



In the Same Light

200 Poems for Our Century

From the Migrants & Exiles
of the Tang Dynasty

Translations by Wong May

The Song Cave

“A fugitive will come to you to report to you the news,
Your mouth will be opened to the fugitive, and you shall speak
And be no longer mute.”

— Ezekiel 24:26–27

“Is this the time of translation?
The translated poem — the migrant
Living in an alien house.”

— Ali Ahmad Said Esber

“Build fire
and read the future in smoke.”

— W. G. Sebald

“A mountain keeps its echo,
That is how I hold your voice.”

— Rumi

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~ LIU ZONGYUAN

At Yellow Stream, Hearing an Ape

My path winds along the winding stream.
The stricken ape,
Where is it wailing?
The poor old officer who did a term at the emperor's court
Has no more tears to shed.

You are making sad noises in vain.

River Snow

Mountains —

No birds arise

Footpaths —

Run

Out

Of

Footprints

Lone boat —

Straw cloak /

Bamboo hat

Man

Seen

Casting

Cold river snow

*Autumn Morning in the Southern Valley,
Passing a Deserted Village*

Depth of autumn,
The dew that was
Is now heavy frost.

At dawn I walked south to the hidden valley.
Yellow leaves have covered both bridge & creek.
Ancient trees only

Remain
In the village.

Icy blossoms blow about,
Disparate, each to each.
The sound of water is remote but audible.

I have long forgotten what was on my mind.
So what was it
That startled the marshland deer?

*Early Morning Reading Buddhist Texts
with Zhao at His Temple*

Water drawn from the well
Chills the teeth —

The mouth opens.

Sit brushing the coat of
Its dust

& dust
Off the coat —

Heart goes quiet.

Out for a random walk
From the East Wing study

Broadleaf sutra in hand
Hear my own voice
Word for word —

Learning the text
On foot

Forgetting the discourse,
Stumble
Upon the source.

The lost trail to the origin
We all partake of.

If the fables of old
Were anything to go by,

Nature, vanished Nature
May even
Be found back in us?

In the abbot's silent courtyard,
The color of moss
Leads one
Deeper into the bamboo grove.

Sunrise:

Dew,
Mist, nothing amiss.

The green pines
Look twice bathed.

Coming off speech
& words
I come to,

Glad of the heart's gladness.

*Passing the Northern Pool by the Creek After Rain
at Dawn*

Last night's clouds
Dispersed
On the shoal

Dawn moon broaches
 An obscure village

By the clear pond
A tall tree

Shakes itself
Shakes off the night rain

Troubled by little
 Today

 Haply a guest
 Am I

 The tree haply
 My host

Life by the Brookside

Long have I held
My post in the world

Banished
By royal decree
To the south
Wasn't lucky
I got lucky

A guest of the woodland
In a neighborhood
 Of woodsmen
& easeful smallholders
 Am glad —
I look like one.

At dawn
Lift the morning dew to
Trim weeds

& night
 With the sound of water over stones
In the creekbed

 A boat passes,
Pass
 The night.

I come & go
 Seeing no one

Will sing long
 Likely
Of the blue skies of Zhou.

Farewell to My Brother

Desolation & gloom. What is left of the soul?
What tears I had not shed

We wept together into the River Yue.

Demoted
Bodily, 6,000 *li* from home & country
Twelve years in the wilderness of Guangxi
— As many times left for dead;
In Guilin
The sickly vapor of the swamp
Dark as splashed ink.

Where you are in the south
— Late spring
Tell me
The Lake of Dongting
Is it every bit a picture
 Of the sky?

If you want to know
Where in my dreams I go

Look no further than
 The mist on the trees
 At the city gate of Jing,

 I dream but
 to come as close.

~ DU FU

Riverside Village

The clear stream hugs the village as it bends.
Our long summer in the nook.
Swallows on the rafters
Boldly
Come & go.
Wading birds on the water
Befriend each other,
Hold still.
My old wife draws a chessboard on a piece of paper.
The youngest son bangs on a bodkin
To make a fishhook.

Ill, I take what medicine
I can afford.

What more can a man's
Humble body
Ask for in the world?

Gladness of Rain on a Spring Night

The good rain bides its time

— Naught falls but with spring

Steals in like a breeze

In the night

Lying soundlessly wet on all things

The good rain

Where the path to the woods ran
Ragged

Clouds at both ends black

With the fisherman's lights on the river
Like a fire in water

Dawn sees red

The good rain

Weighing in
On the brocade of the royal city
Rightly
Hordes of
The unwashed
Sodden flowers

On the Heights

High wind, sheer sky, stricken cries of gibbons.
The cove clean-clear / sand, white,
Birds wheel overhead winging back.

Into the Three Gorges the forest shreds
Itself / headlong, swishing
Leaves, boughs

The Yangtze rolls on
Gaining on us.

Autumn finds me on foot again
A wayfarer
 In my advanced years
Often ill on the journey,
I climb the terrain this once
On my own.

Hardships
The unendurable endured
All is as frost to the grizzled head.

Newly
 Bereft of liquor,
I totter about the heights, falling hard
On an empty jar.