

Translations by Graeme Wilson

The golden treasury of T'ang and Sung poetry never ceases to have its fascination for Western poets and poetry lovers. In this and the following pages is another small sampler in which Wei Ying-wu, Li Po, Lu Yu, Meng Chiao, Po Chü-i and Hsin Ch'i-chi are represented—mostly by familiar and much-loved pieces. The translations are the work of an Englishman who writes poetry as an avocation and also translates from the Japanese and the Korean. The reader may be interested in comparing Mr. Wilson's interpretation of the Hsin Ch'i-chi ts'u with John Turner's version which appeared in Renditions No. 1.

NIGHT

Where does the darkness come from?
Where does it go, the light?
All that I know is that half my ageing
Happens under night.

Wei Ying-wu

詠夜
韋應物
明從何處去
暗從何處來
但覺年年老
半是此中催

A NIGHT WITH FRIENDS

That we may purge
the world's unending sadness
Let's linger here
and drink ten barrels dry.
This night's sheer sheen
invites long conversations,
The moon's too bright
for sleep to ease one's eye
But, safely drunk,
let's bed on this bare mountain
Our pillow earth,
our coverlet the sky.

Li Po

友人會宿
李白
滌蕩千古愁
留連百壺飲
良宵宜清談
皓月未能寢
醉來卧空山
天地即衾枕

THE GATEWAY OF THE SWORD

My robe is wet with stains of drink
 cross-smirched with travel-stains.
 However far I journey,
 all places leave me bored.

How much of a poet am I?

Dank in the drizzling rains,
 I drift on this lonely donkey
 through the Gateway of the Sword.

Lu Yu

劍門道中遇微雨
 陸游
 衣上征塵雜酒痕
 遠遊無處不消魂
 此身合是詩人未
 細雨騎驢入劍門

登樂遊原
 杜牧
 長空澹澹孤鳥沒
 萬古消沉向此中
 看取漢家何事業
 五陵無樹起秋風

BIRD

A single bird gone from the sky's pale span.
 By this let all man's works and ends be known.
 Where are the wonders wrought by the House of Han?
 Through five bare tombs the winds of autumn moan.

Tu Mu

RISKS

Avoid sharp swords and lovely women.

Swords that are brought too near
 Will slice the hand. Too close a beauty
 Can cost the heart too dear.
 The road's worst threat is not its length,
 Ten yards can break a wheel,
 And the risk of love is not in loving
 Too many times. The real
 Peril is that a single night
 May pierce more deep than steel.

Meng Chiao

偶作
 孟郊
 利劍不可近 美人不可親
 利劍近傷手 美人近傷身
 道險不在廣 十步能摧輪
 情愛不在多 一夕能傷神

WISDOM

Those who talk know nothing:
Those who know keep mum.

From Lao Tzu, so one is told,
These words of wisdom come
But, if one is to grant
His wisdom was not wrong,
How comes it Lao Tzu wrote books
Five thousand symbols long?

Po Chü-i

讀老子
白居易
言者不知知者默
此語吾聞於老君
若道老君是知者
緣何自著五千文

TOWER

When I was young and did not know
Grief's tartly burning tang
I used to climb this platformed tower
And, in the heart's harangue,
Pretend a grief I did not feel
To power the songs I sang.

Now that I know the taste of grief,
How much it burns away,
I could, but will not, sing of it.

Instead, I simply say
"How clear the air of autumn is,
How cool this autumn day."

Hsin Ch'i-Chi

醜奴兒
辛棄疾
少年不識愁滋味
愛上層樓爲賦新詞強說愁
而今識盡愁滋味
欲說還休卻道天涼好個秋