶非耶两不知。

*"Her jade moth-like eyebrows were almost like they were in life, and not like when she was sick in bed at the Shining Sun Hall. Her soul not coming the king's heart was in pain. Her soul coming the king was still sorrowful. The lamp at his back apart from a curtain he could not speak. Alas but to use that brief spell to see her and yet still be separate. These sorrowful hearts Emperor Wu of Han was not alone. Since times immemorial it has always been like this."*

翠蛾仿佛平生貌，不似昭阳寝疾时。魂之不来君心苦，魂之来兮君亦悲。背灯隔帐不得语，安用暂来还见违。伤心不独汉武帝，自古及今皆若斯。

*"Sir, have you not heard that King Mu of Zhou cried for three days before the Terrace of Layered Jade for Lady Sheng? And have you not seen the tears shed by Emperor Xuanzong beneath the Mawei Slope remembering his precious concubine? Even though those beautiful figures, those gorgeous countenances all became dust, this yearning goes on and on with no end in sight."*

君不见穆王三日哭，重璧台前伤盛姬？又不见秦陵一掬泪，马嵬坡下念贵妃？  
纵令妍姿艳质化为土，此恨长在无销期。

*"Alive and enchanted, dead and deluded, these women of rare beauty enchant people forever haunting their lives. A man is not wood or stone, all have passion. Only if they did not encounter those kingdom-toppling beauty."*

生亦惑死亦惑，尤物感人忘不得。人非木石皆有情，不如不遇倾城色。<sup>xxxix</sup>

### Poem 37. The Concubines of the Mausoleum

The thirty-seventh poem is The Concubines of the Mausoleum. Before I start my analysis of the poem, Liu Longkai makes an integral point on the true nature of the piece. He notes, "This poem is not talking about palace ladies, which was already covered in 'The Gray Haired Maiden of Shangyang.' Here [this poem] is speaking of ministers who have been slandered and dismissed. As for [the line] 'Snowy nights in the Xuanhui Hall and spring in the Bathing Pool': Xuanhui was a palace name where the emperor would summon ministers to see them up close. The Bathing Pool was also a palace name. It was the place where the emperor summoned members of the Hanlin Academy."<sup>76</sup> Still though, the poem will speak of ministers as palace ladies for their fate is similar in some aspects, and I shall not use quotation marks to distinguish these women from men. Most certainly, some women were sent to the mausoleum, but essentially this poem describes two things at once.

From the outset we have an emotional plea to the audience to feel sorry for the women sent to keep watch at the mausoleum. These poor women have all but lost their

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<sup>76</sup> Liu Longkai, *Chen Yinke Yuanbai shizhengshi* p. 152: Chinese original, "这首诗并不是讲的宫女，那在《上阳白发人》里头已经讲了。这里讲的是臣子被谗遭黜。‘宣徽雪夜浴堂春’，宣徽，殿名，皇帝召见近臣之处；浴堂，亦殿名，皇帝召见翰林的地方。"

lives in service to the deceased emperor. They spend their lives in the mausoleum, locked deep and far away from the world outside. What this offense is exactly we do not know. These women were sent away because they were considered a risk and essentially speaking they are imprisoned. What a tragedy that they are to be locked in the mausoleum all their lives. What crime could possibly warrant such terrible treatment of human life?

The scenery of their imprisonment is most certainly bleak. Herein lies the emotion behind the piece. If worded any other way the poem would not have the same effect. We do not know for sure if service at the mausoleum was truly this depressing, but to show the suffering of these poor women, Bai Juyi had no other way to describe it. Locked deep behind thick doors the moss growing outside the mausoleum walls shows the time spent in confinement. The women, their hearts now cold are resigned to their pallid fate.

### The Concubines of the Mausoleum

Ling yuan qie 陵园妾

Pity for those shut behind doors

怜幽闭也

*"The concubines of the mausoleum. Their colors like flowers, their destiny like leaves. And what of this life as meager as a leaf?"*

陵园妾，颜色如花命如叶。命如叶薄将奈何？

*"Once being sent to serve in the deceased emperor's resting palace so many years have gone by...so many years and time has changed. Spring to worry and Autumn to pine away: Was there an end to it all?"*

一奉寝宫年月多。年月多，时光换，春愁秋思知何限？



*"Black hair fell like silk as thicketed sideburns went neglected. Gone were their tide on plain silk skirts right off their crimson jade skin. Remembering the past in the palace when they were both envied and suspected of. Because of this slander they were considered to have committed an 'offense' and were sent away to the mausoleum."*

青丝发落从鬓疏，红玉肤销系裙慢。忆昔宫中被妒猜，因谗得罪配陵来。

*"Old mothers wailed and screamed as the palanquin parted, eunuchs from the palace saw them in, locked the door, and walked away. Once the mausoleum on the mound was closed shut there would never be a day for it to open. Never a day, before their deaths those bodies were not allowed out."*

老母啼呼趁车别，中宫监送锁门回。山宫一闭无开日，未死此身不令出。

*"The moon loitered back and forth across the pine door all night long, this city of cypress from dawn to dusk the wind rustling so desolate. The pine door of the cypress city deep and enclosed within; listening to cicadas and hearing the swallows, to feel the light and shadow of time going by."*

松门到晓月徘徊，柏城尽日风萧瑟。松门柏城幽闭深，闻蝉听燕感光阴。

*"To see with one's eyes a chrysanthemum's pistil tears on the Double Ninth, to hold pear blossoms in the hand, this heart at Cold Food times. To take flowers and cover one's tears for none to see. Gone with weeds, blue moss wrapped around both the walls and courtyard."*

眼看菊蕊重阳泪，手把梨花寒食心。把花掩泪无人见，绿芜墙绕青苔院。

*"The four seasons saw them receiving their powders money all in vain; for three reigns they did not know their monarch's face. Reminiscing of the six palaces attending to him the absolute, snowy nights in the Xuanhui Hall and spring in the Bathing Pool. For*

*those that are not favored with the lord's rains and dew, it seems that I have heard they number three thousand and no less."*

四季徒支妆粉钱，三朝不识君王面。遥想六宫奉至尊，宣徽雪夜浴堂春。雨露之恩不及者，犹闻不啻三千人。

*"Three thousand women, how differently we are treated than they [i.e., those who remain in the imperial palace, not sent to the mausoleum] Alas I wish they would be ordered to take turns in serving in the mausoleum. Every three years to come and go so that joy and sorrow could be spread out among all of us."*

三千人，我尔君恩何厚薄？愿令轮转直陵园，三岁一来均苦乐。<sup>xl</sup>

#### Poem 38. The Salt Merchant's Wife

The thirty-eighth poem is The Salt Merchant's Wife. In this poem Bai Juyi takes aim at the rich with a irreverent stab. Although he holds the rich in disdain he is careful in the way he lambastes his target. Never going overboard, he keeps the criticism to a minimum and makes sure his audience learns something about the rich people involved.

So it is that the salt merchant pockets as much profit as possible. The empire is neglected in favor of the individual. While the salt merchant should be a good vassal of the Tang and give over the appropriate number of goods and material, he chooses instead to keep it all for himself. It is still unclear however, from reading the poem, whether Bai Juyi is targeting problems in government policy in the Salt and Iron Ministry or issues with the individual merchants. But if we look at the subtitle: "disgust over petty men," chances are that he is dedicating his poem to crafty merchants.

#### The Salt Merchant's Wife

Yan shang fu 盐商妇

## Disgust over petty men

恶幸人也

*"The salt merchant's wife, has much in gold and fine silks. She does not work the fields nor raise silkworms for weaving. South, North, East, and West never to lose her home: wind and water are her village and a boat is her house. A girl that came from a lowly household of Yangzhou, married to a great merchant from Xijiang. Abundant were gold hairpins on her green chignons, fat were her white wrists that made her silver bracelets too narrow."*

盐商妇，多金帛，不事田农与蚕绩。南北东西不失家，风水为乡船作宅。本是扬州小家女，嫁得西江大商客。绿鬟富去金钗多，皓腕肥来银钏窄。

*"Summoning blue-capped house servants in front, scolding maidservant behind: May I ask how did it come to be like this? Her husband a salt merchant for fifteen years, he serves not the prefect or county magistrate but the Son of Heaven only. Every year when salt profits are collected, little goes to the government while more goes to the individual. The official profits so paltry, the merchant - extravagant. The Salt and Iron Minister was far away and did not have a hint of it."*

前呼苍头后叱婢，问尔因何得如此？婿作盐商十五年，不属州县属天子。每年盐利入官时，少入官家多入私。官家利薄私家厚，盐铁尚书远不知。

*"Let alone that fish and rice at the river's head are both cheap, red sliced meat, yellow oranges, and fragrant cooked rice. Full in the belly, thick with make-up, she leans over the railing of the upper level of the boat; a pair of red cheeks, a flower about to burst. Oh salt merchant's wife, you were lucky to marry that salt merchant. All day long you have delicacies to eat, all lifelong you have good clothes to wear. Good clothes and*

*delicious food, both need to come from somewhere; alas this should also shame Sang Hongyang. Sang Hongyang, he died long ago. It was not only in the time of the Han, now we have one still."*

何况江头鱼米贱，红脰黄橙香稻饭。饱食浓妆倚柁楼，两朵红腮花欲绽。盐商妇，有幸嫁盐商。终朝美饭食终岁好衣裳。好衣美食有来处，亦须惭愧桑弘羊。桑弘羊，死已久，不独汉时今亦有。<sup>xli</sup>

### Poem 39. Apricot Wood Beams

The thirty-ninth poem is Apricot Wood Beams. This poem speaks of the passing around of residences; and this is the core focus in this poem. As soon as one obtains such extravagant housing, it is passed to someone else by the government. A thousand years past, real estate has barely changed. People's estates pass on as people pass on.

The government-owned real estate they reside in is unlikely to be passed on to their children. However, it is the dream of owning such incredible luxury that motivates them to keep on building. There can always be a mansion more fantastic than the last. Another layer of the poem is the government's appropriation of property and bestowal onto [hopefully] its proper owners or merely "someone else."

#### Apricot Wood Beams

Xing wei liang 杏为梁

A satire of extravagant residences

刺居处奢也

*"Apricot wood beams, cassia wood pillars, whose halls and rooms are these? But commander Li's. Before the paint of jade steps and red railing was dry, last year Li's body perished and now a new lord has moved in. Tall its walls, grand its gates. Whose*

*residence could this be? It was General Lu's. The luster of white mortar and vermillion planks had not yet faded. This year it was taken by the government and bestowed upon someone else."*

杏为梁，桂为柱，何人堂室李开府。碧砌红轩色未干，去年身歿今移主。高其墙，大其门，谁家第宅卢将军。素泥朱板光未灭，今岁官收别赐人。

*"The halls of a commander; the house of a general, their hair went white before it was even finished. A temporary lodge within another temporary lodge, the heart should be the master, the body is but a guest. There were fools thinking about life after their own death. Farsighted though their thinking may be, their plans were not so. The grandest luxury and most lavish splendor exceeding all limits, they left the houses to their children and grandchildren for preservation."*

开府之堂将军宅，造未成时头已白。逆旅重居逆旅中，心是主人身是客。更有愚夫念身后，心虽甚长计非久。穷奢极丽越规模，付子传孙令保守。

*"Do not let passersby hear of it, they would clap their hands and laugh straight at your face. Dear sir, do not you see: The house of the Ma family? It is still her today, but the plaques on the gate is inscribed 'Fengcheng Garden.' Dear Sir, do you not see: The house of the Wei family? Though it has belonged to others, it was returned to fifth generation descendants by Imperial decree."*

莫教门外过客闻，抚掌回头笑杀君。君不见：马家宅，尚犹存，宅门题作奉成园。君不见：魏家宅，属他人，诏赎赐还五代孙。<sup>xliii</sup>

Poem 40. From the Bottom of a Well, to Pull up a Silver Pail

The fortieth poem is From the Bottom of a Well, to Pull up a Silver Pail. This poem tells the story of a young girl who mistakenly falls for a married man. Likened to a

silver pail stuck at the bottom of a well with no cord to pull it up, the young girl is woefully stuck in her position and has no way to move up. Sadly, she will forever be an illicit lover and nothing else.

This piece utilizes many metaphorical objects which are used to describe the young woman's situation. Thinking back to a simpler time when she was just a young girl, our maiden thinks about her good points that attracted her "lord" to fall in love with her. Next we learn of the romance between the young beautiful maiden and her lord. It is a love as fleeting as the flapping wings of a moth caught in the light of a moonlit night. It is uncanny how Bai Juyi deftly vilifies the male character just by showing him as the proverbial Prince on the White Horse (白马王子). The opposite of a prince, he is simply using his wealth and position to romance an innocent young woman.

It is to be questioned whether or not the "lord" feels heartbroken when he sees his young lover. For what the young lady forgets is that there is already another lady that rules his home. When the girl remembers the traditional order of things, she loses all hope to ever be a wife in the traditional sense. Forever just a maidservant, she is just like a silver pail stuck in the mire of an old well. And herein lies the deeper meaning of the poem. Bai Juyi is advocating for women to keep their eyes out for wealthy men looking for "maidservants" to take back home.

From the Bottom of a Well, to Pull up a Silver Pail

井底引银瓶

On Putting a Stop to Elopement

止淫奔也

*"From the bottom of a well to pull up a silver pail, that silver pail it wished to climb on up yet the cord - it was cut. A jade hairpin ground on the stone, that jade hairpin it wished to be complete. Yet in the center, it was broken."*

井底引银瓶，银瓶欲上丝绳绝。石上磨玉簪，玉簪欲成中央折。

*"A sunken pail, a broken hairpin, alas, what's to be done? Just like this morning when I parted with you my lord."*

瓶沉簪折知奈何？似妾今朝与君别。

*"To remember back when I was just a girl at home. People said that both my movements and looks were something special. A graceful beauty, a pair of sideburns like autumn cicada wings. Tossing about a pair of moth-like eyebrows: those distant peaks so colorful."*

忆昔在家为女时，人言举动有殊姿。婵娟两鬓秋蝉翼，宛转双蛾远山色。

*"Laughing I followed my playmates to the rear courtyard: at this time we had yet to be acquainted. I - your maidservant played with green plums over the short wall. You - My Lord riding your white steed alongside the hanging willows."*

笑随戏伴后园中，此时与君未相识。妾弄青梅凭短墙，君骑白马傍垂杨。

*"Along top of that very wall on your horse we gazed at one another far off in the distance. As soon as I saw you I knew it would break my heart. I knew your heart was broken too. And as I spoke with you, you pointed to the southern mountain towards those Pine and Cypress trees."*

墙头马上遥相顾，一见知君即断肠。知君断肠共君语，君指南山松柏树。

*"Grateful to you and to those Pine and Cypress that have become your very heart. Our chance meeting in the dark, I joined my pair of loops and I went along with you."*

*Arriving at your house, I lived there for five or six years, the lady of the house, why she always had something to say: A wife can only be taken by following the rituals; running off with someone is but a concubine's move. Having excluded from the main ancestral sacrifices, I was relegated to the ranks of duckweed and wormwood."*

感君松柏化为心，暗合双鬟逐君去。到君家舍五六年，君家大人频有言。聘则为妻奔是妾，不堪主祀奉苹蘩。

*"In the end I knew that in your household I could not live. Out of your door I hopelessly had no place to go."*

终知君家不可住，其奈出门无去处。

*"How could it be that my father and mother were not still alive? Yes, I still had my full beloved family back in my hometown. Having run away and lived in secret for so long, I did not pass them any news. Alas now I am too forlorn and ashamed to ever return."*

岂无父母在高堂？亦有亲情满故乡。潜来更不通消息，今日悲羞归不得。

*"For one day's grace bestowed by my lord upon me, this error caused my life of a hundred years long. I would pass on a word - to you foolish small-town girls, lest not you give away your body loosely to men!"*

为君一日恩，误妾百年身。寄言痴小人家女，慎勿将身轻许人！<sup>xliii</sup>

#### Poem 41. The Minister's Ox

The forty-first poem is The Minister's Ox. This poem speaks of an official abusing his poor ox by overworking it to an extreme, just so that a dyke can be laid down near his lofty residence. Liu Longkai makes the important distinction that this poem is an allusion to the role of prime ministers of the past: "Some of the prime ministers of the



Western Han, like Wenzong's Zhou Bo, Chen Ping, or Xuanzong's Bing Ji, all took care of general matters and not small things. They only managed the harmony of Yin and Yang. At the conclusion of the poem Bai states: 'Oh Prime Minister of the Right, if you can benefit the people, bring the kingdom to order, and harmonize Yin and Yang, would it trouble us at all even if you broke your ox's neck?'<sup>77</sup> In more general terms, this poem is urging the Prime Minister to care more about the small things, even though he is in charge of much greater matters.

### The Minister's Ox

Guan Niu 官牛

Satire of those in power 讽执政也

*"This minister's ox, this minister's ox, driving this minister's cart. By the banks of the river Chan they load up and cart away sand. One Shi of sand is how many Jin heavy? Loading up in the morning piling more on in the evening, or what end? It's carried to the five gates to the west of the minister's road. Under the shade of green locust trees laying down a dyke of sand."*

官牛官牛驾官车，济水岸边般载沙。一石沙，几斤重？朝载暮载将何用？载向五门官道西，绿槐阴下铺沙堤。

*"Yesterday came appointed a new Prime Minister of the Right, and he feared he might dirty his horses' hooves in the mud. Oh Prime Minister of the Right, although when a horse's hooves step on sand, they would remain clean, but your ox's neck while pulling that cart is right about to bleed! Oh Prime Minister of the Right, if you can benefit the*

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<sup>77</sup> Liu Longkai, *Chen Yinke Yuanbai shizhengshi* p. 158: Chinese original, "西汉的一些丞相，如文宗时的周勃，陈平，宣宗时的邴吉，都只理总事，不管小事，只理阴阳调和。诗的结语说：“右丞相，但能济人治国调阴阳，官牛领穿亦无妨。”

*people, bring the kingdom to order, and harmonize Yin and Yang, would it be any harm to you at all even if you broke your ox's neck?"*

昨来新拜右丞相，恐怕泥涂污马蹄。右丞相，马蹄踏沙虽净洁，牛领牵车欲流血。右丞相，但能济人治国调阴阳，官牛领穿亦无妨。<sup>xliv</sup>

#### Poem 42. The Rabbit Fur Brush

The forty-second poem is The Rabbit Fur Brush. This poem speaks of a brush that represents the workmanship of an entire town of people. To use one is to connect with the labor of countless craftsman. So there is a certain degree of gravity to using this special brush. Liu Longkai makes the brief note: "This piece is placed after The Minister's Ox. [In the latter poem Bai] said that the highest officials were not good. In this poem [Bai Juyi] is saying that those officials in the Censorate are neglecting their duties."<sup>78</sup> Just like the few other poems that speak of specialized goods, this poem directs its criticism towards the men who work as censors in the court, and not so much the lavishness of the product that is made in tribute to the imperial court. At its most basic meaning this poem is urging censors and diarists to respect their expensive tools. Moreover, such brushes should be used with the utmost care and respect. It is a great honor to use a rabbit fur brush and should not be taken lightly.

#### The Rabbit Fur Brush

Zi hao bi 紫毫笔

A satire on neglecting one's duty 讥失职也

*"The rabbit fur brush, its tip like a awl, its sharpness like a knife. Within the rocky lands of Jiangnan there are rabbits so legendary. They eat bamboo and sip from springs*

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<sup>78</sup> Liu Longkai, *Chen Yinke Yuanbai shizhengshi* p. 159: Chinese original, "这篇放在官牛后面。官牛是说最高长官不好，这篇则说言官也失职。"

*to grow fine purple fur. The people of Xuancheng gather them for brushes. And out of ten millions individual hairs they select out one brush whole. The brush may be light, but its achievements are heavy."*

紫毫笔，尖如锥兮利如刀。江南石上有老兔，吃竹饮泉生紫毫。宣城之人采为笔，千万毛中拣一毫。毫虽轻，功甚重。

*"The craftsman's name engraved on brush's side, to fulfill the yearly tribute. Oh ruler, oh minister, do not use it lightly. Do not use it lightly and why is this? I wish you would bestow such an object to the censor's quarters east and west; I wish you would issue these brushes to the ministers and court diarists attending left and right, so that they can hold those brushes and hasten into those golden palaces, so that they can take out those brushes and stand at the foot of the white jade stairs."*

管勒工名充岁贡，君兮臣兮勿轻用。勿轻用，将何如？愿赐东西府御史，愿颁左右台起居。搦管趋入黄金阙，抽毫立在白玉除。

*"Of your ministers there are those who are evil and those who are upright; [equipped with such brushes] officials in the appropriate bureaus will be able to report them all to you, your every move and speech they will be able to record with no distortion. Oh court diarists! Oh, censors-in-attendance! You must know that a rabbit fur brush is not easy to obtain. Every year when Xuancheng sends in these brushes the price of these brushes is as expensive as gold. Be careful not to use them simply for nitpicking a minister's minor lapses in demeanor, be careful not to use them simply to record the words of the imperial edicts."*

臣有奸邪正衙奏，君有动言直笔书。起居郎，侍御史，尔知紫毫不易致。每岁宣城进笔时，紫毫之价如金贵。慎勿空将弹失仪，慎勿空将录制词。<sup>xlv</sup>

### Poem 43. Sui Levy Willows

The forty-third poem is Sui Levy Willows. This poem speaks of how these beautiful green willows provide shade and beauty alongside the rivers. Grown old and sick during the Tang, they were once beautiful in the Sui. So as the power and prestige of the Sui fall so does the health of the willows. The gradual demise of their kingdom is written ever so beautifully. Their laughter and songs will end when they finally realize their end amidst the gray willows.

Just like a previous poem called Two Kings' Descendants, this poem depicts how things change between dynasties. The power, beauty, and prestige of yesteryears eventually fades and is replaced with something altogether new. Basically speaking this poems message is that the Sons of Heaven typically never see their own reign (and life) coming to an end, but when it does, to say that they are surprised is an understatement!

Sui Levy Willows

Sui di liu 隋堤柳

Sorrow for a vanquished kingdom

憫亡國也

*"Those Sui levy willows the years by gone. So long and deep they are wholly decrepit. The wind fluttering, the rain pattering, in threes and twos down by the Bian river mouth. Old branches and sick leaves worry people to death; they once had their Spring in the Daye Reign [of the Sui] [605-618]. In the years of the Daye Reign of Emperor Yang, he had planted rows of willows between the flowing waters. West from the Yellow River and east to the Huai, green shade for thirteen hundred miles."*

隋堤柳，岁久年深尽衰朽。风飘飘兮雨萧萧，三株两株汴河口。老枝病叶愁杀人，曾经大业年中春。大业年中炀天子，种柳成行夹流水。西自黄河东至淮，绿阴一千三百里。

*"In the final years of the Daye Reign those months in the dusk of its Spring. The willows colored like smoke, their cotton limbs like snow. The imperial carriage traveled south and graced Jiangdu; the emperor gave it free reins as to what pleased his desires. They must have taken these willows and tied them to the dragon boats. Purple whiskered guards protected their brocaded mooring ropes. Beautiful young women were on duty in the winding halls of Milou<sup>79</sup>. Within the Four Seas their wealth and power at this time had already been exhausted. Yet on those boats just when would their songs and laughter end? A wasteland above and troubles below, their power was waning. The peril around their ancestral temple was like the dangling pearls on the crown."*

大业末年春暮月，柳色如烟絮如雪。南幸江都恣佚游，应将此柳系龙舟。紫髯郎将护锦缆，青娥御史直迷楼。海内财力此时竭，舟中歌笑何日休？上荒下困势不久，宗社之危如缀旒。

*"Emperor Yang, he said himself: My good fortune and prosperity are boundless. How was he to know that his heir apparent was to be the Duke of Xi? His dragon boat before even passing by the pavilions of Pengcheng, those righteous army banners had already broke into the palace of Chang-an. Desolate walls and misfortune to life: the affairs of man had changed. No longer would his luxurious chariot be able to return to the capital. His earthen grave a few feet long, just where is he buried? Below the Dais of the duke of Wu the sad winds are many. Two hundred years later by the road near the*

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<sup>79</sup> The Milou 迷楼 or "winding halls" were for pleasure for the Emperor.

*River Bian, sand, grass, and mist from morning to dusk. Just how do our kings reflect back on kings of the past? Please take a look at the Sui Levy and its vanquished trees."*

炀天子，自言福祚长无穷，岂知皇子封酈公。龙舟未过彭城阁，义旗已入长安宫。萧墙祸生人事变，晏驾不得归秦中。土坟数尺何处葬？吴公台下多悲风。二百年来汴河路，沙草和烟朝复暮。后王何以鉴前王？请看隋堤亡国树。<sup>xlvi</sup>

#### Poem 44. The Grasses Boundless

The forty-fourth poem is The Grasses Boundless. This poem speaks of the many goals of grand burials, to take one's wealth with him to the next life. Even though such wealth cannot be enjoyed after death, the endeavor at least hides their lavishness for a spell. Liu Longkai makes a very important distinction about this poem. "As for Tang Dezong's tomb 'Chongling' (mausoleum of worship), Shunzong's tomb (mausoleum of abundance), Bai Juyi had seen these all before. There was also no one that had spoken about these [tombs] to any great extent, so Bai could not be talking about the latter mentioned tombs. This was a general narrative about the custom as a whole."<sup>80</sup>

#### The Grasses Boundless

Cao mang mang 草茫茫

#### Reprimanding extravagant burials

惩厚葬也

*"The grasses boundless, the earth gray. Boundless and gray at what place? At the foot of Mount Li, the tomb of the Emperor of Qin. In the tomb below two layered springs were drained so that the ground was considered firm and solid. Down flowed those*

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<sup>80</sup> Liu Longkai, *Chen Yinke Yuangbai shizhengshi* p. 162: Chinese original: "唐德宗崇陵，顺宗丰陵，白氏都见过的也并无人说它们怎样讲究，所以白氏不会是说的它们。这是一般性的风俗上的叙说。"

*mercury waters like rivers and seas. Above the ceiling adorned with lustrous pearls made into shapes of the Sun Raven and Moon Hare. Another Heaven and Earth was created in the tomb, in the hope of taking all the wealth and power along with him."*

草茫茫，土苍苍。苍苍茫茫在何处？骊山脚下秦皇墓。墓中下涸二重泉，当时自以为深固。下流水银象江海，上缀珠光作乌兔。别为天地于其间，拟将富贵随身去。

*"One day robbers came to dig up the grave and broke into this tomb. The Emperor's dragon coffin and the ancestral hall three months of flames. Pitiful that treasured jade and gems were returned to the world of man; temporarily lodged in the tomb, a misfortune bought for themselves. The extravagant one: scattered about in a mess; the frugal one: at rest; one unlucky and one fortunate right in front of one's eyes. Feel free, sir, to look back towards the south: Emperor Wen of Han is buried in the fields of Baling."*

一朝盗掘坟陵破，龙椁神堂三月火。可怜宝玉归人间，暂借泉中买身祸。奢者狼藉俭者安，一凶一吉在眼前。凭君回首向南望，汉文葬在灞陵原。<sup>xlvi</sup>

#### Poem 45. The Old Grave Fox

The forty fifth poem is The Old Grave Fox. This poem speaks of a ghostlike beauty that is certainly most enchanting, but we have yet to learn what this fake beauty is capable of doing. From what we read at the beginning of the poem, it almost seems as if the old fox spirit is ashamed of itself. Whether this woman is an actual ghost spirit or a real person is left up to the reader to decide.

The fact remains that in this poem Bai Juyi holds this particular fox spirit in great disdain. It is not only what the creature represents as a wicked enchantress that Bai Juyi

so loathes, it is the wanton use of one's good looks to harm others that is the key point of the poem. Liu Longkai makes notes (and I am paraphrasing here) on the many and varied anthropomorphic woman/beast creatures have been written about in India and ancient China.<sup>81</sup> But this information is in many ways off the topic, for when one looks at the poem at a deeper level, all we discover is that Bai Juyi views female beauty as something that can be dangerous. Therefore from my point of view, in many ways it is a misogynistic poem.

The Old Grave Fox

Gu zhong hu 古冢狐

Against lustfulness

戒艳色也

*"The old grave fox, bewitching and ancient. It transforms into a women with a countenance so fine. Hoar changed into cloudy loops. Face changed with made-up cheeks. A great long tail dragging behind is made into a long red skirt. Slowly she walks alongside the deserted village road. About in dusk's hour, in a quiet place with no people around. Whether she sings, whether she dances, or whether she sadly wails, jade eyebrows not raised, a flowery face held low."*

古冢狐，妖且老，化为妇人颜色好。头变云鬟面变妆，大尾曳作长红裳。徐徐行傍荒村路，日欲暮时人静处。或歌或舞或悲啼，翠眉不举花颜低。

*"So sudden a smile, ten million shapes. Onlookers, when they see her, out of ten, eight or nine enchanted. If a false beauty can enchant people just like this, then a true*

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<sup>81</sup> Liu Longkai, Chen Yinke Yuanbai shizhengshi p. 163



*beauty should enchant even more. That one - true. This one - false. They are both equally charming. People's hearts hold disgust for that which is false and deeply treasure the one that is true. A fox so false, a witch like this, their harmfulness seems shallow still. True falseness that comes from the daily routines of morning and night dazzles people's eyes."*

忽然一笑千万态，见者十人八九迷。假色迷人犹若是，真色迷人应过此。彼真此假俱迷人，人心恶假贵重真。狐假女妖害犹浅，一朝一夕迷人眼。

*"A woman with a fox like charm her harmfulness lies deep. The days grow long the months drag on while she drowns people's hearts. All the more harmful is beauties like Bao Si<sup>82</sup> and Da Ji<sup>83</sup>, their poisonous bewitchment could ruin a family and overthrow a country. Dear sir if you look between this harmfulness both shallow and deep, alas how could it be that fake beauty is the same as real beauty?"*

女为狐媚害即深，日长月长溺人心。何况褒姒之色善蛊惑能丧人家覆人国。君看为害浅深间，岂将假色同真色。<sup>xlviii</sup>

#### Poem 46. The Black Pond Dragon

The forty-sixth poem is The Black Pond Dragon. This poem speaks of the fact that even a real dragon cannot make a god of itself. It is the superstition of mankind that breathes life into (imaginary) creatures like dragons. Eventually the poem depicts how

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<sup>82</sup> Michael Loewe, Edward L. Shaughnessy, *The Cambridge history of ancient China: from the origins of civilization to 221 B.C.* p. 349-351: "According to the *Shi ji*, at this time King You had become so infatuated with one of his consorts, Bao Si 褒姒, that he divorced his queen, a daughter of the lord of the state of Shen 申, deposed the legitimate heir apparent, Yi Jiu 宜臼, and forced him into exile, and established another son - borne to him by Bao Si - as the new heir apparent."

<sup>83</sup> Xu Zhonglin, *Creation of the Gods* vol. 1 p. 44-65: This book, originally called Fengshen yanyi 封神演义 is translated into English, although some portions such as poems are omitted. It is grounded on what her father of says to her, or rather of her " [Da Ji] My darling daughter! Because of you, your elder brother has been taken captive. Because of you, this city is surrounded at this very moment. Because of you, your parents shall lose their lives. Because of you, our entire family will perish..." Or in the original Chinese, "冤家! 为你, 兄被他人所擒, 城北他人所困, 父母被他人所杀, 宗庙被他人所有, 生了你一人断送我苏氏一家" It goes without saying that Da Ji is not allowed a response. Reference of her are scattered.

the sacrifices to the dragon disappear. But the fact is that foxes and rats that enjoyed the meat and wine meant for the Dragon God. Now the people will be all the more superstitious since the sacrifice disappeared!

The poem takes aim at the officials that use the peoples superstitions to build lavish shrines for a false dragon god. Liu Longkai explains the poem succinctly: "In this poem the dragon is compared to the emperor, the foxes and mice are the greedy officials, and the pigs (the sacrifice) are the common people."<sup>85</sup> The people did no wrong to be treated so terribly at the hands of officials. Officials that should be in service of the emperor first, and the people second.

### The Black Pond Dragon

Hei tan long 黑潭龙

The scourge of greedy officials

疾贪吏也

*"The black pond, its waters deep and black as ink. There were legends of a godly dragon that people did not yet know. Above the pond a house was built and the government established a shrine there. A dragon itself cannot become a god; it is people that made a god of it. Good harvest or bad harvest, flooding or drought, diseases and epidemics, in the eyes of the local people were all the dragon's doing. Each and every household raised pigs and distilled pure wine, in the morning they prayed, by evening they gave thanks as per the shaman's words."*

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<sup>85</sup> Liu Longkai, *Chen Yinke Yuanbai shizhengshi* p. 164: Chinese original, "这首诗以龙比皇帝，狐鼠比贪官，豚比小民。"

黑潭水深黑如墨，传有神龙人不识。潭上驾屋官立祠，龙不能神人神之。丰凶水旱与疾疫，乡里皆言龙所为。家家养豚漉清酒，朝祈暮赛依巫口。

*"When the god comes the winds blow, paper money moves, brocaded parasols shake. When the god leaves, the wind is quieted, the incense fire goes out, the cups and basins go cold. A pile of fresh meat discarded on the craggy rocks of the pond, sacrificial wine dripped on the grass in front of the temple. One does not know how much of it the Dragon God enjoyed, as forest rats and mountain foxes were full of meat and wine."*

神之来兮风飘飘，纸钱动兮锦伞摇。神之去兮风亦静，香火灭兮杯盆冷。肉堆潭岸石，酒泼庙前草。不知龙神享几多，林鼠山狐长醉饱。

*"How lucky were the foxes? Alas what crime did the pig commit? Year after year they slaughter pigs to feed the foxes. The foxes masqueraded as Dragon Gods and eat the pork clean; nine layers down at the bottom of that spring abyss, did the dragon know?"*

狐何幸豚何辜？年年杀豚将喂狐。狐假龙神食豚尽，九重泉底龙知无？<sup>xlix</sup>

#### Poem 47. Heaven Can Be Guessed At

The forty-seventh poem is Heaven Can Be Guessed At. This poem is full of cryptic sayings. Yet somehow they are important advice to follow. Those quick mouthed tricksters can cause a man to do as they please, lest that man be a step ahead of the trickster. Of all of Bai Juyi's New Yuefu poems this one is the most simple, and at the same time the most complicated. However, I believe its meaning to be hinged on the line, "...one can never guess if a person's smile is an angry glare." Basically, Bai Juyi is letting the reader be aware of tricksters who wear a smile, but at their hearts desire to steal something from their unwary counterpart. At their heart of heart is something that cannot be surmised or understood outright.

Heaven Can Be Guessed At

Tian ke du 天可度

Disgust for tricksters

恶诈人也

*"Heaven can be guessed at, Earth can be measured. It is only a person's heart that cannot defend. But to see crimson loyalty truly red as blood, who knows what false words spoken craftily like with a reed mouthpiece. They would urge you, my lord: 'Cover your nose!' Lord, you mustn't cover it, lest you and your wife be estranged like Shen and Shang. They would urge you, my lord: 'Catch that bee....' Lord, you mustn't catch it, lest you and your son become like jackals and wolves."*

天可度，地可量，唯有人心不可防。但见丹诚赤如血，谁知伪言巧似簧。劝君掩鼻君莫掩，使君夫妇为参商。劝君掇蜂君莫掇，使君父子成豺狼。

*"A fish at the bottom of the sea...a bird in the heavens. As high as it is - it can be shot down. As deep as it is - it can be fished out. When people's hearts and minds are opposite one another, no matter how close they are, they cannot be surmised. Sir, have you not seen, Li Yifu and his ilk were laughing so joyously, yet in that laughter was an assassin with a knife. Yin and Yang and heavenly shifts all can be measured. One can never guess if a person's smile is an angry glare."*

海底鱼兮天上鸟，高可射兮深可钓。唯有人心相对时，咫尺之间不能料。君不见李义府之辈笑欣欣，笑中有刀潜杀人。阴阳神变皆可测，不测人间笑是瞋。<sup>1</sup>

Poem 48. The Lucky Qin Parrot

The forty-eighth poem is The Lucky Qin Parrot. This poem is also cryptic as the last one; however, it appears that these stories of birds and their strife are political

allegory for things that Bai Juyi is too afraid to speak of directly. How interesting it is that he can touch untouchable issues by using a parrot as a mouthpiece. Perhaps, the depiction of the parrot is related to Bai Juyi's feelings of himself in the court. That he is merely just "parroting" the words of the emperor, but is himself still locked in a cage. Therefore, I believe this poem to have two layers, one of self-criticism (that Bai himself lacks the courage to say everything he needs to say while in court), and another to other members of the court that are too afraid to speak their opinions. Lastly, the subtitle "sadness for people treated unjustly" bears witness the latter idea. Bai most certainly feels that his words are not being properly heard by the Emperor and those around him.

### The Lucky Qin Parrot

Qin ji liao 秦吉了

Sadness for people treated unjustly

哀冤民也

*"The lucky Qin parrot came from the southlands, colored feathers blue and black with a flowery neck so red. Both ears and heart so smart, its tongue skilled to a tee, bird talk and people's words there's nothing it does not know. Yesterday a long clawed raptor, this morning a big beaked raven. The raptor with one fell swoop wipes out a baby swallow nest whole; the raven pecks the mother hen's two eyes turning them into withered holes. The hen cries and plummets to the earth, the mother swallow startles and flies away and then it takes up the eggs and seizes the nestlings."*

秦吉了，出南中，彩毛青黑花颈红。耳聪心慧舌端巧，鸟语人言无不通。昨日长爪鸢，今朝大嘴乌。鸢捎乳燕一窠覆，乌啄母鸡双眼枯。鸡号堕地燕惊去，然后拾卵攫其雏。

*"How could there be no vultures or fish hawks about [to stop the 鸢 and 乌 from inflicting such havoc on these innocent birds]? In its lair and full of meat they refused to fight. There are also exotic birds and cranes in flocks, leisurely perching on high as if they had not heard a thing. Oh lucky Qin parrot, people say that you are a bird that is able to speak. How could you have not seen the injustice and suffering of the chickens and swallows? I have heard that the phoenix is lord of the birds. Alas you did not speak one word in front of the phoenix, only to safely chirp out such idle words."*

岂无雕与鸢？喙中肉饱不肯搏。亦有鸾鹤群，闲立扬高如不闻。秦吉了，人云尔是能言鸟，岂不见鸡燕之冤苦？吾闻凤凰百鸟主，尔竟不为凤凰之前致一言安用噪噪闲言语。<sup>li</sup>

#### Poem 49. Yajiu's Sword

The forty-ninth poem is Yajiu's Sword. The sword Yajiu made was of incredible quality and that the guest is here making a case that this quality should be put to good use. The poem is focused around a stranger coming to view the curio who extols the qualities of the beauty of the sword. Just like the several poems before it, it is cryptic, and the political meaning it is referring to is very hard to discern. Basically, I believe the point of the poem to be that treasured curios should be used rather than idly stored away.

#### Yajiu's Sword

Ya jiu jian 鸦九剑

Pondering removing congestion

思决壅也

*"Master Ouye died a thousand years ago. Yet his spirit was secretly received by Zhang Yajiu. Yajiu was smelting swords in Mount Wu; the heavens bestowed him date*

*and time, the gods loaned him power. Gold and metal their essences jumped turning in the molten forge; leaping about they requested to be made into the legendary Moye sword. The sword finished, it was not tested for more than ten years, then a stranger came carrying gold to buy a show."*

欧冶子死千年后，精灵暗授张鸦九。鸦九铸剑吴山中，天与日时神借功。金铁腾精火翻焰，踊跃求为镆铍剑。剑成未试十余年，有客持金买一观。

*"Who would have known that although this closed box for so long thought to be used, the three foot green snake refused to wind and twist. The stranger had heart, yet the sword had no mouth. The stranger therefore spoke to Yajiu on the sword's behalf: 'Sir, do not boast that I can cut jade. Sir, do not praise that I can chop bells. It is not as good as carrying me to burst open the floating clouds, so that they will not block the brilliance of the sun, so that sir, your selfless light will extend to all things, that the sleeping worms will wake up and the dormant seeds of the grasses will sprout.'"*

谁知闭匣长思用，三尺青蛇不肯蟠。客有心，剑无口，客代剑言告鸦九。君勿矜我玉可切，君勿夸我种可剜。不如持握决浮云，无令漫漫蔽白日。为君使无私之光及万物，蛰虫昭萌草出。<sup>lii</sup>

#### Poem 50. The Poem Collector

The fiftieth and last poem is The Poem Collector. The poem has the subtitle: "Reflecting on former kings and the causes behind their chaos and demise." This subtitle is the key to the poem as it outlines the overall theme of the poem and sets the stage for the poem to begin gracefully. Moreover it sets the stage for the political theme that the poem sets out to explain. It is a lead-in that opens the door to a world of political allegory of the poem itself. At the beginning of the poem Bai Juyi makes it abundantly clear that

the authorship of New Yuefu poetry allows him to forewarn both those above himself in social status and those below as well. A most useful tool for affecting social change.

The latter mentioned is what I classify as a proper “opening” to a New Yuefu poem. It sets the stage for the social ill to be further expanded upon before the author gives his solution to the problem. Typically it is at this point that we go back in time to disguise that the social ailment in question is not also happening in contemporary society. Bai Juyi has a unique talent to deflect the reader's attention away from believing that every word mentioned is about a contemporary issue – when in fact he is criticizing the past and the present in one fell swoop.

Even if satirical poems are allowed, if left to the powers that be then over time they will have the satire stripped right out of the poems. Herein lies the reason for Bai Juyi's fifty New Yuefu poems - if he does not dare to write this unique brand of poetry, then who will? He is fighting for the good of the people and not vainly for himself. And as it is abundantly evident, these poems have lasted over twelve hundred years!

The Poem Collector

Cai shi guan 采诗官

Reflecting on former kings and the causes behind their chaos and demise

鉴前王乱亡之由也

*"The poem collector, he gathers poems and listens to songs to guide the people's words. The singer has made no crime and the listener shall be forewarned. Down it flows and above it passes: both those below and above are at peace."*

采诗官，采诗听歌导人言。言者无罪闻者诫，下流上通上下泰。



*"The Zhou was vanquished and Qin arose and up to the house of Sui, for ten dynasties not one poem gatherer was placed. The lauding songs in the ancestral temples praise our lords' beautiful virtue. The Music Bureau with its gorgeous words delight our lords' heart and mind. If you demand to bring forth instruction and admonishing words, then ten thousand verse and one thousand chapters will be without one word. It is not that these chapters of verse are without admonitions, it is that those words that gradually reach the Imperial Court have any satirical meaning already cut out. Critical ministers have their mouth shut out and become like redundant personnel, alas the drums of these critics have been hanged high and become but empty vessels."*

周灭秦兴至隋氏，十代采诗官不置。郊庙登歌赞君美，乐府艳词悦君意。若求兴谕规刺言，万句千章无一字。不是章句无规刺，渐及朝廷绝讽议。诤臣杜口为冗员，谏鼓高悬作虚器。

*"One man sits high on the throne always remains solemnly silent; a hundred officials enter the gate: both seek but to please the other side. The assisting ministers of the evening their words all congratulating and with good rapport, those officials in charge of court ceremonies each play about with such auspicious signs."*

一人负宸常端默，百辟入门两自媚。夕郎所贺皆德音，春官每奏唯祥瑞。

*"My Lord your court – is a thousand leagues far. My Lord your gate – is closed nine layers fold. My Lord your ears – only hear the words of the court. My Lord your eyes – do not see the things in front of your door."*

君之堂兮千里远，君之门兮九重闭。君耳唯闻堂上言，君眼不见门前事。

*"Greedy officials harm the people without any misgiving, treacherous court officials shelter you without any fear dear King. Sir have you not seen – At the end of*

*Emperor Li of the Zhou and the Second Emperor of Qin [Huhai]: All his ministers had advantage [or benefits] and the King had none. My Lord, alas my lord, I wish you to hear this, I desire you to clean out your sheltering obstructions and let in the people's feelings, and be first to let poems and songs be your teacher by satire."*

贪吏害民无所忌，奸臣蔽君无所畏。君不见厉王胡亥之末年，群臣有利君无利。君兮君兮愿听此欲开壅蔽达人情，先向歌诗求讽刺。<sup>liii</sup>

### Notes

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<sup>vi</sup> Yu Yueheng, *Bai Juyi Ji* p.41-42

<sup>vii</sup> Yu Yueheng, *Bai Juyi Ji* p. 42-43

<sup>viii</sup> Yu Yueheng, *Bai Juyi Ji* p. 43

<sup>ix</sup> Yu Yueheng, *Bai Juyi Ji* p. 43

<sup>x</sup> Yu Yueheng, *Bai Juyi Ji* p. 44

<sup>xi</sup> Yu Yueheng, *Bai Juyi Ji* p. 44

<sup>xii</sup> Eugene Feifel, *Po Chu Yi as a Censor* p. 210-11

<sup>xiii</sup> Yu Yueheng, *Bai Juyi Ji* p. 45-46

<sup>xiv</sup> Yu Yueheng, *Bai Juyi Ji* p. 46

<sup>xv</sup> Yu Yueheng, *Bai Juyi Ji* p. 47

<sup>xvi</sup> Wang Jian and Li Min, *Shangshu Yizhu* p. 1-11

<sup>xvii</sup> Yu Yueheng, *Bai Juyi Ji* p. 47

<sup>xviii</sup> Yu Yueheng, *Bai Juyi Ji* p. 47-48

<sup>xix</sup> Yu Yueheng, *Bai Juyi Ji* p. 48

<sup>xx</sup> Yu Yueheng, *Bai Juyi Ji* p. 48-49

<sup>xxi</sup> Yu Yueheng, *Bai Juyi Ji* p. 49

<sup>xxii</sup> Yu Yueheng, *Bai Juyi Ji* p. 49-50

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- xxiii Yu Yueheng, Bai Juyi Ji p. 50
- xxiv Yu Yueheng, Bai Juyi Ji p. 50
- xxv Yu Yueheng, Bai Juyi Ji p. 51
- xxvi Yu Yueheng, Bai Juyi Ji p. 53
- xxvii Yu Yueheng, Bai Juyi Ji p. 53
- xxviii Yu Yueheng, Bai Juyi Ji p. 54
- xxix Yu Yueheng, Bai Juyi Ji p. 54
- xxx Yu Yueheng, Bai Juyi Ji p. 55
- xxxi Yu Yueheng, Bai Juyi Ji p. 55-56
- xxxii Yu Yueheng, Bai Juyi Ji p. 56
- xxxiii Yu Yueheng, Bai Juyi Ji p. 56-57
- xxxiv Yu Yueheng, Bai Juyi Ji p. 57
- xxxv Yu Yueheng, Bai Juyi Ji p. 57
- xxxvi Yu Yueheng, Bai Juyi Ji p. 58
- xxxvii Yu Yueheng, Bai Juyi Ji p. 58
- xxxviii Yu Yueheng, Bai Juyi Ji p.58-59
- xxxix Yu Yueheng, Bai Juyi Ji p. 59
- xl Yu Yueheng, Bai Juyi Ji p. 60
- xli Yu Yueheng, Bai Juyi Ji p. 60
- xlii Yu Yueheng, Bai Juyi Ji p. 60-61
- xliii Yu Yueheng, Bai Juyi Ji p. 61
- xliv Yu Yueheng, Bai Juyi Ji p. 61-62
- xlv Yu Yueheng, Bai Juyi Ji p. 62
- xlvi Yu Yueheng, Bai Juyi Ji p. 62

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xlvi Yu Yueheng, Bai Juyi Ji p. 62-63

xlviii Yu Yueheng, Bai Juyi Ji p. 63

xliv Yu Yueheng, Bai Juyi Ji p. 63

<sup>1</sup> Yu Yueheng, Bai Juyi Ji p. 63-64

<sup>li</sup> Yu Yueheng, Bai Juyi Ji p. 64

<sup>lii</sup> Yu Yueheng, Bai Juyi Ji p. 64

<sup>liii</sup> Yu Yueheng, Bai Juyi Ji p. 65

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION

Amidst the garden of Tang Dynasty poetry stands a lone tree. Its fleshy roots go down deep into the soil, its limbs shoot out proudly, its flowers decorate daintily, and its fruits are heavy and sumptuous. This is the tree of the New Yuefu poetry and we have just witnessed all of its majesty. Bai Juyi set out to make poems worthy of political discourse, and he greatly succeeded in doing so.

So it can be said surely and sweetly that Bai Juyi's experimental New Yuefu poems were a grand success. His poetry garnered the praise and scorn of all those around him. For those that understood the aim of his poetry he inspired. For those that cast him away, he educated. Yet still after all his hard work, he remained a beloved poet and was able to serve the kingdom of the Tang until his death.

He took a risk unto himself so that he could educate the populace and make positive social change. This risk was well judged as even over a thousand years later, the tree of New Yuefu poetry still stands proudly. Although new branches, flowers, and fruits never grow, the fact remains that the tree is quite perfect as it is. Even emperors praised his work such as the Tang Emperor Xuanzong 宣宗 [846-859], who wrote a poem eulogizing Bai Juyi and it is as follows.

#### A Eulogy for Bai Juyi

Sewing jade and threading pearls for sixty years,

Who made him an immortal poet and who summoned him to the underworld?

Not attached to even the floating clouds, he named himself Juyi

(“Carefree Living”),

Following the Creator, not exerting himself, he called himself Letian  
("Joyous Skies").

Even children can recite the Song of Everlasting Sorrow,  
Sons of barbarians are able to sing the Pipa Song.  
His works are already full in people's ears,  
Every time I think of him, it saddens me.

吊白居易

缀玉联珠六十年，谁教冥路作诗仙。  
浮云不系名居易，造化无为字乐天。  
童子解吟长恨曲，胡儿能唱琵琶篇。  
文章已满行人耳，一度思卿一怆然。<sup>liv</sup>

### Notes

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<sup>liv</sup> Peng Dingqiu, *Quan Tang shi* p. 50 vol. 1

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