

THREE NARRATIVE POETIC SERIES FROM DU FU'S EXILE ON THE WESTERN FRONTIERS

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ABSTRACT Towards the end of 759, Du Fu experimented repeatedly with long poetic series. Three of these series are narratives, structured by previously unrecognized internal architectures linking their constituent poems and even the series themselves. This article offers an extended discussion of these series' structures, an interpretation of their core narratives, and a new annotated translation into English.¹

KEYWORDS Tang poetry, narrative poetry, autobiography, Buddhism, Daoism

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In the darkening months of 759, Du Fu 杜甫 (712-770) abandoned his government office in the capital corridor and fled with his family to the western frontier. Though the Tang imperial house had, just over a year before, recaptured the capitals from rebel armies under the command of An Lushan 安祿山 and Shi Siming 史思明, recent defeats had turned the tide against the loyalist forces, and Shi Siming was poised once again to take Luoyang.² Frustrated with a court that had scorned his advice and concerned that he and his family were directly in the path of Shi's army, Du Fu decide to forsake his lifelong aspiration of serving the state for a 450-kilometer trek through the mountains to Qinzhou 秦州 (modern-day Tianshui 天水, Gansu province). The reasons the poet had for choosing Qinzhou remain uncertain: he seems to have hoped he could rely for support on a nephew in the area, though that hope seems ultimately to have been disappointed.³ Perhaps he simply thought that, because the region was economically inconsequential, rugged of terrain, and unlikely to put up much loyalist resistance, the place would be safe from the rebels even if the dynasty did fall.

Ultimately, this decision seems to have displayed a characteristic lack of worldly foresight on Du Fu's part: the Tang would survive the Rebellion, and Qinzhou would be captured by the Tibetan empire, attacking from the opposite direction, less than three years later. But whatever its immediate consequences for Du Fu and his family, his flight to Qinzhou would prove a great boon for readers of his poetry, since it marked a turning point in his poetic career. Although he had begun over the previous three years of the Rebellion to write some of the verse that would eventually earn him common and lasting approbation as the greatest poet in Chinese history, it was not until he left the heartland that he began to produce at the prodigious pace that would define the rest of his life and eventually make him the tradition's most prolific poet to date.⁴ During the roughly six months he spent on the western frontiers, he wrote almost a poem per day—as if, now that his hopes for a government career had ended, he had decided to dedicate himself to poetry instead. With the partial exception of his contemporary Li Bai 李白 (701-762), who sometimes traded on his verse to earn a living, poetry was not a profession in the eighth century but rather an avocation in which most educated gentlemen engaged sporadically, often in social situations. If Du Fu began at this point to invest himself in his identity as a poet, therefore, it was perhaps because the art promised him a means of maintaining a connection to the elite tradition, even when he was far from

2 For this history, see Denis Twitchett and John K. Fairbank, eds., *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1979), pp. 453-63.

3 For Du Fu's biography around this time, see Chen Yixin 陳貽焮, *Du Fu pingzhuan* 杜甫評傳 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1982), pp. 485-587. In English, see William Hung, *Tu Fu: China's Greatest Poet* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1952), pp. 142-59.

4 It is worth noting, of course, how much has been lost, both from medieval literary culture in general and from Du Fu's collection in particular, which is listed at roughly twice its current length in the *Jiu Tang shu* 舊唐書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975), 190.5057.

the elite community of the capital region. Whatever his motivations might have been, he would spend the rest of his life in exile far from his hometown, writing scroll after scroll of increasingly experimental—and some might say increasingly interesting—poetry.

A surprising amount of the verse that Du Fu wrote in his six months on the western frontiers is organized into long sets. Poetic sets were not unprecedented at this time, but most were short, and only loosely or thematically interrelated.⁵ Du Fu had himself written a few such sets previously, but nothing matching up to the length or complexity of those he began to write in Qinzhou—not to mention the sheer number of such sets that he seems to have written in a relatively short span of time. At least four extended series are certain to have been written during this six-month period, comprising a total of fifty-one individual poems,⁶ and several other sets are good candidates for this date range as well, being included alongside these more certain series in the third and tenth scrolls of Du Fu's collection as it was collated by Wang Zhu 王洙 in the 1030s and published by Wang Qi 王琪 in 1059.⁷ Wang's ordering is often the best evidence we have for dating Du Fu's poems—it seems likely that some of the manuscripts he collated into his collection came to him in chronological order, perhaps through the poet's own work in editing his collection⁸—though it should be admitted that there are other ways of explaining this contiguity as well. It is possible, for instance,

5 For a useful discussion of premodern Chinese poetic series, see Joseph R. Allen "Macropoetic Structures: The Chinese Solution," *Comparative Literature* 45.4:305-29 (1993) and his recent expansion of this argument, *The Chinese Lyric Sequence: Poems, Paintings, Anthologies* (Cambria Press, 2020). It might be noted that these series challenge Allen's arguments, particularly in his recent book.

6 That is, as "certain" as the dating of Du Fu's poetry gets. The entire edifice of Du Fu studies is built upon such specious "certainty," though it is also possible (perhaps even likely) that Du Fu continued to edit his poetry throughout his life.

7 Our best evidence for this edition is the so-called *Songben Du Gongbu ji* 宋本杜工部集, Xu Guyi congshu facsimile edition (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan 1957). I will discuss this text below. The series in question include three sets of five poems under the title "Getting a Whim Out" 遣興; two sets of *yuefu* 樂府 ballads under the title "Going Out the Passes" 出塞, of five and nine poems, respectively; and one long run of twenty-eight eight-line regulated verses (律詩) each designated by a two-character title. Some of these poems are placed earlier in late-imperial and modern editions of Du Fu's collection. There is no evidence to support an earlier placement, however.

8 This suggestion has been made by Stephen Owen in an unpublished paper. As he notes, both Su Shunqin 蘇舜欽 and Wang Zhu complain that previous collections of Du Fu's poetry were "not ordered chronologically" 前後不倫 or "out of chronological order" 非當時第次矣 (see Xiao Difei 蕭滌非 et al., ed., *Du Fu quanji jiaozhu* 杜甫全集校注, 12 vols. [Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 2014], vol. 12, pp. 6585 and 6587). Since other Song editors do not complain about such flaws in other Tang collections—few of which were arranged in chronological sequence—Owen hypothesizes that there was some pre-existing chronological sequence to Du Fu's collection, which both Su and Wang recognized was only partial and imperfect. The Taiwanese scholar Huang Yizhen 黃奕珍 has offered other evidence for this possibility more specifically focused around these series; see his *Du Fu zi Qin ru Shu shige xiping* 杜甫自秦入蜀詩歌析評 (Taipei: Liren shuju, 2005), pp. 83-128.

that some previous reader before Wang Zhu was interested in Du Fu's extended series, and had copied them into one manuscript that then served as a basis for Wang's compilation.

Whenever these other sets might have been written, however, three of the series definitely composed at this time display an even more striking innovation: they each offer a narrative, strung out over several poems. Elite Tang *shi*-poetry 詩 was, for the most part, a short, episodic, and occasional form: individual poems might contain simple narratives, but the art did not generally provide a sufficient canvas for even the most rudimentary sort of narrative depth.⁹ There were, to be sure, longer poems in the tradition, and Du Fu had himself written relatively extensive narrative poems in the past. Narrative series, however, offered a larger canvas than even the longest of his poems, and the form's built-in ruptures between individual poems allowed for multiple topics to be taken up and related paratactically, freed from the limitations of hypotactic logic. As a result, these series are more thematically diverse and their narrative progress more complex than even the richest of Du Fu's individual narrative poems, "Traveling North" 北征, written two years earlier.

Narrative seems to have been on Du Fu's mind in this period. Two of the less-easily datable series he might have written in these years are also narratives, albeit fictions: they imagine the development of a young man into a soldier in An Lushan's army, and then his reactions to the Rebellion. In these series, Du Fu considers the way a person's mind and character may change over time as he discovers what matters to him and learns about the world he lives in.¹⁰ This sort of spiritual progress is also the theme of the three series translated here, though they, by contrast, are autobiographical—and in a sense somewhat different from the way that we usually talk about most Tang poetry as autobiographical. As an occasional art, Tang poetry outside of a few genres generally begins from, describes, transfigures, or comments on situations presumed to have actually occurred in the lives of its poets. Yet relatively few Tang poems seek earnestly to explore the question of who their authors are as individuals, much less to track the development of these individualities over time. This is a theme that is quite difficult to fit into poems of forty characters, or even a few hundred. When Du Fu gathers twenty forty-character or twelve one-hundred-character poems into coherent sequences, however, the form becomes capable of developing sustained reflections upon who the poet is, what matters to him, and where his life is going. And though these sequences

9 For narrative in premodern Chinese poetry, see Joseph R. Allen, "Early Chinese Narrative Poetry: The Definition of a Tradition" (PhD diss., Univ. of Washington, 1982); Dore Jesse Levy, *Chinese Narrative Poetry: The Late Han through T'ang Dynasties* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1988); and Tsung-Cheng Lin, "Time and Narration: A Study of Sequential Structure in Chinese Narrative Verse" (PhD diss., Univ. of British Columbia, 2006). None of these works deal with anything remotely like these series.

10 The first of these sequences has been translated and discussed by Stephen Owen in "A Poetic Narrative of Change: Du Fu's Poetic Sequence 'Going Out the Passes: First Series,'" in Maghiel van Crevel, Tian Yuan Tan, and Michel Hockx eds., *Text, Performance, and Gender in Chinese Literature and Music: Essays in Honor of Wilt Idema*, pp. 7-22 (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

individually all remain far shorter than narrative forms like the epic or the novel, they are structured by intricate interconnections that both enhance and complicate their narrative possibilities.

By stringing together short poems into extended chronological sequences of moments over time, Du Fu invents in these series what amounts to a new literary form, one that would become an important part of the repertoire for later poets. Taking this narrative innovation a step further, moreover, and beyond what later poets would themselves do, he then strings these series themselves together in a narrative chain, with the second picking up on the themes of the first, and the third serving as an explicit sequel to the second. By writing narratives that crossed the bounds of individual poems and ultimately even individual series, Du Fu thus encouraged his readers to think of his poetry collection as a whole as one long narrative of his life. This vision of the poetry collection as a narrative seems to have been basically unprecedented in his time, when poetry generally circulated in brief and fragmentary forms, out of chronological order, and without commentaries to inform the reader when a given poem was written. It would, however, set the template for many of the most famous poets of later eras, as well as for the way that nearly all premodern Chinese poetry is read today. In this sense, these three series can be said to represent an important step in Du Fu's redefinition of the Chinese poetic art.¹¹

"TWENTY MISCELLANEOUS POEMS OF QINZHOU"

The first series translated below, "Twenty Miscellaneous Poems of Qinzhou," is made up of twenty regulated verses. The "regulation" of regulated verse refers primarily to its fixed prosody, but the form is also structured by complex interconnections both between lines and between couplets.¹² The middle couplets, that is, must be semantically parallel: every character or phrase in one line must be paired with a commensurate character or phrase in the other line of the couplet. And the couplets of an eight-line regulated verse ideally follow a set structure of exposition, by which the first couplet of the poem broaches two topics that are then dealt with separately in the two middle couplets, and then related in a new way in the final couplet. These structural interconnections between the lines of a couplet and the couplets of a poem thus turn what might, to an uninitiated reader, seem a mere litany of eight fragmentary images into a sustained meditation upon the relationship between two ideas that

11 For a useful discussion of the circulation of poetry in Tang China, see Christopher M.B. Nugent, *Manifest in Words, Written on Paper: Producing and Circulating Poetry in Tang Dynasty China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Asia Center, 2010). For Du Fu's redefinition of the Chinese poetic art, see Lucas Rambo Bender, *Du Fu Transforms: Tradition and Ethics amid Societal Collapse* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Asia Center, 2021).

12 For an accessible introduction to the form of regulated verse, see Zong-qi Cai, "Recent-Style *Shi* Poetry," in Zong-qi Cai, ed., *How to Read Chinese Poetry*, 161-80 (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2008), pp. 161-73.

start out in tension. In this sense, each poem has a miniature narrative impulse as a process of thought and perception, and it is these minor narratives that Du Fu will string together into the more elaborate narrative of the series as a whole.

To illustrate this form, let us consider briefly the second poem of the series, which describes Du Fu's visit to a Buddhist monastery in Qinzhou (please refer to the full translation below, after this introduction). For the purposes of regulated prosody, the tones of Chinese characters are divided into two categories: level (平) and deflected (仄). In this poem, these categories alternate in perfect regulation, and the final characters of each couplet rhyme exactly as expected. Note the alternation of tone-category between the second and the fourth characters in each line, between corresponding characters in each line in a given couplet, and between each couplet (rhyme characters in **bold**, rhymes in parentheses):

平平平仄仄，仄仄仄平平。(kjuwng)

平仄平平仄，平平仄仄平。(khuwng)

仄平平仄仄，平仄仄平平。(pjuwng)

平仄平平仄，平平仄仄平。(tuwng)

The first two lines of this poem each broach a topic that will repeat throughout the verse, the first line highlighting the *Buddhist* character of the monastery nowadays, and the second that it was *once the palace* of Wei Xiao 隗嚣 (? - 33 CE), who set up a separatist regime and declared himself King of Ningshuo in the early days of the Eastern Han dynasty. The second couplet will pick up this second theme—the transience of worldly glory—in its parallel depiction of the ruined palace: while its *colorful paintings* are *fading* within its **empty halls**, *green lichens* are *growing* on its **ancient gate**. The third couplet then returns to the Buddhist character of the building nowadays, observing—in a common Buddhist image, symbolizing both the illusory character of the world and the presence, within all those illusions, of a transcendent reality¹³—the image of the moon repeated in the dewdrops hanging from the leaves in the courtyard. Buddhist insight was often evoked in Tang verse by visual naiveté: because the religion taught that the conventional substances of our experience are merely illusory conjunctions of unrelated phenomena, poets employed in Buddhist-themed poems the analytical technique of observing the world not as the mind constructs it, but as it truly

13 This image is pervasive and may not have a single source. For one early articulation, see the *Da zhidu lun* 大智度論 (Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra) as translated by Kumārajīva, T.1509:101c08: “You should understand that all dharmas are like illusions, like flames, like the moon in the water, like void emptiness, like an echo...” 解了諸法如幻、如焰、如水中月、如虛空、如響。

appears.¹⁴ This seems to be what Du Fu is doing in the sixth line here, which sees the clouds not being blown by the wind (as the poet knew they were, “conventionally” speaking), but rather chasing after the wind, doing their slow best to keep up with gusts that outpace them. This image then prompts the turn to the final couplet, wherein Du Fu recognizes that he similarly cannot “keep up” with the Wei River he sees flowing off to the east, towards his hometown. Drawing together the topics initially articulated in the first couplet and then dealt with singly in the second and third, this image combines both the Buddhist theme and the theme of human transience. Ever since Confucius had stood upon the bank of a stream and watched it “flowing off, day and night, without stopping,” the eastward flow of China's rivers had become a figure for the ineluctable passage of time.¹⁵ This river is, moreover, “without feeling” (無情): not only “cruel” in its abandonment of the aging poet, but also “beyond passions,” a central Buddhist ideal. Perceiving the Wei's callous continuity, therefore, Du Fu experiences the flash of insight expected in temple-visiting poems and reconciles thereby the two themes announced in the first couplet: it is the ultimate nature of things that the world has no regard for the ephemeral lives of men.

Within this one poem, we can already discern a rudimentary narrative, tracing the progress of Du Fu's encounter with the monastery—which might have been where he and his family first stayed when they arrived in Qinzhou, since monasteries often provided lodging and food to travelers as a charitable service—and his thoughts about finding himself there. First, Du Fu reflects upon the monastery's history as he approaches it, observes the moss upon its gate as he enters the temple grounds, and notices the fading paintings as he goes into the hall. In the second half of the poem, however, we sense a restlessness in the poet: apparently unsatisfied by what he finds in the monastery building, he goes back out into the courtyard, and then further to a vantage of the Wei river, which could, he reflects, take him back home. This last reflection is, finally, undercut by the second narrative implicit in the poem's architecture, by which Du Fu's yearning to return to the heartland is in the end overcome by his realization that all things must pass, including the once-glorious Tang empire. Implicitly, this realization convinces him not to leave Qinzhou, but to return to the monastery and plan his next move for setting up a dwelling here.

It is at this point that this poem's internal narratives connect both backwards to the previous poem in the series and forwards to the next. In the first poem, Du Fu arrived at Qinzhou, but found himself regretting his decision to come; in the third, he will begin examining the map of the region, in search of a place to settle down. Poem II thus serves to explain how he

14 For similar techniques of confused agency and visual naïveté in other temple-visiting poems in Du Fu's corpus, see Xiao et al, eds., *Du Fu quanji jiaozhu*, pp. 2115 and 2786. For just one example of the technique elsewhere, see Wang Wei 王維, *Wang Wei ji jiaozhu* 王維集校注, Chen Tiemin 陳鐵民, ed., 4 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1997), p. 176.

15 See *Lunyu jishi* 論語集釋, Cheng Shude 程樹德 et al., ed. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1990), 18.610.

went from an initial reluctance to remain in Qinzhou to taking a faltering first step towards establishing a residence nearby.

The poem also serves as a link in the overall narrative of the series as a whole. If we read the first poem and the last, the arc of that narrative becomes clear: Du Fu goes from regretting his decision to come to Qinzhou to resolving to remain here permanently as a recluse in Eastern Bough Valley. The narrative interest of the series lies in the complications of this resolution: Du Fu's changing perception of Qinzhou and its (partly non-Chinese) inhabitants, his reasons for hesitating to settle down here, the reasons he finally overcomes those hesitations, and the processes of thought and perception by which he does so. These vacillations and their resolutions are articulated not merely within the successive poems of the series—each of which contains an equally complex structure as the example analyzed here—but moreover (in a point I do not believe any critic has remarked previously) in the architectonic connections that obtain *between* the series' poems as well. Just as the lines of each regulated verse in the set are organized into couplets, so too is each poem of the series itself part of a couplet of poems. Poem I, for instance, makes a pair with poem XI, poem II with poem XII, poem III with poem XIII, and so on. This consistent pairing of poems across the first and second halves of the series allows Du Fu both to return to topics previously broached and dropped, and also to reflect upon how far his thinking has come in the interim.

Consider, for example, the relationship between poem II and poem XII. In the first line of poem II, Du Fu tells us that he is visiting a Buddhist monastery to the “north of Qinzhou's walls,” while in poem XII, the first line describes a later visit to “Southwall Temple.” In the second couplet, similarly, poem II's “empty halls” are matched by poem XII's “empty courtyard,” and the former's “ancient lichens” parallel the latter's “old tree.” The parallels in the third couplets are somewhat more subtle—I only recognized them myself when my discovery of the series' structure made me rethink my translation of these lines—involving in both cases the sort of “Buddhist” perceptual alteration we noted in poem II above. Where poem II employed visual naiveté to present moons in every dewdrop and clouds chasing the wind, poem XII's third couplet employs syntactical ambiguities to blur the distinctions between subject and object. In these lines, the middle character can apply equally well to both the nouns that precede it and the nouns that follow it, rendering it undecidable, first, whether the flowers are “imperiled beneath rocks” or are rather “beneath teetering rocks”; and second, whether the evening sunlight is “beside a fallen bell” or, more interestingly, “lies down beside the bell.” This blurring of subject and object through the ambivalence of one character in each line is one of Du Fu's more famous technical innovations, one that he uses elsewhere as well¹⁶—including, perhaps, in the second couplet of poem II here, wherein it is not clear whether the “gate” or the “lichens” are “ancient”, or whether the “halls” or the “paintings” are “empty” (if the paintings are “empty,” they are so in a sense drawn from Buddhist thought:

16 The most famous example is probably Xiao et al., eds., *Du Fu quanji jiaozhu*, p. 779.

that is, illusory, lacking self-being). Within poem XII, however, this vision of Buddhist non-duality leads to a flash of insight very different from the ending of poem II. Where earlier Du Fu had realized that it is the nature of things to be heartless, here he ends the poem with another Buddhist vision of the nature of ultimate reality: that is, as compassionate. As he attains a vision of the indistinguishability of "self" from "other," the wind on the creek seems to be sighing for his sorrows.

The narrative point emphasized in the relationship between poem II and poem XII thus concerns the reasons Du Fu is considering staying in Qinzhou. In poem II, the reasons were negative: there was nothing in the nature of reality that cared enough about human suffering to prevent the Tang from collapsing. By poem XII, by contrast, Qinzhou has begun to seem to the poet a congenial location to settle down. If the Wei River in poem II had made him homesick for the heartland, the spring that flowed from Southwall Temple is now encouraging him to site a dwelling nearby, and to imitate the old tree nourished by its waters.¹⁷

This resolution will not last long, of course: in the next poem, we find him changing his mind and beginning to focus his interest on Eastbough Valley (modern-day Bahuaicun 八槐村, about thirty kilometers to the southeast of Qinzhou), which promised him melons and millet, better than mere sympathy. He will then go on in poem XIV to imagine even more visionary consummations in a hermitage on the famous Daoist site Matepool Mountain 仇池山 (in modern-day Xihe 西河, Daqiaoxiang 大橋鄉, roughly a 150-kilometer journey from Qinzhou), before resolving finally on the attractions of Eastbough Valley in poems XV and XVI. These vacillations certainly do not constitute the sort of dramatic narrative action we are used to as readers of novels, but they do represent, if we read closely enough, the working through of significant ethical dilemmas. Having recently abandoned his lifelong dream of serving in government, Du Fu was now trying to decide how to live out the rest of his life: what religious vision would prove compelling to him, what pleasures various sites might provide, what privations he could bear. Unforeseen complications would intervene as well, with the Tibetans beginning to mobilize against the Tang and threaten the Qinzhou region. With all the complicated ethical and practical questions that come to impinge on the decision over the course of the series, its narrative begins to resemble that of a real human life.

THE "LEAVING QIN PREFECTURE" SERIES

Given the conflicted feelings he evinces throughout the "Twenty Miscellaneous Poems of Qinzhou" series, it comes as little surprise that the resolution Du Fu reached at its end would not last. At the beginning of winter, just three months after he arrived in Qinzhou, Du Fu

17 Much of Du Fu's Qinzhou-era poetry considers different places in the region to site his hermitage. He also considered taking up residence by a spring flowing from the nearby Taiping monastery in modern-day Yulancun 玉蘭村. See Xiao et al., eds., *Du Fu quanji jiaozhu*, p. 1503.

decided that he could not survive there. His nephew seems to have offered little help, and he received an invitation to come live instead at Tonggu, roughly 120 kilometers to the south.¹⁸ Reflecting with sardonic humor that Qinzhou was never a very propitious place for his reclusion anyway, he packed up his family and set out on a rugged overland journey through the desolate mountains and valleys of the far west, recording the stages of his travel in a twelve-poem set, beginning with “Leaving Qinzhou.”¹⁹

The twelve poems of this series are not prosodically regulated in the way “Twenty Miscellaneous Poems of Qinzhou” were. Instead, they are all in old-style verse (古體詩), a form that does not require that the tones of its characters alternate according to a settled pattern, that the poems be a set length, that the middle couplets be structured by parallelism, or that the couplets be interrelated according to a predetermined architecture. Instead, the form is far freer, a fact that makes these poems’ interpretation simultaneously less intensive and ultimately more difficult, especially since Du Fu employs highly compressed, archaic, and often ambiguous language throughout the series, mimicking the style of old poetry from the Han and early Six Dynasties.

Some assistance in interpretation is provided by Du Fu’s habit of writing in four-line blocks, with the major transitions of thought generally occurring between these blocks rather than within them.²⁰ Even more helpful is his consistent practice of echoing a given poem’s beginning near its end. When we identify these echoes, we can often appreciate the narrative that the poem tracks in Du Fu’s thought. Consider, for example, “Cold Gorge,” the fifth poem of the set. In the first couplet, the poet tells us that as he and his family travel on, they grow more depressed and more silent, speaking little to one another. In the penultimate couplet of the poem, however, after they have made a fire beside the waters of the gorge, people who live in the desolate cold nearby see the smoke of their cooking and come to talk with them.²¹ This gesture of human fellowship in adversity finally inspires Du Fu to get over the depres-

18 For Du Fu’s cousin, see Xiao et al., eds., *Du Fu quanji jiaozhu*, pp. 1597-1606. Du Fu had at least one acquaintance in Tonggu, a certain “Case Reviewer Wei (16)” 韋十六評事. Though he says in “Massed-Plant Ridge” that he has never met the person who invited him to come to Tonggu, it was perhaps through the good offices of Mr. Wei that he received this invitation. See *ibid.*, p. 861.

19 As Xiaofei Tian has noted, it is the autocommentarial note to the first poem in the series that instructs us to read these poems as a set, rather than as isolated travel verses. See Tian Xiaofei 田曉菲, “Juewu xushi: Du Fu jixingshi de fojiao jiedu” 覺悟敘事：杜甫紀行詩的佛教解讀, *Shanghai shifan daxue xuebao* 47.1:106-13 (2018) and *idem*, “Feeding the Phoenix: Du Fu’s Qinzhou-Tonggu Series,” in Xiaofei Tian, ed., *Reading Du Fu: Nine Views*, 93-108 (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Univ. Press: 2020).

20 Jin Shengtān 金聖歎 (1608-1661) famously argued that most of Du Fu’s “ancient-style” verse could be analyzed into four-line blocks, and made this observation the basis of his *fenjie* 分解 method. For a discussion, see Ji Hao, “Confronting the Past: Jin Shengtān’s Commentaries on Du Fu’s Poems,” *Ming Studies* 64: 63-95 (2011).

21 Tian has pointed out the contrast between the beginning of this poem and the end; see “Juewu xushi,” p. 109.

sion in which he started the poem, and to cease complaining about the hardships of the road that he had described in its body.

This echo—not speaking, speaking—allows us to trace through the poem a process of thinking and learning, one that will ultimately fit in with the larger narrative of the series as a whole. Du Fu begins the set with a fantasy of Tonggu as a “happy land” (樂土): a place he imagines will be beautiful, warm, rich with food, and distant from “human affairs,” not requiring him to partake in “social niceties” he claims are “far from his nature.” This fantasy is, in part, a continuation of the vacillations of “Twenty Miscellaneous Poems of Qinzhou”: Du Fu is still testing out visions of what is important to him, and of what sort of life he can live now that he has given up on government service. Over the course of the series, however, every element of his initial fantasy comes into question. In “Cold Gorge,” he learns that he does not, in fact, hate social niceties as much as he previously thought, as speaking with people relieves his depression. Just as important, he begins to recognize that paradise for himself alone will not satisfy him, as it turns out that others are suffering just as he is. These reflections are crucial to the overall narrative of the series, which ends with an alternate fantasy, this time of sacrificing himself for the common good of the empire. If he had begun “Leaving Qinzhou” hoping to finally escape not only the troubled Tang dynasty but even the necessity of social interaction in general, by the end he wishes there were some way he could forcefully confirm his commitment to the human community. Over his hard travels, he has learned something important about himself.

This larger narrative is articulated through a complicated motivic structure of images, topics, and echoes that repeat throughout the series. “Cold Gorge,” for example, recapitulates and inverts the imagery of the second poem, “Red Ravine.” There, Du Fu refused to pursue smoke on the horizon that signaled the warmth and social comforts of a distant inn; by enjoying now the way his own fire serves as the source of the smoke to which others are drawn, the transition between the second poem and the fifth foreshadows the larger progression of the series’ narrative as a whole, by which he comes to recognize his concern for other people. The cold of Cold Gorge also recalls to his mind the topic of his family’s too-thin clothes, which he had mentioned in the first poem as one of his reasons for traveling south; by returning to this topic nearly halfway towards Tonggu, Du Fu hints that he is beginning to doubt his fantasy that the place will be a paradise. Finally, the poem ends on the reflection that “In this life, I’ve escaped shouldering a lance, so I don’t dare refuse the hardships of the road.” The first of these lines alludes to a tradition of *yuefu* 樂府 ballads concerning military service on the frontiers, ballads that had been repeatedly invoked in the first two poems. It is not totally clear why speaking with the rustics of Cold Gorge brings Du Fu to the realization that his experience of the western borderlands is not comparable to that of a soldier: most likely, they impress him with tales of their families’ suffering, perhaps in being drafted into military service. Whatever the connection, though, he seems to decide in this final couplet that the imagery of frontier warfare through which he had previously depicted his journey is

less appropriate than another balladic genre invoked in the concluding line, concerning “the hardships of the roads” in the west and southwest.

The remarkable density of these motivic repetitions forces us to read every poem in the series in light of all the others, and to bear in mind what has come before as we make our way forwards. Imagery from frontier *yuefu*, for instance, does not disappear at this point, but appears again dramatically in “Dragongate Fort,” wherein Du Fu encounters soldiers guarding an undermanned border-post threatened by the recent mobilization of the Tibetans. The beginning and end of this poem strikingly echo the final two lines of “Cold Gorge”: in the second couplet, for instance, Du Fu reminds himself that “I don’t refuse this wretched journey,” and in the final lines, he observes men who *do* shoulder lances weeping at night in their far outpost. It is not clear what precisely occasions this weeping (which, given the lack of pronouns, might be his own as well), whether it is the danger of being overrun by the Tibetans or the inability of the soldiers here to help out back in Luoyang, against Shi Siming’s rebels. Perhaps (noting again Du Fu’s virtuosity with double entendres) it is both: this outpost is undermanned in part because of warfare back home, and the war in the east is going poorly in part because the Tang military had frequently to divert its attentions elsewhere, defending the western frontiers against hostile foreign powers and tamping down incipient rebellions throughout the south. What Du Fu starts to recognize here, then, seems to be the interconnection of the frontier and the heartland, a theme that both builds upon and reverses the conclusions of “Cold Gorge.” As he learned in that earlier poem, he cares more than he initially thought about human community; at this point, however, he can no longer pretend that his community is made up entirely of rustics. Even if he does not himself “carry a lance,” visiting Dragongate Fort forces him to recognize that other people do: that in fact he does live within the world described by frontier *yuefu*, a world he had tried to leave behind in Qinzhou. Abandoning that “strategic hub,” therefore, has not finally removed him from the Tang’s troubles, which permeate even the rougher, more remote landscapes of the far west.

It was almost certainly a coincidence that Du Fu happened, at this stage of his journey, to come across a fort that could prompt him to pick up previous themes from the series: if he was writing as he went—generally the assumption when it comes to Chinese *shi*-poetry—he is unlikely to have been able to fully plan out the motivic progression of the set in advance. What seems not to have been coincidental, however, is the fact that these echoes occur in the eighth poem of the sequence, the fifth-from-last, and thus the chiasitic-opposite of “Cold Gorge,” the fifth-from-the-beginning. Throughout the series, Du Fu programs in these sorts of chiasitic correspondences, with pointed echoes of the second poem in the eleventh, the third in the tenth, the fourth in the ninth, and so on. Poems in the series also recall their parallels across the halfway-point division as well. The ninth poem thus echoes the third, the tenth the fourth, and “Mudwork Mountain,” the eleventh, “Cold Gorge”: its depiction of the increasing warmth of Du Fu’s southerly journey engendering new “hardships of the road”

(that is, mud) and leading him to joke about “sending word” (語, recalling the “word” he had with the rustics of Cold Gorge) to others *not* to join him here. Of course, when we take into account the motivic through-lines of the series, it is often possible to find connections between randomly selected poems from the set, especially if we are willing, like Malvolio in *Twelfth Night*, to crush things a little. Yet the correspondences between poems in parallel and chiasmic positions are too pervasive and precise to be mere chance. As he did in “Twenty Miscellaneous Poems of Qinzhou,” Du Fu has built into this series an architectonic structure that helps us track its interweaving narrative threads.

One way to test the existence and the explanatory power of this previously unrecognized structure is to apply it to arguments that have been made about the series by other scholars. In a pair of recent articles, for example, Xiaofei Tian has offered a brilliant reading of the “Leaving Qinzhou” set as a “narrative of enlightenment” of a distinctly Buddhist sort.²² According to her analysis, the sixth poem of the series, “Dharma-Mirror Monastery,” describes a false destination, reminiscent of the parable of the phantom city (化城) in the *Lotus Sutra* (*Saddharma Puṇḍarīka Sūtra*, 妙法蓮華經). In this parable, the guide of a group of weary travelers in the desert conjures an illusory city to temporarily dispel their fatigue and frustration with the hard journey and to convince them to continue on their quest towards a more real consummation.²³ This parable elucidates the Buddha's “skillful means” (*upāya*, 方便) as a teacher, explaining why he initially taught his disciples to pursue the “Hīnayāna” (小乘) goal of saving oneself, instead of starting with the “Mahāyāna” (大乘) goal of saving others. Du Fu began the series with an analogy of the former goal in mind, seeking a paradise where he and his family would be happy even as the empire collapsed. He comes around to something like the “Mahāyāna” ideal, however, in the final poem of the series, wherein we find him willing to sacrifice himself to save the empire by feeding his body to a hungry phoenix-chick—the phoenix being an auger of peace and prosperity for a state—very much the sort of self-sacrifice for others that the Buddha himself performed in tales of his previous incarnations.²⁴ Tian thus shows that over the course of the series, Du Fu matures in much the way the travelers did in the *Lotus Sutra* parable.

Let us test the architectonic structure I propose underlies this series by examining whether it can help us better appreciate these Buddhist themes. As it turns out, Buddhist imagery does not appear pervasively throughout the series. As far as I can tell, in fact, it is only evident in these two poems discussed by Tian and in two others where Tian does not

22 Tian, “Juewu xushi” and “Feeding the Phoenix.”

23 For this parable, see Kumarajiva, trans., *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra* 妙法蓮華經, T.262:25c26-26a12. In English, see Burton Watson, trans., *The Lotus Sutra* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), pp.135-37.

24 Stories of this nature appear in many versions throughout the canon. One instance is in the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa Sūtra* 金光明經, T.663:353c31-356c21. An English translation of this story can be found in R.E. Emmerick, trans. *The Sūtra of Golden Light: Being a Translation of the Suvarṇabhāsottamasūtra*, Sacred Books of the Buddhists, vol. 37 (London: Luzac, 1970), pp. 85-97.

mention Buddhist imagery, but where we know to expect it if we follow the structure of chiasmic and parallel echoes I suggest is characteristic of the set. Poem six and poem twelve are, of course, parallel, each representing the sixth poem of their respective half of the series. The other two poems in the four-poem set described by this structure are the first and the seventh, and both, it turns out, can be read as invoking Buddhist ideals and stories. The seventh poem in the series, for example, describes Du Fu's terror in crossing Springtime Gorge, wherein he sees huge mountains tumbling towards him in rage, hears demons howling in the wind, and fears the axles of the earth will break. These visions echo the famous story, told in several Buddhist texts available to Du Fu and depicted widely in Chinese Buddhist art, of the demon Māra's assault on the Buddha at the moment of his enlightenment.²⁵ Upset that the Buddha was about to escape and lead others out of his reign of illusion, Māra summons armies of demons to terrify him into submission. According to the scene's various depictions in Buddhist sources, these demons make horrific sounds, call down storms, uproot mountains, and throw huge rocks at the Buddha, none of which manage to alarm him. Du Fu in "Springtime Gorge" is, of course, quite alarmed, but he too comes to recognize the illusory character of the threats he perceives there. The poem thus represents a potent inversion of "Dharma-Mirror Monastery" (its chiasmic-opposite), in which the illusions that threaten to turn Du Fu from his path are alluring, rather than terrifying.

Buddhist imagery also appears in the first poem, though more subtly. The poem is more obviously concerned with the model of Confucius, whom Du Fu quotes in both the first and last lines. Reading the poem out of the context of the series, therefore, we would be likely to understand the phrase "happy land" (樂土) in the third line—what Du Fu hopes to find at the end of his journey—as an allusion to the Confucian *Classic of Poetry* (*Shijing* 詩經), wherein it describes a political utopia, a place of good governance and plenty.²⁶ The phrase, however, also had a Buddhist use, referring to paradisiacal Buddha-lands (*buddhakṣetra*) brought into being by and sustained by the power of various Buddhas, such as Amitabha of the far west.²⁷ In this term, therefore, Buddhist and Confucian ideals are conflated—much

25 On the textual level, Du Fu might have known this imagery from the *Buddhacarita* 佛所行讚, T.192:25a15-28c24; for an English translation, Charles Willemen, trans., *Buddhacarita: In Praise of the Buddha's Acts* (Moraga, Calif.: BDK America, 2009), 93-98. He also might have known it from the *Lalitavistara* 方廣大莊嚴經, T.187:593c14-595a2. Considering the popularity of the scene, however, it is perhaps more likely that he knew it from iconography, or from imitations describing the enlightenment moment of various Chinese Buddhist saints. This iconography has been briefly discussed by Ananda W.P. Guruge, "The Buddha's Encounters with Māra, the Tempter: Their Representation in Literature and Art," *Indologica Taurinensia* 17-18:183-208 (1991-1992).

26 See "Shuo shu" 碩鼠 in *Maoshi zhushu* 毛詩注疏, with annotations by Zheng Xuan 鄭玄, Kong Yingda 孔穎達, et al., Chongkan Songben Shisanjing zhushu fu jiaokan ji (Taipei: Yiwen yinshu guan, 1981), 5.211b.

27 The phrase appears in this meaning, for example, in Daoxuan's 道宣 (596-667) preface to the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*, T.262:1c10, as well as in the *Avatamsaka Sūtra* 大方廣佛華嚴經 as translated by Buddhābhadda 佛陀跋陀羅 (359-429), T.278:721a7.

as they are in the final poem as well, where Du Fu imagines sacrificing himself, not to feed a hungry tiger, as the Buddha famously did in a past life, but rather to feed a phoenix, a Confucian auger of good governance that supposedly appeared last at the founding of the Zhou dynasty.

The structural reading of the series that I am proposing, therefore, is both supported by and strengthens Tian's groundbreaking argument that the set represents a "narrative of enlightenment" in a distinctly Buddhist vein. Recognizing the broader scope of the Buddhist pattern, however, also complicates Tian's argument as well. For not only does this Buddhist thematic become intertwined with Confucian imagery, but this intertwining tends to undermine the significance of the "enlightenment" Du Fu comes to at the end of the set. If it is possible to take his ultimate willingness to sacrifice himself as a spiritual advance, that is, the last lines of the final poem also reflect on the uselessness of this sort of (Buddhist) spiritual progress to the (Confucian) governance of the empire, which Du Fu has come to recognize that he cares about in a deep, ineliminable way.

In theory, at least, there is no necessary disconnect between personal enlightenment and governmental efficacy. The heroes of the Buddhist and the Confucian traditions were both known as "sages" (聖) in medieval China, and it was a longstanding doctrine of both traditions that personal integrity could produce miraculous effects in the larger world through a process known as correlative resonance (感應). This, indeed, is the standard explanation of auspicious prodigies like the phoenix that legendarily appeared in response to the virtue of King Wen of Zhou and the unicorn that resonated with the virtue of Confucius (and appears in an allusion in the first poem of this series, mirroring the appearance of the phoenix in the last).²⁸

One of the major programs of significance throughout this series, however, involves the description of progressive divergences between Du Fu's mental preoccupations and the external realities he encounters. The set begins with the fantasy that Tonggu will satisfy him both physically and spiritually, that, as a "happy land," its beauty, warmth, plenty, and remoteness from human society will all be of a piece, fitting together as well as the name of the place's famous Chestnut Pavilion and the (food-providing and beautiful) chestnut trees he expects to find there. As early as the third poem, however, the integrality of his concerns begins to fracture. Although he sees in a place called "Ironhall Gorge" (#3) a "hall the color of iron," fit to be the dwelling of immortals and suggestive of spiritual consummations embedded in the landscape, over the course of the poem, he comes to recognize that his mental preoccupations can pull him out of his physical experience, remembrance of the Rebellion making him feel hot inside despite the harsh cold of the place. And much the same lesson is repeated—albeit to the opposite effect—in the chiasmic counterpart of this poem, "Massed-Plant Ridge"

28 There are many useful summaries of the concept of "correlative resonance." See, for instance, Robert H. Sharf, *Coming to Terms with Chinese Buddhism* (Honolulu: Univ. of Hawai'i Press, 2002), pp. 77-97.

(#10), wherein Du Fu goes from initial disappointment that this invitingly named place in fact merely “masses longstanding cold” to finding, at the end of the poem, that the fervency of his hope can make bracken ferns and a grass-thatched hut in Tonggu (replacements for the missing “massed plants”) appear in imagination “before his eyes.” There is, he is reflecting in these poems, no necessary connection between what goes on in his mind and what goes on in the physical world.

This disconnect between the mental and the physical is also invoked in the final poem of the series as well, which disappoints Du Fu’s fantasy in “Massed-Plant Ridge” that he will find a satisfactory dwelling in Tonggu: as Tian remarks, it is precisely because Tonggu fails to fulfill his hopes that Du Fu does not even mention the place when he gets there, writing instead about an imaginary trip up Phoenix Terrace Mountain, past the town to the southeast.²⁹ But if Chestnut Pavilion has proven barren of chestnuts and Massed-Plant Ridge of plants, both we and Du Fu should be wary at this point of believing that there might be a phoenix chick on the top of Phoenix Terrace Mountain. Taken together, indeed, these reflections on the gaps that can intervene between thought and reality, name and thing—consistent preoccupations of the Buddhist and Confucian traditions respectively—threaten the correlative cosmology that might have linked his spiritual maturation to the fortunes of the empire. As he recognizes in the final couplet, just because he imagines it intensely does not mean it will happen. Placed within the fuller context of the series, therefore, Du Fu’s more “enlightened” fantasy of self-sacrifice is less triumphant than desperate: the projection of a new, more fragile illusion, rather than an escape from illusion altogether.

THE “LEAVING TONGGU COUNTY” SERIES

Read along these lines, the “Leaving Qinzhou” series represents a narrative of Du Fu’s increasing disillusionment with the idea that his narrative project will lead to a satisfying conclusion. Du Fu never even mentions at the end of the series the goal he set for himself at its outset, and he never brings up again the person who supposedly invited him to Tonggu and promised him succor there—a sign, likely, that the promise was empty. After a brief period of near-starvation, therefore—described in another seven-poem set not translated here, “Songs Written While Residing in Tonggu County in the Qianyuan Reign” 乾元中寓居同谷縣作歌七首—Du Fu decided to leave the region, never to return.³⁰ Beginning on the first day of winter’s last month, his family began another journey along the legendarily arduous and spectacular plankways into Shu, arriving around the new year at Chengdu, newly entitled the Tang’s “Southern Capital.” Du Fu chronicled this journey in another set of twelve

29 Tian, “Juewu xushi,” p. 111.

30 See Xiao et al., eds., *Du Fu quanji jiaozhu*, p. 1770.

poems—a number that cannot be a coincidence, as the journey from Tonggu to Chengdu is more than four times as long as the journey from Qinzhou to Tonggu. By writing this second set in the pattern of the first, Du Fu seems to have been turning the narrative failure of the “Leaving Qinzhou” series to a new end. Formally, the “Leaving Tonggu County” series is a near-perfect copy of the “Leaving Qin Prefecture” series. Again, the poems are written in four-line blocks, are isometric and monorhymic, and are structured, for the most part, by narratives articulated through contrasts between their beginnings and endings. The structure of parallel and chiasmic echoes is, moreover, even more pronounced in this set.

Beyond these formal correspondences, moreover, the two series are themselves tied together by a complex program of inter-series echoes. Some of the poems in the “Leaving Tonggu” series recall several of the poems in the previous set; “Treebark Ridge,” for instance, seems to recall almost all of them in a kind of palinodic summary. Others, however, more pointedly recall one particular poem. It is hard to miss, for example, the echoes of “Leaving Qin Prefecture” in “Chengdu Superior Prefecture,” the last poem of these combined series thus bringing to a close the entire cycle by repeatedly invoking the first. As Xiaofei Tian has observed, moreover, each poem in the “Leaving Tonggu” series mirrors in some way its counterpart in the “Leaving Qinzhou” set, with the third poem in the latter recalling the third poem in the former, the fourth the fourth, and so on.³¹ These parallels allow Du Fu as he travels along this new more southerly path to rethink the spiritual and intellectual journey of his previous, problematic journey to Tonggu, and thus to turn what had been an unsatisfying conclusion into the middle of a longer narrative.

For the sake of illustration, consider the relationship between the fifth poems of each series, “Cold Gorge” and “Flying Immortals Plankway.” A clear lexical echo, between “cloud-gate” in the former and “earthgate” in the latter, can be found at the very beginning of these poems; since each of these terms belies the direction that the poem will take therefrom—“Cold Gorge” descending into the earth and “Flying Immortals Plankway” ascending into the clouds—this repetition sets the poems up as antitheses, almost as if they were opposing lines in a parallel couplet of regulated verse. And this dynamic of mirroring antithesis continues as we follow the poems forward. Both poems, for instance, describe how a perilous passage makes Du Fu reconsider his feelings towards community, and both end on images of unexpected communion amidst hardship, with travelers in “Flying Immortals Plankway” lying and sitting together, alternately wearied and terrified by the cliffside path. Yet where Du Fu resolved in “Cold Gorge” to stop complaining about the “hardships of the road,” he ends “Flying Immortals Plankway” with a complaint: that his wife and children should never have dragged him along on this hard journey. If “Cold Gorge” ended with a sincere recognition of others’ suffering, “Flying Immortals Plankway” ends with a joking rejection of community, a

31 See Tian, “Feeding the Phoenix,” p. 108.

claim that Du Fu would rather have starved to death alone than have to face the trials of this passage.

This facetious inversion of “Cold Gorge” is not the only joke in the poem; another can be found in its initial and final allusions to the (itself often humorous) Daoist classic *Zhuangzi* 莊子. In the first couplet, Du Fu describes the plankway on the cliffside as an “autumn hair,” the very beginnings of an animal’s winter coat and thus a byword for infinitesimally small things. According to the *Zhuangzi*, a true sage is capable of “equalizing things” (齊物), recognizing that mountains are tiny and autumn hairs huge.³² In describing the plankway this way, Du Fu thus wittily disclaims for himself this Zhuangzian spiritual attainment: he sees an autumn hair *in* the mountains, but finds he has no ability to perceive the plankway as large enough to support him comfortably on this enormous height. This opening joke is then recalled again near the end of the poem, where Du Fu uses another *Zhuangzi* allusion to give a specious reason why he should not have undertaken this trek. In that text, sages are described as “living as if floating,” the suggestion being that they merely go where life takes them, without swimming against the tide. This, Du Fu suggests, is what he should have done in Tonggu, simply staying there to starve if that was his fate. “Floating,” however, can also refer to traveling through the sky, as Du Fu does in passing over “Flying Immortals Plankway.” Even as he once again fails to actualize the *Zhuangzi*’s vision of the sage, then, he is ironically instantiating it in another, more literalistic way.

“Cold Gorge” and “Flying Immortals Plankway” thus contrast not merely in their imagery but also in their tone, the relatively playful treatment of Du Fu’s sufferings in the latter poem suggesting that he is learning different lessons in this second series. Indeed, where the previous series dwelled upon the repeated failure of the poet’s fantasies, the dynamic we observed in “Flying Immortals Plankway”—by which he unexpectedly fulfils spiritual ideals he had expected himself to fail—is characteristic of the second set as a whole. By the end of the “Leaving Qinzhou” series, Du Fu could only imagine “putting an end to his lifetime’s roaming” in the most macabre sense. Over the course of the “Leaving Tonggu” set, by contrast, he learns that he does not have to put an end to his wandering exile in order to find something like a home for himself.

This point is made most directly in the eighth poem, “Stonebox Plankway,” the intra-series chiasmic opposite of “Flying Immortals Plankway” (#5). Here again Du Fu is thinking about how he is prevented (and again, as some commentators have recognized, by his “encumbrance” with a family)³³ from actualizing a quasi-Daoist ideal, this time the “freedom”

32 For medieval approaches to this passage, see *Nanhua zhenjing zhushu* 南華真經注疏, with annotations by Guo Xiang 郭象, and Cheng Xuanying 成玄英 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1998), 1.43.

33 See, for instance, the comments of Cai Mengbi 蔡夢弼 (fl. 1200) in Lu Yin 魯訔 and Cai Mengbi, annot., *Caotang shi jian* 草堂詩箋 (Taipei: Guangwen shuju, 1964), 18.433.

(自由) of “suiting one’s nature” in reclusion. Yet now he is “glad” to be so encumbered, and willingly “yields” to previous poets like Tao Qian 陶潛 (ca. 372-427) and Xie Lingyun 謝靈運 (385-433) as better exemplars of such reclusive unconstraint. This willing yielding may derive from the fact that Du Fu does seem here, in some limited, ironic sense, to be attaining these goals even as he disclaims them. Just as he had found himself, in “Dragongate Fort,” the inter-series parallel of this poem, living in the sort of frontier ballad he had previously discarded, so too here does he pointedly echo the verse of Tao and Xie in this very poem. And if he claims that his forced travels “betray his reclusive desires,” the “wealth of strange rocks” and the “many early flowers” he sees here at Stonebox Plankway recall the early warmth and “strange rocks” he had originally sought in Tonggu. By giving up on his previous demand for a perfectly satisfying narrative conclusion, that is, he has become capable of finding partial and temporary consolations all along his path.

As if to make this point formally, “Stonebox Plankway” uses the same rhyme as “Leaving Tonggu County.” In both of these travel series, each poem uses a different rhyme, with the exception of the first poem and one other. In the “Leaving Qinzhou” series, the repetition occurs in the final poem, suggesting that in its ending, the series has come full circle. By the time we reach this second series, therefore, we expect that a repetition of the first poem’s rhyme will mark a conclusion, the “end” of Du Fu’s spiritual journey in the set. The repetition in this eighth poem is, therefore, a surprise, but one that is, upon reflection, appropriate to the poem’s thematic content.

In another sense, however, the series’ development does not end with Du Fu’s acceptance of his exile in “Stonebox Plankway.” Like its chiasitic-opposite, “Flying Immortals Plankway” (#5), and its intra-series parallel, “Treebark Ridge” (#2), which imagined the towering mountains near Tonggu growing with the “numinous mushrooms” that grant Daoist immortality, “Stonebox Plankway” is part of a program of Daoist themes commensurate to the Buddhist imagery of the first travel set. And as was the case with that Buddhist imagery, this Daoist program reaches its paradoxical culmination—simultaneously realizing and discarding the spiritual progress Du Fu has made throughout the series—in the final poem. Arriving at Chengdu, Du Fu both finds himself in a Daoist paradise and finds that such a paradise has lost its appeal for him. The place, he recognizes, is a “tiered city”—recalling Tiered City (層城), the name of the city of the immortals in the Kunlun range—and he hears all around him flutes being played—as Daoist immortals legendarily did to summon phoenixes (recalling, not coincidentally, the one that *didn’t* appear in “Phoenix Terrace,” the inter-series parallel of this poem). But he is unmoved. Echoing the exile poetry of Qu Yuan 屈原 (ca. 340-278 BCE) and Wang Can 王粲 (177-217)—the former of whom was speaking of his journeys in the immortal realms, and the latter of the southlands—Chengdu is “truly beautiful,” but not his home.

Du Fu had alluded to Wang Can as well in “Leaving Qin Prefecture,” the first poem of these paired travel series, when he complained that climbing Qinzhou’s towers had not re-

lieved his cares. These paired allusions suggest that in a certain sense, Du Fu has made no progress over the last twenty-four poems: he is still in exile. Yet something has nonetheless changed in the way that he understands that exile. In the “Twenty Miscellaneous Poems of Qinzhou,” and still at the beginning of the “Leaving Qinzhou” set, he had hoped that his exile could be merely spatial: that if he could find the right spot—the right tower to climb—he could find a home away from his hometown, one that would fully satisfy his desires for beauty, for spiritual consummations, for isolation, and for sustenance. All these descriptions work for Chengdu, albeit in a slightly different register: the place is “truly beautiful,” is a vision of the paradise of the immortals, holds for him no friends or family that would require him to participate in the “social niceties” he previously scorned, and is rich and fertile in a way neither Qinzhou nor Tonggu was. At this point, however, two things have changed. First, Du Fu has recognized that his exile goes deeper than mere spatial distance from the central plain. Second, he is more accepting of his estrangement from anything that might resemble a home, and, in a precise reversal of his self-destructive fantasy in “Phoenix Terrace,” resolves in the final lines not to “let the bitter sorrows [of his exile] wound” him. It can hardly be a coincidence that this resolution echoes advice given by the Daoist immortal Peng Zu 彭祖.³⁴

THE TRANSLATIONS

There is, obviously, much more that could be said about these series, whose rich interconnections I have only begun to describe here. To give a full account of all of the textual dynamics I see in these poems would, however, not only require me to go on at tedious length; it would also spoil the fun that I hope the reader will have attempting to puzzle out the hidden architectures of these sets. It is these architectures that I have done my best to preserve and make visible in my translations below. Indeed, it was the discovery of these complex architectures that prompted me to retranslate these poems in the first place, since they are not consistently evident in any of the versions currently available.

Preserving as best as possible the architectures of these series requires certain disciplines of the translator. First of all, it requires the translation of complete sets, something quite rare in the history of these poems’ reception in English or other European languages. Selections from these series have appeared in numerous translations, including those by Edna Worthley Underwood and Chi Hwang Chu, Florence Ayscough, William Hung, Rewi Alley, Wu

34 See *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 (Taipei: Taiwan Shangwu yinshuguan, 1975), 720.3321a. Of course, Du Fu could have been thinking of many other Daoist and related texts that advised not giving oneself over to violent emotion in order to maintain one’s vital force.

Juntao, Sam Hamill, David Hinton, Florence Hu-Sterk, Burton Watson, and David Young.³⁵ To my knowledge, however, the only full renditions of any of these sets to have appeared in a Western language are to be found in the complete translations of Erwin von Zach and Stephen Owen.³⁶ In these latter translations, it is sometimes possible to catch the connections between poems in a given series, especially when those connections are a matter of explicit topic or imagery, and it is undoubtedly a great virtue of both works that they have made the full scope of these and other series available to Western readers. Owen in particular represents far and away the most faithful translation of Du Fu's poetry available in any Western language, and my translations began as modifications of his.³⁷ My debt both to his particular translations of this series and to his general translation style will be immediately apparent to those familiar with his work.

Beyond translating complete sets, however, the project of preserving the architecture of these series requires certain kinds of sacrifices when it comes to producing an acceptable standalone English poem, sacrifices even Owen does not make. Enabling readers to sense connections that are there in the original text means, for instance, keeping invariant the rendering of certain words, even when they appear in contexts that would otherwise recommend differential translation, and even when doing so makes for somewhat awkward and unpoetic English. In some cases, moreover, as in the examples from "Twenty Miscellaneous Poems of Qinzhou" discussed above, it means leaving ambiguities in the Chinese ambiguous in English (as far as possible—the result is often awkward), so as to

35 Edna Worthley Underwood and Chi Hwang Chu, trans., *Tu Fu, Wanderer and Minstrel under Moons of Cathay* (Portland, Maine: Mosher Press, 1929), pp. 45-47, 53-56, 62, 65, 69-70, and 85. Florence Wheelock Ayscough, trans., *Tu Fu, the Autobiography of a Chinese Poet, A.D. 712-770*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1929), vol. 2, p. 28. William Hung, *Tu Fu: China's Greatest Poet* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1952), pp. 146-47, 155, and 158-59. Rewi Alley, trans. *Tu Fu: Selected Poems* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2001), pp. 154-57, 165-75, 186-87. Juntao Wu, trans., *Tu Fu, One Hundred and Fifty Poems* (Xi'an: Shanxi renmin chubanshe, 1985), pp. 110, 140-154. Sam Hamill, trans., *Facing the Snow: Visions of Tu Fu* (Fredonia, N.Y.: White Pine Press, 1988), pp. 8, 12 (under the wrong title), and 62. David Hinton, trans., *The Selected Poems of Tu Fu* (New York: New Directions, 1989), pp. 41-42. Florence Hu-Sterk, *Lapogée de la poésie chinoise: Li Bai et Du Fu* (Paris: You Feng, 2000), pp. 42-43. Burton Watson, trans., *The Selected Poems of Du Fu* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), pp. 53-57, 67-69, 78. David Young, trans., *Du Fu: A Life in Poetry* (New York: Knopf, 2008), pp. 102-4, 113-13, 120-21.

36 Erwin von Zach, trans., *Tu Fu's Gedichte* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952), pp. 172-78, 213-20, 223-31. Stephen Owen, trans., *The Poetry of Du Fu* (Boston: De Gruyter, 2016), vol. 2, pp. 132-148, 232-254, and 264-288.

37 For a useful critical discussion of this massive undertaking, see Nicholas Morrow Williams, "Sashimi and History: On a New Translation of Du Fu by Stephen Owen," *China Review International* 21.3/4 (2014): pp. 201-44.

allow for the sort of reinterpretation that is often necessary to puzzle out the expected echoes between verses.³⁸ Most frustrating for the English reader, finally, will be the necessity of jumping back and forth between the translation of the poems and my relatively copious annotations, which explain (again, as far as possible) the multitudinous allusions that Du Fu makes throughout these series and that often articulate the thought underlying the otherwise puzzling shifts in surface imagery and mood that characterize their many imbricated narratives. Owen explicitly “follow[s] a principle of minimalism in the notes to [his] text, telling the reader [only] what he or she needs to know to make rough sense of the poem,” though he acknowledges that “in many cases, a richer sense of the poem depends on grasping not just the rough sense, but the full weight of allusions.”³⁹ Because many of these series’ interconnections are articulated precisely in such allusions, some of the connective tissue of these series will not be apparent in his translation to readers who do not have them all already in mind.

If I may editorialize for a moment, it seems to me that we as readers of Chinese poetry in translation (and as readers of poetry in general) are too wary of footnotes, and of the allusions that make them necessary. Because eighth-century literati cared about their relationship to generations past and future more than we tend to now, allusions were at the center of their literary art.⁴⁰ Du Fu in particular seems to have been invested in the relationship between his work and the tradition, and he displays throughout his verse an unusually capacious and precise memory for what he has read; hence the old cliché that “every word of Du Fu’s has a source” (無一字無來處).⁴¹ Helping the reader figure out what texts Du Fu might have been thinking of thus requires a significant number of footnotes, closer to the number provided by the massively annotated editions of his work that have circulated in China since the Southern Song. The very prevalence of these editions, it might be noted, gives the lie to the currently common image of premodern Chinese poetry as an art characterized by some combination of striking natural imagery, elegant simplicity, and emotional suggestiveness, rather than by the sort of complex intellectual challenges presented by these sets. It is true, of course, that

38 It might be noted that this practice is often important in translating Du Fu, as he is undoubtedly the foremost master of pointed equivocation and double entendre in Chinese poetic history.

39 Owen, trans., *The Poetry of Du Fu*, p. lxxx.

40 For discussions of the significance of allusions in Tang poetry and in Du Fu specifically, see David Lattimore, *Textual Allusion and T’ang Poetry*, ACLS Conference on T’ang Studies (Cambridge, U.K., Cambridge Univ., 1969); Eva Shan Chou, “Tu Fu’s Eight Laments: Allusion and Imagery as Modes of Poetry” (PhD diss., Harvard Univ., 1984); and Idem, “Allusion and Periphrasis as Modes of Poetry in Tu Fu’s ‘Eight Laments,’” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 45.1:77-128 (1985).

41 For the source of this cliché, see Huang Tingjian 黃庭堅, *Huang Tingjian quanji* 黃庭堅全集, ed. Liu Lin 劉琳 et al. (Chengdu: Sichuan daxue chubanshe, 2001), 18.473.

Du Fu is doing something unprecedented here, and that a good translation of these poems will therefore differ in approach from one that would do better justice to Tang poetry—even Du Fu's poetry—of a very different kind. But structures of roughly this sort were a part of premodern Chinese poetry elsewhere as well.

In what follows, therefore, I have worked to provide a translation that, whatever its lack of immediate appeal as a standalone English text, gives readers at least a shot at tapping some of the subterranean veins of these series, and thus of appreciating their intellectual complexities. Of course, significant limitations attend this ambition. I have, for instance, been selective when it comes to the allusions I note: I provide annotations, that is, only when I have been able to link them to the program of the poem and the sequence at large. And I have not managed to produce a strictly "literal" translation—something that is hardly possible when translating from literary Chinese in general and that Du Fu, the greatest poet of ambiguity in the language, makes doubly difficult. Even in the very first line of poetry below—"All I could see was grief at my prospects" 滿目悲生事—it will be clear that my translations are interpretations, representing what I take Du Fu to be trying to communicate rather than what his words say, one by one. The major problem here lies in the final two characters, *sheng* 生 and *shi* 事, "life" and "affairs," which can also be read as a binomial compound, *shengshi* 生事, meaning either "the affairs needed to keep me alive" (i.e., my "livelihood") or, in a sense attested unequivocally only somewhat later, "the affairs of my lifetime" (i.e., the state of the world). Both of these binomial senses are probably in play here, and I have tried to finesse the distinction in my translation. Since Du Fu's "prospects" as an official were inextricably bound up with the state, its fortunes were to some degree his own; the sense of "livelihood," however, better explains why Du Fu has to, in the next line, "rely upon others" to make his long journey, or alternately, why he makes it "on account of others" (his family, that is, which depended on him for their livelihood). I have also made other interpretive decisions here, choosing (for instance) "All I could see" over Owen's more literal "Filling my eyes" because the former more transparently communicates why Du Fu feels he has to leave the heartland: that he sees no alternative. This rather subtle point of phrasing is intended to introduce the reluctance and regret that will throughout the series characterize his retrospective account of his decision to come to Qinzhou.

The translations below are thus the product of counterbalanced impulses: first, to preserve the architectures of the series even at the cost of transparent and felicitous English; and second, to represent as clearly as possible what I understand Du Fu to have been trying to communicate. It is worth pointing out that both of these impulses—alongside my attempts to preserve repetitions and ambiguities—entail that where I have myself missed what Du Fu was trying to say, missed an allusion, or missed a connection between the poems of these series, it is unlikely to be available to the English reader. In this sense, this translation is an act of criticism more than of art, and one that hopes eventually to be superseded by another that

is more elegant where it can be, but elsewhere may have even more copious annotations and potentially even more awkward and ambiguous language.

Scholars interested in using these translations as a springboard for in-depth explorations of these series should begin with the new critical edition of Du Fu's works published in 2013 under the general editorship of Xiao Difei 蕭滌非.⁴² This work should be consulted for its collation of early editions of Du Fu's collection; Owen's notes should also be consulted, since they include variants from *Wenyuan yinghua* 文苑英華 and a few other early sources that Xiao's collation inexplicably leaves out. Xiao's edition also provides most of the allusions I translate in the footnotes, alongside brief discussions of commentarial debates about these poems and reconstructions of the locations Du Fu discusses in them.⁴³ The availability of this material obviates the need to provide variants, debate cruxes, or source allusions here; I do at least provide the Chinese for most allusions, so that they can be easily found in the relevant digital databases. Annotations and discussions of these series also make up the bulk of Gao Tianyou 高天佑, *Du Fu Long-Shu jixing shi zhuxi* 杜甫陇蜀纪行诗注析,⁴⁴ and interested readers should additionally consult the annotations by Li Jizu 李济阻 et al. and Liu Yanxiang 刘雁翔—noting, however, that their volumes consider only the first few poems of the “Leaving Tonggu County” series, before the poet arrives within the boundaries of Sichuan.⁴⁵ The most useful extended discussion of the “Leaving Qin Prefecture” and “Leaving Tonggu County” sequences is Huang Yizhen's 黄奕珍 *Du Fu zi Qin ru Shu shige xiping* 杜甫自秦入蜀诗歌析评.

In my translations, I have primarily followed the readings of the so-called *Songben Du Gongbu ji* 宋本杜工部集 edition of Du Fu's work, mostly put together in the seventeenth century under the auspices of Mao Yi 毛扆 (ca. 1640-1713), son of the famous book collector Mao Jin 毛晉 (1599-1659). Scholars now generally accept the *Songben* as the most valuable surviving early edition of Du Fu's poetry—it serves, for instance, as the base text for Xiao Difei's critical edition—but it is important to note that it remains a complicated and disputed text.⁴⁶ Although some of its leaves are unmistakably early, others have a more uncertain

42 Xiao et al., eds., *Du Fu quanji jiaozhu*.

43 For locations near Tonggu, see also Jian Jinsong 简锦松, “Du Fu Tonggu shi xiandi yanjiu” 杜甫同谷诗现地研究, *TaiDa wen-shi-zhe xuebao* 台大文史哲学报 84 (2016): 53-96. Scholars with access may also consult Zhao Guozheng 赵国正 and Zhang Jiongzhi 张炯之, *Du Fu Tonggu shi bian* 杜甫同谷诗编 (Lanzhou: Lanzhou ribao yinshuachang, 1998), though I have been unable to consult this volume.

44 Gao Tianyou, *Du Fu Long-Shu jixing shi zhuxi* (Lanzhou: Gansu renmin chubanshe, 2002).

45 Li Jizu 李济阻, Wang Dequan 王德全, and Liu Bingzhen 刘秉臣, annot., *Du Fu Longyou shi zhuxi* 杜甫隴右诗注析 (Lanzhou: Gansu renmin chubanshe, 1985). Liu Yanxiang 刘雁翔, *Du Fu Qinzhou shi biejie* 杜甫秦州诗别解 (Lanzhou: Gansu jiaoyu chubanshe, 2012).

46 For a recent discussion of scholarship on this still-debated edition, see Hasebe Tsuyoshi 長谷部剛, *To Ho shibunshū no keisei ni kansuru bunkengaku no kenkyū* 杜甫詩文集の形成に関する文献学的研究 (Suita: Kansai Daigaku Shuppanbu, 2019), 183-213.

provenance—including, unfortunately, those that preserve the series to be discussed here.⁴⁷ I continue to think, like most scholars in the field, that this edition remains the “best” we have in terms of preserving early readings, and for this reason, I have endeavored in almost all cases, beyond changing a few nonstandard graphs (仰 to 仰, for example, in “Twenty Miscellaneous Poems” XII), to present the Chinese as close as the standard set of Unicode characters can get to the *Songben* reading. In a number of instances, however, the architectures I have discovered in these series provide reason for accepting variant readings from among those preserved in the *Songben* itself or in some of the other early editions collated by Xiao and Owen.

Consider, for example, poem XI of the “Twenty Miscellaneous Poems of Qinzhou.” In the *Songben* edition, the last couplet contains two variants, which change the sense from “I never expected this bookworm’s ears [耳] / in my decline would grow tired [厭] of war-drums” to “...this bookworms’ eyes [眼] ... would see [見] war-drums.” In the absence of parallels between this poem and the first of the series, the standard reading, “ears / grow tired,” would

47 The *Songben* edition is made up of what seem to be three different texts, in both printed and hand-made-facsimile (影鈔) forms. Denoting the two main texts with an uppercase “A” and “B,” printed versions with a lowercase “a,” and facsimile versions with a lowercase “b,” William Hung divides the *Songben* into four principal sections: Aa, Ab, Ba, and Bb. (See William Hung, “Tu Fu Again,” *Tsing Hua Journal of Chinese Studies* 10.2:1-60 [July 1974]. Although the notation is Hung’s, he is largely summarizing the views of Zhang Yuanji 張元濟 [1867-1959], who put the edition together, and whose colophon [跋] is printed with it. Note also that since the surviving copy of Mao Yi’s text lacks 7 leaves, it has been supplemented in the Shanghai Library photolithic reprint by another edition, of some indeterminate relation to Mao Yi’s, copied by Qian Zeng 錢曾 [1629-1701] and currently housed in the Beijing Library. Hung calls these leaves “c” texts, but they will not concern us here.) According to the general weight of contemporary opinion, Aa leaves represent an early Southern-Song (probably Shaoxing period 紹興, 1131-1162) reprint of Wang Qi’s initial 1059 printing of Du Fu’s complete collection, upon which all surviving editions are ultimately based. (For a discussion of this ancestor edition, see Zhang Zhonggang 張忠綱, Zhao Ruicai 趙睿才, Qi Wei 綦維, and Sun Wei 孫微, eds., *Du ji xulu* 杜集叙錄 [Jinan: Qi-Lu shushe, 2008], p. 14.) These Aa leaves are thus the most reliable early texts of any of Du Fu’s poetry that we have (though for an argument that this Shaoxing period edition might not have preserved the original form of the Wang Qi edition, see Andō Shunroku 安東俊六, To Ho kenkyū 杜甫研究 [Tokyo: Kazama Shobō, 1996], 16-32), predating the second-earliest surviving edition, a 1225 printing of Guo Zhida’s 郭知達 heavily annotated *Jiujia jizhu Du shi* 九家集注杜詩, by somewhere between 94 and 63 years (see Guo Zhida 郭知達, *Xinkan jiaoding jizhu Du shi* 新刊校定集注杜詩 [Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1982]). The Ba texts are less certain, but seem also to represent an early Southern-Song edition, perhaps the Wu Ruo 吳若 collation of 1133, or a related text based upon it. The “b” texts of both of these editions—which make up the majority of the pages—derive from a facsimile copy that Mao Jin had made from Song-dynasty editions unknown to us; Mao Yi claims that important features of Mao Jin’s facsimile texts proved that they were, in fact, the same Song-dynasty print editions of which he had managed to procure fragments in the Aa and Ba sections. Unfortunately, none of these series are found on Aa leaves. The “Twenty Miscellaneous Poems of Qinzhou” derive from Ba—the questionably Wu Ruo-like print edition—and the “Leaving Qinzhou” and “Leaving Tonggu” series are found in Ab—the facsimile, supposedly, of the Southern-Song Wang Qi reprint.

seem preferable, since the sound of war-drums would have been more inescapable than their sight. As we have already observed, however, that first poem begins on an apparently visual note whose strangeness may match the end of poem XI—“*All I could see* [滿目] was grief at my prospects”—and both poems, it turns out, revolve around the relationship between Du Fu’s immediate experience and what he has read about in books. I would suggest, therefore, that what has happened here is the following: the original reading was probably a combination of *ears* 耳 and *see* 見, following the common Tang usage by which the verb “see” (見) can also have the meaning of “hear”—but with a distinct sense of immediacy to it. The variant of *eyes* for *ears* appears only in the *Songben* edition and nowhere else; given that the text of this series derives there from what is probably a somewhat late and otherwise lost stemma (though it is still the earliest we possess for these poems), it is possible that *eyes* represents an attempt to square what had come to seem an incongruous mixing of the senses. *Grow tired of* (獸 *jiemH*, which in certain dialects might have sounded quite close to 見 *kenH*) could also represent such a “correction” on the part of a later reader, a correction that went on to become the standard reading in all subsequent editions, most of which nonetheless preserved the variant *see*.

More dramatically, the architectures of these series can also help to solve a puzzle that has otherwise remained intractable for almost a millennium. The puzzle in question concerns the poem “Swordgate” (#10) in the “Leaving Tonggu” series, which in all surviving editions contains an odd number of couplets, thus violating the pattern common to all of the other poems in these journey narratives. To solve this problem, commentators have often supplied an extra couplet from an apparently late manuscript we have no reason to trust.⁴⁸ Once we appreciate the structure of the series, however, it becomes unlikely that the text has lost a couplet, and much more likely that a spurious couplet has been added. As was initially pointed out to me by Sinclair Im, a student in my Du Fu seminar who set out to make a visual representation of the architectures I have discussed here, the “Leaving Qinzhou” series has precisely the same number of couplets (52) in its first six poems as it does in its second six, despite the fact that each poem in the series has what looks initially like a random number of lines—a sign of the care that Du Fu has taken in creating a mirroring structure between the first and second halves of the set. The “Leaving Tonggu” series is close: there are 56 couplets in poems #1 through #6, and 57 couplets in poems #7 through #12. Obviously, an

48 Qiu Zhao’ao 仇兆鰲 (1638-1717) claimed to have once seen a hand-copied manuscript that contained the lines, “The streams and mountains here store up brilliant essences; it is a heavenly storehouse giving rise to hidden treasures” 川嶽儲精英，天府興寶藏. See Qiu Zhao’ao 仇兆鰲, *Du shi xiangzhu* 杜詩詳注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979), 9.720. Qiu’s couplet was accepted by a number of later editions. Citations from a number of critics discussing this issue can be found at Xiao et al., eds., *Du Fu quanji jiaozhu*, vol. 4, pp. 1883-84.

extra couplet has been snuck into the text, spoiling what would have been the perfect parallelism between the two halves that would thus have mirrored the "Leaving Qinzhou" set.

The question is, which couplet in "Swordgate" should be deleted? Here, unfortunately, we are on less firm ground, especially since there are no obvious mistakes in rhyme to signal an improper insertion. As the seventeenth-century poet-critic Li Yindu 李因篤 (1631-1692) pointed out, however, there is one couplet that "does not fit either with what comes before or after it" 俱與上下不屬.⁴⁹ The same point has also been made tacitly by critics who accept the supplemental addition, as they have placed the speculative extra couplet before the couplet to which Li Yindu takes exception. Pu Qilong 浦起龍 (1679-1762), for instance, justifies the insertion by saying that "Du Fu's poems usually switch directions every four lines, so this section is lacking two lines" 杜詩多四句轉意，此段獨闕兩句.⁵⁰ The trouble with the couplet in question—which reads, "Yet pearls and jade speed to the Central Plain, / and the auras of Min and Emei turn gloomy" 珠玉走中原，岷峨氣悽愴—is that its import is diametrically opposed to the couplet that precedes it and the four-line section that follows, both of which criticize Sichuan's recalcitrance against the imperial authority of the Central Plain. I would suggest, therefore, that the couplet was inserted at some point by a Sichuanese partisan who wanted to justify the region's occasional rebelliousness by blaming it on the rapaciousness of the northern government. Deleting this couplet, as I have done in the translation below, makes the poem's logic much more transparent.

Here, then, are my annotated translations of Du Fu's narrative poetic series from his exile on the western frontiers.

秦州雜詩二十首 Twenty Miscellaneous Poems of Qinzhou

I.

4	滿目悲生事 因人作遠遊 遲迴度隴怯 浩蕩及關愁 水落魚龍夜	All I could see was grief at my prospects, so on account of others, I made a long journey. ⁵¹ We hesitated, afraid to cross the Long Mountains; flooding over, sorrow on reaching the frontier. ⁵² Waters fall in the Fish-Dragon night;
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49 See Liu Jun 劉濬, comp., *Du shi ji ping* 杜詩集評, *Du shi congkan* 杜詩叢刊 edition (Taipei: Datong shuju, 1973), *juan* 2; Xiao et al., eds., *Du Fu quanji jiaozhu*, vol. 4, 1883.

50 Pu Qilong 浦起龍, *Du Du xinjie* 讀杜心解, 2 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1961), 1.1.87.

51 It is not clear what "others" Du Fu is referring to here. I suspect he is speaking of his family, and his desire to protect them from the Rebellion. It is also possible he may be thinking of a nephew in Qinzhou upon whom he hoped to rely.

52 According to longstanding poetic convention, soldiers on campaign in the western regions would grieve when crossing the Long Mountains, through what is today called the Liupan range 六盤山. What is translated here as "reaching the frontier" could also be "reaching Dazhen Pass" 大震關.

- 山空鳥鼠秋 the mountains are empty in Bird-Rat's autumn.⁵³
 西征問烽火 Marching west, I ask about beacon fires;
 8 心折此淹留 my heart shatters to be stuck here.⁵⁴

II.

- 秦州城北寺 The monastery north of Qinzhou's walls,⁵⁵
 傳是隗囂宮 they say, was Wei Xiao's palace.⁵⁶
 苔蘚山門古 Lichen and moss on its mountain gate ancient;
 4 丹青野殿空 polychrome paintings in ruined halls empty.⁵⁷
 月明垂葉露 The moon glows in dew hanging from the leaves;
 雲逐渡溪風 clouds chase the wind crossing the stream.⁵⁸
 清渭無情極 The clear Wei, though, is totally unfeeling:
 8 愁時獨向東 in the time of my sorrow, it heads east alone.⁵⁹

53 Fish-Dragon Stream is an old name for what is now called the Qianhe 千河; according to the sixth-century *Shuijingzhu* 水經註, rainbow-colored fish were reputed to live in the stream, and were thought to be a variety of dragon. The "Bird-Rat Mountains" is another old name, supposedly of a place so foreign from the central lands that birds and rats mated together there. Du Fu's path to Qinzhou would have followed Fish-Dragon Stream for a substantial distance after passing through the administrative seat of Longzhou, in modern-day Long county 隴縣; the Bird-Rat Mountains were about 200 km west of Qinzhou.

54 Much of the historical and biographical background of this poem is unclear. Some commentators think that Du Fu was originally planning to travel further, but was stopped here in Qinzhou by news ("beacon fires") of fighting with the Tibetans, who had begun to take advantage of the Tang armies' focus on the rebels in the east to chip away at its control of the Hexi corridor, a narrow defile that stretched from the west of the capital into Central Asia, and served as China's connection to the Silk Road. The area would fall in its entirety to the Tibetans within four years.

55 This line refers to Chongning Temple 崇寧寺. The *Songben* edition reads "mountains" 山 for "walls" 城 in the first line, with a variant 城. I read "walls" to avoid a repetition of the same character in the third position of the first two couplets, which would have been considered a fault and could explain the introduction of variant 山. The temple in question was, however, both north of the walls and in the northern mountains, and both variants work in parallel with the opening couplet of poem XII.

56 Wei Xiao (first c. CE) took control of the region west of Long during the Wang Mang 王莽 rebellion against the Han dynasty. The region was brought back under Han control after his death.

57 "Empty" (空, skt. *śūnya*) was a term of art in Buddhist philosophy, denoting the lack of own-being that characterizes all phenomena, rendering them as illusory as paintings.

58 The moon's reflection in various bodies of water was a common Buddhist figure for both the illusoriness of phenomena and the presence within all illusory phenomena of ultimate reality.

59 "Unfeeling" is an ambivalent word in this context. On the one hand, to be "without passion" was a Buddhist ideal that thus picks up the imagery of the middle couplets. On the other hand, however, "without feeling" is a common reproach, serving here to denote the Wei River's cruelty in not taking Du Fu with it, away from this place. The Wei, which had its source at Bird-Rat Mountain and flowed past Qinzhou, flowed east back towards the capital region and Du Fu's hometown.

III.

- 州圖領同谷 By the province map, it administers Tonggu;
 驛道出流沙 its post-roads go out to Flowing Sands.⁶⁰
 降虜兼千帳 Surrendered caitiffs, together a thousand tents;
 4 居人有萬家 of settled folk there are ten-thousand households.⁶¹
 馬驕珠汗落 From proud horses pearls of sweat fall;
 胡舞白題斜 on dancing barbarians, white foreheads tilt.⁶²
 年少臨洮子 The young men, the boys of Lintao,
 8 西來亦自誇 even boast about coming from the west.⁶³

IV.

- 鼓角緣邊郡 Drums and horns surround this frontier region
 川原欲夜時 as night falls on its river-plains.⁶⁴
 秋聽殷地發 Heard in autumn, they come shaking the earth;
 4 風散入雲悲 then scattered on the winds, grieving they enter the clouds.
 抱葉寒蟬靜 Cold cicadas still, clasping their leaves;
 歸山獨鳥遲 a lone bird is late returning to the hills.⁶⁵
 萬方聲一槩 Everywhere the sounds are all the same.⁶⁶

60 "It" is Qinzhou, the administrative center of the region. Tonggu is modern-day Cheng county 成县, about 100km south of Qinzhou. "Flowing Sands" is an ancient name for the Gobi desert.

61 This couplet could also be understood as enjambed—that is, as employing "flowing water parallelism" (流水對)—in which case we would read, "a thousand tents *house* ten-thousand families."

62 This is a troublesome line. There is no consensus on the meaning of the phrase "white foreheads" 白題, which seems to come from a passage in the *Shiji* 史記. Some commentators think that certain western groups smeared their foreheads with white ash or white paint; others think it refers to a white hat; others think it is a white flag used in military dances. There seems to be no way to be sure. "Barbarians" is a somewhat exaggerated translation of *hu* 胡, a non-specific ethnonym for several groups of non-Han peoples, mostly coming from China's west.

63 Lintao, modern-day Lintan 臨潭, was about 300 km to the west of Qinzhou, out even further past Bird-Rat Mountain, beyond the borders of the Chinese state.

64 The drums and bugles are military music, a sign of Tang armies stationed in and moving through the region.

65 "Returning to the hills" was an oft-used expression for going into reclusion, so Du Fu may see here an image of himself, making his escape from the empire but rather "late" in his life. The difference between the lodging of the cicadas—autumn leaves about to fall—and the more stable home of the bird in the mountains may suggest a reflection upon the current instability of the state.

66 In this line, the *Songben* edition gives a variant: "For ten-thousand years" 萬年 for "Everywhere" 萬方. Both readings make good sense in the context of the poem. Since poem XIV considers a Daoist site where one might practice a ten-thousand year lifespan apart from a society that has been at war "for ten-thousand years," the variant is appealing. I have provisionally taken the *Songben* reading, however, because of the likelihood that both poems are discussing, in different ways, the relationship of the frontier to the heartland.

- 8 吾道竟何之 where, in the end, can my way take me?⁶⁷

V.

- 南使宜天馬 Southern Commissioners found Qinzhou fit for heaven-horses,
 由來萬匹強 so they've always been here ten-thousand strong.⁶⁸
 浮雲連陣沒 Drifting clouds, line after line swallowed up;
 4 秋草徧山長 autumn plants now grow tall throughout the hills.⁶⁹
 聞說真龍種 Yet I've heard that of the true dragon-breed
 仍殘老驢驢 there still remains one old Sushuang.⁷⁰
 哀鳴思戰鬪 It neighs sadly, yearning for battle,
 8 迥立向蒼蒼 and stands out tall, facing gray-blue skies.

VI.

- 城上胡笳奏 Atop the walls a barbarian fife is played;
 山邊漢節歸 beside the mountains Han standards return.⁷¹
 防河赴滄海 Defending the Yellow River, they go to the sea;
 4 奉詔發金微 receiving the edict, they set out from Jinwei.⁷²
 士苦形骸黑 The soldiers have suffered, their skeletons blackened;
 旌疎鳥獸稀 banners grown sparse, their birds and beasts few.⁷³

67 "My way" recalls Confucius' lament at the capture of the unicorn, when he knew there was no hope he would succeed in bringing peace to the world: "Alas! my way is at an end" 吾道窮矣. The idea that Du Fu might follow a "way" (*dao*), however, will be echoed in the specifically Daoist reclusion he imagines in poem XIV.

68 The "Southern Commissioners" (more properly, "Commissioners for the Southern Pasturages") were in charge of finding and appraising horse pasturages in the southern part of north China. "Heaven-horses" were highly prized horses from the Fergana Valley.

69 The parallelism in this couplet is striking. "Line after line" can be read both as "successive battle lines"—referring to the horses figuratively as "drifting clouds" wiped out in the empire's recent battles—and as "successive thunderheads"—referring to the rainclouds that have let the plants grow so tall in the absence of the horses that once ate them. The rain reading might be preferable given the parallel with the second couplet of poem XV.

70 Although Sushuang clearly means "a fine horse," its precise freight is not clear. The term is used in the textual record to refer both to a type of horse and to a type of dragon. Truly excellent horses were often discussed as being descended from dragon-stock.

71 Once again, "barbarian" translates *hu* 胡. The *hu* (that is, the so-called Xiongnu 匈奴) were the main strategic rivals of the Han dynasty.

72 Commentators disagree on exactly what is being described in this couplet. As I have translated it here, the couplet describes troops from garrisons further west (at Jinwei, the Altai Mountain range) being requisitioned to fight in the east against the rebels (in the lower reaches of the Yellow River, the Chinese heartland). It is also possible that troops are going in two directions, both east against the rebels and west against the Tibetans at Jinwei. In that case, the second line would read, "they set out for Jinwei."

73 The "birds and beasts" here are figures on the military banners; they are "few" now because so many of the troops have died.

- 8 郝聞往來戍 Who has heard of such campaigning back and forth?
恨解鄴城圍 I hate that they broke the siege at Ye.⁷⁴

VII.

- 莽莽萬重山 Endless, the myriad-layered mountains—
孤城山谷間 lonely walls amidst the mountain valleys.
無風雲出塞 Without wind, clouds emerge from the passes;
4 不夜月臨關 though not night, the moon overlooks the frontier.⁷⁵
屬國歸何晚 How late returns the Dependent Countries;
樓蘭斬未還 still unrepeatd, the beheading of Loulan.⁷⁶
煙塵獨長望 Alone I gaze afar, towards the smoke and dust;
8 衰颯正摧顏 weak and wasted, I've really wrecked my looks.⁷⁷

VIII.

- 聞道尋源使 I hear the envoy seeking the River's source
從天此路迴 came back from heaven along this route.⁷⁸
牽牛去幾許 From the Oxherd, then, how far can we be?
4 宛馬至今來 Fergana horses arrive here to this day.⁷⁹
一望幽燕隔 I gaze out towards You-Yan, cut-off:

- 74 In the winter of 758 and early spring of 759, the Tang armies had the rebels surrounded in their base at Ye, in the far northeast. The rebels were able to break the siege and advanced rapidly back upon the heartland, capturing Luoyang in the autumn of 759. This reversal may have been partly responsible for Du Fu's flight to Qinzhou.
- 75 "Moon over Frontier Mountains" 關山月 was the title of a traditional *yuefu* (ballad) tune, which may start Du Fu thinking about the Han precedents of the next couplet.
- 76 These lines refer to two stories from Han-dynasty history. The "Dependent Countries" refers to Su Wu 蘇武 (second c. BCE), a Han-dynasty ambassador appointed "Supervisor of Dependent Countries" 典屬國 when he was finally released from a long captivity among the Xiongnu. Loulan refers to the king of Loulan, ruler of the Shanshan people of modern-day Xinjiang, who was assassinated by Fu Jiezi 傅介子 (first c. BCE) after breaking his treaties with the Han. Nearly all commentators take these lines to be references to a Tang emissary sent to the Tibetans. But given the fact that Du Fu has not yet introduced this emissary (he will arrive from the east in poem IX and head west in poem X), it is more likely that he is referring to himself here: he is like an unreturned Su Wu, and does not have the accomplishments of a Fu Jiezi.
- 77 "The smoke and dust" is the warfare back in the east. The worries occasioned by all this violence have prematurely aged the poet.
- 78 The "envoy" is Zhang Qian 張騫 (second c. BCE), who first explored Central Asia and played a role in establishing Han dominance in the region now known as Xinjiang. Since other legends had the source of the Yellow River in heaven, Zhang Qian was sometimes said to have gone to heaven in his westward explorations.
- 79 As mentioned in poem V, horses from the Fergana Valley region were commonly known as "heaven-horses" 天馬, thus making them an apt parallel for the Oxherd star.

- 何時郡國開 when will those provinces be reconnected?⁸⁰
 東征健兒盡 Marched off east, our halest troops are gone;
 8 羌笛暮吹哀 a Tibetan flute blows sadly at dusk.⁸¹
- IX.
- 今日明人眼 Today what lights up my eyes
 臨池好驛亭 is the fine post-station pavilion on a pool.⁸²
 叢篁低地碧 Clusters of bamboo in the lowlands, emerald;
 4 高柳半天青 towering willows, half the sky green.
 稠疊多幽事 In this thick growth, there's much secluded beauty;
 喧呼閱使星 but noisy shouting at the sight of envoy stars.⁸³
 老夫如有此 If this old fellow could get the place,
 8 不異在郊垌 it would be no different than living in the suburbs!⁸⁴
- X.
- 雲氣接崑崙 Cloudy vapors reach the Kunlun Mountains;
 涇涇塞雨繁 unceasing come the frontier rains.⁸⁵
 羌童看渭水 A Tibetan boy watches the Wei's waters,

-
- 80 You and Yan were historical names for the base area of the rebels, in the far northeast. The precision of Du Fu's parallelism here is worth noting, since You 幽 was historically a commandery 郡 and Yan 燕 a kingdom 國.
- 81 This flute-playing recalls the "Rhapsody on Recalling Old Friends" 思舊賦 by Xiang Xiu 向秀 (227?-272). In this piece, Xiang hears the sound of a flute and is reminded of dead friends. Du Fu may also be thinking here of the "Rhapsody on the Long Flute" 長笛賦 by Ma Rong 馬融 (79-166), which suggests that the flute (笛) derived originally from Tibet.
- 82 It is not clear exactly where this post-station is; Gao Tianyou hypothesizes that it is the post-station overlooking Tianshui lake 天水湖, about seven kilometers southwest of modern-day Tianshui. Li Yanxiang agrees, and further identifies it as the Red Valley post-station.
- 83 "Envoy stars" comes from a story in the *History of the Latter Han* 後漢書, wherein two envoys sent out by Emperor He 漢和帝 (r. 88-105) to collect poems among the populace stopped for the night at a waystation run by Li He 李郃. Looking at the night sky, Li observed two stars crossing out of the region associated with the capital and into the region of Yi, whither the envoys were headed. Li thus knew, although these envoys were traveling incognito, that they had been sent by the emperor. The contemporary referent would seem—from the parallel with poem XIX, where the mission fails—to be an emissary to the Tibetans.
- 84 The phrase translated as "suburbs" 郊垌 is ambiguous: it could also mean the distant wilds. I understand Du Fu to be saying that the ceremonial hubbub occasioned by the emissary's arrival at this post-station pavilion reminds him of the suburban areas near the capital, where one could pursue secluded "reclusion" but still partake of human society.
- 85 The Kunlun Mountains are the legendary home of the immortals, in the far west.

- 4 使客向河源 while the envoy heads towards the River's source.⁸⁶
 煙火軍中幕 Smoky fires—the tents of the army;
 牛羊嶺上村 oxen and sheep—a village on the ridge.⁸⁷
 所居秋草淨 By my dwelling the autumn plants are clean,
 8 正開小蓬門 and now I'll close my small brushwood gate.⁸⁸

XI.

- 蕭蕭古塞冷 Winds whistle through ancient passes cold;
 漠漠秋雲低 thick and dark, the autumn clouds low.
 黃鵠翅垂雨 A brown goose, droop-winged with rain;
 4 蒼鷹飢啄泥 a gray hawk pecks starving at the mud.⁸⁹
 薊門誰自北 Who now will head north from Ji Gate?
 漢將獨征西 Han generals only had to march to the west.⁹⁰
 不意書生耳 But I never expected this bookworm's ears
 8 臨衰見鼓鞞 in my decline would hear their war-drums.⁹¹

86 This line recalls the legend of Zhang Qian, discussed in poem VIII. The “source of the Yellow River” could thus be a generic reference for traveling west, or it could refer to going to the Heyuan army, a military group in the northwest. Some commentators have read the Tibetan boy's interest in the eastward flow of the Wei's waters as menacing, especially given that they are likely rising with all the rain, and thus threatening to flood the heartland.

87 These lines represent inferences: Du Fu can neither see the tents nor the village given the heavy rain, but he knows their presence from the smoke and the animals.

88 “Closing one's gate” was a conventional sign of reclusion. The plants are “clean” or “pure” thanks to the rain. In the paradises of the Kunlun Mountains, the plants would have been similarly “pure.”

89 This poem breaks dramatically with conventional depictions of the frontier (of the sort, not coincidentally, Du Fu recalls in poem I of the series). In nearly all Tang poetry about the western regions, it was a desert: rains came only in suddenness and violence. Hawks too were thought to feast in autumn, the season wherein nature did its killing; and geese in border *yuefu* passed easily through the sky heading southeast, in the direction of the soldiers' homes. The animals in this couplet recall the toponyms in the third couplet of poem I.

90 “Ballad of Heading Out Ji's North Gate” 出自薊北門行 was a *yuefu* title, characteristically referring to military campaigns in the northeast. Ji Gate was near modern-day Beijing, in the territory currently held by the rebels. During the reign of Emperor Guangwu of the Han 漢光武帝 (r. 25-57 CE), there was a title of “Western Marching General” 征西將軍. The sixth line could also be rendered, “Han generals only march to the west,” “A lone Han general marches in the west,” or “It only took one Han general to march in the west,” all of which would suggest Du Fu is worried here about the Tibetan threat. (I take him to only begin worrying about that threat later, in poem XVIII.) However we render it, though, these lines recall Du Fu's “marching west” 西征 in poem I, as well as his experience reaching the frontier in the second couplet of that poem, which echoed common tropes from previous poetry depicting soldiers on campaign.

91 The variants of this couplet are discussed in the introduction. Du Fu's self-description here as a “bookworm” contrasts with his militaristic depiction of the frontier in poem I, which draws extensively on precedent frontier poetry.

XII.

- | | | |
|---|-------|---|
| | 山頭南郭寺 | From the mountain-topping Southwall Temple |
| | 水號北流泉 | there's a stream called "North-Flowing Spring." ⁹² |
| | 老樹空庭得 | An old tree gets it in the empty courtyard, ⁹³ |
| 4 | 清渠一邑傳 | its pure channel running through the town. |
| | 秋花危石底 | Autumn blossoms beneath rocks imperiled; |
| | 晚景臥鐘邊 | evening sunlight beside a bell lying down. |
| | 俛仰悲身世 | In a flash of insight, I grieve for my lifetime, |
| 8 | 溪風為颯然 | and the creekside wind sighs for me. |

XIII.

- | | | |
|---|-------|---|
| | 傳道東柯谷 | They say that Eastbough Valley |
| | 深藏數十家 | hides deep a few dozen homes. ⁹⁴ |
| | 對門藤蓋瓦 | Facing their gates, wisteria covers the rooftiles; |
| 4 | 映竹水穿沙 | shining through bamboo, waters thread the sand. ⁹⁵ |
| | 瘦地翻宜粟 | The thin soil is surprisingly good for millet, |
| | 陽坡可種瓜 | and on the sunnyside slopes one can plant melons. ⁹⁶ |
| | 船人近相報 | Boatman, let me know when we get close: |
| 8 | 但恐失桃花 | I fear I'll miss the peach blossoms. ⁹⁷ |

XIV.

- | | | |
|--|-------|---------------------------------------|
| | 萬古仇池穴 | Since ancient times Mate-Pool's caves |
|--|-------|---------------------------------------|

92 That is, the stream derives from a spring on the temple grounds (such springs were thought to have miraculous medicinal properties, and thus often provided the sites for religious institutions). The temple in question was also known as South Mountain Temple 南山寺. Different commentators have it either on Cuiping Mountain 翠屏山 or Huiyin Mountain 慧音山, just outside the south wall of Qinzhou. Parallels between this poem and poem II are discussed in the introduction.

93 "Gets it" probably means "gets the stream's waters." But "getting the truth"—as in Buddhist enlightenment—may also be in play.

94 A valley of the Eastbough River 東柯河 some 25 kilometers to the east of modern-day Tianshui city. The paucity of its inhabitants contrasts with the "ten-thousand households" of Qinzhou proper in poem III, and their hiddenness suggests they may not be on the "province map" discussed in that poem.

95 These water-threaded sands recall the "Flowing Sands" mentioned in poem III.

96 Du Fu may be thinking here of the famous melons planted by Shao Ping 召平, former Marquis of Dongling, after he was demoted to the status of a commoner following the collapse of the Qin dynasty in 206 BCE. These melons were a common metonymy for reclusion.

97 This line refers to Tao Qian's famous story, "The Record of Peach Blossom Spring" 桃花源記. In that story, a fisherman followed the peach petals he saw floating on a stream back to a hidden valley. There, a community of peace-loving folk had made themselves an idyllic refuge from the world after fleeing during the disorder of the Qin dynasty. In the Tang, they were sometimes thought of as immortals.

- 4 潛通小有天 have secretly linked to Little-Presence Heaven.⁹⁸
 神魚人不見 Though no man sees the sacred fish,
 福地語真傳 truthful words transmit that it's a holy place.
 近接西南境 Close upon Qinzhou's southwest border,
 長懷十九泉 I've long yearned for its nineteen springs.⁹⁹
 何時一茅屋 So when will I in a lone, thatched hut
 8 送老白雲邊 send off my old age beside its white clouds?¹⁰⁰

XV.

- 4 未暇泛滄海 I've had no chance to float off on blue seas
 悠悠兵馬間 in this endless interval of war-horses.¹⁰¹
 塞門風落木 At these frontier passes, winds bare the trees;
 客舍雨連山 from my sojourner's lodgings, rains link the hills.
 阮籍行多興 Ruan Ji had many inspirations as he traveled;
 龐公隱不還 Pang Degong did not return from hiding away.¹⁰²
 東柯遂踈懶 At Eastbough I will at last be slack and lazy,

98 Mate-Pool Mountain was approximately 150km south-southwest of Qinzhou (within the boundaries of modern-day Xihe county 西和縣, Daqiao village 大橋鄉), and was so named because it had a volcanic pool at its peak, reputed to contain sacred fish, eating which would make you immortal. "Little-Presence Heaven" (or as it is more often called, "Little-Presence Pure-Void Grotto-Heaven" 小有清虛洞天) was a Daoist grotto-heaven on Mt. Wangwu 王屋山 in Henan, not far from Du Fu's hometown outside Luoyang.

99 It is not clear where Du Fu gets the idea that there are "nineteen springs" on Mate-Pool; in later ages, it was famous for having ninety-nine springs. Some commentators have suggested that nineteen might be a shortened form of ninety-nine, though this usage is not attested elsewhere.

100 To "send off his old age" is ambiguous. On the one hand, Du Fu simply means to pass his last years happily on Mate-Pool Mountain. On the other, given the Daoist character of the place, he might be "sending away" his old age in exchange for immortality. This final line may also recall a poem by the Daoist master Tao Hongjing 陶弘景 (456-536): "You ask me what there is in the mountains? Upon the peaks, many white clouds. One can with them make oneself happy, but they cannot be captured and sent in to my lord" 山中何所有，嶺上多白雲。只可自怡悅，不堪持寄君。 Du Fu's resolution here to live out his years on Mate-Pool Mountain recalls poem IV, wherein he sees a bird "returning to the hills."

101 The first line here may refer to Confucius' statement: "My way is not practiced; I will ride a raft and float upon the sea" 道不行，乘桴浮于海。 This was understood to be expressing a desire for reclusion. The war horses here clearly recall the theme of poem V.

102 Ruan Ji was a famous poet and eccentric of the third century. Commentators disagree as to whether his "travels" here refer to stories of him following roads to their ends, and then bursting into tears—an embodied metaphor for being "at the end of one's road" 窮, unable to advance in government—or refer to sightseeing visits he took that would last several days. Pang Degong 龐德公 (turn of the third c.) refused Liu Biao's 劉表 invitation to serve the collapsing Eastern Han, instead taking his wife and children into reclusion on Deergate Mountain 鹿門山。

- 8 休鑷鬢毛斑 and stop tweezing the white from my hair.¹⁰³

XVI.

- 東柯好崖谷 Eastbough has fine cliffs, a fine valley,
 不與眾峯群 flocking not with other peaks.
 落日邀雙鳥 In the setting sun, it invites paired birds;
 4 晴天養片雲 in clear skies, it nurtures wisps of cloud.¹⁰⁴
 野人矜險絕 Its rugged remoteness is boasted by its rustics;
 水竹會平分 may they grant me an equal share of its water and bamboo!
 採藥吾將老 Gathering herbs, it's there I will grow old,
 8 童兒未遣聞 though I haven't yet let my children know.¹⁰⁵

XVII.

- 邊秋陰易久 Frontier autumn, dark weather easily lasts:
 不復辨晨光 I can no longer make out the morning light.¹⁰⁶
 簷雨亂淋幔 Disorderly, rain from the eaves soaks the curtains;
 4 山雲低度牆 low, clouds from the mountains pass through the walls.¹⁰⁷
 鷗鷺窺淺井 A cormorant peers into a shallow well;
 蚯蚓上高堂 earthworms ascend the high-ceilinged hall.
 車馬何蕭索 How few now are horses and carriages;
 8 門前百草長 at my gate, all the plants are tall.¹⁰⁸

103 Du Fu's invocation of his old age here recalls the "old Sushuang" of poem V. Clearly his foreseen laziness is intended as a contrast with that noble horse, which refuses to accept that it has become useless with age.

104 The valley's nurturing and welcoming aspects here may be intended to contrast with the empire's treatment of its soldiers in poem VI.

105 "Picking herbs" may refer back to Pang Degong in the previous poem, who survived with his family on Deergate Mountain by gathering the herbs that grew there naturally. Given this last line, however, Du Fu may be thinking of going to Eastbough alone, without his children. He will change his mind in the last poem.

106 This line may allude to Tao Qian's "Return!" 歸去來兮辭, wherein Tao describes his journey home to take up reclusion. Near the end of the journey, Tao writes: "I asked travelers about the road ahead, regretting that the morning light was so faint. Then I saw the eaves of my house, and began to dash with joy" 問征夫以前路, 恨晨光之熹微。乃瞻衡宇, 載欣載奔。 Note the resonance between the dusky daytime here and the moon appearing in the daylight in poem VII.

107 These clouds recall the clouds in the second couplet of poem VII. There, they were passing through mountains; here, just the walls of his hermitage.

108 This couplet recalls the famous opening to Tao Qian's "Drinking Ale, #5" 飲酒其五: "I made my hut within the human realm, but there is no ruckus of horses or carriages. You ask me how this can be: when the mind is distant, the place naturally becomes remote" 結廬在人境, 而無車馬喧。問君何能爾? 心遠地自偏。 "Few" could also be translated as "dreary": that is, Du Fu's horse and carriage are both soaked by the rain and shabby with disuse. Either way, Du Fu is suggesting here that his mind does not have to be remote, because the place he has chosen is; the contrast with his "gazing into the distance" in poem VII is clear.

XVIII.

- 地僻秋將盡 The land remote, autumn's almost gone;
 山高客未歸 mountains high, the traveler unreturned.¹⁰⁹
 塞雲多斷續 Frontier clouds many, intermittent,
 4 邊日少光輝 and from the border sun, little light.¹¹⁰
 警急烽常報 Warning of crisis, beacon fires are often announced;
 傳聲檄屢飛 transmitting word, calls-to-arms frequently fly.
 西戎外甥國 The Western Rong are our nephew's kingdom:
 8 何得近天威 how can they defy Heaven's might?¹¹¹

XIX.

- 鳳林戈未息 At Phoenix-Woods the pikes do not rest;
 魚海路常難 the Fish-Sea road was always hard.¹¹²
 候火雲峯峻 Watch-fires on the cloudy peaks' looming:
 4 懸軍幕井乾 our army isolated, its covered well run dry.¹¹³
 風連西極動 Winds stir, reaching from the western extreme;
 月過北庭寒 the moon freezes, passing over Northcourt.¹¹⁴
 故老思飛將 This oldster longs for the Flying General,
 8 何人議築壇 but what man is worthy of building an altar?¹¹⁵

109 Compare with the first couplet of poem XVIII, which describes Zhang Qian "returning" from the western regions.

110 The phrase translated as "border sun" could also read "beside the sun," which would connect back to the third line of poem VIII.

111 The "Western Rong" is an archaizing reference to the Tibetans, using an ethnonym originally applied to tribal enemies of the Zhou dynasty. The Tang had made an alliance with the Tibetans by marrying off to their king a Tang imperial princess; this allowed the Tang to claim that the Tibetan rulers were their "nephews on the distaff side." If poem VIII ended by suggesting the humanity of the Tibetans, then, this poem suggests they lack the most basic human values. Note also the transfer of "Heaven" back east, to the Tang court in Chang'an, from its westward inclination in poem VIII.

112 This poem discusses the failure of the embassy to the Tibetans first mentioned in poem IX. Phoenix-Woods was a mountain near modern-day Linxia 臨夏縣, about 300 km west-northwest of Qinzhou. Fish-Sea was a lake north of modern Wuwei city 武威市, about 600km north-northwest of Qinzhou. The Tibetans were currently contesting Tang control of the region described; the whole area would fall to them in stages between three and five years after this poem was written.

113 Watch-fires, or beacon-fires, relayed information from the front back to the heartland: the second line of this couplet may be what Du Fu imagines them saying. Note the striking parallelism between the looming mountains shrouded in cloud and the deep well, covered with cloth.

114 Northcourt (Beiting) was a Tang military jurisdiction centered near modern-day Urumqi, Xinjiang, further out in the Tang's Hexi corridor into Central Asia.

115 The "Flying General" was Li Guang 李廣 (second c. BCE), a Han-dynasty general renowned for his battle prowess against the Xiongnu. Building an altar was a Han-dynasty practice for commissioning a general; it might have occurred in "the suburbs," outside the capital city, the place Du Fu was imagining at the end of poem IX.

XX.

- | | | |
|---|-------|---|
| | 唐堯真自聖 | Our Yao is truly a sage unto himself; |
| | 野老復何知 | what does this old rustic know? ¹¹⁶ |
| | 曬藥能無婦 | Could I be without my wife to dry my herbs? |
| 4 | 應門幸有兒 | luckily I have sons to answer the gate. |
| | 藏書聞禹穴 | For hidden writings, I have heard of Yu's cave; |
| | 讀記悟仇池 | reading the accounts, I realize it's on Mate-Pool! ¹¹⁷ |
| | 為報駕行舊 | Please tell my friends, therefore, in the mandarin-duck ranks: |
| 8 | 鷓鴣在一枝 | this wren remains on his single branch. ¹¹⁸ |

發秦州 Leaving Qin Prefecture (#1)¹¹⁹

- | | | |
|--|-------|--|
| | 我衰更癩拙 | In my decline I grow lazier, more dense, |
| | 生事不自謀 | making a living I can't handle on my own. ¹²⁰ |
| | 無食問樂土 | I have no food, so I ask about happy lands; ¹²¹ |

-
- 116 "Our Yao" is Emperor Suzong. Yao was a legendary sage king of antiquity, who (according to the *Zhuangzi* 莊子), once tried to cede rulership of the empire to the recluse Xu You 許由, whom he took to be wiser than himself. "Unto himself" most obviously means that Suzong needs no help to be a sage; at the same time, however, the line could also be read, "he takes himself to be a sage."
- 117 The sage king Yu legendarily found in a cave on Wanwei 宛委 Mountain mysterious writings that explained to him the method of solving China's primordial flood. There were many different accounts of the mountain's location, one of which had it about 350 km northwest of Qinzhou. Du Fu appears to have a new solution.
- 118 The "mandarin-duck ranks" are the ranks at court, wherein courtiers stood in ceremonial lines like ducks in flight. The wren on its branch is a figure from the *Zhuangzi*. When Yao offered his empire to Xu You, Xu declined by saying that "The wren makes her nest in the deep woods, but does not need more than a single branch." Note the aptness of this allusion to Du Fu's chosen place of reclusion: Eastbough Valley.
- 119 Early (likely authorial) note: "Twelve poems recording my journey in the second year of the Qianyuan Reign, going from Qin Prefecture to Tonggu County" 乾元二年自秦州赴同谷縣紀行十二首.
- 120 "In my decline" echoes Confucius from the *Analects* 論語: "Deep indeed is my decline! For too long I have not dreamt of the Duke of Zhou" 子曰: 甚矣吾衰也! 久矣吾不復夢見周公. This is an undeniably deflating invocation of Confucius' words, and one that conflates the spiritual and the physical in a way that will be important throughout this series (and in particular, in poems #6, #7, and #12). "Lazy and dense" are conventional attributes of the recluse, a figure who in some cases merely *feigns* laziness and clumsiness to avoid government service.
- 121 The phrase "happy lands" comes from the poem "Big Rat" 碩鼠 in the *Shijing*, wherein peasants complain of being overtaxed by their ruler: "We are going to leave you, and go to a happy land" 逝將去女, 適彼樂土. "Happy land" 樂土 is also sometimes used as a translation for the idea of a Buddhist "pure land" or "Buddha land." This conflation of Buddhist and Confucian themes provides one of the major echoes with poem #12 of this series; Buddhist themes also recur in poems #6 and #7, as discussed in the introduction.

- 4 無衣思南州 I have no clothes, so I long for southern climes.¹²²
 漢源十月交 At Hanyuan near the tenth month's turn
 天氣如涼秋 the weather is a mere autumnal chill.¹²³
 草木未黃落 The plants and trees have not yellowed or shed,
 8 況聞山水幽 and further, I hear the landscape's beautiful.¹²⁴
 栗亭名更嘉 And Chestnut Pavilion's name is all the more fine
 下有良田疇 since beneath it lie good fields.¹²⁵
 充腸多薯蕷 We'll fill our bellies there with the plentiful yams,
 12 崖蜜亦易求 and cliffside honey will be easy to get.
 密竹復冬筍 Amidst its thick bamboo are winter shoots,
 清池可方舟 and its clear pools can bear linked boats.¹²⁶
 雖傷旅寓遠 Though it wounds me to sojourn so far from home,
 16 庶遂平生遊 I hope there to complete my lifetime's roaming.
 此邦俯要衝 This fiefdom here overlooks a strategic hub;
 實恐人事稠 I truly fear so many human affairs.
 應接非本性 Social niceties are not in my nature,
 20 登臨未銷憂 and climbing for views has not relieved my cares.¹²⁷
 谿谷無異石 The ravines here have no strange rocks,
 塞田始微收 and the frontier fields have always had meager harvests.
 豈復慰老夫 What more is there to comfort this old man?—
 24 惘然難久留 disappointed, it'd be hard to stay here long.
 日色隱孤戍 The sun's colors hide from the lonely outpost;
 烏啼滿城頭 the crying of crows fills the city walls.
 中宵驅車去 At midnight I drive my wagon away,

122 "I have no clothes," echoes the *Shijing* poem "Seventh Month" 七月: "We have no clothes, so how are we to get through the year?" 無衣無褐, 何以卒歲. The phrase translated as "southern climes" may derive from a poem attributed to the great ancient poet and exile Qu Yuan 屈原, called "Far Travels" 遠遊: "I rejoice in the fiery virtue of the southern climes, with beautiful cassia trees flourishing in winter" 嘉南州之炎德兮, 麗桂樹之冬榮. In this poem, Qu attains the *dao* and becomes an immortal.

123 By the Chinese calendar, the tenth month marked the beginning of winter. Hanyuan was a county adjacent to Du Fu's destination of Tonggu, located at modern-day Hanyuan zhen 漢源鎮 in modern-day Xihe county 西和縣.

124 "Beautiful" here translates *you* 幽, which also has the meaning of "secluded" or "hidden away."

125 Chestnut Pavilion was a landmark near Tonggu; the name is "fine" because it suggests there may be (edible) chestnuts nearby.

126 Traditionally, linking two boats together was the privilege of a "grandee" 大夫方舟, while the feudal lords could link four boats together. Linking two boats in this way was probably done for stability.

127 This line alludes to Wang Can's 王粲 (177-217) "Rhapsody on Climbing the Tower" 登樓賦: "I climb this tower and look around in four directions, taking this idle day to relieve my cares" 登茲樓以四望兮, 聊暇日以銷憂.

- 28 飲馬寒塘流 watering my horse at the currents of cold ponds.¹²⁸
 磊落星月高 Scattered bright, the stars and moon are high;
 蒼茫雲霧浮 through the vastness float clouds and fog.
 大哉乾坤內 Huge, this space twixt heaven and earth,
 32 吾道長悠悠 and my way is ever far and uncertain.¹²⁹

赤谷 Red Ravine (#2)¹³⁰

- 天寒霜雪繁 The skies cold, frost and snow teem,
 遊子有所之 but the wanderer has a destination.
 豈但歲月暮 It's not just the year that draws to dusk:
 4 重來未有期 I may never come back this way again.
 晨發赤谷亭 At dawn we leave from Red Ravine station:¹³¹
 險艱方自茲 the perils and ardors begin from here.
 亂石無改轍 Yet among riotous rocks, we don't change course,
 8 我車已載脂 for our carriage is already oiled.¹³²
 山深苦多風 Mountains deep, we suffer strong winds;
 落日童稚飢 at sunset the children grow hungry.
 悄然村墟迥 Silent in the distance a small village inn,
 12 煙火何由追 but how could we chase its smoking hearth?
 貧病轉零落 Poor, sick, ever more a fallen leaf,
 故鄉不可思 I cannot yearn for my hometown.
 常恐死道路 I always fear I'll die by the roadside

128 This line recalls the title of an old *yuefu* ballad: "Watering My Horse at a Pool by the Great Wall," and specifically a couplet from Chen Lin's 陳琳 (d. 217) version of that ballad: "I watered my horse at a pool by the great wall; the water was cold, and hurt the horse's bones" 飲馬長城窟，水寒傷馬骨。

129 "Heaven and earth" here is literally "Qian and Kun," the first two hexagrams of the *Yijing* 易經, which were understood to symbolize heaven and earth. "My way" echoes Confucius, who exclaimed upon learning about the capture of the unicorn: "My way is at an end!" 吾道窮矣。Generally, his "way" is understood in this context as his "way of government," rather than a literal road (as here).

130 A north-south river valley, flanked on both sides by red rocks, near modern-day Nuanhuo wan 暖和灣, Lüer village 呂二鄉, some 3.5 km to the southwest of Qinzhou.

131 Gao Tianyou thinks that the phrase translated "Red Ravine station" is actually a local toponym, something like Fort Red Ravine, rather than an actual Tang post-station.

132 This couplet contains allusions to two precedent poems on traveling. "Change course" here recalls Cao Zhi's 曹植 (192-232) "Given to the Prince of Baima" 贈白馬王彪: "Halfway through, the wagon ruts cease; so I changed my course and climbed a high ridge" 中逵絕無軌，改轍登高崗。"Well-oiled" derives from "Quanshui" 泉水 from the *Shijing*: "I will oil the axle and fix the pin, and the returning carriage will speed on" 載脂載輦，還車言邁。According to the Mao commentary, this poem was about "yearning to go home."

- 16 永為高人嗤 and forever be laughed at by lofty men.¹³³

鐵堂峽 Ironhall Gorge (#3)¹³⁴

- 山風吹遊子 Mountain winds blow the wanderer on;
 縹緲乘險絕 tossed in the distance, we climb a sheer defile.
 硤形藏堂隍 The gorge's shapes enclose a palatial hall;
 4 壁色立積鐵 the cliffs' colors set forth a mass of iron.
 徑摩穹蒼蟠 Our path coils up, scraping the vaulted gray,
 石與厚地裂 its rocks sundered from the thick earth.¹³⁵
 修纖無垠竹 Long and graceful, bamboo without end;
 8 嵌空太始雪 engraved in the void, primeval snows.¹³⁶
 威遲哀壑底 Winding to the depths of this mournful gorge,
 徒旅慘不悅 we sojourners are grim, without joy.
 水寒長冰橫 The water is cold, forever stretched with ice;
 12 我馬骨正折 now my horse's bones are really breaking.¹³⁷
 生涯抵弧矢 Between life's banks, I've confronted bows and arrows,
 盜賊殊未滅 and the rebels are still far from wiped out.
 飄蓬逾三年 Tossed like a tumbleweed over three years,

133 This couplet alludes to the *Analects*, wherein Confucius says: "Would I prefer to die in the hands of grand ministers, or in your hands, my friends? Even though I may not have a grand funeral, it's not like I'm dying by the roadside!" 予與其死於臣之手也，無寧死於二三子之手乎？且予縱不得大葬，予死於道路乎。 Dying by the roadside would be one way Du Fu might "complete his lifetime's roaming."

134 About a 37 km journey south from Red Ravine, just northeast of modern-day Tianshui zhen 天水鎮. At this point, Du Fu would have been following the course of the Xihan River 西漢水.

135 The presence of heaven and the "thick earth" in this couplet might recall a saying recorded in the *History of the Latter Han* 後漢書: "Ages of disorder are long, and ages of peace are short. In ages of disorder, petty people enjoy favor, and noble men are poor and base. When noble men are poor and base, they crouch under high heaven and tread gingerly upon the thick earth, fearing that further disasters will overtake them" 夫亂世長而化世短。亂世則小人貴寵，君子困賤。當君子困賤之時，踞高天，躋厚地，猶恐有鎮厭之禍也。

136 This couplet continues the theme of bamboo and water, which was first brought up in the seventh couplet of poem #1, and which will remain a major motif throughout the series. "Without end" and "primeval," moreover, are words that often apply to the *dao*; as such, Du Fu is continuing to find in the physical landscape here intimations of the spiritual consummations he seeks, just as in the first poem he expected that he would. The next couplet will also suggest that, at this point, the link between his physical location and his mental state is still intact; it will begin to come apart at the end of this poem.

137 This line alludes again to Chen Lin's "Watering my Horse at a Pool by the Great Wall": "The water was cold and hurt my horse's bones" 飲馬長城窟，水寒傷馬骨. This allusion to a frontier ballad probably calls to mind the "bows and arrows" of the next couplet.

- 16 回首肝肺熱 I turn my head, liver and lungs hot.¹³⁸

鹽井 Saltwell (#4)¹³⁹

- | | | |
|---|-------|--|
| | 鹵中草木白 | In the saltflats, the plants and trees are white; |
| | 青者官鹽煙 | what's green is smoke from government salt. ¹⁴⁰ |
| | 官作既有程 | Since government work has its set schedules, |
| 4 | 煮鹽煙在川 | the smoke from boiling salt remains on the river. ¹⁴¹ |
| | 汲井歲桴桴 | Drawing the wells, they labor past the harvest, |
| | 出車日連連 | sending out wagons, one day after another. ¹⁴² |
| | 自公斗三百 | Official merchants buy one <i>dou</i> for three-hundred, |
| 8 | 轉致斛六千 | which then brings in six-thousand for a <i>hu</i> . ¹⁴³ |
| | 君子慎止足 | The noble man is careful to stop at sufficiency; |
| | 小人苦喧闐 | it's petty men who make this wretched racket. ¹⁴⁴ |
| | 我何良歎嗟 | But what do I have to sigh about? |

138 The tumbleweed is a common image in old poetry, often standing for a traveler. Tumbleweeds have “lost contact with their roots.” Heat in the liver and lungs was a medical condition, but here it probably just refers to indignation.

139 The salt well described in this poem was probably in modern-day Yanguan zhen 鹽官鎮, in Gansu's Li county 禮縣, roughly 13 km west-southwest of Ironhall Gorge.

140 From the Han dynasty onwards, Chinese governments had supported themselves financially through a monopoly on salt production. The smoke here would have been from fires used to boil down saltwater.

141 This couplet alludes again to Chen Lin's “Watering my Horse at a Pool by the Great Wall”: “Official work has its set schedules, so lift your mallets to the rhythm of the sound” 官作自有程，與築諧汝聲. This describes the brutal slave labor of building the Great Wall.

142 “Labor” recalls a story from the *Zhuangzi*: “As [Zigong] passed Hanyin, he saw a man working his vegetable garden. He had dug his channels, drawn from the well, and was carrying a large jug to irrigate them with. He was laboring and laboring, using all his physical strength with little to show for it” 過漢陰，見一丈人方將為圃畦，鑿隧而入井，抱甕而出灌，搨搨然用力甚多而見功寡. The man refused to use mechanical irrigation because it violated natural simplicity; although Zigong was impressed, Confucius mocked him as pretentious in his imitation of primeval times. The second line here echoes “Sending Out Wagons” 出車 from the *Shijing*: “He sent out wagons in unceasing stream” 出車彭彭. This describes a military mobilization.

143 A *dou* was roughly six kilos, a *hu* the equivalent of ten *dou*. The point is that the official merchants make a hundred-percent profit on the salt they buy from the saltworks. The phrase translated “official merchants” is an (ironic) allusion to the description of the frugal and virtuous ministers of ancient times in “Little Lambs” 羔羊 from the *Shijing*: “They cut down on eating in working for the common good” 退食自公.

144 This couplet alludes to Laozi's *Daodejing* 道德經: “He who knows sufficiency is not humiliated, and he who knows how to stop is not endangered; such are capable of enduring” 知足不辱，知止不殆，可以長久.

- 12 物理固自然 the principle of things is of course self-so.¹⁴⁵

寒硤 Cold Gorge (#5)¹⁴⁶

- | | | |
|----|-------|---|
| | 行邁日悄悄 | We journey on, each day more silent; |
| | 山谷勢多端 | mountains and valleys, contours multifarious. ¹⁴⁷ |
| | 雲門轉絕岸 | A cloudgate turns to sheer cliff; |
| 4 | 積阻霾天寒 | massed obstructions, dark skies cold. |
| | 寒硤不可度 | Cold Gorge cannot be traversed; |
| | 我實衣裳單 | our clothes are truly too thin. ¹⁴⁸ |
| | 況當仲冬交 | Worse yet at the turn of mid-winter, |
| 8 | 沝沿增波瀾 | when the whirlpools augment their waves. |
| | 野人尋煙語 | Yet rustics seek our smoke for a word |
| | 行子傍水餐 | as we travelers dine beside the waters. ¹⁴⁹ |
| | 此生免荷殳 | This life I've escaped shouldering a lance; |
| 12 | 未敢辭路難 | I don't dare refuse the hardships of the road. ¹⁵⁰ |

145 The "self-so" was an important concept in medieval philosophy, deriving in large part from the *Daodejing*. It refers to what is naturally the case, without interference or oppression from the outside. It was also a virtue that recluses were thought to actualize, something like "naturalness." To say that exploitative commerce was "natural" for human society would have been a profoundly disturbing thought, especially in light of Du Fu's planned reclusion at Tonggu.

146 Now called Qijia Gorge 祁家峽, Wanjia Gorge 晚家峽, or Dawan Gorge 大灣峽, this long ravine was around 25 km southwest from the salt well.

147 The same phrase for "silent" appears in the sixth couplet of poem #2 in this series.

148 This line alludes to Shen Yue's 沈約 (441-513) "White Horse Ballad" 白馬篇, which describes a young bravo braving brutal campaigns on the western frontiers in order to serve his ruler: "I only see the thickness of my ruler's grace; how could I notice the thinness of my clothes?" 唯見恩義重, 豈覺衣裳單. The inadequacy of Du Fu's clothes is a theme announced in the first poem of this series; the phrase translated as "cannot" here also appears in the penultimate couplet of poem #2.

149 Compare the sixth couplet of poem #2 in this series. Du Fu's attitude towards the "social niceties" he said in poem #1 were "not his nature" seems to be softening here.

150 A "lance" is an archaic bamboo weapon. It appears in "Bo xi" 伯兮 from the *Shijing*, which criticizes a military campaign that has gone on too long: "This fine man bears a lance, dashing forward for our king" 伯也執殳, 為王前驅. The "hardships of the road" may echo Shen Yue's "White Horse Ballad": "Ask for me of that narrowminded peasant, does he know the hardships of Long's roads?" 寄言狹斜子, 詎知隴道難. "The Hardships of Shu's Roads" 蜀道難 was also a *yuefu* ballad title. Here Du Fu may be transitioning from the militaristic frontier ballads that have populated the previous poems to a different genre of *yuefu*, concerning travel.

法鏡寺 Dharma Mirror Monastery (#6)¹⁵¹

	身危適他州	My body imperiled, I head elsewhere:
	勉強終勞苦	the arduous effort is to the end wretched toil.
	神傷山行深	It wounds my spirit, journeying deep in the mountains,
4	愁破崖寺古	but cares break at an ancient temple on a cliff.
	嬋娟碧鮮淨	Slim and alluring, fresh emeralds clean:
	蕭瑟寒籜聚	fallen in the wind, their clustered cold sheaths. ¹⁵²
	回回山根水	Waters at the mountain-roots twist and turn;
8	冉冉松上雨	slow and gentle, the rain on the pines.
	洩雲蒙清晨	Leaking clouds cover the cool dawn;
	初日翳復吐	first sunlight, shaded, again breaks through.
	朱甍半光炯	Of the red roof-tiles, half sparkle and glow;
12	戶牖粲可數	one can count the gleaming doors and windows.
	拄策忘前期	Taking up my staff, I forget previous plans;
	出蘿已亭午	when I emerge from the vines it's already noon.
	冥冥子規叫	Then from my dark trance, the cuckoo cries:
16	微徑不復取	I'll take no more faint paths. ¹⁵³

青陽峽 Springtime Gorge (#7)¹⁵⁴

塞外苦獸山 Beyond the frontier, I'm sick of mountains,

151 The temple, established during the Northern Wei dynasty (386-534), was about 12 kilometers north of modern-day Xihe county 西和縣 in what is now Shibao xiang 石堡鄉, around 10 km south from Cold Gorge. At this stage of the journey, Du Fu would have broken off from the main current of the Xihan River, and followed instead the course of its north-flowing tributary nowadays called Yangshui River 漾水河.

152 The first line of this couplet cites traditional descriptions of bamboo deriving from Zuo Si's 左思 (third c.) "Rhapsody on the Capital of Wu" 吳都賦. "Sheaths" wrap bamboo shoots—of much the kind Du Fu imagined eating in the first poem of the series. Here the "cleanliness" of the bamboo refers to these sheaths having been shed. The next couplet will take up water, thus completing the motif of bamboo and water that runs throughout the series.

153 "Faint paths" here should probably be understood in the sense of "side paths," off the main road and away from his destination in Tonggu. The phrase translated here as "dark trance" is highly ambivalent. It could mean "faintly," "dark sky," "the vastness," or simply "darkness," implying that Du Fu has been walking on this side-path all day in an effort to reach the temple, where he might have expected hospitality and a meal. "Dark trance," however, highlights the theme of Buddhist illusion that is common to poems #1, #6, #7, and #12 in this series, discussed in the introduction. The cuckoo's call conventionally sounded like *burugu* 不如歸去: "Better go back home!"

154 Located about 25 km southeast of Xihe county. The toponym is now written as the homophonous Bluesheep Gorge 青羊峽.

- 南行道彌惡 and as we journey south, the way gets worse.¹⁵⁵
 岡巒相經互 Spines and ridges cross and link;
 4 雲水氣參錯 water and cloud in riotous disorder.
 林迴峽角來 Through tall woods come the gorge's horns;
 天窄壁面削 the skies narrow between cliff-faces cleaved-off.
 溪西五里石 Five leagues west of the stream, the rock
 8 奮怒向我落 rises furious to topple towards us.
 仰看日車側 Looking up, the sun's coach turns away;
 俯恐坤軸弱 looking down, I fear earth's axles too weak.
 魑魅嘯有風 Goblins scream and there is wind;
 12 霜霰浩漠漠 frost and sleet flood vast and blinding.¹⁵⁶
 昨憶踰隴坂 I recall recently crossing the slopes of Long,
 高秋視吳岳 looking out on Mount Wu at autumn's height.¹⁵⁷
 東笑蓮華卑 I laughed then the east's Lotus Peak was low,
 16 北知崆峒薄 and learned the north's Kongtong was slight.¹⁵⁸
 超然俾壯觀 Soaring, it equaled my vast prospect,
 已謂殷寥廓 and I had thought its hugeness unsurpassed.¹⁵⁹
 突兀猶趁人 Suddenly looming, still chasing us:
 20 及茲歎冥冥 reaching here, I sigh in dark bewilderment.¹⁶⁰

155 Compare the eleventh couplet of poem #1 in this series.

156 As discussed in the introduction, this scene echoes medieval depictions of Mara's attack upon the Buddha.

157 Du Fu crossed the slopes of Long on his way to Qinzhou. Wu Mountain is in modern-day Qianyang 千陽, along Du Fu's journey west.

158 Lotus Peak was one of the central peaks of Mount Hua 華山, near Chang'an. The Kongtong Mountains are near modern-day Pingliang city 平涼市, in Gansu.

159 The final couplets of this poem represent a significant crux. The phrase *liaokuo* 寥廓, translated here as "unsurpassed," more generally refers to a vast empty space, such as the sky or the cosmos at large (or, more rarely, the darker spirit worlds beyond our own). If we take 殷, translated above as "hugeness," in a different, more archaic sense, the second line here might read, "I had thought it [i.e., Mount Wu] occupied the sky."

160 "Dark bewilderment" is another highly ambiguous phrase, echoing the "dark trance" of poem #6. Among other possibilities, Du Fu could be sighing at "dark creation," or (as Stephen Owen translates) Mount Wu could be "lost in darkness." (Like *liaokuo* in the previous couplet, the phrase can also refer to the world of the dead.) It is also unclear whether "Suddenly looming" describes Mount Wu or the rock of Springtime Gorge; the ambiguity may be intentional. On any translation, Du Fu's awe at the vastness of the mountains here echoes the final couplet of poem #1 in this series.

龍門鎮 Dragongate Fort (#8)¹⁶¹

- | | | |
|----|-------|--|
| | 細泉兼輕冰 | Thin streams merge their light ice |
| | 沮洳棧道濕 | and through the marshes the plankway soaks. ¹⁶² |
| | 不辭辛苦行 | Though I don't refuse this wretched journey, |
| 4 | 迫此短景急 | we're pressed here by the rushing of the brief light. ¹⁶³ |
| | 石門雪雲隘 | A stone gate, cramped with clouds and snow; |
| | 古鎮峰巒集 | an ancient fort gathering ridges and peaks. |
| | 旌竿暮慘澹 | The flagpole grows gloomier at dusk, |
| 8 | 風水白刃澀 | winds and waters dull as bare blades. ¹⁶⁴ |
| | 胡馬屯成皋 | With barbarian horses blocking Chenggao, |
| | 防虞此何及 | how could we defend this place? ¹⁶⁵ |
| | 嗟爾遠戍人 | I sigh for the men in far outposts, |
| 12 | 山寒夜中泣 | the mountains cold, weeping at night. ¹⁶⁶ |

石龕 Stone Niches (#9)¹⁶⁷

- | | | |
|--|-------|---|
| | 熊羆咆我東 | Bears and brown bears roar to our east; |
|--|-------|---|

161 This may be in the area now called Fucheng zhen 府城鎮, to the southeast of modern-day Zhifang zhen 紙坊鎮 in Cheng county 成縣.

162 The phrase translated as "marshes," *juru* 沮洳, recalls "The Fen's Marshes" 汾沮洳 from the *Shijing*, a poem that criticizes an overly parsimonious ruler.

163 Compare the final couplet of poem #5 in this series.

164 The waters here may recall those in the fourth couplet of poem #5 in this series, and the wind may similarly recall that in the fifth couplet of poem #2. This military outpost may also bear comparison to the village inn in the latter, as both poems concern Du Fu's relationship to others.

165 Chenggao was a strategic military pass just east of Luoyang, the site of an important battle between Chu and Han for control of the empire after the fall of the Qin. The barbarian (*hu*) horses are a metonymy for Shi Siming's rebels, who at the time had recaptured Luoyang. The import of this question is ambiguous: it could either mean, "why are we bothering to defend this place?" or "how could we have the resources to adequately defend this place?"

166 Men in far outposts were a common topic of *yuefu* ballads about the frontier. It is possible Du Fu is including himself in this group, since he is apparently staying the night at this fort. Either way, he seems to be both recalling and partially reversing the ending of poem #5.

167 These meditation niches carved in the gorge rock may have been at the site of the Bafengya Grottoes 八峰崖石窟, about 31 km south-southeast from Xihe county. As Gao Tianyou notes, however, Du Fu would have come upon these grottoes before reaching what is now Fucheng zhen, the supposed site of Dragongate Fort. The identification of one or the other site would seem to be in error. Zhao Guozheng and Zhang Jiongzhi suggest that these niches may have been further south, at modern-day Shengquan Monastery 聖泉寺.

- 4 虎豹號我西 tigers and leopards howl to our west.¹⁶⁸
 我後鬼長嘯 Behind us demons vent long screams,
 我前猿又啼 and ahead of us monkeys cry.
 天寒昏無日 The skies are cold, dark with no sun;
 山遠道路迷 mountains distant, the way is lost.
 8 驅車石龕下 I drive my carriage below these stone niches,
 仲冬見虹蜺 and see a midwinter rainbow.¹⁶⁹
 伐竹者誰子 Whose son is that, cutting bamboo?
 悲歌上雲梯 singing sadly, he mounts the cloud-ladders.¹⁷⁰
 為官采美箭 He's gathering good arrows for government use;
 12 五歲供梁齊 for five years he's supplied Qi and Liang.¹⁷¹
 苦云直簳盡 Wretchedly he says the straight shafts are used up,
 無以充提攜 and there's no way to fill his bag.¹⁷²
 奈何漁陽騎 What can be done about Yuyang's cavalry,
 16 颯颯驚烝黎 their whooshing horses startling the folk?¹⁷³

積草嶺 Massed-Plant Ridge (#10)¹⁷⁴

連峰積長陰 Linked peaks mass longstanding cold;

- 168 These lines recall the "Summons of the Recluse" 招隱士 from the *Songs of the Southlands* (*Chuci* 楚辭): "Tigers and leopards brawl and bears and brown bears roar" 虎豹鬥兮熊羆咆. This poem was supposedly written to "summon" a recluse out of the wilderness and back to civilization.
- 169 According to the "Monthly Ordinances" 月令 chapter of the *Liji* 禮記, rainbows were supposed to hide away in winter. The appearance here may thus be a prodigy, foretelling disaster for the state. Alternately, it may indicate that the weather is getting warmer as Du Fu travels south.
- 170 "Cloud-ladders" here stand for plankways in the mountains; the term was also used to denote what immortals climbed to get up into heaven and thus also as a metonymy for the paths of power, at the human court. "Whose son is that" (誰子 or 誰家子) is a question redolent of (usually fictional) *yuefu* ballads.
- 171 Qi and Liang were historical names for the far northeast provinces, where the Tang armies were fighting the rebels. "For government use" recalls the "government work" of the second couplet of poem #4 in this series.
- 172 Compare the lack of bamboo for arrows here with the "bamboo without end" and the "bows and arrows" discussed in poem #3 of this series. "Fill his bag" could also be "supply them [the troops in Qi and Liang] with aid."
- 173 Yuyang was in the far northeast, the base of the rebels. Note the correspondence of the terrifying animal sounds at the beginning and the end of this poem. It would seem that the heartland is no better than the wilderness in this respect.
- 174 The site at which Du Fu would have crossed this ridge has been the subject of much debate. See Gao Tianyou, 90 and Jian Jinsong, 59-60.

- 白日遞隱見 the white sun alternates hidden and seen.¹⁷⁵
 颼颼林響交 Soughing, forest echoes cross;
 4 慘慘石狀變 gloomy, the rock shapes change.¹⁷⁶
 山分積草嶺 The mountains split at Massed-Plant Ridge;
 路異明水縣 my road departs from Brightwater County's.¹⁷⁷
 旅泊吾道窮 My sojourning way is at its end,
 8 衰年歲時倦 in declining years, wearied by the season.¹⁷⁸
 卜居尚百里 To divine my dwelling it's still a hundred leagues;
 休駕投諸彥 halting my harness, I'll throw in with good men.¹⁷⁹
 邑有佳主人 The town has a talented official in charge;
 12 情如已會面 our feelings are as if we'd met face to face.¹⁸⁰
 來書語絕妙 In the letter that came, his words were wondrous;
 遠客驚深眷 this far traveler was startled by his deep concern.
 食蕨不願餘 I'll eat bracken there and wish for nothing more;
 16 茅茨眼中見 a grass-thatched hut I see before my eyes.¹⁸¹

泥功山 Mudwork Mountain (#11)¹⁸²

朝行青泥上 At dawn we journeyed on the black mud;

- 175 Compare the lack of "massed plants" here with the "iron hall" Du Fu saw in "Ironhall Gorge," poem #3 in this series. The absence here picks up on the theme, announced in the invocation of "Chestnut Pavilion" in poem #1, of the relationship between names and things. This question has both Confucian and Buddhist overtones, in that it was a longstanding Confucian goal to "correct names" 正名, and Buddhists were concerned about the mismatch between ideas and reality.
- 176 These "rock shapes" recall the "gorge's shapes" in the second couplet of poem #3.
- 177 "Brightwater County" may refer to what is elsewhere called "Singing Water County" 鳴水縣, to the southeast of Du Fu's destination of Tonggu, in the area of modern Lüeyang County 略陽縣. The road to Brightwater County would have led back towards the heartland.
- 178 "My way is at an end" echoes Confucius' exclamation upon hearing about the capture of the unicorn. "Declining years" also echoes Confucius' "Deep indeed is my decline." Both of these allusions already appeared in the first poem of the series. "Wearied by the season" could also be "wearied by the passage of time."
- 179 "Divining a dwelling" was the ritual practice of choosing a good place to site one's house.
- 180 Contrast the fifth couplet of poem #3 in this series.
- 181 Bracken ferns were traditionally the food of recluses. In particular, the recluses Boyi 伯夷 and Shuqi 叔齊, who refused to eat the grain of the new dynasty after the fall of the Shang, subsisted on bracken on Mount Shouyang. The bracken and grass Du Fu imagines here seem to make up for the "massed plants" missing on "Massed-Plant Ridge." Ending in imagination (there of the past; here of the future) recalls the final couplet of poem #3 in this series. "Wishing for nothing more" also echoes the noble man's being "careful to stop at sufficiency" from poem #4.
- 182 This mountain, sometimes called Mudlord Mountain 泥公山, seems to have been about 20km northwest of Tonggu, in modern-day Erlang Village 二郎鄉.

- 暮在青泥中 at dusk we were in the black mud.¹⁸³
 泥濘非一時 This mud and muck is not of one time,
 4 版築勞人功 so rammed earth would waste human work.¹⁸⁴
 不畏道途永 I don't fear the road ahead is long,
 乃將汨沒同 but that we'll all share in sinking.¹⁸⁵
 白馬為鐵驪 My white horse becomes an iron-black steed;
 8 小兒成老翁 my little boys grow into old men.¹⁸⁶
 哀猿透卻墜 A mournful gibbon leaps but falls back in;
 死鹿力所窮 a dead deer, its strength exhausted.
 寄語北來人 Pass word to those coming from the north:
 12 後來莫匆匆 don't all race to come after us.¹⁸⁷

鳳凰臺 Phoenix Terrace (#12)¹⁸⁸

- 亭亭鳳凰臺 Rising straight up, Phoenix Terrace
 北對西康州 faces West Kangzhou to the north.¹⁸⁹
 西伯今寂寞 The Earl of the West is now cold and silent,

- 183 This couplet parodies a common structure of travel poems, which often describe in the first couplet the distance covered over the course of the day to be narrated. The structure derives originally from the *Songs of the Southlands* (楚辭), where it characteristically described great distances, too far to travel by mortal means. The couplet also recalls the first couplet of poem #2 in this series.
- 184 Though it is clearly playing upon the name of the place, this couplet is obscure. It may mean that a "rammed earth" road would be needed to make the mountain passable, but that, faced with a mountain that never stops creating mud, building such a road would take more human effort than is realistically possible.
- 185 As Xiaofei Tian has pointed out, this couplet seems to echo one of Xie Lingyun's poems about his vast reclusive estate: "I do not grieve that I am far from people, but merely regret there's no one to share this with me" 不惜去人遠，但恨莫與同。 These lines also echo the hardships of the road in poem #2 of this series.
- 186 According to the "Monthly Ordinances," the emperor was supposed to ride "iron-black steeds" in midwinter. The boys may "become old men" because of the time it takes to climb the mountain, because they might be forced to use walking sticks to get through the mud, because they have to move slowly and unsurely, or because, covered in mud, their skin seems wrinkled.
- 187 This couplet recalls a Lu Zhaolin 盧照隣 (ca. 634-ca. 686) poem about traveling in the west, which itself plays on the *yuefu* ballad "The Hardships of Shu's Roads": "Pass word to those who'd come after: these roads are indeed uniquely hard" 傳語後來者，斯路誠獨難。 This concluding bitter joke, playing on the slowness of the travelers' progress through the mud, recalls the end of poem #2 in this series, as well as Du Fu's resolution, at the end of poem #5, not to "refuse the hardships of the road."
- 188 This mountain was 3.5 km past Tonggu, to the southeast. Supposedly a phoenix had perched there during the Han dynasty; hence the name. An early, probably authorial note is appended to the title in the *Songben*: "The mountain is so precipitous, no one can reach its lofty peak" 山峻，人不至高頂。
- 189 West Kangzhou was an old name for Tonggu county, modern-day Cheng county.

- 4 鳳聲亦悠悠 and the cries of the phoenix too have faded.¹⁹⁰
 山峻路絕蹤 The mountain's precipitous, its paths untracked,
 石林氣高浮 and through high stone forests auras float.¹⁹¹
 安得萬丈梯 How can I get a ladder of ten-thousand spans,
 8 為君上上頭 to ascend for my lord to its highest peak?¹⁹²
 恐有無母雛 I fear there's there a motherless chick,
 飢寒日啾啾 hungry and cold, wailing worse each day.¹⁹³
 我能剖心出 I could gouge out my heart
 12 飲啄慰孤愁 to feed it, comfort its lonely cares.
 心以當竹實 This heart could serve as bamboo-fruit,
 炯然忘外求 its gleaming make her forget all other desire;¹⁹⁴
 血以當醴泉 My blood could serve as a sweetwater spring,
 16 豈徒比清流 beyond compare with any clear stream.¹⁹⁵
 所重王者瑞 What matters to me is the auspice of a king:
 敢辭微命休 dare I refuse to end my meager life?
 坐看綵翮長 Soon you'd see its bright pinions grow,
 20 舉意八極周 at a thought to circle the world's eight extremes,
 自天銜瑞圖 Bearing an auspicious diagram from heaven
 飛下十二樓 and descending to the twelve towers.¹⁹⁶
 圖以奉至尊 The diagram will be presented to our Most Revered;
 24 鳳以垂鴻猷 the phoenix will bestow on him the Great Plan.¹⁹⁷

190 The "Earl of the West" was King Wen 文王 of the Zhou dynasty. In the seventh year of his reign, King Wen received the mandate of Heaven, and a phoenix cried out on Mt. Qi as a portent of his virtuous rule.

191 "Stone forests" could refer either to forest-like collections of rocks or to an immortal landscape, the vegetation of which was often imagined as made of jewels. Either way, the phrase recalls poem #1, wherein Du Fu complained that Qinzhou had "no strange rocks."

192 "How can I get" (usually something impossible) is a common motif of *yuefu* ballads.

193 "Wailing" here is an onomatopoeia, *jiujiu*. The compound comes from the old *yuefu*, "Ballad of West of Long" 隴西行, wherein the speaker attains immortality and ascends to heaven, meeting with "Phoenixes calling out *jiujiu*, one mother with nine chicks" 鳳凰鳴啾啾，一母將九雛. The hunger and cold that pertained to Du Fu himself in the first poem of this set has now been transferred to the phoenix chick.

194 According to the *Hanshi waizhuan* 韓詩外傳, phoenixes eat only the fruit of bamboo.

195 In the *Zhuangzi*, we read of a wonderful bird that "will only drink from sweetwater springs" 非醴泉不飲. According to Cheng Xuanying's 成玄英 (fl. 631-653) commentary on the text, this bird was a type of phoenix.

196 Supposedly a phoenix once presented such a diagram to the Yellow Emperor. The "twelve towers" probably refer to those built in the capital city by the Yellow Emperor as a way to welcome the spirits, matching the twelve palaces of the immortals in the Kunlun mountains.

197 The "Most Revered" is, of course, the emperor. Du Fu may be recalling the current emperor's own language here: "I have received the Great Plan from my ancestors; I dare to set my will on honesty and reverence" 朕獲嗣鴻猷，敢志虔敬.

- 再光中興業 Once more there'll be the work of a Restoration,
 一洗蒼生憂 washing away the cares of the common folk.¹⁹⁸
 深哀正為此 Since my deep feelings are precisely these,
 28 羣盜何淹留 how can the rebels linger on?¹⁹⁹

發同谷縣 **Leaving Tonggu County (#1)**²⁰⁰

- 賢有不黔突 Worthies have had unblackened chimneys,
 聖有不暖席 some sages unwarmed mats.²⁰¹
 況我飢愚人 How much more me, a hungry, foolish man:
 4 焉能尚安宅 how could I value dwelling at rest?²⁰²
 始來茲山中 First coming here among these mountains,
 休駕喜地僻 I halted my harness, delighting in the land's remoteness.²⁰³
 奈何迫物累 Yet what can I do? I'm pressed by my encumbrances

198 "Restoration" originally described the restoration of the Zhou dynasty after the capital was sacked by barbarians.

199 The penultimate line here could also read, "If out of deep feeling I were able to do this," i.e., if I were able to sacrifice myself to feed the phoenix. Read as translated above, however, this couplet may invoke the old idea of "correlative resonance," by which strong feelings produce real effects in the cosmos. The appearance of the phoenix to King Wen was an example of such resonance, as was the appearance of the unicorn during the time of Confucius. The final line can also be read in a more plaintive sense: "Why are the rebels lingering on?"

200 Early (probably authorial) note: "Recording my journey on the first day of the twelfth month of the second year of the Qianyuan Reign from Longyou to Jiannan" 乾元二年十二月一日自隴右赴劔南紀行.

201 The "Cultivating Effort Chapter" 脩務訓 of the *Huainanzi* 淮南子 tells us that "Confucius had an unblackened chimney; Mozi an unwarmed mat. Sages do not worry that mountains will be high or rivers broad, but will undergo humiliation to help the ruler" 孔子無黔突，墨子無暖席。是以聖人不高山，不廣河，蒙恥辱以干世主。In other sources, the respective attributes of Confucius and Mozi are reversed, as Du Fu apparently remembered the quote. The reference to Confucius here recalls that in poem #1 of the previous series.

202 "Dwelling at rest" echoes "Wild Geese" 鴻雁 from the *Shijing*, a poem that praises Zhou King Xuan's ability to gather his people and rebuild their homes: "Though there was pain and toil, in the end we had rest in our dwellings" 雖則劬勞，其究安宅。Du Fu could also be thinking of the *Mengzi* 孟子: "Benevolence is the restful home of the human being, and righteousness, our proper road. To leave behind one's restful home and not dwell in it, and to forsake the proper road and not take it: this brings grief!" 仁，人之安宅也；義，人之正路也。曠安宅而弗居，舍正路而不由，哀哉。It is also possible that the line should be translated, "could I long have rest in a dwelling," taking *shang* 尚 as adverbial rather than as a verb.

203 Though the echo is not precise, "the land's remoteness" might have recalled a poem by Tao Qian: "I built my hut in the human world, and yet there is no noise from carriages or horses. I ask you: how is this possible? If your mind is distant, the place naturally becomes remote" 結廬在人境，而無車馬喧。問君何能爾？心遠地自偏。

- 8 一歲四行役 in one year to four forced journeys.²⁰⁴
 忡忡去絕境 Careworn, I leave this transcendent realm,
 杳杳更遠適 going far again into the dark unknown.²⁰⁵
 停驂龍潭雲 I halt my team by the clouds of a dragon tarn,
 12 迴首白崖石 turn my head at the rocks of White Cliff.
 臨岐別數子 At the crossroads, parting from a few friends,
 握手淚再滴 we clasp hands and tears fall again.
 交情無舊深 None of these friendships was long or deep,
 16 窮老多慘感 but old and poor, there's much makes me sad.²⁰⁶
 平生懶拙意 All my life I've wanted to be lazy and dense;
 偶值棲遁跡 by chance I found here a perch to hide my tracks.²⁰⁷
 去住與願違 But my going and staying betray my desires;²⁰⁸
 20 仰慙林間翮 I'm put to shame by the pinions in the woods.²⁰⁹

204 "My encumbrances" echoes the *Zhuangzi*'s description of the sage: "He who knows the joy of heaven has no resentment of heaven, no criticism of men, no encumbrance by things, and no blame from ghosts or spirits" 故知天樂者，無天怨，無人非，無物累，無鬼責。"Forced journeys" comes from "Climbing the Hill" 陟岵 in the *Shijing*: "My father sighs: 'my son is on a forced journey, and cannot rest day or night'" 嗟！予子行役，夙夜無已。In the *Shijing*, the "forced journey" is for state business.

205 "Transcendent realm" is, literally, a "cut-off realm," separated from the body of the empire both spatially and qualitatively. The term is used in Tao Qian's "Record of Peach Blossom Spring": "They had fled from the disorder of the Qin dynasty, taken their wives and children and townsfolk and come to this cut-off realm, never coming forth again, from that point on separated from outsiders" 自云先世避秦時亂，率妻子邑人來此絕境，不復出焉，遂與外人間隔。

206 This couplet might recall a poem of Tao Qian's, which asks: "If people understand one another, what need they be old friends?" 相知何必舊。It also recalls Du Fu's claim, in poem #1 of the previous series, that "social niceties" were "not in his nature," as well as his complaint that there was nothing in Qinzhou to "comfort this old man."

207 "Hiding one's tracks" was a way of speaking about reclusion. "Lazy and dense" were conventional attributes of the recluse, who hid his talents to avoid being drafted to serve the state; the same phrase appeared in the first poem of the previous series as well.

208 The final character of this line is uncertain. Although the *Songben* edition reads 達 ("my going and staying attain my desires") without a variant, all other early editions read 違, equally without a variant. If the above reading is right, Du Fu might be thinking of Xi Kang's 嵇康 (223-262) "Poem of Indignation" 幽憤詩, in which he imagines retiring to the mountains to cultivate his longevity, and which he wrote soon before being executed: "things have betrayed my desires, and I have ended up stuck here" 事與願違，遭茲淹留。

209 This line alludes to another poem of Tao Qian's: "Lazy and slow, the pinions coming forth from the wood, and before dusk they have returned again" 遲遲出林翮，未夕復來歸。"Going and staying" of one's own accord (*quzhu zizai* 去住自在) was a spiritual attainment in both the Buddhist and Daoist traditions. Of course, the "pinions in the woods" recall the "pinions" (also 翮) of the phoenix Du Fu imagined in the final poem of the previous series.

木皮嶺 **Treebark Ridge (#2)**²¹⁰

- 首路栗亭西 As we took to the road west of Chestnut Pavilion,
 尚想鳳皇村 I was still imagining Phoenix Village.²¹¹
 季冬携童稚 In winter's last month, taking my children by the hand,
 4 辛苦赴蜀門 wretchedly we head towards Shu's Gate.²¹²
 南登木皮嶺 To the south we mount Treebark Ridge,
 艱險不易論 its ardors and perils not easy to tell.²¹³
 汗流被我體 Sweat flows, covering my body;
 8 祁寒為之暄 the vast cold becomes, on its account, warm.²¹⁴
 遠岫爭輔佐 The distant peaks vie to buttress and support it;
 千巖自崩奔 a thousand cliffs crumble and flee.²¹⁵
 始知五岳外 Only now do I know, beyond the Five Marchmounts,
 12 別有他山尊 there are other mountains to hold in awe.²¹⁶
 仰千塞大明 It affronts above to block the Great Lights
 俯入裂厚坤 and enters below, splitting the Thick Earth.²¹⁷
 再聞虎豹鬪 Again I hear tigers and leopards battling
 16 屢踟風水昏 and repeatedly tread through winds and waters dark.²¹⁸

210 Treebark Ridge was about 32 km east-southeast of Tonggu, modern-day Mulianhua zhang 木蓮花掌.

211 Chestnut Pavilion was slightly north of Treebark Ridge. Phoenix Village seems to have been where Du Fu stayed in Tonggu; it was slightly to the southeast of the county seat in modern-day Cheng Prefecture 成縣.

212 That is, Swordgate. Zhang Zai's 張載 (d. ca. 304) "Inscription on Swordgate" 劍門銘 reads: "Shu's Gate is fast and impenetrable" 惟蜀之門，作固作鎮. Du Fu also discussed traveling with his children in the second poem of the previous series, to rather different effect.

213 "Ardors and perils" appear in the same place in poem #2 of the previous series.

214 The phrase "sweat flows" may recall an anecdote in the *Zhuangzi*, wherein Bohun Wuren takes Lie Yukou up to the edge of a precipice. Lie Yukou was terrified, "lay upon the ground, sweat flowing down to his heels" 御寇伏地，汗流至踵. He was mocked for this by Bohun Wuren as showing poor spiritual attainment. "Vast cold" comes from the *Shangshu*: "The minds of the people cannot attain the mean; you must do so for them. When it rains during summer's heat, the people complain; in winter's vast cold, the people also complain. How afflicted they are! Think on their afflictions and make plans for their ease, and the people will be pacified" 民心罔中，惟爾之中。夏暑雨，小民惟曰怨咨：冬祁寒，小民亦惟曰怨咨。厥惟艱哉！思其艱以圖其易，民乃寧.

215 Both the compounds "buttress and support" and "crumble and flee" have connotations in the political realm. The former suggests the function of ministers with respect to the emperor; the latter, the collapse of an army.

216 The Five Marchmounts are the great mountains of China proper, one in each of the five directions as defined relative to the Central Plain. "To hold in awe" is another political phrase: one holds an emperor "in awe."

217 "Great Lights" and "Thick Earth" both derive from the *Yijing*. "Thick Earth" 厚坤 recalls, but is not exactly the same phrase as, "thick earth" 厚地 in "Ironhall Gorge," above.

218 "Tigers and leopards fighting" derives from "Summons of the Recluse," cited in "Stone Niches" above.

- 高有廢閣道 High up is an abandoned plankway,
 摧折如短轅 broken off to the width of a short-shafted cart.
 下有冬青林 Below it are groves of wintergreen holly,
 20 石上走長根 with long roots running over the rocks.
 西崖特秀發 West Cliff is especially outstanding,
 煥若靈芝繁 glowing as if with numinous mushrooms.²¹⁹
 潤聚金碧氣 Moistened by cumulate auras of gold and sapphire,
 24 清無沙土痕 it is pure, without a trace of dirt.
 憶觀崑崙圖 I recall seeing a painting of Mount Kunlun:
 目擊玄圃存 what my eyes strike here holds Mysterious Gardens.²²⁰
 對此欲何適 Yet facing this place, where am I going?
 28 默傷垂老魂 in silence it wounds my soul, drooping with age.²²¹

白沙渡 Whitesands Crossing (#3)²²²

- 畏途隨長江 The fearsome road follows the long river,
 渡口下絕岸 to the crossing descending a sheer bank.²²³

219 West Cliff is the peak of another mountain in the same range as Treebark Ridge. “Numinous mushrooms” are the food of the immortals, and confer immortality on those that find them. The possibility that Du Fu might eat these mushrooms and attain deathlessness contrasts with the ending imagined in the final couplet of poem #2 in the previous series, “dying by the roadside.”

220 The Kunlun Mountains are the Himalayas, legendarily the dwellings of the immortals and the site of the Mysterious (or Floating) Gardens. The phrasing of this line may recall an anecdote from the *Zhuangzi*, in which Confucius met with a non-Chinese man of great attainment, but did not say a word to him. When asked why, Confucius said, “When I saw that man, I knew what my eyes were striking on was one who held the *dao* within. There was nothing that needed to be said” 仲尼曰：若夫人者，目擊而道存矣，亦不可以容聲矣。

221 The penultimate line recalls an anecdote from the *Liji* 禮記：“Confucius said, ‘I have observed that the way of the Zhou dynasty was ruined [everywhere else] by [the benighted kings] You and Li. If I were to leave [my home state of] Lu, where would I go?’” 我觀周道，幽、厲傷之，吾舍魯何適矣。The question, “where am I going?” contrasts dramatically with the first couplet of poem #2 in the previous series, where “the wanderer [had] a destination.”

222 This was a manned official crossing on the Whitewater River 白水江 about 20km to the southwest of modern-day Hui county 徽縣。

223 “Fearsome road” derives from the *Zhuangzi*: “Confucius said, ‘When it comes to a dangerous road, where of every ten people one is killed, then fathers, sons, and brothers will warn each other about it, and will only venture out on it with strength of numbers—this is wisdom. Yet people do not recognize that there is that to be feared in bed, and that to be feared in eating and drinking’” 夫畏塗者，十殺一人，則父子兄弟相戒也，必盛卒徒而後敢出焉，不亦知乎！人之所取畏者，衽席之上，飲食之間，而不知為之戒者，過也。The phrase translated here as “long river” usually refers to the “Long River,” the Yangzi, in the south. “Sheer bank” also derives from Guo Pu’s 郭璞 (276-324) “Rhapsody on the Yangzi” 江賦, specifically the section describing the Three Gorges. Here, however, Du Fu is on the much smaller Jialing River 嘉陵水. These echoes may intimate that his mind is already on his destination, further south.

- 4 差池上舟楫 Climbing then aboard scattered boats,
杳窕入雲漢 dark and deep, we enter the cloud-stream.²²⁴
天寒荒野外 The skies are cold beyond the wilds;
日暮中流半 the sun sets halfway in the current.
我馬向北嘶 My horse whinnies, facing north;
8 山猿飲相喚 mountain gibbons call each other to drink.²²⁵
水清石礚礚 Waters clear, with rocks distinct in piles;
沙白灘漫漫 sands white, the rapids flowing slowly.²²⁶
迴然洗愁辛 In a flash, wretched cares are washed away
12 多病一疎散 and all my illnesses are at once allayed.
高壁抵巖崕 Then high cliffs confront us, rough and huge,
洪濤越凌亂 as we ride the flooding waves, riotous and roiled.²²⁷
臨風獨迴首 Facing the wind, I turn my head alone,²²⁸
16 攬轡復三歎 then grasp the reins and repeatedly sigh.²²⁹

224 The "cloud-stream" is a name for the Milky Way. "Scattered" (*chachi* 差池) in the first line is a crux; it might mean that Du Fu's companions climb "slowly" aboard a boat.

225 The horse facing north recalls "Traveling On" 行行重行行 from the *Nineteen Old Poems* 古詩十九首: "The north-born horse leans towards the north wind; the bird of the south nests on a southern branch" 胡馬依北風，越鳥巢南枝。Du Fu similarly discussed his horse, in connection with an old poem, in "Ironhall Gorge," above. Gibbons' calls were associated with going through the Three Gorges; according to a common convention, hearing three such calls was supposed to make one shed tears.

226 This couplet echoes another old poem, the anonymous "Yan'ge Ballad" 艷歌行: "I tell you, do not look: if the water is clear, the rocks will be seen. The rocks are visible, how piled up they are! To travel far is not as good as returning home" 語卿且勿眊，水清石自見。石見何疊疊，遠行不如歸。The clarity of the waters also recalls the description of the Milky Way from the *Nineteen Old Poems*: "The River of Stars is clear and shallow, and the lovers only so far apart" 河漢清且淺，相去復幾許。Seeing "white sands" here at Whitesands Crossing echoes Du Fu's vision of an "iron hall" at Ironhall Gorge in poem #3 of the previous series.

227 The second line here might recall Cao Zhi's "Given to the Prince of Baima": "Floating in our boats, we cross flooding waves" 汎舟越洪濤。"Rough and huge" and "riotous and roiled" may intimate the violence of the age, which Du Fu recalled at the end of the corresponding poem in the previous series.

228 "Facing the wind" derives from the "Nine Songs" 九歌 of the *Songs of the Southlands*: "The goddess I gazed for has not come; facing the wind desolately, I sing out loud" 望美人兮未來，臨風愴兮浩歌。It is often a sign of desolation, sometimes resolution, in later verse. Du Fu also "turned his head" at the end of poem #3 in the previous series, albeit in a different sense.

229 "Clasping the reins" may recall Cao Zhi's "Given to the Prince of Baima": "I wish to return home, but there's no way to do so; grasping the reins, I pace back and forth" 欲還絕無蹊，攬轡止踟躕。"Grasping the reins" was also associated with a story about the Han-dynasty official Fan Pang 范滂 (2nd c., CE): when Fan was appointed to relieve a famine and put down a rebellion, he "grasped the reins" of his carriage, showing an ambition to right the world. "Repeated sighs" appear in much old poetry, including the *Nineteen Old Poems*.

水會渡 Merging Waters Crossing (#4)²³⁰

- | | | |
|----|-------|--|
| | 山行有常程 | Mountain journeys have set schedules, |
| | 中夜尚未安 | but at midnight we've yet to rest. ²³¹ |
| | 微月沒已久 | The faint moon sunk long ago; |
| 4 | 崖傾路何難 | the cliffs overhang, the road so hard. ²³² |
| | 大江動我前 | The vast river moves before me, |
| | 洶若溟渤寬 | surging broad as the northern seas. ²³³ |
| | 篙師暗理楫 | Here boatmen ply their darkling oars, |
| 8 | 謠嘯輕波瀾 | singing and whistling, making light of the waves. |
| | 霜濃木石滑 | The frost is heavy, trees and rocks slick; |
| | 風急手足寒 | the wind rushes, our hands and feet cold. ²³⁴ |
| | 入舟已千憂 | Boarding the boat, already a thousand worries, |
| 12 | 陟嶽仍萬盤 | and to climb the next precipice, ten-thousand more bends. ²³⁵ |
| | 迴眺積水外 | And when I gaze back beyond the massed waters |
| | 始知眾星乾 | only then do I know the many stars dry. ²³⁶ |

230 The location of this crossing is debated. Some commentators suggest that it was near the confluence of the Jialing River with the Quanjie River 泉街水 and the Badu River 八渡水; others, near the confluence of the Jialing River with the Yongning River 永寧河 and the Tianjia River 田家河, on the border of modern-day Liangdang county 兩當縣.

231 "Set schedules" recalls again Chen Lin's "Watering my Horse at a Pool by the Great Wall": "Official work has its set schedules, so lift your mallets to the rhythm of the sound." See "Saltwell" above, where, by contrast, the "set schedule" was applied to the workers, not to the poet.

232 This line once again recalls the *yuefu* title, "The Hardships of Shu's Roads." The couplet as a whole echoes a poem by Xie Lingyun: "Early here I hear the speeding of the evening wind, and late I see the glow of the morning sun. The cliffs overhang, so the light cannot linger; the forest is deep, so the echoes speed" 早聞夕颺急, 晚見朝日暝。崖傾光難留, 林深響易奔。

233 "The vast river" 大江 once again sounds much like "the Vast River," the Yangzi. "The northern seas" is literally Minghai and Bohai: a legendary ocean in the far north and the great bay in China's northeast. These lines thus seem to represent an exaggerated perception of the convergence of these smallish western rivers.

234 Here the rocks and trees are slick with frost; in poem #4 of the previous series, they were white with salt.

235 Beyond recalling the numerical figures of poem #4 in the previous series, this couplet continues the re-blending of the mental and the physical observed above in the third-to-last couplet of poem #3 in this series.

236 In the *Xunzi*, we read: "If you accumulate earth, you'll make a mountain; if you mass water, you'll make an ocean" 積土而為山, 積水而為海. In keeping with this ocean imagery, commentators cite here Cao Cao's 曹操 (155-220) "Observing the Gray Sea" 觀滄海: "The travels of sun and moon seem to come from its midst; the glowing river of stars seems to come from its depths" 日月之行, 若出其中。星漢燦爛, 若出其裏. The phrase "many stars" often has political resonances, deriving from Confucius' saying in the *Analects*: "Government should be accomplished through moral charisma, just as the north star remains still and the many stars wheel around it" 為政以德, 譬如北辰, 居其所而眾星共之. Note that the convergence of waters in this place, "Merging Waters Crossing," picks up the theme of things and their names that was also at issue in the corresponding group of four poems in the previous series.

- 遠遊令人瘦 These far travels make a man gaunt,
 16 衰疾慙加餐 yet declining and sick, I'd be ashamed to eat more.²³⁷

飛仙閣 Flying Immortals Plankway (#5)²³⁸

- 土門山行窄 At the earthgate, our mountain journey narrows;
 微徑綠秋毫 the faint path traces an autumn hair.²³⁹
 4 棧雲闌干峻 Plankways in the clouds, railings precipitous;
 梯石結構牢 ladders of stone, construction firm.
 萬壑欹踈竹 In ten-thousand gullies sparse bamboo lean;
 積陰帶奔濤 massed cold engulfing rushing waves.²⁴⁰
 8 寒日外淡泊 Beyond, the cold sun is wan and pale;
 長風中怒號 within, continuous winds howl with rage.²⁴¹
 歇鞍在地底 Resting my saddle on the land beneath,
 始覺所歷高 only then do I realize the heights we passed over.
 往來雜坐卧 Of those coming and going, some sit and some lie,
 12 人馬同疲勞 men and horses alike worn out.²⁴²
 浮生有定分 Our floating lives have their settled fates:

237 Presumably Du Fu would be ashamed to take more of the limited food his family has; note that food (salt) and greediness were also topics in poem #4 in the previous series. The language of this couplet recalls "Traveling on" from the *Nineteen Old Poems*: "Thinking of you makes a person old; suddenly my years grow late. Leave it though, don't talk of it anymore! Just do your best and make sure you eat more" 思君令人老，歲月忽已晚。棄捐勿復道，努力加餐飯。 "Far Travels" was also the name of one of the poems in the *Songs of the Southlands*.

238 Located on Flying Immortals Ridge 飛仙陵, about 15km to the east of modern-day Lüeyang County 略陽縣 in Shaanxi.

239 The *Zhuangzi* uses "autumn hairs" as a byword for tiny things in a famous quote about how the sage "levels things" 齊物. As the sage sees it, "In the whole world, there is nothing larger than the tip of an autumn hair, and great mountains are small" 天下莫大於秋豪之末，而大山為小. Contrast with this couplet the "cloud gate" in the second couplet of poem #5 in the previous series. Du Fu had vowed not to take any more "faint paths" in "Dharma Mirror Monastery."

240 This couplet may recall Gu Kaizi's 顧愷之 (344-406) famous description of Guiji in the southeast: "A thousand peaks compete to stand forth; ten-thousand gullies vie to flow" 千巖競秀，萬壑爭流. In the *Huainanzi*, we read that "massed cold becomes water" 積陰之寒氣為水.

241 "Wan and pale" can also describe a person's character, as "disinterested" or "apathetic." "Howl with rage" echoes the *Zhuangzi*: "When the Great Clod exhales breath, its name is wind. If only this would not start up! When it does, the ten-thousand hollows howl with rage" 夫大塊噫氣，其名為風，是唯無作，作則萬竅怒呿.

242 This line recalls Cao Pi's 曹丕 (187-226) "Ballad of Suffering from Cold" 苦寒行: "On we travel, further each day; men and horses starving together" 行行日已遠，人馬同時飢. It also recalls, and contrasts with, the friendly conversation in the wilderness that Du Fu had in poem #5 of the previous series.

- 飢飽豈可逃 hunger or satiety, how could one flee them?²⁴³
 歎息謂妻子 Sighing I say to wife and kids:
 16 我何隨汝曹 what am I doing, following you lot?²⁴⁴

五盤 Five Bends (#6)²⁴⁵

- 五盤雖云險 Although it's said Five Bends is perilous,²⁴⁶
 山色佳有餘 the mountains' colors are rich and fine.²⁴⁷
 仰凌棧道細 Gazing up, we pass over plankways thin;
 4 俯映江木疎 looking down, glimmers through river trees sparse.
 地僻無罟網 The land is remote, without seines or nets,
 水清反多魚 so in the clear waters are still many fish.²⁴⁸
 好鳥不妄飛 The splendid birds do not fly for nothing;
 8 野人半巢居 and half of the rustics here live in nests.²⁴⁹

243 "Floating life" echoes the *Zhuangzi*: "The life of a sage is the operation of heaven; his death is the transformation of things.... His life is as if floating, his death as if a rest" 聖人之生也天行，其死也物化... 其生若浮，其死若休. The idea that each thing had a settled "fate" or "portion" (*fen* 分) was central to the interpretation of the *Zhuangzi* offered by its most influential commentator, Guo Xiang 郭象 (d. 312).

244 Owen takes *sui* 隨 here as transitive: "How could I have brought you along?" Reading this as a joke provides a clearer contrast to the end of the corresponding poem in the previous series.

245 This is Five-Bend Ridge (also called Seven-Bend Ridge). Sources disagree on its exact location. Some suggest it was about eighty-five kilometers to the northeast of modern-day Guangyuan City 廣元市 in Sichuan, others about forty kilometers to the southwest of Ningqiang county 寧羌縣.

246 "Although it's said" echoes one of the *Nineteen Old Poems*: "Although it's said traveling is joyful, it's not as good as quickly returning home" 客行雖云樂，不如早旋歸. Du Fu might also be remembering Li Bai's "The Hardships of Shu's Roads" 蜀道難: "Though it's said Chengdu is wonderful, it would be better to quickly return home" 錦城雖云樂，不如早還家.

247 "The mountains' colors are ... fine" recalls one of Tao Qian's poems, "Drinking Ale #5" 飲酒其五, which reads (in some versions), "The mountains' colors are fine towards sunset, and the flying birds return together" 山色日夕佳，飛鳥相與還. Like poem #6 of the previous series, this poem will discuss the possibility of ending the journey—this time, in reclusion tinged with Daoist themes—before reaching its planned destination.

248 "Still" in this line references an old proverb: "When water is very clear there won't be fish in it, and a person of utmost perspicacity will have no companions" 水至清則無魚，人至察則無徒. According to the *Xici* 繫辭 commentary on the *Yijing*, "seines and nets" were two of the earliest inventions by the primal sage, Fu Xi 伏羲.

249 Du Fu might be thinking in this couplet of Tao Qian's "Return!": "The clouds have no aim in coming out from the peaks; the birds know to return when they get tired of flying" 雲無心而出岫，鳥倦飛而知還. In great antiquity, before the time of Fu Xi, an even earlier sage taught the people to live in nests. According to the *Zhuangzi*, "In ancient times, there were many beasts and few people, so the folk took to living in nests to avoid the beasts. In the daytime they gathered acorns and chestnuts, and at dusk they perched in the trees, and therefore they were called the people of [the sage called] Nest-Builder" 古者禽獸多而人少，於是民皆巢居以避之，晝拾橡栗，暮栖木上，故命之曰有巢氏之民.

- 喜見淳樸俗 I delight to see such untainted folkways,
 坦然心神舒 and, calming, mind and spirit relax.
 東郊尚格鬪 Yet in the eastern suburbs they still are fighting;
 12 巨猾何時除 when will the giant monster be slain?²⁵⁰
 故鄉有弟妹 In my hometown I had brothers and sisters,
 流落隨丘墟 but since they've fled, it's fallen to fox-mounds.
 成都萬事好 In Chengdu, of course, everything may be great,
 16 豈若歸吾廬 but how could it compare to returning to my hut?²⁵¹

龍門閣 Dragongate Plankway (#7)²⁵²

- 清江下龍門 The clear river descends through Dragongate,
 絕壁無尺土 sheer cliffs without a foot of dirt.²⁵³
 長風駕高浪 A steady wind harnesses high waves,
 4 浩浩自太古 surging in flood here from primeval times.²⁵⁴
 危途中縈盤 Our perilous path winds through its midst;
 仰望垂線縷 gazing upwards, it hangs like a fine thread.
 滑石欹誰鑿 Who bored the holes in the slanting slick stone

250 "Giant monster" comes from Zhang Heng's 張衡 (78-139) "Eastern Metropolis Rhapsody" 東京賦, where it referred originally to the usurper Wang Mang 王莽 (45 BCE-23 CE), who briefly overthrew the Han dynasty in the first century CE. Here the reference is to Shi Siming, the rebel general who at this point was occupying Luoyang. The phrase "eastern suburbs," which here refers to Luoyang, comes from an episode in the *Shangshu* wherein the state of Lu battled against the barbarians.

251 This line echoes the poems cited in the note appended to the first line of this verse. It also echoes the Tao Qian poem cited in the note to the second line, which begins: "I built my hut in the human realm, but there is no noise from carriages or horses" 結廬在人境，而無車馬喧. Tao frequently talked about his hut, as for instance in his "Reading the *Classic of Mountains and Seas*" 讀山海經: "The birds are happy to have a place to lodge, and I also love my hut" 眾鳥欣有託，吾亦愛吾廬. Note that "returning" 歸 was suggested by the cuckoo's call at the end of poem #6 in the last series as well, though the meaning of "return" here has shifted.

252 On Dragongate Mountain 龍門山, some forty kilometers to the northeast of modern-day Guangyuan City 廣元市, Sichuan.

253 The "river" here is still the Jialing River.

254 This couplet alludes to one of Guo Pu's "Roaming with the Immortals" poems 遊仙詩: "A boat-swallowing leviathan surges from the ocean floor, and harnesses high waves towards Penglai [the isle of the immortals]" 吞舟涌海底，高浪駕蓬萊. The second line may recall the description of the primeval flood in the *Shangshu*: "Destructive in their surging are the floodwaters, embracing the hills and overtopping the peaks, surging up to drown the heavens" 湯湯洪水方割，蕩蕩懷山襄陵，浩浩滔天. In suggesting that the flood continues here, despite having been stemmed in China by the early sage king Yu, this poem recalls the hints in the previous that this is a land unspoiled by civilization.

- 8 浮梁裊相拄 to support this swinging floating bridge?²⁵⁵
 目眩隕雜花 My eyes dazzle: myriad petals tumbling;
 頭風吹過雨 my head swims: the blow of passing rain.²⁵⁶
 百年不敢料 I dare not count on a hundred-year lifespan—
 12 一墜那得取 one slip and I'd never be brought back.
 飽聞經瞿塘 I've heard my fill about passing through Qutang,
 足見度大庾 and seen enough of traversing Dayu.²⁵⁷
 終身歷艱險 If to life's end I pass through ardors and perils,
 16 恐懼從此數 my count of terrors will start from here.²⁵⁸

石櫃閣 **Stonebox Plankway (#8)**²⁵⁹

- 季冬日已長 Winter's last month, each day grows longer;
 山晚半天赤 late in the mountains, half the sky's red.²⁶⁰

255 Generally, a “floating bridge” was on the water. I have translated as if Du Fu is using the term for the plankway on the cliffside here. Some commentators, however, take this to be a mountain-water couplet, in which case we would read: “The floating bridge swings between its supports.”

256 These lines are unclear, which might be part of the point. “My head swims” is literally, *toufeng* 頭風 “wind on my head,” but *toufeng* was also a Chinese medical term for various ailments ranging from headache to stroke. Commentators have disagreed about whether the passing rain and the falling flowers are analogies for Du Fu's terror or really part of the scene. There may perhaps be an allusion here to the story of the archery contest between Bohun Wuren and Lie Yukou in the *Zhuangzi*, already alluded to in “Treebark Ridge.” Though Lie Yukou was a talented archer, he could not compete with Bohun Wuren when the latter stood over the ledge of a towering precipice. Bohun Wuren commented, “The utmost man can ascend to peek into the azure heavens, descend and dive into the Yellow Springs, or travel throughout the eight directions, all without changing his composure. You, on the other hand, are terrified and your eyes are dazzled. Your ability to hit the target is done for!” 夫至人者，上闚青天，下潛黃泉，揮斥八極，神氣不變。今汝怵然有懼目之志，爾於中也殆矣夫。It is also possible that Du Fu is alluding here to the rain of flowers that accompanied sermons by the Buddha or Daoist divinities, and Daoist divinities were, moreover, sometimes depicted as resembling passing rain. Whether or not he was thinking of such depictions, however, he was equally dazzled by the mountain landscape in poem #7 of the previous series.

257 Qutang Gorge and Dayu Ridge, both in the south, were legendary for their perils; Dragongate seems to combine their respective watery and mountainous dangers. This enumeration of other mountains recalls the seventh and eighth couplets of “Springtime Gorge.”

258 The echoes between the ending of this poem and the ending of its counterpart in the previous series should be evident.

259 A famous section of the plankways to Shu, located at the southern edge of the Qianfo Mountain range 千佛山, just north of modern-day Guangyuan City.

260 According to Wang Yi's 王逸 (89-158) commentary on the *Songs of the Southlands*, the heaven of the southern direction was called the “Red Heaven” 南方赤天; this suggests that Du Fu is approaching his southern destination. Compare this opening to the “hurry of the brief light” in poem #8 of the previous series, as well as to the false warmth created by the rugged landscape in poem #2 of this one. The fact that he can now see the sky contrasts nicely with the opening of poem #5.

- 蜀道多早花 On the ways of Shu are many early flowers,
 4 江間饒奇石 in the rivers a wealth of strange rocks.²⁶¹
 石櫃曾波上 Stonebox above the tiered waves
 臨虛蕩高壁 overlooks a void scouring tall cliffs.²⁶²
 清暉迴群鷗 In the clear glow flocks of gulls return;
 8 暝色帶遠客 then darkness' colors engulf the far travelers.²⁶³
 羈棲負幽意 This sojourn betrays my desire for beauty;²⁶⁴
 感歎向絕跡 with sighs I face this land where tracks might end.²⁶⁵
 信甘孱懦嬰 In truth, though, I'm glad to be bound by timidity and fear,
 12 不獨凍餒迫 so as not to be compelled just by freezing and hunger.²⁶⁶
 優游謝康樂 You roamed easy, Xie Kangle;
 放浪陶彭澤 and you lived unrestrained, Tao of Pengze.²⁶⁷
 吾衰未自由 In my decline, I haven't achieved freedom;

261 This couplet may echo Jiang Yan's 江淹 "Imitation of Guo Pu's 'Roaming with the Immortals'" 郭弘農璞遊仙: "Upon the peaks are many numinous plants, and by the seaside a wealth of strange rocks" 崦山多靈草, 海濱饒奇石. Du Fu was seeking out "strange rocks" when he left Qinzhou.

262 The phrase "tiered waves" derives from the "Summons of the Recluse" in the *Songs of the Southlands*: "The auroras of the mountains loom up, the rocks are rough; the valleys are sheer cliffs, the water tiers its waves" 山氣龍嶠兮石嵯峨, 谿谷巖巖兮水曾波. The phrase "overlooks a void" derives from Guo Pu's "Rhapsody on the Yangzi."

263 The phrases "clear glow" and "darkness' color" appear together in Xie Lingyun's "Written on the Lake when Returning from my Vihāra on Stonecliff" 石壁精舍還湖中作: "From evening to dawn, the weather changes; the mountains and waters hold within a clear glow. This clear glow can give one pleasure; the traveler is entranced, and forgets to return. Coming out of the valley, the sun is still early; entering the boat, the light has become faint. Forested gullies collect the color of darkness; rosy clouds gather in evening mists..." 昏旦變氣候, 山水含清暉。清暉能娛人, 游子憺忘歸。出谷日尚早, 入舟陽已微。林壑斂暝色, 雲霞收夕霏. The poem goes on to suggest that when one's mind is happy, one will naturally harmonize with the truth of things.

264 "Beauty" here again translates *you* 幽, and again the meaning of "seclusion" is implied. Du Fu's sojourn betrays his desire to take up reclusion in a landscape that is both secluded and beautiful.

265 "Land where tracks might end" can also be "trackless land," a land where no one has been. For "tracks to end" would be equivalent to "hiding one's tracks," going into reclusion. It could also mean ending one's journey.

266 Commentators disagree whether "timidity and fear" are Du Fu's attributes or those of his family, though the echoes with poems #2 and #5 in this series suggest the latter interpretation. "Freezing and hunger" were what drove Du Fu out of Qinzhou.

267 Xie Lingyun and Tao Qian, poets of the late-fourth and early-fifth centuries, whose verse is recalled repeatedly throughout this series. Note that Du Fu also recalled previous poetry—*yuefu* ballads—in the eighth poem of the previous series. There too his recall of precedent verse was bound up with accepting his "wretched journey."

- 16 謝爾性有適 I yield to you in suiting your natures.²⁶⁸

桔柏渡 Bellflower and Cypress Crossing (#9)²⁶⁹

- | | | |
|----|-------|---|
| | 青冥寒江渡 | In the blue-dark over this cold river crossing, |
| | 駕竹為長橋 | bamboo's been harnessed into a long bridge. ²⁷⁰ |
| | 竿濕煙漠漠 | The railings are soaked in the billowing mist, |
| 4 | 江永風蕭蕭 | the river endless in the whistling wind. ²⁷¹ |
| | 連竿動嫋娜 | Linked ropes sway, sinuous and turning; |
| | 征衣颯飄颻 | our traveling clothes flutter and blow. |
| | 急流鵝鷖散 | Bustards and herons scatter in rushing currents; |
| 8 | 絕岸龜鼉驕 | turtles and alligators luxuriate on sheer banks. ²⁷² |
| | 西轅自茲異 | Our westward yoke from this point departs: |
| | 東逝不可要 | what goes off east cannot be asked along. ²⁷³ |
| | 高通荊門路 | Towering, it will connect to its Briargate road; |
| 12 | 闊會滄海潮 | widening, it will merge in the gray sea's tides. ²⁷⁴ |
| | 孤光隱顧眄 | Its lonely light hides from my backwards glance; |

268 "In my decline" once again echoes Confucius: "In my decline, I no longer dream of the Duke of Zhou." "I haven't achieved freedom" can also be translated, "things aren't up to me," or "I cannot do as I please." It may be possible to hear here a contrast with Confucius' autobiography: "At seventy, I followed my heart's desires, without transgressing the rules" 七十而從心所欲，不踰矩。 "Freedom" (自由) was, however, also a spiritual attainment in contemporary Buddhism and Daoism, roughly equivalent to "liberation." Du Fu was also thinking about the "settled fate" of his "floating life" in poem #5 of this series.

269 At the confluence of the Jialing River and the Bailong River 白龍江, near modern-day Zhaohuazhen 昭化鎮 in Guangyuan.

270 "Blue-dark"—that is, the sky—may echo the "Jiuzhang" 九章 from the *Songs of the Southlands*: "I took my stand in the blue-dark and unfurled a rainbow, then rushed onwards until I brushed against heaven" 據青冥而攬虹兮，遂儵忽而捫天。 In poem #9 of the previous series, the bamboo had been all used up to make arrow-hafts.

271 This couplet echoes "The Han River is Broad" 漢廣 from the *Shijing*: "The river is endless: it cannot be rafted" 江之永矣、不可方思。 The rocks and trees were wet (with frost) in poem #4 of this series.

272 These animals may recall the more phantasmagorical animals of poem #9 in the previous series; their ease may recall the boatmen in poem #4 of this one.

273 China's rivers all, proverbially, flowed east, and it would be by following this eastward flow that Du Fu could return home to the heartland. Note the echo of the arrow-hafts being sent east in poem #9 of the previous series, as well as the contrast to poem #3 in this one, where Du Fu joins up with the river he has been following ever since. The word "goes off" here echoes Confucius in the *Analects*: "The Master, standing by a stream, said: 'It just goes off like this, day and night, without ever stopping!'" 子在川上，曰：逝者如斯夫！不舍晝夜。 The reference was usually understood to be to time's passage.

274 Briargate (Jingmen) is a mountain in Hubei past which the Yangzi flows on its way to the sea.

- 遊子悵寂寥 the wanderer grows despondent in the silent vastness.²⁷⁵
 無以洗心胸 I've nothing left to wash my mind;
 16 前登但山椒 on the climb ahead are only mountain peaks.²⁷⁶

劍門 Swordgate (#10)²⁷⁷

- 惟天有設險 Of all the perils heaven has established
 劍門天下壯 under heaven, Swordgate is the grandest.²⁷⁸
 連山抱西南 Ranged mountains embrace the southwest;
 4 石角皆北向 the rocks' sharp horns all face north.²⁷⁹
 兩崖崇墉倚 The paired cliffs lean, towering fortifications,
 刻畫城郭狀 artfully fashioned to the shape of city walls.
 一夫怒臨關 With a single man in fury at this pass,
 8 百萬未可傍 a million could not get near him.²⁸⁰
 三皇五帝前 Back under the Three Thearchs and Five Godkings,
 雞犬各相放 everyone let their chickens and dogs run free.²⁸¹
 後王尚柔遠 But though later kings honored "kindness to the distant,"
 12 職貢道已喪 the way of tribute duties was already lost.²⁸²
 至今英雄人 Up to today, therefore, domineering men

275 Du Fu gazed backwards at the river in the penultimate couplet of "Merging Waters Crossing" as well. In that poem, the river itself seemed like a sea, and Du Fu held a rather different attitude towards it than he does here.

276 This couplet echoes the *Xici* commentary to the *Yijing*: "The sages used [the *Yijing*] to wash clean their minds" 聖人以此洗心. The river "washed away" Du Fu's "wretched cares" in poem #3 of this series.

277 Also named Liangshan 梁山, Swordgate Mountain is just to the north of modern-day Jiangge county 劍閣縣 in Sichuan.

278 This line echoes the *Yijing*: "The perils of heaven cannot be scaled; the perils of the earth are mountains and rivers, hills and ridges; and kings establish perils in order to preserve their kingdoms" 天險不可升也，地險山川丘陵也，王公設險以守其國. This couplet has a distinctly archaic ring owing to the prefatory particle *wei* 惟, which is similarly placed before "heaven" several times in the *Shangshu*.

279 Poem #10 in the previous series also discussed such a point of geographical division, and noted the "rock shapes" there.

280 This line echoes Zhang Zai's "Inscription on Swordgate": "One man holding a pike could make ten-thousand hesitate" 一人荷戟，萬夫趑趄. I have cut a couplet after this one that is included in all early manuscripts of this poem. For a discussion of my reasoning, and for the text of the cut couplet, see the introduction.

281 The "Three Thearchs and Five Godkings" are legendary Chinese sages of great antiquity, the creators of Chinese culture and civilization.

282 "Kindness to the distant" was a policy discussed by the sage king Shun in the *Shangshu*. The point here seems to be that Shu has often refused its obligation to submit to central authority, despite the generosity that has been shown it by the governments centered on the Central Plain.

- 高視見霸王 gaze haughtily, presenting themselves as overlord kings.²⁸³
 并吞與割據 They'll annex neighbors and hack off territory,
 16 極力不相讓 use the utmost force and never yield.
 吾將罪真宰 For this, I was about to fault the True Ruler,
 意欲鏟疊嶂 wanting him to level these layered barrier-peaks.²⁸⁴
 恐此復偶然 Yet perhaps this is, in fact, all chance;²⁸⁵
 20 臨風默惆悵 facing the wind, I silently despair.²⁸⁶

鹿頭山 Deerhead Mountain (#11)²⁸⁷

- 鹿頭何亭亭 Deerhead, rising straight up!
 是日慰飢渴 on this day it comforts my hunger and thirst.²⁸⁸
 連山西南斷 Linked mountains had cut off the southwest;
 4 俯見千里豁 but gazing down here, a thousand leagues open out.²⁸⁹
 遊子出京華 The wanderer who came from the capital,

283 This line is difficult to parse. It is also possible that these domineering men “look down on overlords and kings,” or improperly “see overlords as kings.”

284 The “True Ruler” is an idea from the *Zhuangzi*, of a hidden being in control of transformation. This couplet’s imagined destruction recalls the imagined construction at the end of poem #10 of the previous series.

285 The phrase translated “perhaps this is all by chance” has been given many different explanations by commentators. Owen suggests that what “happens by chance” are local rebellions, such as (presumably) the one underway in the northeast. Other commentators suggest reading, “I fear there will be a mischance”—that is, a rebellion in Shu. There would be such a rebellion shortly after Du Fu arrived, and he is clearly worried about the possibility in the next poem. Yet considering the expected correspondence between the beginning and end of the poem, it seems most likely that Du Fu is accepting here that Swordgate’s topography is a matter of chance, rather than design. He was also thinking about human significance in the landscape in the corresponding poem of the previous series, as well as in the third poem of this one.

286 “Facing the wind,” again, derives from the “Nine Songs” 九歌 of the *Songs of the Southlands*: “The beautiful one I gazed for has not come; facing the wind desolately, I sing out loud.” The phrase has a dramatically different meaning here, however, from its use at the end of poem #3.

287 In modern-day Luojiang County 羅江縣. According to legend, Pang Tong 龐統 (179-214, courtesy name: Mr. Phoenix-Chick 鳳雛先生) died on this mountain; one of its slopes was called, for this reason, “Fallen Phoenix Slope” 落鳳坡. The resonances with “Phoenix Terrace” in the previous series are evident.

288 Du Fu’s “hunger and thirst” also appeared in poem #5 of this series; it has, of course, been a major theme of both travel series since “Leaving Qin Prefecture.”

289 This couplet could also be read, as Owen does, to say that the mountains “break off to the southwest,” that is, that there are no more mountains in the Chengdu basin. Deerhead Mountain is, however, more or less in the middle of that basin, and even higher mountains are visible from it to the southeast.

- 劍門不可越 all the way to Swordgate, the uncrossable,²⁹⁰
 及茲阻險盡 Finds that, reaching this point, the perils end,
 8 始喜原野闊 and delights now at the wild plains' breadth.²⁹¹
 殊方昔三分 A foreign land, once one of three divisions,
 霸氣曾間發 where overlords' auras have sometimes shone forth.²⁹²
 天下今一家 These days, though, all the world's one family,
 12 雲端失雙闕 if at clouds' edge I've lost the paired towers.²⁹³
 悠然想楊馬 Faded in the distance I envision Yang and Ma,
 繼起名碑兀 appearing in succession, their fame towering up.²⁹⁴
 有文令人傷 Culture they had, enough to wound a man:
 16 何處埋爾骨 for where now have they buried your bones?²⁹⁵
 紆餘脂膏地 Winding abundantly, a rich and fertile land;
 慘澹豪俠窟 gloomy and dark, a lair for haughty bandits.²⁹⁶
 杖鉞非老臣 Were not the axe-holder here an old servant of the throne,

290 The word used for "the capital" here recalls Guo Pu's "Roaming with the Immortals": "The capital is a lair for roving bandits, so in the mountains and forests I sought to hide away" 京華遊俠窟，山林隱遯棲。 "Swordgate, the uncrossable," is literally, "Swordgate could not be crossed." This sort of hyperbole is common in old poems, and is also found in poems #2 and #5 of the previous series.

291 The contrast here with "Mudwork Mountain" is obvious, though it might be noted that both poems dwell upon the importance of human "work" in taming the landscape. The ease of the journey described here also contrasts with poem #2 of this series, where the "ardors and perils" of the road were "not easy to tell." There is also a verbal parallel in this couplet to the fifth couplet of poem #5; to render this parallel in translation, we might read (more awkwardly) "and delights *only now* at the wild plains' breadth."

292 Shu was one of the Three Kingdoms in the period after the fall of the Han. The "aura of an overlord" is that of a regional strongman—not a true emperor. Du Fu was also interested in the question of China's wholeness in poem #2 of this series.

293 "All the world's one family" derives from the *Liji*: "The sages made all the world one family, and the central states as if a single man" 故聖人耐以天下為一家，以中國為一人。 The "paired towers" are the guard-towers of the imperial palace, back in Chang'an; this reference may echo one of the *Nineteen Old Poems*: "The two palaces [of emperor and empress] gaze upon each other from afar, their paired towers over a hundred feet high" 兩宮遙相望，雙闕百餘尺。 "At clouds' edge" may echo one of the *Five Old Poems* 古詩五首: "The fair one is at clouds' edge, but the paths of heaven are sundered, and there's no date set for meeting" 美人在雲端，天路隔無期。

294 "Yang and Ma" refers to Sima Xiangru (179-117 BCE) and Yang Xiong 揚雄 (53 BCE-18 CE), two famous Han-dynasty writers from the Shu region.

295 "Culture" (文) also means "literary writings." The graves of Yang Xiong and Sima Xiangru were both thought to be in or near Chengdu. Du Fu is mulling the question of literary immortality here, whereas he was thinking about more literal forms of immortality in poems #2 and #5 in this series. He was also thinking about poets in poem #8.

296 "A lair for haughty bandits" recalls again Guo Pu's "Roaming with the Immortals": "The capital is a lair for roving bandits, so in the mountains and forests I sought to hide away." "Winding abundantly" is sometimes a description for a rich literary style, like that of Yang Xiong or Sima Xiangru.

- 20 宣風豈專達 how could he take charge of spreading its edifying influence?²⁹⁷
冀公柱石姿 This Duke of Ji, he could be a pillar of state;
論道邦國活 with him planning the way, the kingdom will survive.²⁹⁸
斯人亦何幸 What great fortune it is for this people—
24 公鎮踰歲月 may his pacifying influence last the years.²⁹⁹

成都府 Chengdu Superior Prefecture (#12)³⁰⁰

- 翳翳桑榆日 Shaded, the sun of mulberry and elm,
照我征衣裳 shining on our traveling clothes.³⁰¹
我行山川異 Our journeys have changed the hills and streams;
4 忽在天一方 suddenly I am at one edge of the sky.³⁰²
但逢新人民 And here, all I meet are new people;

297 The axe-holder is the regional commander, an axe having been given in antiquity as a sign of martial authority. There is a marked tension between “spreading [the throne’s] cultural influence” and “taking charge”: on the one hand, the commander governs on behalf of the emperor; on the other, he does so unsupervised. This tension is sustained throughout the last three couplets of the poem.

298 Original note: “Vice Director Pei Mian, the Duke of Ji” 僕射裴冀公冕. Pei was the current military commander of the region. “Planning the way” derives from the *Shangshu*: “The three highest civil offices plan the way and rule the kingdoms, and they put in order *yin* and *yang*” 茲惟三公，論道經邦，變理陰陽. It is unclear whether “the kingdom” refers to the Shu region or to the Tang state as a whole.

299 “This people” is ambiguous. It could refer to the people of Shu, or to “This People,” the Chinese people as a whole.

300 Chengdu had been made a “Superior Prefecture” when it was entitled the Southern Capital in 756, after Emperor Xuanzong fled there from An Lushan’s rebels.

301 “Mulberry and elm” is a figure for the evening sun, which seems to hover in the tips of their branches. It was an old proverb that if one was unsuccessful early in life, “losing it in the eastern corner, one could get it back in mulberry and elm” 失之東隅，收之桑榆, i.e., in one’s sunset years. This couplet once again echoes Tao Qian’s “Return!”: “The sun is shaded and about to set; I brush against lonely pines and pace back and forth. Let me return to reclusion!” 景翳翳以將入，撫孤松而盤桓，歸去來兮. There may also be an echo of one of Ruan Ji’s “Yonghuai” 詠懷 poems: “Burning brightly, the sun falling in the west; its lingering glow shines on my clothes” 灼灼西隤日，餘光照我衣. Ruan’s poem contrasts the cushy life of officials with the ardors of reclusion.

302 “At one edge of the sky” is a phrase found in several old poems. In the Li Ling 李陵 (d. 74 BCE) corpus, for example, we read “I will part far off from my good friend, each of us at one edge of the sky” 良友遠別離，各在天一方. In Xu Gan’s 徐幹 (171-218) “Chamber Thoughts” 室思, we read: “I recall parting from my lord for life, each of us at one edge of the sky” 念與君生別，各在天一方. Being at “one edge of the sky” contrasts with Du Fu’s fantasy of the phoenix “circling the world’s eight extremes” in poem #12 of the previous series.

- 未卜見故鄉 no divining when I'll see my hometown.³⁰³
 大江東流去 The great river flows off east;
 8 遊子去日長 the wanderer's days gone grow long.³⁰⁴
 曾城填華屋 Tiered walls packed with ornate roofs;
 季冬樹木蒼 in winter's last month, the trees gray-green.³⁰⁵
 喧然名都會 A bustling racket in this famed metropolis,
 12 吹簫聞笙簧 where flutes play, interspersed with reeds.³⁰⁶
 信美無與適 Though lovely indeed, there's no one here suits me;
 側身望川梁 I hunch, gazing from the river bridge.³⁰⁷
 鳥雀夜各歸 At nightfall each little bird returns;

303 "New people" recalls the friendships that were neither "long or deep" in poem #1 of this series. The phrase used for "people" here is, however, slightly odd in its generality. It does not sound like he is meeting unfamiliar individuals, but rather almost a whole new race or species. "The people" (人民) was usually the term for the population of the empire, and may suggest in the context of the last two poems that Du Fu is worried Sichuan may not remain part of the Tang. Du Fu was also thinking about his hometown in poem #6 of this series.

304 The association in this couplet of the river's flow and the passage of time may derive, again, from the *Analekts*: "The Master stood above a stream, and said, 'What passes is just like this: it does not stop, day or night.'" "Days gone grow long" might perhaps recall Lu Ji's 陸機 (261-303) "Short Song" 短歌行: "Duckweed glows in the springtime, and orchids are fragrant in fall. The days they're around are bitterly short; the days they're gone are bitterly long" 蘋以春暉，蘭以秋芳。來日苦短，去日苦長. The poem as a whole is a lament for the brevity of human life. It is also possible that Du Fu is saying the days have begun to grow longer with the approach of spring and his progress south, a theme he mentioned in poem #8 of this series.

305 "Tiered walls" refers literally to the elaborate mansions of Chengdu, but "Tiered-Walls" 曾城 was also the name of the legendary city of the immortals in the Kunlun Mountains. The contrast with the dwellings in poem #6 of this series is thus multifaceted. "Ornate roofs" might also recall Cao Zhi's description of death in "Lay of the Harp" 箏篴引: "I was born under an ornate roof, but fallen like a leaf, I return to the hills" 生在華屋處，零落歸山丘. Note that Du Fu was hoping to find trees that would not "yellow or shed" in winter all the way back in "Leaving Qin Prefecture," the poem that launched him on the travels he is now bringing to an end. There, however, he was fleeing the "human affairs" that press in around him here in this metropolis.

306 This line recalls the legend of Flutemaster 蕭史, who seduced Nongyu 弄玉, the daughter of Duke Mu of Qin 秦穆公 (d. 621 BCE). Flutemaster used his flute to call down a phoenix, upon which he and Nongyu rode off together into immortality. The invocation of this story here cannot but recall "Phoenix Terrace," the final poem of the previous series.

307 "Though lovely indeed" is a phrase with a rich history in the poetic tradition. It originates in the "Lisao" 離騷, in the *Songs of the Southlands*, marking the moment when the speaker (generally understood to be the exile Qu Yuan) gives up on courting the goddess Fufei. It is also found in Wang Can's "Rhapsody on Climbing a Tower," which describes Wang's flight south to escape the disorder in the northlands: "Although lovely indeed, this isn't my land; how could I stay here even a short time?" 雖信美而非吾土兮，曾何足以少留. The "river bridge" in question is Ten-Thousand-League Bridge 萬里橋, so named because Fei Yi 費禕 (d. 253) once parted from his friend Zhuge Liang 諸葛亮 (d. 234) here, saying, "A journey of ten thousand miles begins from this bridge" 萬里之路，始於此行. "Hunching one's body" was a traditional sign of circumspection in dangerous circumstances, going all the way back to the *Shijing*.

- 16 中原杳茫茫 the Central Plain is dark in the vastness.³⁰⁸
 初月出不高 The new moon comes out, not high;
 眾星尚爭光 the many stars still compete in brightness.³⁰⁹
 自古有羈旅 Yet sojourners there've been since ancient times:
 20 我何苦哀傷 so why should wretched sorrows wound me?³¹⁰

308 The return of the birds may recall once again Tao Qian's "On Poor Scholars": "Lazy and slow, the pinions coming forth from the wood, and before it is dusk they have returned again." Or it might recall his "Return!": "The birds know to return when they get tired of flying."

309 This couplet echoes the *Huainanzi*: "When the sun comes out, the stars cannot be seen; this is because they cannot compete with its brightness" 日出星不見，不能與之爭光也。As noted previously, "many stars" often has political resonances, suggesting the ideal subordination of all ministers to the emperor. "Compete in brightness" may also have connotations of literary immortality as well, since the exile poet Qu Yuan was said to "compete with the sun and moon in brightness" 日月爭光。As noted in the introduction, this penultimate couplet recalls the corresponding couplet in "Leaving Qin Prefecture."

310 Du Fu was thinking about ancient travelers in the first couplet of this series as well. And besides its callback to "though it wounds me to sojourn so far from home" in "Leaving Qin Prefecture," the final line may recall "Cultivating Longevity" 養壽, a text included in the *Biographies of the Immortals* 神仙傳 and purportedly authored by the long-lived Peng Zu 彭祖: "Worry, sadness, and sorrows wound men" 憂愁悲哀傷人。Alternately, it may recall one of Ruan Ji's "Yonghuai" poems: "I am a sojourner without any friends; looking around, I harbor sorrows and wounds within" 羈旅無疇匹，俛仰懷哀傷。In that case, we might translate, "why should I suffer sorrows and wounds?" The present rendition is intended to highlight the contrast with Du Fu's self-destructive fantasy in poem #12 of the previous series.