

Songs of Kuan Han-ch'ing

A new poetic form which flourished and enjoyed great popularity in thirteenth-century China, the ch'ü (曲) was the chief component of Yuan drama, and the writing of it was confined to no one school of poets. In traditional terminology, the ch'ü includes hsi-ch'ü (戲曲), songs written for the drama and sung on the stage with dialogues inserted in between, and san-ch'ü (散曲), lyrical songs written as individual pieces, commonly performed as solos or duets in teahouses, market places, brothels or wherever people gathered. Invigorated by the infusion of colloquial language, these songs attained much spontaneity, as is manifested in the two selections presented here. Well-loved for their vivacious rendering of human sentiments, the songs of Kuan Han-ch'ing (A.D. 1224-1297) represent no mean portion of the works of the great dramatist who has given us Injustice to Tou O and over sixty other plays.

SOMETIMES

Her lovely coiffure flows up like a cloud,
A tiny foot peeks from its red silken cover.
This is no wild flower that grows by the road.
Curses to you, handsome, bothersome lover!
 Sometimes he's hard to take,
 Sometimes he's not.

Outside the green-gauze window stirs not a soul;
He kneels by the bed all ready for embrace.
She calls him heartless and turns coldly away.
Her words, 'tis true, are reproachful to his face.
 But sometimes she's hard to get,
 Sometimes she's not.

A graceful plume curls from the cold silver lamp,
Behind the bed-curtains my tears won't abate.
To sleep all alone takes the joy out of life.
With only a thin quilt for a mate—
 Though sometimes it's warm enough,
 Sometimes it's not.

My lover is such an affectionate thing,
He worries a girl till she's weary and grey.
Whatever he had to say, he's got me fooled.
So how could I know when we play—
 That sometimes he's really true
 Sometimes he's not.

—ALLEN P. ALSOP, trans.

題情

雲鬢霧鬢勝堆鴉
淺露金蓮簌絳紗
不比等閑牆外花
罵你箇俏冤家
一半兒難當一半兒耍

碧紗窗外靜無人
跪在床前忙要親
罵了箇負心回轉身
雖是我話兒嗔
一半兒推辭一半兒肯

銀臺燈滅篆烟殘
獨入羅幃掩泪眼
乍孤眠好教人情興懶
薄設設被兒單
一半兒溫和一半兒寒

多情多緒小冤家
迢逗得人來憔悴煞
說來的話先瞞過咱
怎知他
一半兒真實一半兒假

閑適

適意行
安心坐
渴時飲飢時餐醉時歌
困來時就向莎茵卧
日月長
天地闊
閑快活

舊酒投
新醅潑
老瓦盆邊笑呵呵
共山僧野叟閑吟和
他出一對雞
我出一箇鵝
閑快活

意馬收
心猿鎖
跳出紅塵惡風波
槐陰午夢誰驚破
離了利名場
鑽入安樂窩
閑快活

南畝耕
東山卧
世態人情經歷多
閑將往事思量過
賢的是他
愚的是我
爭甚麼

關漢卿散曲二首

LOAFING'S FUN!

Strolling's fine,
 Sitting's the thing.
 My thirst is wined, my hunger dined: when drunk I sing.
 Feeling weary, I use the greensward as my bedding.
 Days so long,
 World so wide.
 Loafing's fun!

Old wine's gone.
 New hooch—done.
 We laugh ha! ha! round the old crock's rim.
 Hill priests and hermits all, raising voice in song.
 He has a brace of chickens,
 And I've a goose, so come:
 Loafing's fun!

The horses in my head are tamed.
 The apes of my desires are chained.
 I've quit the busy world where ill wind's blowing.
 Who'll spoil my noontime dreams neath branches spreading?
 I've fled ambition's market,
 And built a nest to rest in.
 Loafing's fun!

There's ploughing in the field;
 and sleeping on the hill.
 Of the world's affairs, and men's, I have known my fill.
 At ease now, over bygone days I mull.
 They're the wise uns,
 I'm the fool.
 Why quarrel?

—C. GODWIN, *trans.*