LI CH'ING-CHAO:
COMPLETE POEMS

Translated and edited by
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and
LING CHUNG

A NEW DIRECTIONS BOOK
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I bought a spray of Spring in bloom
From a flower carrying pole.
It is covered with tiny teardrops
That still reflect the pink clouds of dawn
And traces of morning dew.
Lest my lover should think
The flowers are lovelier than my face
I pin it slanting in my thick black hair
And ask him to compare us.

ATTRIBUTED TO LI CH'ING-CHAO

TO THE TUNE "PICKING MULBERRIES"

It is turning dark,
Sudden wind and rain
Wash away the blazing sunlight.
I play the mouth organ for awhile,
And then lightly powder myself
Before the water-flower ornamented mirror.
In my transparent purple silk nightgown
My white skin glows,
Fragrant and smooth as snow.
I smile to my love and say,
"Tonight within the gauze curtains
Our pillows and mats will be cool."

ATTRIBUTED TO LI CH'ING-CHAO

TWO SPRINGS
TO THE TUNE "SMALL RILLS"

Spring has come to the women's quarter.
Once more the new grass is kingfisher green.
The cracked red buds of plum blossoms
Are still unopened little balls.
Blue-green clouds carve jade dragons.
The jade powder becomes fine dust.
I try to hold on to my morning dream.
I have already drained and broken
The cup of Spring.
Flower shadows lie heavy
On the garden gate.
In the orange twilight
Pale moonlight spreads
On the translucent curtain.
Three times in two years
My lord has gone away to the East.
Today he returns,
And my joy is already
Greater than the Spring.
FAREWELL LETTER TO MY SISTER
SENT FROM AN INN AT LO CHANG
TO THE TUNE "BUTTERFLIES LOVE FLOWERS"

I wipe away my tears
And stain my silk sleeves with rouge and powder.
Over and over I sing the four verses
Of "Sunlight on the Pass."
You said we would be separated
By endless mountains and waters.
Hsiao! Hsiao! I listen to the fine rain
All alone in a lonely inn.
My heart was so troubled at our separation
That I forgot to give you a parting cup for the journey.
So I send you this letter by the wild geese.
At least Shantung Province is not
A far-off island in the Eastern Sea.

TO THE TUNE "YOU MOVE IN FRAGRANCE"

The sky turns,
The Autumn light turns,
And my heart aches.
I visit the golden flowers
And realize that the Ninth Day of the Ninth Month
Will soon be here.
I try on a new dress
And taste the new green thick wine.
By turns the weather is windy, rainy, and chilly.
As the orange twilight fills the courtyard
I am overwhelmed with anxiety.
The wine awakens all the sorrow of the past in my breast.
How can I bear the endless night,
The full moon's light on our empty bed,
The sound of the fullers' mallets,
Beating cloth for winter,
The shrill crying of the crickets,
And the lingering notes of the bugles?
Is it true that our people left behind in the occupied territories are still planting mulberry trees and hemp?
Is it true that the rear guard of the Barbarians only patrols the city walls?

This widow’s father and grandfather were born in Shantung.
Although they never held high office, their fame spread wide and far.
I remember when they carried on animated discussions with other scholars by the city gate,
The listeners were so crowded that their sweat fell like rain.
Their offspring crossed the Yangtze River to the South many years ago.
Drifting in the rapids, they mingled with refugees.
I send blood-stained tears to the mountains and rivers of home.
And sprinkle a cup of earth on East Mountain.
I imagine when Your Lordship, His Majesty’s envoy,
upholding the Imperial spirit, passes through our two capitals, Kai Feng and Lo Yang.
Thousands of people would line the streets and present tea and bread to welcome you.
The peach trees in the Palace of Everlasting Prosperity will bloom all over.
The magnolias on the Flower Calyx Tower will no longer flutter in dismay.
Announce that the Emperor’s heart aches for the suffering people—they are his own children.

Let them understand that the Will of Heaven remembers all living beings.
Our sagacious Emperor offers his trust which is as brilliant as the sun.
There is no need to negotiate many times after the long chaos of the years.

A SATIRE ON THE LORDS
WHO CROSSED THE YANGTSZ
IN FLIGHT FROM THE CHIN TROOPS

Alive we need heroes among the living
Who when dead will be heroes among the ghosts.
I cannot tell how much we miss Hsiang Yu
Who preferred death to crossing to the East of the River.
TO THE TUNE "EVERLASTING JOY"

The sun sets in molten gold.
The evening clouds form a jade disk.
Where is he?
Dense white mist envelops the willows.
A sad flute plays "Falling Plum Blossoms."
How many Spring days are left now?
This Feast of Lanterns should be joyful.
The weather is calm and lovely.
But who can tell if it
Will be followed by wind and rain?
A friend sends her perfumed carriage
And high-bred horses to fetch me.
I decline the invitation of
My old poetry and wine companion.
I remember the happy days in the lost capital.
We took our ease in the women's quarters.
The Feast of Lanterns was elaborately celebrated—
Gold pendants, emerald hairpins, brocaded girdles,
Now anhes—we competed
To see who was most smartly dressed.
Now I am withering away,
Wind-blown hair, frosty temples.
I am embarrassed to go out this evening
Among girls in the flower of youth.
I prefer to stay beyond the curtains,
And listen to talk and laughter
I can no longer shun.

BIOGRAPHY OF LI CH'ING-CHAO

Li Ch'ing-chao (1084-1155) is universally considered
to be China's greatest woman poet. Her life was colorful
and versatile: other than a great poet, she was a scholar
of history and classics, a literary critic, an art collector, a
specialist in bronze and stone inscriptions, a painter, a
calligrapher, and a political commentator. Li is reputed
to be the greatest writer of t'ieh poetry, a lyric verse form
written to the popular tunes of the Sung Dynasty (960-
1279). Her t'ieh poems are full of lucid imagery, refined
and highly suggestive. In this collection we have trans-
lated all her t'ieh poems. Her poems in shih form, the
formal, regular verse, were widely read by her contempo-
raries. But today, only seventeen of her shih poems can
be found.

Li Ch'ing-chao and her husband Chao Ming-ch'eng
came from well-known families of scholars and officials.
Wang Kung-ch'ên (1013-85), the grandfather of Ch'ing-
chao's mother, was a prime minister. Her mother had
some reputation as a poet. Her father, Li Ke-fei, was an
avid prose writer and a member of the prominent and
powerful literary circle led by Su Tung-p'o. When she
was a child, her father was a professor and administrator
in the Imperial Academy in the capital, K'ai Feng. They
lived in a house surrounded by dense bamboo groves
where her father often entertained his literary friends.

As a young girl, Ch'ing-chao already displayed her
talents and untamed spirit. When she was about sev-
ten, she wrote two poems in shih form to rhyme with a
poem written by Chang Lei (Chang Wen-ch'ên), a
good friend of Li Ke-fei, on the newly discovered monu-

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ment erected in the eighth century for the restoration of the court after the An Lu-shan rebellion. For a girl to compete with her father’s friend by writing poems was certainly not considered modest. In her poem, she even dared to criticize the shallowness of Chang’s view that he merely saw the success of General Kuo Tzu-yi, totally ignoring the complexity of the cause and effect of a historical event. According to the Confucian code for women in the elite society, her conduct and ideas were unruly. However, since most of her father’s literary friends were open-minded and unconventional, they not only appreciated her talents, but encouraged her creativity. Brought up in such a favorable environment, her great potential began to take form. When she was eighteen she married Chao Ming-ch’eng, a student in the Imperial Academy. He was the youngest son of Chao Ting-chih, who was an ambitious politician of great influence. For a thousand years, their marriage has been celebrated by the literary gentry as an ideal one. They wrote poems to each other. They shared the same passion for poetry and classics, music, painting, and the art of calligraphy. Ch’ing-chao herself describes her humble but delightful life:

My husband was twenty-one then, studying at the Imperial Academy. Both the Chao and Li families were not wealthy. Our lives had been modest and thrifty. On the first and the fifteenth of each month, when he was granted leave of absence from school, he used to pawn his clothes for five hundred copper coins so that he could buy fruit and rubbings of stone inscriptions from the market at the Huang

Kuo Temple. After he brought them home, the two of us would taste the fruit and study the rubbings. We enjoyed ourselves so much that we claimed ourselves the citizens of the ancient ideal state of Ko T’ien.

Ch’ing-chao must have somewhat exaggerated the strenuous conditions of their financial state, for in one of her poems, she appeared to be a young woman dressing up in the most fashionable and luxurious way:

I remember the happy days in the lost capital.
We took our ease in the women’s quarters.
The Feast of Lanterns was elaborately celebrated—
Gold pendants, emerald hairpins, brocaded girdles,
New sashes—we competed.
To see who was most smartly dressed.

Ch’ing-chao the young bride was apparently lively, radiant, and enjoyed her married life. Her poems written in this period are vivid and sensuous. They portray a lovely, witty, and coquetish young lady. However, the life of the newlyweds was not as idyllic as it has been extolled in the past. In fact, their life was full of tension and stress because of their close linkage to the ruthless power struggle in the court. About thirty years before Ch’ing-chao and Ming-ch’eng were married, the officials in the Sung court were divided into two rival factions. In 1076 when the emperor appointed Wang An-shih prime minister, Wang’s new faction seized power in the court. The old factions soon formed an alliance to oppose Wang’s programs of reformation. These old factions were led by outstanding statesmen and writers, such
as Su-ma Kuang and Su Tung-p'o. Whenever one group seized power, they always strove to wipe out members of the other group from the court, by sending them into exile or imprisoning them. This power struggle between the new and the old factions lasted until the fall of the Northern Sung Dynasty in 1126.

Li Ke-fei, Ch'ing-chao's father, had been a follower of Su Tung-p'o, and a steady member of the old faction. On the other hand, Chao T'ing-chih, though befriended by some members of the old faction, had been a political enemy of Su Tung-p'o ever since Ch'ing-chao and Ming-ch'eng were little children. Chao T'ing-chih gradually drifted away from the old faction and finally, in the year 1101, sided with Ts'ai Ching (1047–1126), the notorious leader of the new faction. This was exactly the year Ch'ing-chao became a bride of the Chao family. Thus, she must have felt traces of hostility in the new environment, for her father and her father-in-law were respectively aligned with two rival parties.

After she was wedded, Ch'ing-chao and Ming-ch'eng lived in the capital for seven turbulent years. In 1102, the second year of her marriage, Li's father-in-law became the vice prime minister. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Ts'ai Ching expelled seventeen members of the old faction from the capital. Li Ke-fei was among them. Ch'ing-chao was so upset about her father's political disgrace that she presented poems to her father-in-law, beseeching him to save her father. During this period, poetry was an influential medium; when a poem was widely circulated among the gentry, it could exercise a certain pressure on public opinion. Only fragments of the poems she wrote to her father-in-law can be found today. She describes the political struggle as "Your fingers are burned while your heart turns cold." In the third year of her marriage, an imperial decree was proclaimed throughout the kingdom stating that all books written by Su Tung-p'o should be burned, that the sons of the expelled officials were not allowed to attend the audience in the palace, and that marriage between the royal family and the family members of the expelled officials was forbidden. Ch'ing-chao, as a family member of an expelled official, must have felt deeply humiliated.

The fifth year of their marriage was a relative relief: because of an amnesty, Li Ke-fei was called back to the court. Meanwhile, the emperor appointed Chao T'ing-chih prime minister of the Right, and dismissed Ts'ai Ching from the office of the prime minister of the Left. By this time, Chao T'ing-chih and Ts'ai Ching's relationship had already turned sour. Thus, Chao T'ing-chih was another political victory and became the most powerful official in the kingdom. Unfortunately, next year in 1107, the Chao family underwent a catastrophe. In the first month of the year, Ts'ai Ching was reappointed the prime minister of the Left. Two months later, Chao T'ing-chih fell in disfavor with the emperor and was dismissed from the office of the prime minister. Sixteen days thereafter, he died of an illness. Deprived of its protector, the Chao family was doomed. Chao T'ing-chih's political enemy, Ts'ai Ching, decided to persecute his family members now that he was dead. Ts'ai accused Chao T'ing-chih of receiving large sums of bribery. The emperor thus deprived Chao T'ing-chih of his honorary titles and imprisoned Chao's family members in the capital and his relatives in Ch'ing Chou, their home town in
Shantung Province. Ming-ch'eng must have been arrested and interrogated. A few months later, the Chao family was released because their political enemies could not find any substantial criminal evidence to charge them with. However, the political life of Ming-ch'eng and his brothers came to an end, forever from then on Ty'ai Ch'ing was favored continually by the emperor. Between the ages of nineteen and twenty-five, therefore, Ch'ing-chao experienced the full extent the ups and downs of the power struggle in the court. However, these experiences did not cool down her interest in politics. In fact, years later she wrote politically satiric poems with an even greater zest than before.

Although Ming-ch'eng became a political outcast for more than ten years, they lived happily in Ch'ing Chou. At last they could fully indulge themselves in their hobbies: collecting and cataloging paintings, calligraphy, the casted inscriptions on the ceremonial bronze vessels of Shang (eighteenth to twelfth centuries B.C.) and Chou (twelfth to third centuries B.C.), rubbings of essays carved on stone monuments, rare books, manuscripts, etc. Ch'ing-chao herself thus describes incidents of their happy life:

Whenever paintings or calligraphic works were bought, they rolled and unrolled the scrolls time and again. Whenever an ancient wine pot was acquired, they examined it with great attention. They corrected the mistakes in the books, pointed out the faults in the antiques, and limited the time of appreciation to the burning of one candle. Every evening, after dinner, they sat together and played a game they had invented themselves in front of a pile of books. The game consisted of pointing out in which volume, on which page, and in which line such or such an event was mentioned. The one who guessed correctly was the winner and had the privilege of taking a sip of the jasmine tea. Sometimes they enjoyed themselves so immensely and laughed so much that they caused the tea cup to tumble from their laps.  

Eventually, because of their tireless search and of their discriminating selection, their collection became one of the finest and largest in the nation. It filled ten huge storage rooms in Ch'ing Chou. They also collaborated in editing the most comprehensive work ever written on ancient inscriptions: *The Study of Bronze and Stone Inscriptions*. Her hobbies and activities, such as scholarly research and the collecting of art, were unusual indeed, for they were exclusively reserved for the gentry and officials, not for their wives. She was, without question, the most "liberated" woman of her time.

After thirteen years of retirement, in the year 1121, Ming-ch'eng returned to the bureaucratic world. It Forced Ty'ai Ch'ing's hostility toward the Chao family had diminished by that time. During the following four years, Ming-ch'eng was appointed successively the local magistrate of two counties in Shantung Province. However, Ming-ch'eng spent most of his time enlarging and studying his collection, instead of working in his office. During the period they lived in Ch'ing Chou, Ming-ch'eng used to take trips to the mountains just to search for old monuments. He carried on this search even when he was a magistrate. Ch'ing-chao's tacit poems about her loneliness
and the sorrow of departure were probably written during his trips. In ancient times, women of the elite society were not allowed to travel as freely as men. Therefore, when Ming-ch'eng took trips, she had to stay home. These poems were permeated with intense feelings which, however, were dispersed into the objects around the persona. Instead of explicitly crying out her grief, she expressed it through projecting her feelings into her environment in the form of sensual imagery. In her loneliness, her love for wine seemed to be the only consolation. Intoxication liberated her sensorial perception to the full. She became extremely sensitive to the subtle changes in her environment and to the transparency of time. In her famous poem, "A Weary Song to a Slow Sad Tune," when she consumed two or three cups of wine, her five senses were sharpened. The evening breeze becomes piercing, the wild goose brings back her sad memory, the fallen flowers grieve her, the darkness outside the window oppresses her, and the splash of raindrops on the leaves almost tear her nerves. The beautiful, fascinating sensory imagery in her poetic works owes much to this special predilection of hers.

In 1127 the Jin from Manchuria plundered the capital K'ai Feng and brought back to the North as trophies the Song emperors and most of the royal family. The empire was shattered into pieces. Ch'ing-chao suffered tremendously in this chaotic state of affairs. Before the fall of the capital, Ming-ch'eng had already gone to Nanking, a city south of the Yangtze River, to attend her mother's funeral. Meanwhile, he moved south the most valuable portion of their collection. Ch'ing-chao was left behind in Ch'ing Chou to take care of their household and the remainder of their collection. Soon after the capital was taken by the Jin, the Sung army stationed at Ch'ing Chou staged a mutiny in which the governor was killed. Ch'ing-chao was forced to flee and make the long journey to Nanking by herself. She had left behind the treasures so dear to their hearts. At the end of this year, the Tatar troops took Ch'ing Chou. They burned the civilian houses in the city. Ch'ing-chao and Ming-ch'eng's collection, in the ten storage rooms, all went up in flames.

The following spring, after months of flight, Ch'ingchao finally reached Nanking to join her husband, who in the meantime had been appointed the city magistrate of Nanking. She must have encountered many terrifying experiences during her journey, but these did not break her spirit. Being a fervent patriot, she scorned the members in the court who persuaded the new emperor, Kao Tsung, to flee to the South, instead of assisting him to resist the Tatars. Her poems of political satire were widely read by her contemporaries. These lines are fragments from one of her lost poems:

Among the gentry who have fled to the South
We do not have Wang Tao.
No news coming from the North
Brings Liu K'un's victory.

Wang Tao helped Emperor Yuan Ti of the Chin Dynasty to set up a government in the South after the nomads took their capital in the fourth century. Liu K'un, a contemporary of Wang Tao, fought fiercely against the nomads. Ch'ing-chao used these two allusions to attack the lack of talent and ability of the high officials
and generals in the Sung court. Her poems, "A Satire on the Lords Who Crossed the Yangtze in Flight from the Chin Troops" implies that there was not even a single courageous man in the army. Her poignant criticism must have won her applause among the patriots, but at the same time antagonized many powerful officials.

During the days when she was the first lady of Nanjing, her vigor and love for poetry and for the beauty of nature remained the same. Her relatives in Nanking reported interesting episodes of her life. She would venture to climb up the city walls even in snowstorms, in order to view the distant snow-capped landscape and to capture some poetic inspiration. When, after each excursion, she had completed a poem, she would urge Ming-ch'eng to compose one to rhyme with hers. Ming-ch'eng was compelled to comply with her every time.\(^\text{10}\) As the city magistrate of Nanking, Ming-ch'eng could provide his family with a comfortable life and proper protection. However, these sheltered days were brief. The following year, in 1139, Ming-ch'eng fell terribly ill, probably of typhoid, on his way to a new official post. Soon after Ch'ing-chao reached the inn where he was staying, he died. He was forty-nine. After Ch'ing-chao buried him, she was left alone, with their sizable collection of art, in a time of disorder and troubles. The Tatars had just crossed the Yangtze River, and the Sung court fled further south. In the next few years, Ch'ing-chao was continually in flight, following the route of the fleeing court. Without a protector now, she lost almost the entire collection: some items were stolen, some abandoned, and some donated to the Imperial Collection.

In 1133, when she was forty-nine, she settled down in Lin An (today's Hang Chou), where the Sung court established its new capital. It was during this year that the most controversial incident in her life probably occurred.\(^\text{11}\) Gathered from several sources in the books written by her contemporaries, it seems Ch'ing-chao married a minor official, Chang Ju-chou, but divorced him a few months later. During their brief marriage, Chang abused her both verbally and physically. She soon appealed for a divorce, and meanwhile she accused Chang of misappropriating military funds. Her divorce was granted, and Chang was convicted. However, she was also imprisoned: according to the Sung law, a wife who brought a lawsuit against her husband was confined, even though her husband had committed the crime. Scholars in the Ming (1368–1644) and Ch'ing (1644–1911) dynasties attacked these records as sheer fabrications. However, their refutations were mostly groundless. Their opinions were to a large extent conditioned by the much stricter moral code for women imposed by the Neo-Confuciansists after the thirteenth century. According to the code, if a woman remarried, she was considered a blemish on the whole clan. The writings of these scholars must have been motivated by their wish that the private life of the greatest 12th poetesses be stainless. It was not unlikely, as they had suggested, that Ch'ing-chao's political enemies fabricated this sordid story to ruin her reputation. However, even if she did marry twice, it seems perfectly natural for a lonely, helpless woman to find someone to lean on in such a chaotic period. In the Sung Dynasty, it was rather common for a widow to marry again. The remarried woman was not condemned, as she was later.
As Ch'ing-chao grew older, her tz'u poems lost their former vitality and color, but were permeated with a growing sense of reconciliation. Although she had experienced much hardship and many shocks, she was still able to celebrate the beautiful and the artistic, no matter how humble and minute they were. She wrote during her recuperation from an illness in "Cassia Flowers, To a new version of The Silk Washing Brook":

It is good to rest on my pillows.  
And write poetry.  
Before the door  
Beautiful in wind, shadow and rain,  
All day the fragrant cassia blossoms  
Bend toward me, delicate and subtle.

And in her poem "Dream, to the tune The Honor of a Fisherman," her vision grew profound and majestic. The political criticim in her "Poems Dedicated to Lord Han, the Minister of the Council of Defense, and Lord Hu, the Minister of the Board of Works" had been toned down and became implicit. But her love for the lost homeland was as strong as ever:

I send blood-stained tears to the mountains and rivers of home,  
And sprinkle a cup of earth on East Mountain.

Here her tears were turned into a libation for the downfall of her family, her nation, and for the suffering of the people. The scope was sweeping, the pathos all-embracing. In her younger days, her tears were shed for her personal feelings of loneliness; for example, in the poem "A Song of Departure, to the tune Butterflies Love Flowers."

But now who will share with me  
The joy of wine and poetry?  
Tears streak my rouge.  
My hairsins are too heavy.

The imagery of tears here successfully depicts the psychology of a resentful, sensitive woman in her loneliness. Ch'ing-chao is a master of employing imagery in diverse styles. She was the only Chinese woman author who mastered a great variety of styles and excelled in both the writing of shih and tz'u poetry.

Very little is recorded about her remaining years. She probably stayed with the family of her younger brother. She traveled to Chechiang Province when she was fifty-two, because of an alarm over an attack from the Tatars. She composed several poems there. When she was sixty-six, she visited Mi Yu-juan and showed him a calligraphy scroll written by Mi's father, the famous calligrapher Mi Fei. Apparently, old age did not diminish her devotion to art. She died some time after the age of sixty-eight.

LENG CHUANG

NOTES

1. The texts of our translations are based on Li Ch'ing-chao Chi (Shanghai: Chung Hua She Chueh, 1962). We have translated in total sixty-seven poems, of which fifty are tz'u poems, seventeen are shih. All poems with a subtitle "To the tune . . ." are in tz'u's form. The editors of Li Ch'ing-chao Chi express doubt on the authenticity of some tz'u poems. We have indicated these poems by a postscript, "attributed to Li Ch'ing-chao."
NOTES TO THE POEMS
Page 7. Two Springers, to the tune Small Hills. The original of "women's quarters" here is ch'ang-wen, the Palace of Tall Gate erected in the Han Dynasty. The queen of Emperor Wu lived in this palace in the second century B.C. Because she fell into the disfavor of the emperor, poet Su-ma Hsiao-jent wrote for her "the Rhyming Prose of the Tall Gate Palace," to describe her love for the Emperor and her loneliness. After the Emperor read the prose, he was so moved that he returned to her. This allusion might imply that Li's husband has gone to another woman, but now is coming back to her.

Page 10. When the Peony at the Back Pavillon Bloomed, to the tune An Idle, Lovely Lady. The last lines allude to a Time tone for the flute, very popular at Li's time, which was called "Flower Bloomers Are Falling," so the music of the flute is often related to the falling plum blossoms, which symbolize the transience of beauty.
Down. The peony is regarded the queen of all flowers. They were carefully tended in the palaces through many dynasties.

They symbolize the most favorite woman of the emperor.

The east side of the city alludes to Chi Ch'ing, who was brought up in the east side of Ch'ang An, the capital of the T'ang Dynasty. Chi became a favorite of Emperor Ming Huang, because of his skill in training fighting cocks. The southern streets of Ch'ang An were the courtesans' quarter.

The Brilliant Light Palace was built by Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty. Night-bright pearls were inlaid on the walls, and the staircases were gilded; therefore, the palace was bright even on a dark night.

Page 15, Caritas Flowers, to the tune Pantridge Sky. "Pantridge Sky" is a kind of cloud formation, called in English "patched and mother's" tails, usually a sign of coming rain.

Page 14, Nine Days, Ninth Month, to the tune Dusk with Flower Shadow. Ninth Day, Ninth Month—a day of picnics on hills, chrysanthemum viewing, and outdoor love-making—was originally both a harvest festival and the autumn Feast of the Dead. The last lines of the poem allude to the famous line of T'o Ch'ien: "I gather chrysanthemum flowers by the eastern hedge." This allusion adds a touch of the leisure and freedom of a Poetic heritage to her poem. When her husband saw this poem, he composed fifty poems to the same tune. Then he missed her poem with his and showed them to his friend Lu Ti-fo. Lu pointed out that the best lines among these fifty-one poems were the last lines of her poem.

Page 15, The Beauty of White Chrysanthemums, to the tune Beauties. Yang Kuan-fei was the consort of Emperor Ming Huang, the most famous beauty in Chinese history. She was responsible for the revolt of An Lushan, which permanently crippled the dynasty. The Emperor fleeing from the capital was forced by his troops to order her hung to a pear tree. A foreigner appeared and flew away with her blood-stained handkerchief.

Sun Shou (ninth century) was the wife of the warlord Liang Yi, famous for her courtesan.

In the third century, Han Shou was a minor officer in the office of Chi Ch'ung, the minister. The minister's daughter Chi Wu fell in love with Han Shou. He stole into her room and became her lover. The Emperor gave Chi Ch'ung some incense in which was a gift from Nan Viet. Chi Wu stole it and gave it to her lover. The minister discovered their secret love by the scent of that incense in Han Shou's gown. He married his daughter to Han Shou.

Lady Hsi (ninth century) was a consort of Emperor Yaran of Liang. Her malicious trick infuriated the Emperor. Later when she was caught in an affair with an attendant she was forced to commit suicide.

Hsun hsi may mean the bank of the Han River or may be an ancient name for the city of Hsun Kow.

Pan Ch'ien-yi was concubine of Emperor Ch'ien of Eastern Han. As the emperor's affection cooled, she presented him with a fan and a famous poem (translated in The Orchid Boat—"A Song of Gold") comparing herself to a summer fan discarded at the approach of summer.

Page 18, Rrose, to the tune Song of Laps. "Every fiber of my soft heart" in Chinese is "every inch of my soft boughs." The boughs, as in earlier English and many other languages, were realistically considered the seat of disturbing emotion.

Page 20, to the tune The Silk Washing Brook. The pl-hsang bird is not the so-called Chinese phoenix feng-huang but a mythical gold bird that was sent to the emperor from Nan Viet, which sp slim gold. The last lines refer to the "candle flower," the red glowing stick of a burned-out candle.

Page 21, On Seasons, to the tune The Silk Washing Brook. The jade bi blue-ching was of course not made of jade but inlaid with it. It is the ancestor of the loo.

Page 22, Spring in the Woman's Quarter, to the tune Beautiful Nien Nia. Nien Nia was a famous courtesan of early
T'ang, but the song is probably older, and she was named after it.

For "The Day of Cold Food," see notes for next poem.

Page 23, The Day of Cold Food, to the tune The Silk Washing Brook. "The Day of Cold Food," the day before the Spring Festival, is the day when the New Year's Fire corresponds almost exactly to the Catholic rite of Holy Saturday. All fires are extinguished, a new fire is lit in the evening by flint and steel or bow drill, and all the fires in the community are started again from that fire. There is a long Confucian euhemeristic legend with a typical Confucianist political content that Ch'ien Chih-fu, a noble hermit, refused office in the court of the Duke of Chin and hid in a forested mountain. The Duke set fire to the whole mountain, but Ch'ien preferred death to the government bureaucracy. This is an excellent example of the fustian Confucian interpretation of pan-Asianic cult practices.

In The Book of Songs ("Shih Ching"), the erotic poems of the Day of Cold Food are celebrated by different people who have preserved rites dating from the neolithic age. The text is an excellent example of a day of new fire which has received a political interpretation in Judaism.

Gathering wild flowers and herbs to play a game was a custom on the Dragon Boat Festival, the fifth day of the fifth month. The Day of Cold Food is in the third month. Li's line indicates that the people sensed the transience of Spring and anticipated the customs.

The last line, which should read "Wet the swing in the garden," has always seemed to Remarque so irrelevant as to be a corroboration of the text. On the other hand, references in Chinese love poetry have an erotic significance, and apparently once had a family ritual connection with the Day of Cold Food.

Page 24, Thoughts from the Woman's Quarter, to the tune The Silk Washing Brook. Y'elol could be interpreted in three ways. We have incorporated all three in this translation: 1) the lover went south, 2) the lover went to the cups made of rhinoceros horn, and 3) the golden tree. The golden tree of the South was another mythical tribute from Nam Viet, but to this day Chinese believe that sandalwood generates its own heat. The rhinoceros horn was believed to be one of the most potent aphrodisiacs.

Page 25, to the tune The Husbandman's Headlights. Chinese call the Milky Way the River of Heaven. The original text refers to the Dipper, the seven stars in Urs Major.

Page 27, Song of Departure, to the tune Cutting a Flowering Plum Branch. Orchid boats are floating pleasure houses. But, sometimes it is interpreted as the host made of magnolia wood. This poem is packed with echoes. Wild goose is a cliché in Chinese poetry for "message" because they migrate every year regularly. Remarque points out that "orchid boat" is also a common metaphor for the female sexual organ, as in this poem.

Page 28, Farewell Letter to My Sister, Sash from an Inn at Lo Ch'ing, to the tune Butterfly Love Flowers. This poem was written in 1221, when Li was thirty-eight. She wrote it in a town called Lo Ch'ing, traveling on her way from Ch'ing Chou to Lai Chou, where her husband held the post of a magistrate. "Sunlight on the Pass," or "The Sun Pass," was a famous song of departure. Sun Pass, Yang Kuan, is a town in today's Kansu Province, which was a passage from the Chinese frontier to the barbarians lands. P'ing-ch'ai are the mythical islands in the Eastern Seas where Tiote immortal resides.

Page 29, to the tune You Move in Fragrance. Golden flowers are the yellow chrysanthemum flowers.

Page 30, Thoughts from the Woman's Quarter, to the tune Nymphas of the Flute on the Phoenix Terrace. "Wailing Springs" alludes to Two Ch'in's "Peach Blossom Spring." A fabrician discovered a utopian village in the mountains. Here Li alluded to her husband, who probably had taken a trip to the mountains.

Page 31, to the tune Remembering the Girl of Ch'in. The wu-yung tree, stereota philantopica, is said
to be the only tree on which the so-called Chinese phoenix, the feng-huang, will perch, and it is the best wood for making musical instruments.

Between our lines 10 and 11 the Chinese text is corrupt.

Page 39. Camellia Flowers, to a new version of The Silk Washing Brook. Yin Fu is the style name of Lu Kang, a Taoist philosopher of the third century A.D. He was renowned as a most refined gentleman, eloquent, wise, modest, and also an excellent officer. General Wei Kang praised him: "He is like a mirage which reflects the blue sky where all clouds are dispersed."

Page 39. Banana Trees, to the tune Picking Mulberries. This poem must have been written after Li Red to the South in 1128, for banana trees grow only in South China, and also because he called himself Ji Shen, a Northerner; hence, the translation of "this exile from the North."

Page 40. to the tune Partridge Sky. Chung Hsiu is the style name of Wang Yen, one of the seven leading poets of T'ao Yen's time in the third century. Wang, a royalist of the declining Han court, fled from the capital after the usurpers seized power. He went to Chung-chou to serve the Han prince Liu Piao, but the prince ignored Wang. Thus Wang wrote the famous verse, "Climbing the Tower," in which he lamented the downfall of Han, his homeland, and his longing for the capital. Because of this allusion, Li's poem must have been written after he fled to the South.

Page 41. I Gave a Party to My Relatives on the Day of Purification, to the tune Butterflies Love Flowers. The Day of Purification is the third day of the third month, when people held parties by rivers.

Ch'ang An, the capital of the T'ang Dynasty, alludes to the lost capital K'ai Feng. Hence, this poem must have been written after Li Red to the South.

Page 43. Picking Plum Blossoms, to the tune Perfumed Garden. He Sun was a poet who lived in the sixth century.

When he held an official post at Yang Chou, he very much enjoyed the plum blossoms in the garden of his office. Later he was promoted to a post in the North. He missed the plum blossoms so much that he asked to return to his former office in Yang Chou. His request was granted. When he came back, the plum tree burst into bloom, to welcome him. Compare the legend of the Japanese statesman Sugawara no Michizane (845-903), whose beloved plum tree followed him into exile, byting through the air to Kyushu.

Page 47. to the tune The Perfumed Garden. Li Ch'ing-chao in her Postscript to the Studies of Bronze and Stone Inscriptions describes how her husband and she would play memory games of the Chinese classics, and the winner would drink the tea. They grew so excited that the tea was usually spilled.

Page 49. Spring Fresh, to the tune Spring at Wu Ling, Two Rivers, shuang hui, is in today's Chekiang Province, in 1129 when she was fifty-two years old. Li lived for a while in the nearby town Chin-hua. Her husband had died six years before, in 1123.

Page 51. On Plum Blossoms. Li Ch'ing-chao wrote a subtitle for this poem: "Pots in the past always composed that to write about plum blossoms was very difficult, for they are hard to avoid vulgarisms. Now that I have tried it, I totally agree with them." Li's poem is by no means vulgar. "Fruit player" alludes to a legend in Li Po's Chu Ci. "Drake Mu of the State of Ch'in, in the seventh century B.C., had a beautiful daughter. She married a Fane player, Hsiao Shih. One day, this couple rode on a phoenix and flew away from a jade palace (covered with white jade). They became immortals. "The Fane player" in Li's poem must allude to her husband, who had died and was gone 'beyond the sky.'"

Page 57. Sauromatum. The title "ksan-hsii" is a mode of classical shih poetry. Literally "ksan-hsii" means "being moved to express personal sentiment and feelings." It is a very common title for shih poetry whenever a poet is writing about personal feelings.
At the end of the Han Dynasty in the latter part of the second century, warlords rose everywhere, among whom was Yiian Shu, whose style name was Kuang-yo. Yiian Shu became powerful and later crowned himself. He soon began to fall because of his wasteful extravagance and could no longer support his own army. He went to the State of Ch'ing (today's Shantung Province) to depend on his relative Yian T'ao, another warlord. Yiian T'ao, in order to annihilate him, ordered Liu Pei to block his way. Yiian Shu was unable to reach the State of Ch'ing. When he was besieged at Ch'ing T'ing, he sighed, "Is this where I meet my end?" He became seriously ill with his anger and weariness, and finally died.

Ch'ing-chiu here must mean the State of Ch'ing, the general area of today's Shantung Province, not the county of Ch'ing where Li and her husband stayed for more than ten years in their country estate.

Kuei-feng "the brother of the square hole" means coin, because a Chinese coin was round with a square hole in the middle. The reference is to pedantry, especially, as in Dante and Freud, with guarded.

Mr. Wu-yu and Scholar Ts'ao-hui are fictitious characters in Su-ma Hsiung's rhyming prose T'ao-hui Fu. Su-ma Hsiung (second century B.C.), the leading writer of his day, in this prose says Mr. Wu-yu (Mr. Nonexistence) was an envoy from the kingdom of Ch'i (of the Warring States) to the State of Ch'i. The King of Ch'i entertained him by taking him on a royal hunt. On his way back Mr. Nonexistence visited Scholar Ts'ao-hui (Scholar No Such) and bragged that the hunt of King Ch'i's, his own king, was far more extravagant and the landscape of Ch'i far more splendid than that of the kingdom of Ch'i. Su-ma Hsiung uses these two fictitious characters to add an allegorical touch and so means to display his own gift in handling rich, decorative language in the form of rhyming prose.

Li Ch'ing-chiu at the end of the poem says that he prefers to indulge herself in wild imagination of the past, and in a fancy-splendid landscape together with Mr. Nonexistence and Scholar No Such, thus to accept the company of local officials who care for nothing but amusing wealth.

This poem was written in 1123 when Li was thirty-eight years old. Li and her husband had lived in their country estate in the county of Ch'ing for more than ten years and enjoyed tremendously the life of hermits and scholars. In 1124 her husband was appointed as the magistrate of the county of Li, his first official post after fourteen years of retirement. He went to his post first, and Li arrived there in the eighth month. She must have felt a strong sense of existence to the life in a yuan, the compound which included both the office and dwelling of a magistrate.

Page 96: Poems on Yuan Ch'in's "Codex to the Restoration of the Tang" by RETROSPECT WITH CHIANG WEN-CH'IN'S POEM. L. Yuan Ch'in, a middle Yung poet, wrote an ode in praise of Kuo T'ao-yi, the general who destroyed the rebellion of An Lu-shan. A monument was discovered when Li Ch'ing-chiu was about seventeen. Many famous contemporary poets, including Chiang Wen-ch'in, a friend of her father, wrote poems on this discovery.

Line 1. tien-sen. This could mean fifty years of Emperor Ming Huang's glory passed away like a flash of lighting, or they fell smaller as though struck by lighting.

Line 2. Helen Yang was the ancient capital of the Ch'in Empire. When Hsiang-yi entered the city in the third century B.C., he burned it down.

Lines 5-6. wu-fang wuu-fang. "geoms of your five stables and kennels." In the Tang Dynasty anyone with special skills in literature, art, or sports could be appointed wu-fang—special attendant in the court. Of the five attendants, four were for the hunting birds of falconry and one was for the hunting dogs.

Line 7. tiu, "Diligent Work Tower," was a several-storied building in the palace at Chang An, the Tang capital, where the emperors often gave banquets and held audiences.

Lines 18-19. The imperial concubine Yang Kuei-fei loved to eat fillets; a special boar's relay was set up to deliver the fruit from Canton to Chang An, which is over a thousand miles. The horses were forced to travel fast so that the fillets would still be fresh when they arrived at the capital.

Line 22. Yao and Shun are legendary ancient sage kings, two of the culture heroes reputed to have founded civilization.

Line 36. By the lessons of the Hsia and Shang dynasties (twenty-first to sixteenth centuries B.C.), Li Ch'ieng-chao means that the official historians say that the last emperors of these two dynasties were corrupted by concubines and ministers. In saying that Ming Huang fell into a similar trap, the reader recognizes the strict Confucianism of the scholar-gentry. According to them, all dynasties fell from these causes—women, eunuchs, evil ministers, and foreigners. "When women rule, the line decays."

Last three lines. Chang Shao was a powerful minister for three T'ang emperors; the last was Ming Huang, whom he helped to seize power when still a prince. Chang Shao was very cunning, famous for plots, plans, and strategies, and he was probably one of the men most responsible for the glorious days of T'ang. But not long after Ming Huang succeeded to the throne, he was ousted by Yao T'ung, who told the emperor that Chang was plotting with the emperor's younger brother to seize power. Chang Shao was exiled to a provincial post. Li in this poem says that the Emperor was blind to the facts in the court and corrupted by Yang Kui-fei, his harem, and his foreign generals and advisers, and that everyone, even the Emperor, had to take the responsibility for the temporary fall of the capital. This is an unusual and courageous statement, for the sun here alluding to a ruthless power struggle in the contemporary Sung court. The poem was written before he was twenty.

Page 117, 2.

Line 8. Li Ch'ieng-chao criticizes her contemporaries' poems on the monument because they did not present the whole picture of the rebellion, but merely emulated the achievements of the general Kuo T'ai-yi.

Line 10. The emperor not only doted on Yang Kui-fei, but gave her three son titles of duchesses, as well as great wealth.

Line 15. An Lu-shan and Shih Su-ming were the leaders of the rebellion.

Lines 25-31. When the rebellion was suppressed, Empress Ming Huang retired (in 757 A.D.) from Szechuan to the capital, Ch'ang An. By then his son, Emperor Su, had succeeded to the throne. Ming Huang retired and lived in the Southern Palace.

At first, Emperor Su behaved as a most fatted son; later, he listened to his minister Li Fu-kao, who persuaded him that Ming Huang was conspiring to regain the throne. Li Fu-kao rose to power through the influence of Su's wife, Empress Chang. In 766 A.D. Li forged an Imperial Decree requesting Ming Huang to visit the Western Palace, where from then on he was held under a kind of house arrest. His followers were all sent into exile. Kao Li-shih, the once powerful eunuch, was sent to Wu Shan. Last two lines. When Kao Li-shih came to Wu Shan, he saw shepherd's-purse growing wild and wrote a poem:

In Ch'iang An they were sold by the peck.
Here near the five streams, nobody even cares to pick them.
One grows in the land of Chiao, the other in that of the T'atars.
But they taste just the same.

Li Ch'ieng-chao misses his country and attacks Kao Li-shih for caring only about the trivias of cheap vegetables in his exile, instead of attacking Li Fu-kao and Empress Chang. He is unjust to Kuo, a politician with conscience who was loyal to Ming Huang, in contrast to Li Fu-kao and the all-powerful eunuchs of late T'ang and Ming dynasties.

Shepherd's-purse (Capsella bursa-pastoris) is a crucifer, a member of the mustard and cabbage family. It is circumpolar, grows on wasteland, and is an escape from imported fader in the Southern Hemisphere. In the sixteenth century, it was sold as a vegetable in American markets, and Robert Fortune in his Wonders in China says, "Besides the more common vegetables, shepherd's-purse and a species of clover crossed the modest and are used by the natives; and really these things, when properly cooked, are not bad." It is an antiscorbutic and a mild diuretic.

Page 119, 5.

Poems Dedicated to Lord Han, the Minister of the Council, or Dependent, and Lo Su Hui, the Minister of the Board of Works. These two poems were written in 1133, seven years after Empress Hui and Emperor Ch'i-in were captured and brought to the North by the Chin Tatars. The present Emperor Kao was the son of Empress Hui and the younger brother of Emperor Ch'i-in. Emperor Kao established a court in
the South. Many historians agree that the main purpose of Emperor Kao's envoys was not to ask the Chins to release the two captured emperors, but to beg for a truce. In fact, they think Emperor Kao felt threatened that the two emperors might be released, because once released, they would become claimants to his throne. Lord Hu and Lord Han's mission was by no means easy, because during 1127 to 1135, many envoys had been sent to the Chins. Most of those envoys were tortured and imprisoned. More over returned. However, since 1128 and 1132 the Sung army had won several battles, they were in a better bargaining position. Han and Hu came back safely and brought back an envoy from the Chins to further negotiate the treaty. Of course they did not bring back the two captive emperors. The first poem was a parody on the court audience. Subtle satirism runs through the poem. For example, it is utterly disgraceful for an emperor ever to say openly, "I am willing to give up land," no matter for what reason. The second poem is more outspoken in voicing Li Ch'ing-chao's opposition to the Sung court's begging for a truce.

The title. The Minister of the Council of Defense is the highest official in charge of military policy and defenses. Lord Han, Han Hsiao-chou, was a great-grandson of Han Chi, a prime minister and scholar and the patron of Li Ch'ing-chao's father and grandfather. Pi-yau, Board of War, was a mistake. It should be ke-yau, Board of Works, for Lord Hu, Hu Sung-nien, had never held a post in the Board of War. The Minister of the Board of Works was in charge of public property, official seals, coinage of money, and natural resources.

The subtitle. Liang-hung literally means "two palaces." One refers to the empress in exile—Emperor Hui and his son Emperor Ch'in—as well as most of the royal family, all held by the Chins in the remote North. The other palace is Emperor Kao's, who finally set up his court in 1132 at Lin An (today's Hang Chou).

Page 59. I. To Lord Han.
Line 7. This is the third reign year of Shao-hsing (1133). Emperor Kao had succeeded to the throne starting from 1127, and had already reigned for seven years.

Line 7. Yuan Yu-ch'ing was a very virtuous man in the T'ang Dynasty. A friend praised him, "It is said that a most virtuous man would appear every five hundred years. You are qualified to be one of them." Thus, Yuan changed his name to Yuan Pun-ch'ien, Yuan the half a thousand.

Line 8. Yang-ch'in, Yang is the hot element; ch'in, nine, is the largest of the digits. Yang and ch'in put together mean the extreme blighting period, the perilous time, 1129 to 1132, when Emperor Kao's court fled all through South China, pursued by the Chins.

Line 9. The monument was erected in 89 A.D. at Yen Shan Mountain in Mongolia when, in the Han Dynasty, the Chinese general Tou Hsin defeated the Huns.

Line 10. Chiao-ch'ing this literally means "the willows of the Golden City." The city is in today's Kansu Province. In the first century B.C., General Chao Ch'ung-kun defeated the Hsi Ch'ing Barbarians, started an agricultural military colony there, and planted willows along the roads.

Line 12. Literally, "the weary of frost and dew," meaning the longing for parents. Nurtures of children is compared to dew which waters the grass.

Line 13. In Tso Ch'uan, when the Duke gave food to Yin Liu-shu, Yin did not drink the most soup. The Duke asked for the reason. Yin said, "My mother has tasted whatever I have eaten in the past, but has not yet tasted this most soup. Could my feel send this soup to her?"

Line 22. Hua Yü (268-814), a famous statesman, writer, and Confucian scholar of the T'ang Dynasty.

Line 26. Kao and Kuai were two renowned ministers in the legendary age of the sage King Shun. Kao was Minister of Justice, Kuai was Minister of Ceremony.

Line 27. Wang Sheng was a court official and relative of Emperor Yuen of the Han Dynasty in the first century B.C. His appearance was stern and awesome. A Han chief who came to pay tribute to the court was so terrified by him that he fled China after the audience.

Line 28. Tsu-ysu, Kuo Tsu-ysu, was the general who subjugated the Turkish Ata Lu-shan rebellion in the eighth century.
Line 10. Paste was used to seal up the envelope. The purple color could only be used by the Empress, for purple and gold were the imperial colors.

Last two lines. When the Chinese sign a treaty, they use, instead of ink, blood of a dog and a horse to pledge their oath.

Page 60. II. To Lord Hu.

Line 3. Many tales in Chinese history tell of an Emperor or general who won over the hearts of his soldiers when he took off his own robe and gave it to a soldier on a cold day. That was one of the reasons, the stories say, why the soldiers fought to the death for him.

Line 4. In the third century B.C., the Prince of the State of Yen sent a brave, Ch'ing K'io, to assassinate the Emperor of Ch'in, who was deserving one by one the independent states. It was a very difficult task. At the farewell party by the River Yi, Ch'ing K'io sang to the Prince and his friends: "The wind blows, listen below; Cold is the waters of River Yi. The brave man is going away. He will never return."

Line 13. During the Spring and Autumn Period (7th to 5th Centuries B.C.), the generals from the State of Sung and those from the State of Ch'u had a peace conference. The generals from Ch'u wore weapons inside their robes, intending to ambush the Sung generals.

Lines 14-15. In the middle of the eighth century, the Turkish rebellion shook the kingdom of T'ang. In the latter part of the eighth century, during the reign of Emperor Te of T'ang, a Turkish general came to the T'ang court and requested the Emperor to consider a peace conference. However, the Turkish prime minister requested the Chinese Emperor to change the locale for the conference from T'ung Liang to Yen Chou. The Emperor turned down this suggestion for fear the Turks would ambush the Chinese army in the mountains of Yen Chou.

Line 16. K'ou Ch'in is in today's Honan Province. In the seventh century B.C., Duke Hsuan of the State of Ch'in invited duke from many states to attend a conference for an alliance against the Northern Barbarians, the Huns, the Hetisians, at this place. Chien Ts'e is also in today's Honan Province. In the seventh century B.C., Duke Wen of Ch'in invited many dukes to hold a conference for an alliance there, after he defeated the army of the Southern State of Ch'u and erected a palace at Chien Ts'e.

Line 18. During the northern expedition of General Huan Wen in the fourth century, when he won the decisive battle, he ordered his secretary Yüan Hsiung to write an ode. Yüan Hsiung was a talented writer. Without dimming his cleverness, Yüan immediately completed seven pages of a beautifully written ode of victory.

Line 19. In the fourth century B.C., Prince Meng-ch'ing from the state of Ch'in loved to patronize talented people from all walks of life. Once he was inspired by King Cho of Ch'in, who intended to kill him. Eventually the prince escaped from the prison and rode with his followers to the Yen Han Pass, a gate in the Great Wall. They reached the pass at midnight, but the gates were closed as the guards would only open them when the crows crowed. One of the Prince's followers mimicked a cock's crow so well that the cocks for miles around all crows. The guards believed it was dawn, opened the gate, and let them through.

Line 22. The pearl of Sui and the jade disk of Master Hsu are poetic synonyms for priceless treasure. In the Chou Dynasty (eleventh to eighth centuries B.C.), the Duke of Sui saw a wounded serpent. He applied an herb to its wound and cured it. Later, the serpent found a great pearl in the river and presented it to the Duke. In the eighth century B.C., Master Hsu from the State of Ch'in found an arctic jade rock. He presented it to the King. However, the king's jade cutter said there was no jade in the rock. The King angrily accused Master Hsu of swindling him and cut off his left foot. When the King died, Master Hsu brought the rock to the new King. The same thing happened: he lost his right foot. When this king died, the old Master Hsu embraced the rock at the foot of Ch'in Mountain and wept for three days and nights. The young King sent a messenger to ask him for the reason of his lamentation. Master Hsu said, "I am not lamenting the loss of my feet, but because a rare jade is discarded as a rock, and a man of integrity is accused of being a swindler." The King sent his jade cutter to work on the rock. Indeed there was a huge piece of excellent jade inside. The King
named the priceless work of art made from it the "jade disk of Master He."

Line 50: Chi Hua was a town in today's Shantung Province. According to The Book of History ("Shih Chi"), in the Warring States scholars flourished in the State of Chi. By the city gate of Chi Hua, the scholars used to hold fervent discussions on the affairs of state and the problems of men.

Line 58: "The peach tree" alludes to a poem by Yiian Chen of the ninth century, called "Verse on the Palace of Everlasting Prosperity." The poem starts with a description of the unattended palace after the Turkish An Lu-shan rebellion:

The Palace of Everlasting Prosperity is overgrown with bamboo.
No one attends them, they crowd in thongs.
The thousand barren peach trees cover the walls.
When the wind blows, petals fall like red rain.

Page 66. A SAILOR ON THE LONG WHO CRIED THE YANGZI IN FLIGHT FROM THE CHINESE TROOPS. Heian Jing (third century B.C.) became the ruler of all the Chinese States when he seized the capital and the last Emperor of the Ch’in Dynasty. Four years later in 206 B.C., this young hero was cornered against the River Wu by Liu Pang, and committed suicide because he was ashamed to escape. Liu Pang became the first Emperor of the Han Dynasty. Here Li Chi’s (a Han poet from the Han Dynasty) famous poem also implies his deep hatred of the Sung court, which fled to the South of Yangzte River.

Page 66. CHINESE HISTORY. The Han Dynasty lasted for four hundred and twenty-five years, from 206 B.C.-179 A.D. The continuity of the dynasty was interrupted for fourteen years by Wang Mang from 9 to 23 A.D., who crowned himself and changed the dynastic title to Hsin. Hence, the Han Dynasty was divided into the Former Han and the Latter Han. Chi Kang was a famous writer in the third century. Historians believe that he was executed by Sima Zhao, because of his satires on Sima’s usurpation of the Wei Dynasty. In the satire, Chi Kang compared Sima to the founders of the Shang and Chou Dynasties, who in turn had overthrown the previous kings. According to Confucius, these founders are sage kings. But Chi Kang condemned them as traitors, for they rebelled against and killed their own kings. Li’s satires are very effective and continued. In twenty Chinese characters he discusses four historical events: 1) the succession of the Hsang Dynasty to the Han Dynasty, 2) the succession of the Chou Dynasty to the Han Dynasty, 3) the succession of the Hsin Dynasty to the Han Dynasty, and 4) the succession of the Chou Dynasty to the Wei Dynasty. However, at the bottom of this poem he is satirizing a contemporary event. After the Sung Court fled to the South in 316, the barbarian Chin in 519 appointed a puppet government at K’ai-feng, with Chang Pang-shung as the puppet king. Hence, the "excessiveness" in her poem alludes to the Dynasty Chi’s headed by Chang Pang-shung.

Page 67. WRITTEN ON CLIMBING EIGHT POETIC TOWERS. This poem was written in 1144 when Li was fifty-one and lived at Chin Hsii Town in Chekiang Province. Shen Yeh is a poet and literary critic of the fifth century. He was appointed as the prefect of this area. A tower was built west of Chin Hsii under his supervision. When it was completed, he wrote eight poems to celebrate its beauty. Thus, the tower was later named the Eight Poetic Tower. It is situated at the meeting point where the Chin Hsii River and Wu Yi River flow into one, which in turn is connected with many fascinating waterways.

In the Southern Sung Dynasty, the district of Linsche Lou (approximately in today’s Chekiang Province) was divided into fourteen counties.

Page 67. OUR BOAT STARTS AT NIGHT FROM THE BEACH OF YEN KUANG. Yen Kuang (first century A.D.) was a friend of the prince who became Emperor Kuang Wu of the Han Dynasty. When he ascended the throne, the Emperor offered his old friend power, fame, and wealth, but Yen declined and stayed by the River as a fisherman and farmer. The beach of Yen was named after him.

Page 68. IN THE EMPEROR’S CRANMER. This is a riddle, a poem written for a party given by the emperor on a festival.
The following four poems were written on the fifth day of the fifth month, the festival of poets in commemoration of Ch'iu Yüan, the poet who drowned himself in the fourth century B.C. They were written in 1143 when Li was sixty years old and lived in Lin An, the capital of Southern Sung. In the Sung Dynasty, wives of high officials were granted titles by the emperor. They could also present poems to the throne at the festival parties. One of Li Ch'iu-ch'iu's relatives was a lady with a title. Li wrote these four poems on her behalf.

A Twist legend says that when the immortals Lao Tsu and Chang Tao-ling visited Sun Chuan, a jade couch with twisted carved legs emerged from the ground. Lao Tsu sat on it and preached. When Lao Tsu and Chang departed after his preaching, the couch sank into the earth. Only a hole was left in the ground.

In the last two lines, Li advises the Emperor that it is better to contemplate the affairs of the state in the light of the torches than to enjoy parties and entertainments in the fragrance of incense. To burn incense was a custom at festivals to expel evil spirits.

Page 68, To the Emperor. The rearing of the silkworms occurs in the fourth lunar month, and since this poem was written on the fifth day of the fifth month, it was already completed in the imperial gueyin workshop. According to an ancient Chinese ritual which had been practised by many dynasties, the Emperor is the chief attendant of silkworms in the whole nation, just as the Emperor, as a model for the kingdom, provides a field in early spring. According to The Book of Rites of the Chu Dynasty ("Chou Li"), the second term for rearing silkworms, supposed to be in the fifth month, was forbidden, because it was the period to herd horses. The spirit of silk worms and that of horses are believed to have the same origin and therefore their breeding should not be overlapped. This belief probably derived from an ancient fable about the origin of the silkworm. A daughter pledged that whoever brought back her father could take her as wife. A horse from their stable then mysteriously disappeared. A few days later, the horse brought back her father. Her father was so angry at the horse that he killed it and dried the horn hide on a tree. The hide suddenly flew to the girl, enveloped her, and turned to a mulberry tree. With the girl wrapped in the hide like a silkworm in a cocoon, they were transformed into silkworms.

The Emperor Kao had no sons then. His son died very young. Thus, he and the empress had no heir.

Page 70, To the Imperial Concubine. The Chinese title is K'uei Fei, “Noble Consort’s Chamber.” This title is given to the first-ranking Imperial Concubine, next only to the Queen, like the consort of the great Tiang Emperor Ming Huang. Yang Kuei Fei, the most famous of all Chinese beauties. All the talks about the Emperor Kao’s beguiling a son and many sons were futile; because the Emperor did not have an heir, the throne was succeeded by his remote nephew after he died. The stewardess of the harem who kept records of the Emperor’s sex life gave his concubines different brands. The one who was to sleep with the Emperor that night wore a silver bracelet on her left arm; after intercourse she wore it on her right. If she became pregnant, she wore a gold bracelet. The subject of Li’s poem was pregnant. Kou Yi is the name of the palace of the Han Dynasty where the concubine of the Emperor Wu lived. She was called Kou Yi, which means “horse.” The legend says she held her feet clasped tight since she was born. When the Emperor summoned her to his bed, the first time he touched her, her fingers opened. Kou Yi’s son succeeded to the throne. Li implies that the subject of her poem may have given birth to the heir apparent. Unfortunately, she in fact later gave birth to a daughter.

Chao Yang Palace, the Bright Sun Palace, was the residence
of the Emperors, and Li compares the Imperial Concubine to the Empress herself. “Cyprus seed bed curtains” might have actually been made of juniper berries to perfume the bed, or they might have been made of blue pearls that looked like juniper berries. The character for seeds/berries also means sons. It is a pun.

Page 74. Dream, to the tune The Honor of a Fisherman. There is no other poem like this written by a woman in Chinese literature. It is a poem of mystical trance directly descended from the Li Ssu (“Enchanting Sorcery”) of Chi’I Yuan of the fourth century B.C., the shamanist poems Chi’I Ts’ao (“Songs of the South,” translated by David Hawkes), and the mystical, Taoist, alchemical writing of Ko Hung of the Three Kingdoms; illustrations taken originally from a treatise of Ko Hung can be found, missinterpreted, in Carl Jung’s Secret of the Golden Flower, and in Leo Weiger’s History of the Religions and Philosophical Opinions of China, fifty-second lesson. Chinese Taoists adopted comic visions of this kind, often induced by eating the sacred mushrooms. “The huge roc bird,” a favorite Taoist legendary creature, can be equated with what we now know to be the autonomic nervous system; the little boat with the Serpent Power, hidden in the pericard plexus, and the Immortal Islands in the East with the thousand-petaled lotus of Indian Yoga. Reznick thinks that the three mountains in the Eastern Sea in poems like this and the Songs of the South, interpreted in terms of erotic mysticism, were fashionable in the more sophisticated intellectual circles, especially in Shanghiah, during Kao Miu Tang rule. The secret key was considered to be the sixth chapter of the Tao Te Ch’ing. This poem raises the question: How many of Ching-Chien’s “love poems” are, like those of Hu Fu or Du Fu, actually mystical?

Page 75. Written on the Seventh Day on the Seventh Month, to the Tune You Move in Fragrance. This poem was written on the Seventh Day of the Seventh Month, a festival for lovers. The Cowboy and the Weaver Girl are the two stars on the opposite sides of the Milky Way, Altair and Vega. According to Chinese folklore, after the Cowboy and the Weaver Girl got married, they loved each other so much that they ignored their duties completely. The Empyrean Heaven became so angry at them that he separated them by the River of Heaven, the Milky Way. Later the Emperor was moved by their love and permitted them to meet each other once a year on the Seventh Day of the Seventh Month. He ordered the magpies to form a bridge for the Weaver Girl to cross the River of Heaven.

According to Po-wu Chih, written by Chang Hua in the third century, in a folk tale the ocean to the east of China is connected to the River of Heaven. In autumn when the water cools, people who live by the ocean could sail to heaven on a raft.

Page 76. A Mournful Dream. According to the Book of History, Shih Chi, and other sources, An Ch’ing-sheng was the pupil of the Old Man on the River. An Ch’ing-sheng used to walk meditatively by the sea. The local people called him the Man One Thousand Years Old. When the first Emperor of China traveled to the East in the third century B.C., he talked to An Ch’ing-sheng for three days and nights, and believed he was a Taoist immortal. Later the Emperor sent many messengers to the Eastern Sea to look for him. Their ships returned empty-handed because of the storms. In the second century B.C., Li Shao-chin, a court officer, told Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty that when he traveled on the ocean, he saw An Ch’ing-sheng riding on the waves and eating dates as huge as guards. O Lu-han was reported to be an immortal in the Chin Dynasty. In A.D. 160 she descended to the house of Yang Ch'i-tsai and taught him the Taoist secret of immortality.

According to Taoist beliefs, the immortals used to ride on huge lotus flowers. Their diameters were about one hundred feet. These flowers bloom on the peaks of Tai Hua Mountain. They are called Jade Will Lotus, and their roots are as huge as boats.

Page 81. At a Poetry Party I Am Given the Theme of the Milky Way. Hung Sue was a poet of the ninth century. He lived as a hermit in the mountains for thirty years. Yang Ching-chih, a high officer in the court, admired Hung’s poetry very much, and praised his poetry to everyone he met.
Page 81, to the tune Immortals on the River Bank. The poem was written in the spring of 1218 when Li fled to the South and arrived at Nanjing, where her husband held the post of the city magistrate (like the mayor today). "To light the lantern" means to light it for the lantern festival on the fifteenth of the first month. As the first lady of the city, she was supposed to lead the ladies to light lanterns of a great variety of designs and shapes. In the preface of this poem, Li indicates that the first line was directly quoted from an early Sung poet, Ouyang Hui. However, Li's poem is superior to Ouyang's in depth, pathos, and a sense of passing time.

Page 82, to the tune Everlasting Joy. The capital of Northern Sung was in Pien, the K'ai Feng City. Defeated by the Chins, the Sung moved the capital south to present-day Hang Chou. Presumably Li wrote this poem in Hang Chou, recalling days in the lost capital. The Feast of Lights (lanterns) occurred on the fifteenth of the first month, when people competed with beautiful lanterns and showed off their clothing and ornaments, gifts of the New Year.