

# Six Poems by Wang An-Shih

Translated by James J. Y. Liu

*Wang An-shih (王安石 1021-1086), was one of those formidable scholar-statesmen in the Sung Dynasty who not only made their marks in history but also left behind great bodies of literary works. Posterity remembers Wang An-shih for the drastic political and economic reforms which he instituted while being known as the "Stubborn Prime Minister" under Emperor Shen Tsung. His policies were controversial among the people and pitted him against such worthy adversaries as Su Tung-P'o and Ssu-ma Kuang. From a total of some 1,300 poems in Wang An-shih's collected works, Lin-ch'uan hsien-sheng wen-chi (臨川先生文集), Professor Liu has selected and translated the following for our readers.*

## NEW FLOWERS

Old age has few joys or comforts,  
Let alone lying sick in bed.  
Drawing water to put new flowers in,  
I hope to console myself with the floating fragrance.  
The floating fragrance lasts only a moment,  
And I too — how can I endure long?  
The new flowers and the old I  
Are all over, and both may be forgotten.

已新我流取汲况老  
矣花亦芳慰水復年新  
兩興豈祇以置病少花  
可故久須流新在忻  
忘吾長與芳花牀豫

## TWO IMPROMPTU POEMS

## 1.

The cloud rises from the Chung Mountain,  
And yet returns to the Chung Mountain.  
May I ask people in the mountain:  
Where, now, is that cloud?

雲	借	却	雲	
今	問	入	從	即
在	山	鍾	鍾	事
何	中	山	山	二
處	人	去	起	首

## 2.

The cloud comes from unconsciousness,  
And still returns to unconsciousness.  
Unconsciousness is nowhere to be found:  
Don't seek where unconsciousness is.

無	莫	還	雲	
心	覓	向	從	二
無	無	無	無	
處	心	心	心	
尋	處	去	來	

## DYEING CLOUDS

Dyeing clouds to make willow leaves,  
Cutting water to form pear blossoms:  
If it weren't for the spring wind's skills,  
How could we have the glory of the year?

何	不	剪	染	
緣	是	水	雲	染
有	春	作	為	雲
歲	風	梨	柳	
華	巧	花	葉	

*SOUTHERN SHORES*

Along the southern shore I followed the flowers;  
Turning back my boat, I've lost my way.  
Hidden fragrance is nowhere to be found;  
The sun sets west of the painted bridge.

日 暗 迴 南  
落 香 舟 浦 南  
畫 無 路 隨 浦  
橋 覓 已 花  
西 處 迷 去

*AMIDST THE BAMBOOS*

Amidst the bamboos I built a thatched hut against the rocks.  
Where the bamboo stalks are sparse I see the village in front.  
Lying at ease all day — no one comes here——  
I have the spring wind to sweep the ground before the door.

自 閑 竹 竹  
有 眠 徑 裏  
春 盡 踈 編 竹  
風 日 處 茅 裏  
爲 無 見 倚  
掃 人 前 石  
門 到 村 根