Endnotes
Endnotes — A Grimoire

Je dis qu’existe entre les vieux procédés et le sortilège, que restera la poésie, une parité secrète; je l’énonce ici et peut-être personnellement me suis-je complu à le marquer, par des essais, dans une mesure qui a outrepassé l’aptitude à en jouir consentie par mes contemporains.


I maintain there exists a secret parity between the old methods and sortilege—this remains now as poetry. Stating it thus, I’m privately pleased, perhaps, that my emphases may exceed my contemporaries’ capacity for enjoyment.

— Quoted in Mallarmé : la grammaire & le grimoire, by Mireille Ruppli and Sylvie Thorel-Cailleteau (Genève: Droz, 2005), 1.

1 Source: http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/File:Lipoliangkai.jpg. I wonder if this is Li Bo. Liang Kai isn’t telling, and only later on in Song did people insist that it was he.

2 ch12v4p1999. Throughout the present book, a citation of this form indicates chapter 12, volume 4, page 1999 of Zhan Ying’s 詹錫 unexcelled eight-volume collection of Li Bo’s writings, Li Bo quanji jiaozhu huishi jiping 李白全集校注彙釋集評 (Tianjin 天津: Baihua 百花, 1996).

These lines are from “A Lu Mountain Song Sent to the Imperial Censor, Empty Boat Lu” (Lushanyao ji Lu Shiyu Xuzhou 城山謠寄廬侍御虛舟). For the rest, see Chapter 29.

3 ch3v1p424.

4 Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guqin. Two zithers, the qin 琴 and se 瑟, companionship of plucked silk strings.
You can hear it at Gammaldans, “Teals Descending on the Level Sand (Lo Ka Ping) (1970),” YouTube, December 8, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n3eRm7vTrPg.

5 ch13v4p2183.

6 ch15v5p2502.

7 The Li Taibo nianqian 李太白年潜 by Xue Zhongyong 薛仲琶 of the Song dynasty. The mid-Qing scholar Wang Qi 王琦 reprints it in his excellent edition of Li Bo’s works, Li Taibo quanjji 李太白全集, where it constitutes Chapter 35. It has been translated by Frederic Pet Protopappas as The Life and Times of Li Po, 701–762 A.D.: An Annotated Translation and Analysis of the Chronology of His Life Taken from His Collected Works (Ph.D. diss., Georgetown University, 1982).

For an accounting of Li Bo’s life by his kinsman and literary executor, Li Yangbing 李陽冰, see the Caotang ji 草堂集 (Grass hut collection), ch1v1p1. It has been translated by Shigeyoshi Obata in his The Works of Li Po, the Chinese Poet (New York: Dutton, 1922), 174–82.

8 The Chronology also explains his family’s presence in the west:

At the end of the Sui dynasty [early seventh century], his ancestor had some troubles and moved to the Western Regions, hiding out and changing his name. Thus, since the arising of the Great Tang [in 618], the family has been missing from official records. Only in the reign of Empress Wu [684–704] did their descendants return to the interior and make a home in Sichuan.

9 In other circumstance he might have been known as Li the White, or emerged from Ellis Island as Whitey Pflaumer. Cf. Li Hei 李黑, Li the Black, a military officer of the third century CE.

10 At adulthood a gentleman’s given name becomes a bit too private for use outside the family, so he takes a cognomen, a *zi* 字, known in English as a courtesy or public name. It is often closely related to his given name. Thus at his majority, Christopher Robin became C.R. Milne.


12 Otherwise unknown. This could be a contemporary ceramic sculpture of him, teaching Li:

![Fig. 85. Mud man figurines representing two men with a scroll (ca. 1920s). Source: https://www.rubylane.com/item/738907-A248/Vintage-Chinese-Mudmen-Two-Men-w](https://www.rubylane.com/item/738907-A248/Vintage-Chinese-Mudmen-Two-Men-w)

13 “Letter to Chief Administrator Pei at Anzhou” (*Shang Anzhou Pei Changshi shu* 上安州裴長史書, ch26v7p4025). Pei is
Pei Kuan 裴寬 (679–754), a distinguished official whose biography is in both the old and new Tang Histories.

14 Perhaps to the great-granddaughter of a former prime minister. Later she died.

15 Of the fourth/third century BCE. From chapter 2, “Discourse on Making Things Equal” (Qiwu lun 齊物論). Chapter 1 is entitled “Roaming without a Destination” (Xiaoyao you 逍遙遊).


17 Wei Hao 魏顥 (fl. Kaiyuan period), preface to his Li Hanlin ji 李翰林集 (The collected works of the Hanlin scholar Li Bo). In Li Bo quanji ch1v1p3.

18 Regarding the date of his arrival, see Yu Xianhao 郁賢皓, “Li Bo Churu Chang’an Shiji Tansuo 李白初入長安事跡考索 [Investigation of Li Bo’s first entry to Chang’an],” in Li Bo yu Tangdai wenshi kaolun 李白與唐代文史考論 [Essays on Li Bo and the literary history of the Tang] (Nanjing: Nanjing shifan daxue chubanshe 南京師範大學出版社: 2007), 16–30.

19 From Li Bo’s “Two Poems Given to My Cousin the Prefect of Nanping, Who’s Going Off Wandering” (Zeng Congdi Nanping Taishou zhi yao, er shou 贈從弟南平太守之遙二首), ch10v4p1738.

20 Yang Sui 楊遂, perhaps of the Yuan dynasty. Wang Qi, the Qing dynasty editor mentioned in note 7, also compiled stories
and poems about Li Bo in chapter 36 of his work. This poem comes from anecdote 36, to which Wang appends Yang Sui’s “A Record of Li Bo’s Old House” (Li Taibo guzhai ji 李太白古宅記). Paul Douglas Moore has translated and annotated this material as Stories and Poems about the T’ang Poet Li Po (Ph.D. diss. Georgetown University, 1982).

21 Anecdote 44, from the Sichuan tongzhi 四川通志 (Sichuan gazetteer).

22 Turns out to be a recent forgery—you can find it all over the web, e.g., http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_98fe1ac1010175ze.html. The Imperial Calligraphy Catalogue of 1120 (Xuanhe shupu 宣和书谱) doesn’t record it among its half dozen examples of Li Bo’s work. Nor is there any mention of it in other historical works, as, for example, owned by so-and-so. Nor do the twenty anecdotes about Li Bo’s calligraphy, gathered in Moore’s Stories and Poems about Li Po, allude to it The colophons by established collectors such as Song Ke 宋克 (1327–87), which I don’t show in this excerpt, are also forgeries.

A tippler is drunk on wine, Li Bo is drunk on brightness, brightness is drunk on its own dazzle razzle

The word “wine” occurs in more than two hundred of Li Bo’s poems. Some kinds of poetry can only be conducted with wine, otherwise the immortals get very angry.


24 ch21v6p3272.

25 Well, the Astronomy Bureau of the Qing dynasty (1644–1911) found two more, so now there are five stars in the asterism, see Yi Shitong 伊世同, Zhongxi Duizhao Hengxing Tubiao 中西對照恆星圖表 [Tables of the constant stars, east and west] (Beijing: 1981), 121–33.


28 Ibid., 241. The Wine Stars have been around some time, but the earthly springs were discovered by one Kong Rong 孔融 (153–208), disruptive wit, mordant cynic, jolly soul in the depths of the decaying Han dynasty. Here he sets out wine’s three domains:

The shimmers of the Wine Stars trail through Heaven, the district of the Wine Springs is marked out on Earth, and the virtues of wine are divulged by men.

天垂酒星之燿，地列酒泉之郡，人著旨酒之德

When the Emperor Cao Cao 曹操 (155–220) banned alcohol production due to a grain shortage, Kong wrote him, “Since evil kings are destroyed by lust, why not ban marriage as well?” “Letter to Cao Cao Discussing the Ban on Wine” (Yu Cao Cao lun jiujin shu 與曹操論酒禁書). The Emperor couldn’t shut him up, so eventually he had him killed.


29 ch3v1p357.

30 Denver, Colorado, on the eve of his twentieth birthday, January 1965.
Master Redpine was lead Rain Maker at the time of the Divine Husbandman. [...] Often he'd visit the Kunlun Mountains and meet the Queen Mother of the West in her chamber. He could move in accordance with wind and rain, up or down.

Of Anqi, that text remarks:

He sold medicines on the shore of the Eastern Sea. At that time everyone said he was already 1000 years old. The First Emperor of Qin traveled east to see him, and they spoke together for three days and nights.

Later the Emperor sent expeditions to find him again in the Faerie Seas around Penglai Island, but without success. In Highest Clarity Daoism, Anqi is the Perfected One of the Northern Pole (Beiji zhenren 北極真人).

Section 30, “Record of the Dykes” (Fangji 坊記). He must have read it somewhere else, since the Liji didn’t exist as such until the Han.

Good choice: It’s said that when baby crows grow up, they bring food to their mother. See Cheng Gongsui 成公綏 (231–73), “Rhapsody on the Crow” (Wufu 烏賦).

This story comes from the Yiwen leiju 藝文類聚 (Collection of Literature by Category) of Ouyang Xun 歐陽詢 (557–641), chap. 20, §4, “Filiality” (Xiao 孝). The text claims to be quoting the Biographies of Exemplary Women (Lienüzhuan 列女傳) of Liu Xiang 劉向 (77–76 BCE), but the passage is not found in extant versions of that work, which instead tells the story we...
translate below, immediately after Li Bo’s poem. A compressed version of the Yiwen leiju passage can be found in the Chuxueji 初學記, juan 17, §4, “Filiality” (Xiao 孝), 15b–16a.

35 Though Li Bo has obviously heard of Old Laizi’s dance, the earliest reference to it I’ve been able to find is the Yuan dynasty The Twenty-four Filials (Ershsi xiao 二十四孝) by Guo Juqing 郭居敬, some five or six hundred years later. This line comes from the summation poem attached to his Old Laizi entry.

36 One of a set of engravings from Illustrated Poems of the Twenty-four Filials (Ershisi xiaoti shitu hekan 二十四孝體視圖和看), illustration by Li Xitong 李系統, printed 1869 by Yishengtang 益生堂. https://3g.china.com/baike_6YCa5L-X5piT5oeC.html.


38 ch10v4p1747.

39 From the Biographies of Great Gentlemen (Gaoshiji 高士傳), juan 1, of Huangfu Mi 皇甫謐 (215–282). This is a condensation of the story found in the Biographies of Exemplary Women, juan 2, “The Worthy and Enlightened” (Xianming 賢明).

40 From the Xinkan Gulienüzhuán 新刊古列女傳 (Wenxuanlou congshu 文選樓叢書 of Ruan Heng 阮亨 [1783–1859]), juan 5. https://ctext.org/lie-nv-zhuan/chu-lao-lai-qi/zh.

41 ch9v3p1364.

43 The *Garden of Literature* biographies (Wenyuan 文苑), chap. 190.


46 I think the friend must be Wang Yan 王炎, to whom Li Bo addresses his rhapsody (*fu* 賦) on the Sword Gate Pass that is mentioned in this poem, *Jiange fu* 劍閣賦, ch25v7p3905. The rhapsody comes with a subtitle, “Seeing Off My Friend Wang Yan on His Way to Shu.” I don’t know more of Wang, except that when he died, Li Bo wrote three poems in mourning. See Zhan Ying, ch25v7p3905.

The rhapsody and this poem are very similar, and the rhapsody may have been an early version of, or inspiration for, the poem.
“Pull, pull, my fine hearts-alive; pull, my children; pull, my little ones,” drawlingly and soothingly sighed Stubb to his crew, some of whom still showed signs of uneasiness. “Why don’t you break your backbones, my boys? What is it you stare at? Those chaps in yonder boat? Tut! They are only five more hands come to help us — never mind from where — the more the merrier. Pull, then, do pull; never mind the brimstone — devils are good fellows enough. So, so; there you are now; that’s the stroke for a thousand pounds; that’s the stroke to sweep the stakes! Hurrah for the gold cup of sperm oil, my heroes! Three cheers, men — all hearts alive! Easy, easy; don’t be in a hurry — don’t be in a hurry. Why don’t you snap your oars, you rascals? Bite something, you dogs! So, so, so, then: — softly, softly! That’s it — that’s it! long and strong. Give way there, give way! The devil fetch ye, ye ragamuffin raspsallions; ye are all asleep. Stop snoring, ye sleepers, and pull. Pull, will ye? pull, can’t ye? pull, won’t ye? Why in the name of gudgeons and ginger-cakes don’t ye pull? — pull and break something! pull, and start your eyes out! Here!” whipping out the sharp knife from his girdle; “every mother’s son of ye draw his knife, and pull with the blade between his teeth. That’s it — that’s it. Now ye do something; that looks like it, my steel-bits. Start her — start her, my silver-spoons! Start her, marling-spikes!” (Moby-Dick, chap. 48)

“Road” translates dao, the Way.

The “Great Appendix” (Dazhuan 大傳) to the Classic of Change (Yijing 易經) states, “Within Change is the Great Ultimate. It gives birth to the two principles [yin and yang], the two principles give birth to the four images (xiang 象), the four images give birth to the eight trigrams,” and from that all things arise.

Here’s a good joke: in the *Vishnu purana* it’s said to be 4.32 billion years — see *Wikipedia*, “Kalpa (aeon),” s.v.


Attributed to Zhang Hua 張華 (232–303), but see ibid.

Detail of *Ming Xuanzong xingle tu* 明宣宗行樂圖, a six-meter-long hand scroll by Shang Xi 商喜 (active during reign of the Xuanzong Emperor of the Ming dynasty). https://www.shuge.org/ebook/ming-xuan-zong-xing-le-tu-juan/.

His name’s Xue Shenhuo 薛眘惑, and his feat’s recorded in the *Omnibus Record of Court and Commoners* (*Chaoye qianzai* 朝野僉載) attributed to Zhang Zhuo 張鷟 of the Tang.

This text is quoted in the opening section of chapter 24 of the *Seven Lots of the Cloud Satchel* (*Yunji qiqian* 雲笈七籤), but I haven’t been able to locate it otherwise.
58 ch25v7p3920. If you’re a fan of the Songtexts of Chu 楚辭, you’ll recognize the shaman’s journey through lush and lamentation. For a sensitive treatment of this poem and its generic kin, see Nicholas Morrow Williams, “The Pity of Spring: A Southern Topos Reimagined by Wang Bo and Li Bai,” in Southern Identity and Southern Estrangement in Medieval Chinese Poetry, eds. Ping Wang and Nicholas Morrow Williams [Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2015], 137–63).


60 Over Sogdians and Tocharians (these are Indo-European speakers) as well as over Uyghurs and several other Turkic groups, the Khitan and so on. Not usually the Tibetans. On Tocharians, see Mark Dickens, “Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Tocharian But Were Afraid To Ask,” archived at https://web.archive.org/web/20060803100222/http://www.oxuscom.com/eyawtkat.htm.

We might follow Edward Schafer and call this whole thing Chinastan (“The ‘Yeh chung chi,’” Tʻoung Pao 76, nos. 4–5 [1990]: 147–207). And then we might designate the Chinese-speaking region, especially the lands north of the Yangtze River, as Tang Central, corresponding to the Chinese term “the central states” (zhongguo 中國, the term adopted by Lin Zexu 林則徐 [1785–1850] when he wrote to Queen Victoria in order to represent “China” in relation to the European powers—his draft letter called Nilun Yingjiliguowang xi 擬諭英吉利國王檄).

Robert Somers, who follows Edward Luttwak, calls this empire “hegemonic” rather than “territorial,” in that Tang Central, the inner zone of power, was surrounded by a series of client tribes “deferring to the power of empire but not entirely under its direct control” (“Time, Space, and Structure in the Consolidation of the Tʻang Dynasty (A.D. 617–700),” Journal of Asian Studies 45, no. 5 [1986]: 971–94. Luttwak’s demonstration is in his Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976].)
61 This constancy stands outside of time. Like the Stanley Brothers, “I Am a Man of Constant Sorrow” (out of Dick Burnett). On the center, see Paul Wheatley, *Pivot of the Four Quarters: A Preliminary Enquiry into the Origins and Character of the Ancient Chinese City* (Chicago: Aldine, 1971). For an account of the intersections of geography, literature, mapping, dreams, and imagination in the immediately following period (roughly 780 to 820), see Ao Wang’s aptly entitled *Spatial Imaginaries in Mid-Tang China: Geography, Cartography, and Literature* (Amherst: Cambria Press, 2018).


63 Source: http://www.sacrificeworldwide.com/images/maps_changan_city.gif This is fractal: as Nancy Steinhart has shown, the layout of the Neolithic house is the same as its compound, which is the same as its town, and the same as that of the Imperial capital. See Nancy Shatzman Steinhart, *Chinese Imperial City Planning* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1999).

64 From “Three Analogies” (*Yuyan san shou* 寓言三首), ch-22v7p3455.

65 From “A Moon Song at Emei Mountain, Seeing Off the Sichuan Monk Tranquility, Who Is Going Up to Chang’an” (*Emeishan yuege song Shu Sengyan ru Zhongjing* 峨眉山月歌送蜀僧晏入中京), ch7v3p1202.

66 From “Ziye’s Songs from Wu, Autumn” (*Ziye Wuge* 子夜呉歌), ch6v2p939.
And is sited only slightly to the southeast of the former city. Han palace names often stand in for Tang buildings—see Li Bo’s poem on the Bright Emperor in Sichuan, which speaks of him living in the Jianzhang Palace 建章, only that’s the Han name for it, it’s the first of his “Ten Songs of the Former Emperor on His Circuit West to Inspect the Southern Capital” (Shanghuang xixun Nanjing ge 上皇西巡南京歌十首, ch7v3p1178).

A painter mostly paints another painting—a mountain will look like other mountains painted in the same tradition. Poets are the same way—a mountain will sound like someone else’s mountain poem. For the particulars of Chinese mountain poetics, see Paul Kroll, “Lexical Landscapes and Textual Mountains in the High T’ang,” T’oung Pao 84, no. 1 (1998): 62–101.

And so we might notice that everything of Tang is inhabited by... well, we could call them ghosts, or memories, or deities, or history, or poems. Every person, place, and thing we meet has already been spoken of. The memories got here before we did: we can’t go anywhere they haven’t already been, anywhere they aren’t already. And our visit itself becomes another swirling of these patterns—we are not their epigone, but their co-creators. See Colin Davis, “Etat Présent: Hauntology, Spectres and Phantoms,” French Studies 59, no. 3 (2005): 373–79.

I just said that everything is inhabited by ghosts, but this is not so. There is not some thing being inhabited, there is rather a presencing, there is nothing we might discover behind that presence through exorcistic activity.

It’s also misleading that I call this dimension “time,” since it implies a sequence of moments. A past and a present, an old and a new. But there was nothing very ancient about it. You knew it the way your body remembers an embarrassing moment from last year. Occasional literary-moral movements to “revive the past” (fugu 復古, see Stephen Owen, The Great Age of Chinese Poetry [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981], 8–10 et passim) are thus actually presentists in another guise.
This has led some people to claim that time as we know it doesn’t exist. But if you lose one dimension, don’t you lose them all?

His means are ritual, rites that are not strictly Confucian, Daoist nor Buddhist (though all three have a lot to say about it). They entail blood and the ineffable, for during Tang the “state religion continued to involve imperial blood sacrifices to Heaven” (John Lagerwey, *China: A Religious State* [Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010], 174). Though rooted in the traditions of ancient monarchs whom Confucius also venerated, this state religion was not the socially-oriented “Confucianism” of the elite, with its ethos of texts and learning, its decorum and public service, about which Peter Bol has written so brilliantly in “This Culture of Ours”: *Intellectual Transitions in T’ang and Sung China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992). Whereas some officials lobbied with the Emperor on behalf of this genteel Confucianism, in the competition with Daoism for Imperial favor, their doctrine “never had a prayer,” as John Lagerwey puts it in a celebrated statement from his *Taoist Ritual in Chinese Society and History* (New York: Macmillan, 1987), p 274.

Blood and the ineffable. The blood is offered at the Imperial altars to remove obstructive forces. It’s harder to speak of the ineffable, but a Daoist would know that Chang’an is only the center of things on the earth, whereas the true center of everything is the Pole Star, simulacrum of the supreme god Great Singularity (*taiyi* 太一) and the actual source of Imperial authority.

There must be a fifth and sixth dimension, but they are only known to immortals. Perhaps they are perfectly interpenetrated with the others. Speaking to the Feminine Principle, Chögyam Trungpa remarked:

On the quiet, the unborn begins to manufacture a world, an underworld, in mid-air, the bottom of the ocean. It cannot be obstructed nor prevented. If this underground world is very active, the overground world of the established administra-
tion cannot see it. We are talking here about the black market of the mother. That concept is extremely powerful, extremely powerful. It is some kind of invisible atomic bomb that’s been manufactured in the basement. (‘The Feminine Principle,” in Glimpses of Space [Boulder: Vajradhatu Publications, 1999], 12–13)

72 He lived from 685 to 762. Often referred to by his posthumous Temple Name, Xuanzong 玄宗 (Mysterious Ancestor) or, more recently, by his given name, Li Longji 李隆基.

73 Control of weather was recently perfected in Beijing, where the summer temperature is never reported to be above 40 degrees Celsius, due to a widespread belief that were it to reach that mark, all state employees would be sent home.


76 Detail of Yang Guifei Mounting a Horse, by Qian Xuan 錢選 (1235–1305 CE). Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yang_Guifei#/media/File:%E4%B8%8A%E9%A9%AC%E5%9B%BE.jpg.

77 Bol, “This Culture of Ours,” 33.

78 If you take a paranoid view of the Masons, seeing them as a closed society that controls everything and whose members connect to one another silently across vast distances, then you’ve got a fair sense of how this works. The bureaucracy’s numbers can be measured in various ways. This figure approximates the ranked officials, but their clerks (often hereditary), runners, and so on are many more.
Bol, “This Culture of Ours,” 77.

Owen, The Great Age of Chinese Poetry, 3–4. Nearly 50,000 Tang poems survive, assembled in the early eighteenth century as the Quan Tangshi 全唐詩 (Complete poems of the Tang).

Perhaps Tang practices of land tenure, water control, taxation, gender relations and religious organization are similarly aligned. A civilization can have only one thought at a time.

The last line plays on a much celebrated apothegm of Confucius, which contrasts the leadership styles of the wise (zhizhe 知者) and the good (renzhe 仁者) (Analects 6.23). From The Complete Poetry of the Tang (Quantangshi 全唐詩).

If we apply modern criteria, forgetting that all cultures are absurd, we might find the early Tang aristocrats to be concrete-sequential, precedent-bound and external-locus-of-control, that is, to be tightly tied to authorities lying outside themselves. (Concrete-sequential, that is, oriented to a linear presentation of empirical information — an aspect of what Anthony F. Gregorc calls “mind styles.” External-locus-of-control, that is, dependent on forces that one cannot directly influence — see the work of Julian Rotter and others in personality studies.) But some people find, or make, space within such circumstance. An analogy closer to our own cultural lineage, Mrs Delany (1700–1788), née Mary Granville:

Her father, Colonel Bernard Granville, was at one time Lieutenant Governor of Hull, and had been member of Parliament for Fowey in Cornwall. His grandfather was Sir Bevil, killed while fighting for Charles II in the Civil War, and Sir Bevil’s grandfather was the famous Sir Richard Granville, who died after a heroic encounter between his ship Revenge and the Spanish fleet in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. (Ruth Hayden, Mrs. Delany: Her Life and Her Flowers. [London: The British Museum, 1986], 15)
She was the friend of Handel, corresponded wittily with Swift, was the niece of Lord Lansdowne (poet and patron of Pope), knew Burke, was wooed by John Wesley, entertained and was entertained by Garrick, and saw much of Lord Chesterfield in Ireland. […] King George III and Queen Charlotte were on terms of intimate friendship with her and brought her comfort and happiness in her last years. (ibid., 11–12)

Her father’s sister, Lady Stanley, had been a Maid of Honour to Queen Mary; it was intended that Mary should be groomed for a similar position. (ibid., 15)

Married by her loving parents to a gentleman two score years her senior, she wrote:

I was married with great pomp. Never was woe drest out in gayer colours, and when I was led to the altar, I wished from my soul I had been led, as Iphigenia was, to be sacrificed. (ibid., 24)

But also

To encourage Mary with her music she was given her own harpsichord, and one day she had the pleasure of hearing it played by Handel. She was immediately struck by the beauty of his playing, and the moment he left the house she sat down to imitate it as best she could. Her uncle, teasing her, asked if she thought she would ever play as well as Handel: “If I did not think I should, I would burn my instrument,” she replied. (ibid., 16)

And especially: widowed at 72, she began making “paper-mosaicks,” flowers depicted in a cut paper technique she invented. There are perhaps 600 tiny pieces of paper in this collage:
Denis Twitchett explains:

The Han-lin Academy was a palace organization directly attached to the emperor himself. It originally comprised a large group of writers, poets, experts in geomancy, diviners, Buddhist and Taoist clergy, artists, painters, calligraphers and even masters of chess, who were at the emperor’s disposal in the palace to make his life fuller and more agreeable. In 738 a new section of the Han-lin academy was founded with the establishment of the Academy of Scholars. This new academy, which soon overshadowed the original Han-lin yuan in importance, was a private confidential secretariat dealing with state business and drafting documents for the emperor. *(Cambridge History of China, 3:450)*

These overlapping images are collected in Li Bo’s *Chronology* (*Nianpu* 年譜) under Tianbao 天寶 year 3 (744 CE), ably translated by Frederic Protopappas in his *The Life and Times of Li Po*, 117–25.

But our own currency here is mostly words, with a few images, and the exchange rate isn’t that great. And how do you convert tastes into sound?

When he was still crown prince, he and his five brothers had lived here too. For his fraternal love, see Paul Kroll, “The

A decade after this story, in 755, rebellion would end his rule and his consort’s life. When he returned from exile as Retired Emperor, two years later, he lived here once more, until his death.

86 Source: https://baike.baidu.com/pic/%E5%85%B4%E5%AE%AB/1669636/0/d833c895d143ad4b287f9e2584025aafa50f0686?fr=lemma&ct=single#aid=0&pic=d833c895d143ad4b287f9e2584025aafa50f0686.

For detailed maps of the Palace, with its various pavilions, gates, and Dragon Pond, see Victor Cunrui Xiong, *Sui-Tang Chang’an* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Center for Chinese Studies, 2000), diagrams 4.5 and 4.6.


87 Source: https://baike.baidu.com/pic/%E6%B2-89%E9%A6%99%E4%BA%AD/876601/0/3bf33a87e950352ab06ef86a5243fbf2b2118b41?fr=lemma&ct=single#aid=0&pic=3bf33a87e950352ab06ef86a5243fbf2b2118b41.

88 In a *parfumerie* today you might find it under the name “oud.” Pricey, though. The *Wikipedia* article says that “First-grade agarwood is one of the most expensive natural raw materials in the world, with 2010 prices for superior pure material as high as US$100,000/kg.” The Deluxe edition of this book might include a scratch-and-sniff, like those perfume ads in *The New Yorker*.

The aquilaria tree is native to South-East Asia. When its otherwise healthy and odorless heartwood is infected by mould, the tree responds by producing the resin agar (Skt. *agaru*), or aloes, thus the term “agarwood.” I would like to translate its Chinese name, *chenxiang* 沈香, as “drowning in fragrance,” but it is more
accurately “sinking fragrance,” since the specific gravity of the wood is greater than 1.00, and it sinks in water. For a fine discussion, see Edward Schafer, *The Golden Peaches of Samarkand*, 163–65.

The Pavilion walls were perhaps impregnated with agarwood powder, as were the interior walls of some great Chang’an mansions. See Benn, *China’s Golden Age*, 79–80.


90 So this is a heterotopia, a special place within a special palace within the special Imperial Palace Complex, within the magic city/siting of Chang’an, within the Great Tang. On heterotopics, see Michel Foucault, “Des espaces autres,” in *Architecture/Mouvement/Continuité* 5 (October 1984 [1967]): 46–49.

91 The eponymous Pear Garden was the imperial academy of musical theater and dance, with three hundred students. The Bright Emperor himself oversaw their instruction.

92 With his two brothers, Li Guinian 李龜年 performed widely at private gatherings throughout the two capitals, amassing great wealth. When he sang, “men would put down their wine cups and start to weep (Taiping guangji 太平廣記).” Years later, after Rebellion had destroyed his and many other worlds, the poet Du Fu came upon him in the South, “in the season of our falling flowers,” and recalled the splendid power of those performances in his poem “Meeting Li Guinian south of the Yangtze” (Jiangnan feng Li Guinian 江南逢李龜年).

93 “In ancient music, there were three modes — from high to low they were Plain, Level and Slanted (qing ping ce 清平側).” Wang Zhuo 王灼 (1105–81), *Biji manzhi* 碧雞漫志, chap. 5.

94 ch5v2p765. “A beauty who topples kingdoms.” Later on it is said, in various ways and in various sources, that the Precious
Consort took offense at the suggestion that she might be such a beauty. See Protopappas, *The Life and Times of Li Po*, pp. 117–25.

95 Well, most all of Li Bo’s poems were written to be chanted, intoned, sung. Laurence Picken has found some allied music (*Music from the Tang Court*, 7 vols. [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985–]), and Stephen Jones has identified some modern descendants (*Plucking the Winds: Lives of Village Musicians in Old and New China* [Leiden: CHIME Foundation, 2004] and “Source and Stream: Early Music and Living Traditions in China,” *Early Music* 24, no. 3 [1996]: 375–88).

96 Liangzhou 涼州 is in the corridor linking the Central States with the mixed Turkic regions of the West. Its grape wine was an exotic delicacy. See Schafer, *Peaches*, “Grapes and grape wine,” pp. 141ff. The Consort’s glass cup is likely of central Asian provenance as well. The Seven Treasures (or Seven Precious Substances, *qibao 七寶*) of Buddhism are, variably, gold, silver, crystal, etc.

97 From the *Pine Window Miscellany* (*Songchuang zalu 松窗雜錄*), a Tang dynasty collection of sixteen stories, mostly about the Bright Emperor, attributed to various authors. See Li Xueqin 李學勤, *Siku Dacidian 四庫大辭典* (Changchun: Jilin daxue chubanshe, 1996), 2:2140. Our text follows the *Chronology of Li Bo*, as emended by the *Taiping guangji*. For an expanded, colloquial treatment of the story from later times, see Shuhui Yang, *Stories to Caution the World: A Ming Dynasty Collection* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), Vol. 2, Story 9, 134ff.

98 Meng Qi 孟棨 (875 *jinshi*), from his *Benshishi 本事詩* (Fundamental stories and poems).

99 ch21v6p3362.
He held a series of important posts in the central bureaucracy. “Tutor” is an under-translation: he was one of four high-ranking officials who supervised the daily behavior and political training of the Prince. See Russell Kirkland, “From Imperial Tutor to Taoist Priest: Ho Chih-chang at the T’ang Court,” *Journal of Asian History* 23, no. 2 (1989): 101–33.

From the longer poem “Eight Who Are immortal while They’re Drinking” (*Yinjiu baxian 飲酒八仙*).

From his biography in the *New Tang History* (*Xin Tangshu 新唐書*).


Should this interest you, we translate one of Li Bo’s alchemy poems much later in the book as Chapter 64.

This is not entirely true. You don’t practice wine, you don’t practice meat, you drink and eat.

There is also this story:

When He Zhizhang chanted Li Bo’s “Song of the Roosting Crows,” he exclaimed, “This poem would set ghosts and gods to weep.”

Preserved in various texts, e.g., Fan Chuanzheng 范傳正, *Zeng Zuoshi yi Hanlin xueshi Li Gong xinnubei* 贈左拾遺翰林學士李公新墓碑. The poem in question is *Wuqiqu 烏栖曲* (ch-3v1p342). Steve Owen explains why this is not a conventional compliment but rather an attempt “to account for something that seemed to transcend the usual limits of literature” (*Golden Age*, 121).
He Zhizhang, of Kuaiji, the old south-east, wet and still re-dolent with pre-Chinese energies, the ancient state of Yue. His poem on returning there:

I left home young and come back old.  
My country accent hasn’t changed, but my hair’s much re-duced.  
When children see me, they don’t recognize who I am, smiling, asking, “Stranger, where’re you from?”

少小離家老大回，鄉音無改鬢毛衰  
兒童相見不相識，笑問客從何處來

Li Bo wrote his poem to He in 747 when he was visiting He Zhizhang’s old dwelling place. (See his other poems on Kuaiji translated later in this book, Silk Washing Rock, Chapter 51, and “Mount Tianmu,” Chapter 62.) See also his poem bidding He farewell from Chang’an, “Seeing Off He Zhizhang on His Way Home to Yue” (Song He Binke gui Yue 送賀賓客歸越, ch-14v5p2394).

He Zhizhang’s calligraphy was so admired that we still have bits of it. Here’s the word zheng 爭, “struggle,” from a longer piece:

Fig. 87. Source: http://shufa.guoxuedashi.com/4E89/154363.html.

107 The solar-lunar year is divided into twenty-four two-week segments. “Great Cold” is the last of these, just before the New Year brings on Spring, which arrives in our late January to late February. The text says it occurs in the tenth month, but this
must be incorrect. Probably the graph “two” has been dropped after the graph “ten.”

108 Compiled by Wang Renyu 王仁裕 (880–956) during the Five Dynasties period. Quoted by Wang Qi in his chapter 35.

109 ch5v2p696.

110 As recorded in Wang Qi, ch36v3p1642, quoting the Yitong-zhi 一統志 of the Qing dynasty. On Cui Zongzhi 崔宗之, see Du Fu’s poem of the “Eight Who Are Immortals While Drinking” (Yinzhong baxian 飲中八仙).

111 Snow is words. It is the natural state describing itself. Snow is words, the first sound, first light. It is the natural state, tout court. Snow is Li Bo falling down from nowhere, you can’t stop the snow, even the Bright Emperor cannot. Even Li Bo cannot.

By springtime all the snow is opened and gone.


114 From what Carlos Barros calls the common paradigm of contemporary historiography. See his “Hacia un nuevo paradigma historiográfico,” Debates Americanos 10 (2000): 86–96. Our fondness, then, for the Old Tang History (Jiutangshu 舊唐書) and its alleged credulity.

116 He had died some decades earlier, in 682, but he was born a century prior, in 581, or was it 541? He’s called the King of Medicines — he recorded more than 7,000 pharmaceutical formulae from earlier periods, and all later medical tradition flows out through him. On his esoteric practices, see Jürgen Oster, “Der Körper leicht, das Herz voller Freude,” Taijiquan & qigong journal 3 (2016): 14–21.


118 Xiwangmu 西王母, greatest of all goddesses, but her name better rendered “Royal Mother in the West.”

119 “Ancient Airs” (Gufeng 古風) #17, ch2v1p104.

120 “A Lu Mountain Song That I Sent to Empty Boat Lu” (Lushanyao ji Lu Shiyu Xuzhou 廬山謡寄廬侍御虛舟), ch12v4p1999.

121 Excerpted from the longer “Under Stone Quarry Moon, for Gongfu [Guo Xiangzheng 郭祥正 (1035–1113)]” (Caishi yuexia zeng Gongfu 採石月下贈功甫). The Old Tang History merely remarks, “Li Bo passed away from excessive drinking. He died at Stone Quarry.” Sometimes it takes a while for the truth to come out.

This event may be understood as “deliverance by water” (shuijie 水解), a form of the Daoist practice of “deliverance from the corpse” (shijie 屍解), in which the adept appears to die but instead is freed from his body and transforms into an immortal. The earliest example I know of water liberation is the account of Qin Gao 琴高 in The Arranged Biographies of Immortals (Liexian zhuan 列仙傳) attributed to Liu Xiang 劉向 (ca. 77–76 CE).


122 “Roaming Mount Tai” (*You Taishan* 遊泰山), poem 6, ch17v5p2805.


128 And see Suzanne Cahill’s account in “Practice Makes Perfect: Paths to Transcendence for Women in Medieval China,” *Taoist Resources* 2, no. 2 (1990): 23–42.

130 Like those in the *Arranged Biographies of Immortals* (*Lie-xianzhuan 列仙傳*). It contains seventy-two short biographies of horse doctors, princes, hermits, mages, and divinities. And the *Biographies of Divines and Immortals* (*Shenxian zhuan 神仙傳*) of Ge Hong 葛洪 (283–343), so beautifully translated by Rob Campany as *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth*, with nearly a hundred biographies.

131 See, *inter alia*, the work of Li Bo’s contemporary Wu Yun 吳筠 (?–778), who tells us how in his essay, “One Can Learn How to Be a Divine Immortal” (*Shenxian kexue lun 神仙可學論*). That he had to write it means that not everyone thought it possible.

For further abilities of the immortal, including the power to transform oneself into other beings or objects, see Benjamin Penny, “Immortality and Transcendence,” in *Daoism Handbook*, ed. Livia Kohn (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2000), 109–33.


In loose speech, a *xian* is just a superlative, a genius, an incomparable, the way the proprietary entitling of European monarchs became available to King Oliver and Duke Ellington. Thus we could call Steve Owen a *wenxian 文仙* for his miraculous work in Chinese literature—were he Irish, his name might be Steve O’Wen, Steve of Literature. Or we could say that “xian” is used to stand for the ecstatic transformations of the human realm, its innate magical realism. Think of Michael Jackson dancing.


More literally, “Is his apotheosis, then, complete?” (*Qishenhua suozhi ye* 其神化所至邪). This remark was made of another Sichuanese, Sima Xiangru 司馬相如 (179–17 BCE), the poet to whom Li Bo has been most compared. Attributed to Yang Xiong by Liu Xin 刘歆 of Eastern Han in his *Xijing zaji* 西京雜記 *(Miscellaneous records of the western capital). Quoted by Owen, *Great Age*, 111.

No wonder, then, that Li Bo’s a bit orthogonal to ordinary human concerns. See, *inter alia*, Owen’s astute observation that “he is more convincing when he described an encounter with an immortal or a flight through the heavens than when he described some social occasion at which he was actually present” (ibid., 114), since like most poets he is best with what is actually in front of him.

It can get worse. The greatest mid-century translator of Chinese verse, Arthur Waley, concluded that “he appears in his works as boastful, callous, dissipated, irresponsible and untruthful,” in other words, as “a drunkard” (*The Poetry and Career of Li Po* [London: George Allen and Unwin, 1950], x.)

*Ch16v5p2623.*

*Pace* the Chinese readers who like it these two ways — see Zhan Ying, 2624ff.
And the Chinese reader will also get a whiff of Peach Blossom Spring (Taohuayuan 桃花源), the magic land behind a waterfall, where an ordinary man found immortality—the famous story by Tao Qian 陶潛 (365–427).


The Shuowen 說文 defines xian as “to live a long time and then ascend and depart.” Zhuangzi (in his chapter “Heaven and Earth” 天地) says, “he lives for a thousand years, and when he gets bored with earth, he departs by rising.”

Shijing #220, “When the Guests First Go to Their Mats” (bin zhi chu yan 賓之初筵). For the word family of xian, see Bernard Karlgren, Grammata Serica Recensa (Stockholm: The Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, 1972 [1957]), no. 206: “to rise high; caper about, dan.”

Chapter 28.

ch3v1p372.

Douglas Penick writes:

So the dragon emerges from the cauldron.
It is clear that there were mountains involved.
Multitudes of slaves and craftsmen are not mentioned.
And the dragon emerges.
The dragon actually, for her part, couldn’t care less. It’s some kind of dragon dream she’s having.
The Emperor and his court cross over and become weightless and strange.

But lesser people will not allow it.
It must be real.
They grab at things and obtain precious relics. Things that fall to earth (die).


The Queen Mother, her deathless light of sun, moon and stars, this is larger than that. See Paul Kroll, “The Light of Heaven in Medieval Taoist Verse,” *Journal of Chinese Religions* 27 (1999): 1–12, esp. 9–11.


148 As preserved in Li Shan’s 李善 notes to the *Selection of Refined Writings* (*Wenxuan* 文選). This piece is from Jiang Yan’s poem, *Pan Huangmen zhuo wang* 潘黃門悼亡.

149 In the introduction to his “Gaotang Rhapsody” 高唐賦 from *The Songtexts of Chu*.

150 ch22v7p3435. Her five colors are indeed from her father Heaven. Thus the goddess Nü Gua 女媧 “smelted and refined these five colors of stones and used them to patch the grey-blue sky” (as reported by Wang Chong 王充 [27–ca. 100 CE] in his *Critical Essays* (*Lunheng* 論衡), the chapter “Discussing Heaven” (*Tantian* 談天), as translated by Edward Schafer in *Pacing the Void*, 39.)

Verlaine finds mystery in the sweet smell of thyme:

Que ton vers soit la bonne aventure
Éparse au vent crispé du matin
Qui va fleurant la menthe et le thym…
Et tout le reste est littérature.

380
May your verses themselves be that luck,
scattered in the crisp morning wind
that smells of mint and thyme…
And all the rest is just “literature.”

We also admire Martin Sorrell’s translation of the last word as
“LIT-RIT-CHER.” See Paul Verlaine, Selected Poems, trans. Martin
Sorrell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 125.

151 Ah, but these aren’t just fragrant plants, they are the tools
of a shaman vegetalista. See Gopal Sukhu’s The Shaman and the
Heresiarch: A New Interpretation of the Li sao (Albany: SUNY

152 The poet is Qu Yuan 屈原 and this is his “Encountering
Trouble” (Li sao 離騷) one of the world’s most beautiful poems.
David Hawkes, trans., The Songs of the South: An Anthology of
Ancient Chinese Poems by Yuan and Other Poets (Hammonds-

153 This is mostly Gopal Sukhu’s translation of the ending:

But as we ascended toward the effulgent festival of the Au-
gust Ones,
suddenly I caught sight of my former home below.
My chariot driver seemed about to weep, and my steeds,
looking pensive,
twisted their necks to look back. They would go no further.

陟升皇之赫戲兮，忽臨睨夫舊鄉
僕伕悲餘馬懷兮，蜷局顧而不行

Sukhu, The Shaman and the Heresiarch, 194. Sure, blame it on
the horses. Actually, it’s just that this vast vastness is uninhabit-
able for him, his social gravity ever pulling him down and down.
So he chooses to descend, resumes daily life in its refusal of the
sacred.
And then politics take control: he will drown himself in a material-substance river just to spite his unworthy sovereign, who has been unwilling to recognize his loyal service. And thereby, as Paula Varsano relates, the shaman poet is transformed into a Confucian martyr. See her *Tracking the Banished Immortal: The Poetry of Li Bo and Its Critical Reception* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2003), 166ff.

154 The poem is also a stylistic ancestor of the great tradition of rhapsody (fu 賦), obsessive, overwritten, elegant verse of places, objects, emotions. Li Bo wrote eight, one of which we’ve translated in chapter 15 as “A Rhapsody Lamenting Last Remnants of the Spring.” For a wild translation of the best of these, see Paul Kroll, “Li Po’s *Rhapsody on the Great P’eng-bird,*” *Journal of Chinese Religions* 12 (1984): 1–17.

155 Thus when these men go looking for immortals, especially the female immortal, it usually ends in tears. The sincerity of their longing, which they imagine might draw them closer to the deity, only repels her. There are so many examples of this in the *Songtexts of Chu* and elsewhere! This sadness prevails even over the great Guo Pu 郭璞 of the third/fourth century — Varsano notes that “Guo Pu’s shaman/adept/poet and the flirtatious, tantalizing deity never consummate their relationship” (*Tracking the Banished Immortal*, 199–200).

Pretty much the only men who consummate their relationship with an immortal are themselves immortal. Suzanne Cahill has translated a lavish account of a multiple wedding performed by the Queen Mother of the West for a set of Jade Maidens and their male suitors. The ancient hermit-immortal Chaofu 巢父 (“Nest Father”) sings to his consort:

Jade flute and rose-gem pistil have been just right for night;  
Why not make a single flower open across the dawn?

Guangting’s 杜光庭 (850–933) Biographies of Immortals from the Walled City (Yongcheng jixian lu 場城集仙錄). I could not say what esoteric practices lie beneath this account.

Oh, but that’s not actually how things work, with impermeable roles and singular identities. Cahill has also translated a set of poems from a century or two after Li Bo, where a poet tells of the King of Chu and his lover, or some other person and an immortal, or a regular guy and the breeze, and sometimes they have sex and sometimes we don’t know if they have sex, or if the poet is having sex, somewhere else, the whole time, maybe only in his poem. See her “Sex and the Supernatural in Medieval China: Cantos on the Transcendent Who Presides over the River,” Journal of the American Oriental Society 105, no. 2 (1985): 197–220.


The Fisherman is a famous poetic trope within the discourse of transcendence. You always hope to meet him, but he’s mysterious and hard to find, perhaps an immortal in disguise. However, as Steve Owen points out, Li Bo does not seek the Fisherman, he is he (Great Age, 136).

“May I too become like the mist that gives itself up into morning” (attributed to Marguerite Porete). Perhaps this is the difference between a poet and an immortal.

The Shuowen Jiezi 說文解字 (Explaining simple graphs and analyzing compound graphs) of Xu Shen 許慎, ca. 100 CE.

If you’re an epigraphy fan, check out these earlier forms:
• Xmu ding X 母鼎 (Shang, CHANT 2026) (late second millennium BCE)
- Shanfuyi ding 山父乙鼎 (Western Zhou, CHANT 1561) (early first millennium BCE)
- Zhaodiao shanfu fu 召弔山父簠 (early Springs and Autumns, CHANT 4601) (eighth century BCE)

For the CHinese ANcient Texts Database (CHANT) images, see http://www.chant.org/Default.aspx under the respective identifying number.


161 “Les montagnes sont, en Chine, des divinités. Elles sont considérées comme des puissances naturistes qui agissent d’une manière consciente et qui peuvent, par conséquent, être rendues favorables par des sacrifices et touchées par des prières” (Édouard Chavannes, Le T'ai chan [Paris: Leroux, 1910]). We might say that the deity comes first. The mountain co-emerges with it.


For a contrastive view, which understands Ge Hong as an arch-humanist, see Michael Puett, “Humans, Spirits, and Sages in Chinese Late Antiquity: Ge Hong’s Master Who Embraces Simplicity (Baopuzi),” Extrême-Orient, Extrême-Occident 29 (2007): 95–119.

163 Baopuzi, chap. 17.

164 Such as the Lingbao Wupian zhenwen 靈寶五篇真文 (Perfected script in five tablets), for a glimpse of which see James Robson in the Encyclopedia of Taoism, s.v., 1074.
165  *Baopuzi*, chap. 17. For how mountains became less fearsome shortly after this time, see Kroll, “Lexical Landscapes and Textual Mountains in the High T’ang.”

166  Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/d9/1_mount_hua_shan_china_2011.jpg.


172  Source: http://m.doczj.com/doc/3d8e2843be1e650e52ea998a-2.html.

Such plans of a mountain’s True Form predate the Tang. They contain the power of the mountain god, and just carrying them on your body gives perfect protection — you no longer have to visit the mountain to obtain this. “There are no more important Daoist writings than these” (Ge Hong again, the *Baopuzi*, chap. 19).
173  The Inner Biography of the Martial Emperor of Han (Han Wudi neizhuan 漢武帝內傳), sixth century CE but containing earlier material.

174  The Shenxian zhuan 神仙傳 (Biographies of divine immortals). Rob Campany suggests that Bo He 帛和 was a close contemporary of Ge Hong (To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth, 136).

175  Baopuzi, chap. 19.

176  Thus a major function of regional officials has always been to control all local deities in the imperial name. Paul Kroll writes:

Jean Levi’s work in particular has made clear that the chief conceptual role of state officials in medieval times was as representatives of the state cult, the Confucian tao, centered on the “Son of Heaven” — not as political placemen. We have become so used to speaking of T’ang government functionaries as bureaucrats (with the unavoidable connotations, for us, of the corridors of power, the steps of the Capitol) that we look right past their defining activities as religious emissaries. Like the Taoist priests, they aimed to exert control over the sundry local gods — the gods of the profane — of any region, who were worshipped through “irregular cults” (“Lexical Mountains,” 67).

177  Just as, already in Neolithic farming, the fields were laid out north–south–east–west.

178  I think it’s worthwhile having a dedicated English name for them, too, and so, following Edward Schafer, I call them Marchmounts, “march” meaning “margins, boundary, frontier.” See his Pacing the Void, 6. “Over the march of two worlds, that of the imagination, and that of fact, her soul hovered fluttering.” George MacDonald, Paul Faber, Surgeon (London, 1879).

180 The ruler had first to “wake” the mountain, get its attention, expose himself to those consequences.

181 These are Laozi’s fingers.


184 Combining the accounts in the Xuxianzhuan 續仙轉 (Continued biographies of immortals) and the Old Tang History (Jiu Tangshu 舊唐書), chap. 192. See Russell Kirkland, Taoists of the High T’ang (Ph.D thesis, Indiana University, 1986), 54 and 57. The Perfected Ones look a lot like imperial bureaucrats, and we may wonder, with Durkheim, if they are just the projection of social realities upon the unseen. But we could also take the inverse view, that society is just a projection of the gods. Or somewhere in between: that the gods are pretty hard to hear, so people mostly hear their own voices. These deities demand someone with the clairaudience of Sima Chengzhen, and the kindness to translate their speech into a local dialect. And so Highest Clarity priests took over the management of mountain spirits for the Emperor. And natural spirits that had become national gods submitted to Highest Clarity Perfected Ones, and its Daoism became state orthodoxy.
The title of Terry Kleeman's article tells what happened next: “Mountain Deities in China: the Domestication of the Mountain God and the Subjugation of the Margins” (Journal of the American Oriental Society 114, no. 2 [1994], 226–38). But note that the old gods of “slopes and forest” were still there, and still demanding blood sacrifice. They had been bypassed, not fired — it’s very hard to fire a real god.

185 From “Song of the Roving Swordsman” (Xiake hang 俠客行), ch3v1p489.

186 “Airs” translates feng 風, “wind,” but is used here to mean “style.” Still, we prefer something like “Ancient Aires.” The poem is ch2v1p196.

187 ch17v5p2796.

188 A History of Mt Tai (Daishi 岱史) by Cha Zhilong 查志隆 (1558 jinshi), Schipper #1472.


191 Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/8d/TaiShan.jpg. For more images, more descriptions and more inscriptions, see Lia Wei (Wei Liya) 魏離雅, Lithic Impressions II (Chengdu: Sichuan Fine Arts Institute, 2019.

192 And wrote a suite of six marvel poems on the occasion. We would translate all six, but Paul Kroll has presented them with such vividness and acumen that it would be redundant. We recommend his work to you, the “Verses from on High: the Ascent of T’ai Shan,” T’oung Pao 69, no. 4 (1983): 223–60.
193  Ibid., 241, as we learn from *The Comprehensive Record of the Anomalous* (Guangyi ji 廣異紀). Zhan Ying’s *Li Bo quanji* reports that “When a deer is more than a thousand years old, its fur turns white.”

![Image](image.png)

*Fig. 88. Paul Caponigro, “Running White Deer,” Wicklow, Ireland, 1967*

194  *Usnea filipendula*, called in Chinese “pine lichen” (*songluo* 松蘿) for its most common place of growth or “woman’s lichen” (*nüluo* 女蘿) for its supposed clinging. “Like human hair,” it is said.


198  The Songtexts of Chu explains:

A plumed man in the cinnabar hills, oh,
he must be an immortal visiting from his old home of deathlessness.

仍羽人於丹丘，留不死之舊鄉
— “Far Roaming” (*Yuanyou* 遠遊)
The younger they look, the older they are.


200 See the various notes in Li Bo quanji, quoting the unidentified “writings of the immortals.”

201 Huainanzi 淮南子, chap. 16, “Discussing Mountains” (Shuoshan xun 說山訓).

202 Zhan Ying lists some in his Li Bo quanji.


204 Source: http://wxpic.7399.com/nqvaOZtoY6GlxJuVYKfWmZlkxaJhpc-bna9ip4yNeK/CYgdSTwqKVioDNoWirkLKhkGimi3t61qWLfl-WIeYSWjJqGoprCn3-Hg7CanJuYoKpogtWAmou8aqiFY3eF-faZ8oqqtatunrnl7xKeCen26gXiop2iZZ5J4q62Slp-scKGmnMo.jpg.
   Earlier we saw the “True Form of Mount Tai,” which is a Daoist script based in energy patterns (qi 氣), not in bird tracks or human writing. By contrast, the examples here resemble, but are not assimilable to, Chinese graphs. See Chapter 31, below, “The Grotto-Heaven,” for the history of their revelation.
   Bark removed, the trunk shows the traces of burrowing insects:
The Tibetan traditions speak of “dakini script,” the writing of playful female wisdom deities, the innate magical quality of the phenomenal world in limitless variety. Only a dakini, or an adept, can read it. A Tibetan folk song:
Dakinis write one another in their own script.
The worn road before your house is written in dakini script,
lines of dirt going and going.
Birds write dakini script on the sky,
and bees hum songs written in that language.
The dakini script of the sky is just the sky,
it neither goes nor stays.
The dakini script around your eyes
wrinkles and crinkles when you smile or frown.

One night in August 1964 at Gary Snyder’s house in north Kyoto, Nanao Sakaki sat on the tatami completely covering a piece of paper in squiggly lines. The next night Philip Whalen got very stoned and read the document to the assembled guests.

As the war ended, Ezra Pound was incarcerated near Pisa, charged with treason. A local mountain became Mount Tai.

from the death cells in sight of Mt. Taishan @ Pisa

... and Mt Taishan is as faint as the wraith of my first friend

And he saw the Sage-King Shun there as well:

“sunt lumina,” said Erigena Scotus
as of Shun on Mt Taishan 顯
in the hall of the forebears

— From the Pisan Cantos #74, line 78, and #77, line 51.

205 ch15v5p2495.

206 Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mount_Heng_(Hunan)#/media/File:HengshanMountains.JPG.
James Robson has written extensively on Mount Heng. See his *The Religious Landscape of the Southern Sacred Peak (Nanyue 南嶽) in Medieval China* (Cambridge: Harvard University East Asia Center, 2009).

207 Robson tells the Tang-end of her story in his *ibid.*, chap. 6, “Lady Wei and the Female Daoists of Nanyue,” 184–212.

208 It really depends on how you count. If you skip over Lady Wei, and begin only when Tao Hongjing 陶弘景 (456–536) took the lineage big, Sima is the Fourth.

209 From her biography in chap. 58 of the *Taiping guangji 太平廣紀* (Extensive records from the Taiping era).

210 These writings explain how one may discover the astral and terrestrial deities of Celestial Masters within the human body. Thus they locate spiritual practice in that private space, rather than in ritual, liturgy and congregation. Similarly, whereas the sexual rites of the Celestial Masters took place between warm human bodies, in Highest Clarity they occur between the yin and yang of a solitary practitioner. Thus when Lady Wei betroths Yang Xi to a Perfected Consort round midnight on the evening of 27 July 365, she tells him:

Though you are now publicly presented as mates, this only establishes your respective functions, with she the inner and you the outer. You must not recklessly follow the filthy practices of the world by performing with her base deeds of lewdness and impurity. You are to join with the holy consort through the meeting of your effulgent spirits.


This is about the Planck length. You can’t get any smaller than that.

Her quest itself, of course, increases the likelihood that others can also meet Lady Wei.

Jade-Pure Clarity (Yuqing 玉清), Highest Clarity (Shangqing 上清) and Great Clarity (Taiqing 太清).

The Taiping yulan 太平御覽, chap. 675, says that the adept of high rank “wears a purple lotus head-scarf” (see Li Bo quanji, 2496).

Source: https://rossrosen.com/on-becoming-a-daoist-priest/.


It’s Cao Zhi 曹植 (192–232), son of the warlord Cao Cao and one of China’s great poets. It’s the “Rhapsody on the spirit of Luo River” (Luoshen fu 洛神賦). (You might also like to find the painting by Gu Kaizhi.)

The author of Blue Wave Talks Poetics (Canglang shihua 滄浪詩話), which first argued that the High Tang of Li Bo and Du Fu had set the model for all Chinese poetry. Cited in Li Bo quanji, 2497.
You can even read about her on *Wikipedia*.  

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hua_Shan.jpg.  

Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/1a/Thousand_feet.JPG  


It’s Sima Qian (d. 110 BCE), the greatest of all China’s historians. His autobiography (*zixu 自序*) says only:

> When I was twenty, I went roaming south along the Yangtze and Huai Rivers, climbed Kuaiji, sought the cave of Yu, peered at Jiuyi Mountains, and floated down the Yuan and Xiang Rivers (*Shiji 史記*, chapter 130).

It’s not clear who he is, though Xiao suspects he is a forebear of Prime Minister Xiahou Zi of Xuanzong’s reign (847–59) (noted in *Li Bo quanji*, ch23v7p3601).

His friends were Gao Qi 高霽 and Wei Quanyu 韋權軒. All we know is that Gao was from the area and Wei had been appointed Prefect there.

The Great Vacuity enacts the Marvelous Something of Spontaneity. Molten, it makes the rivers and streams, congealed it makes the mountains and hills.

229 “The Record of Jiuhua Mountain” (*Jiuhuashan ji* 九華山紀), preserved in *Taiping yulan*, chap. 469.


231 Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jiuhuashan_higher_Daxiong_Baodian.jpg.


233 From Mao Deqi 毛德琦 (Qing period), *Lushan zhi* 廬山誌 (A record of Mount Lu), chap. 4 and 7. On Lu Yu’s 陸羽 (733–804) *Classic of Tea*, see Chapter 50 “Tea,” below.

234 https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lofty_Mt.Lu_by_Shen_Zhou.jpg


*Fig. 91. Chang and his assistants copy wall paintings*

236 Wang Qi, ch36v3p1623. From Huang Ying’s 黃鶴 Dushi-zhu 杜詩註 (Notes on Du Fu’s poetry).

237 Sheng Hongzhi 盛弘之 (of the Liu Song dynasty), The Record of Chu (Jingzhou ji 荊州記).

238 ch20v6p3080.

239 Sheng Hongzhi, The Record of Chu.


241 The Zhen’gao, from the Highest Clarity tradition, The True Instructions or Declarations of the Perfected. Entry for year 429 CE (yuanjia liunian 元嘉六年). So here they are Jade Maidens, their divinity not fully revealed.

242 Or his consort. See, inter alia, the third-century CE Laozi zhong jing 老子中經 (Central Scripture of Laozi), where she’s called Mysterious Radiance of Great Yin (Taiyin xuanguang 太陰玄光). Edward Schafer describes her varied magnificence in the “Star Women” section of his Pacing the Void, 131–48, and grants her great illumination in “The Jade Woman of Greatest Mystery,” History of Religions 17 (1978): 387–98.

243 Bo Juyi 白居易 (772–846), “Song of Long-lasting Regret” (Changhen ge 長恨歌), one of China’s favorite poems, written two generations after the event.

244 Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Huaqing_Pool#/media/File:%E8%B4%B4%E5%A6%83%E5%87%BA%E6%B5%B4.jpg. Edward Schafer discusses these springs in “The Development of Bathing Customs in Ancient and Medieval Chi-


His dwelling place, Beihai, means Northern Ocean, but it’s just an area east of Ji’nan on the way to the Bohai sea. Li Bo’s poem tells us his teacher is from the Celestial Masters (Tianshi 天師) lineage, but Terry Kleeman points out that “the term Celestial Master had by the Tang been debased to the point that it could be used for any prominent Taoist” (Encyclopedia of Taoism, 986), so we’ve translated it as “Daoist Master.” Nonetheless, the 64th generation direct lineage descendant of the Celestial Masters founder lives and practices in Taiwan today.

“Seeking the Dao in Anling…” (*Fangdao Anling* 訪道安陵...), ch9v3p1474.


Steve Bokenkamp (in his Foreword to *To Live as Long and Heaven and Earth*, xi) points us to the following passage in the *Zhen’gao* (Declarations of the Perfected), chap. 1. (See also the translations by Thomas E. Smith, *Declarations of the Perfected, Part One: Setting Scripts and Images into Motion* [St. Petersburg: Three Pines, 2013], 49–50.) It is the evening of the 28th of July,
Lady Wang has descended from within the divine enceinte of Purple Subtlety, and Yang Xi prostrates to her and asks:

“You, a sublime perfect being, have come down into this murky realm in your very body, and yet you have never once written anything in your own hand. Is it because the base and exalted are just too far apart, so that the true forms would not be visible here?” [...]

She replies: “It is much as you have said, Mr. Yang. The concealed luminosity, the empty Mystery — there are no paths within them that anyone could follow. Speech emerges from them into empty space — no creature could trace it there. This luminosity and speech careen about, borne on swiftness, transforming, elusive, unfettered. They sink and float, dark and drifting, minnows darting through blazing silence. Tossed into a fordless pond, dragged by billowing winds, they ride an empty boat downstream. This is emptiness within Reality, Being within emptiness, and the formless within Being.

“When we put all this to writing, splattering ink across paper, it pours out in splendid patterns that exceed the visible. Only the brush of Mystery can draw its native brilliance. If you’re bound to apparent material substance, then you’re covertly corrupting this purity — that’s what happens to the forms that are transmitted into this murky realm. When soaring dew takes on bone and flesh and has intercourse with the world below, then the High blemishes the unbridled truth of its song, and the low transgresses its boundaries. It’s not something we do, the numinous laws don’t allow it.”

Li Bo doesn’t hold much truck with boundaries and their separation.

Source: https://i.pinimg.com/736x/1a/56/7c/1a567c73327c55d417e1d2832634fed--salute-font.jpg.

“The rigor Taoists showed in transmitting and inscribing talismans can be seen in how extremely well examples found in
the Dunhuang manuscripts or archeologically excavated accord with those printed in the Ming canon” (*Encyclopedia of Taoism*, “Overview,” 38).

These three talismans are from chapter 1 of the “Precious Registers [Corresponding to the Grade] of Disciple of the Three Luminaries of the Great Arcane, a Heavenly Treasure of the Shangqing Dongzhen Division” (*Shangqing dongzhen tianbao dadong sanjing baolu* 上清洞天真寶大洞三景寶籙), see Schipper #1385. They are:

1. The supreme Lord Laozi’s talismanic register of the golden tiger (*Taishang Dijun jinhu fulu* 太上帝君金虎符籙),
2. The talisman of the divine tiger (*Taishang shenhu fu* 太上神虎符),
3. Register of the flying paces of the void and permanent stars (*Taishang feibu kongchang lu* 太上飛步空常籙).

I have no idea where this random QR comes from, or where it goes. The wags in this book would have it that their silliness is wisdom, too, enticing Li Bo to show more of himself. But they should read the medieval Daoist canon, which, as Rudolf Pfister as shown, concludes that “Laughter is involuntary, even compulsive […], something to avoid, and sometimes an illness symptom” (“Attitudes towards Laughter and Euphoria in Medieval Chinese Daoist Texts,” in *Laughing in Chinese*, ed. Paolo Santangelo [Rome: Aracne, 2012], 335–67, at 350.)


254  The *Baopuzi* 抱樸子, chap. 5.

255  See the *Declarations of the Perfected* (*Zhen’gao* 真誥), chapter 11.

Meng Tian 蒙恬 (d. 210 BCE) was a great general of the First Emperor of Qin, and built much of the Great Wall for him. After his Emperor’s death, he was arrested and forced to commit suicide. He asks himself, “What crime have I committed against Heaven, that I should be condemned to death?” And he answers, slowly: “My crime is certainly worthy of death. When I built the Great Wall, more than ten-thousand miles from east to west, I was unable to avoid cutting the arteries of Earth, those water-bearing channels below the ground. This is indeed my crime” (*Historical Records* [*Shiji* 史記], chap. 88).


258  Translation by Robert Campany, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth*, 152, modified.

259  The *Biographies of Divine Immortals* (*Shenxian zhuan* 神仙傳), chap. 9, “Sire Gourd.”

260  The great geomancer and classical commentator Guo Pu 郭璞 (276–324). Or, with Schafer, we might call his poems “Excursions in Sylphdom.” See Schafer’s “Wu Yün’s 吳錫 Stan-

261 Treatise on Buddhism and Laoism (ShiLao zhi 釋老志).

262 We don’t know much of Li Mu, though the Song dynasty poet Si Xi 四錫 celebrates him in the long “Song of Li Mu Playing the Flute” (Li Mu chuidi ge 李暮吹笛歌). The sacred songs (faqu 法曲) are a musical genre that derived at first from Indic Buddhist and then Daoist musics, blended in the centuries before Tang with Chinese musical practices. It was particularly loved by the Bright Emperor.

263 Wang Qi, Li Taibo quanjí, ch36v3p1619–20. From the “The Record of Li Mu Playing the Flute” (Li Mu chuidi ji 李暮吹笛記) by Yang Juyuan 楊巨源, courtier of a generation after Li Bo’s death (789 jinshi, still alive in 833). Wang Qi points out the discrepancy of dates: the Bright Emperor visited Mount Tai in 726, but the first year of Tianbao was 742.

In Chinese, such rebus-pictograms are called mi 謎, “words hidden within words,” that graph itself an ideogram conjoining the words “word” 言 and “astray” 迷. You may recall a crucial mi in The Story of the Stone/Dream of the Red Chamber. Did your grade-school child ever write “my” under “wear,” like this:

wear
my

264 ch19v6p2964. Parts of the poem are translated in Schafer, Pacing the Void, 125.

265 The South Mountains (Nanshan 南山, or Zhongnan Shan 終南山) run some hundred miles below the green lowlands of Chang’an.

James Benn writes of dwellers in this mountain range in “One Mountain, Two Traditions: Buddhist and Taoist Claims

In his penultimate line, Li Bo’s line, “Having past the last peak,” is more literally “Once I’ve gone past Wugong Mountain,” that’s the companion peak to Taibo in the Nanshan range.

266 Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mount_Taibai#/media/File:Taibai-Dadian-Shan-3x.jpg.

267 Chapter 33. Thus The Secret Canon of Venus (Taibo yijing 太白陰經), the military strategy text by Li Bo’s near contemporary Li Quan 李筌. For a discussion, see Robin D.S. Yates, “The History of Military Divination in China,” EASTM 24 (2005): 15–43.


269 See the Historical Records (Shiji 史記) chapter on astronomy, the Tianguan shu 天官書, discussed by Sun Xiaochun and Jacob Kistemaker in The Chinese Sky during the Han: Constellating Stards and Society (Leiden: Brill, 1997). The Han view is maintained by its successor star texts, such as that found in the History of the Jin Dynasty (Jinshu 晉書), studied by Ho Peng Yoke in The Astronomical Chapter of the Chin Shu (Paris: Mouton: 1966). Much of this information is summarized in the Kaiyuan Zhanjing 開元占經 (Divination canon from the Kaiyuan period) of Gautama Siddha et al., completed in 729, in turn summarized by Joseph Needham et al. in Science and Civilisation in China, Vol. 3: Mathematics and the Sciences of the Heav-

A key text of Highest Clarity Daoism, the Scripture of the Eight Pure Ladies (Basu jing 八素經, Schipper #426), describes the planet as “the round mirror of the essence of metal” (preserved in chapter 3 of the Supreme Secret Essentials [Wushang biyao 無上必要, Schipper #1138]). Schafer discusses the section on the planet Mars in Pacing the Void, 212, where he writes tellingly of planetary power:

The planets are conspicuous concentrations of supernatural power; their movements are rapid and irregular, and so tend to inspire a sense of uneasiness and even dread (ibid., 217).

270 “The Barbarians Have No Real Men” (Hu wuren 胡無人), ch3v1p476.

271 “Presented to Li Bo” (Zeng Li Shi’er Bo 贈李十二白), QuanTangshi 全唐詩, chap. 261. Ahh, but Dongfang Shuo 東方朔 (160–93) is also said to be that Venus. See Comprehensive Meaning of Mores (Fengsu tongyi 風俗通義), chap. 2, and Section VIII of this book.

272 And thus Laozi says,

The bright Dao seems dim,
the smooth Dao seems rough,
the great white seems sullied.

— chapter 41

273 For the provenance of this piece of calligraphy, see Chapter 40, “Climbing Yang Terrace.”

274 Ludwig Wittgenstein, Remarks on Colour (Oxford: Blackwell, 1977). Pierre Hadot insists that the structure of its writing is as significant as any ascribed “content.”
275  Agnes Martin and Herman Melville have also explored parts of this question. Li Bo uses the word “white” over 500 times in his 1,000 poems.


277  “From antiquity the *zhi*-mushroom has been regarded as an auspicious plant. Thus it’s also called ‘the numinous mushroom’ (*lingzhi* 靈芝).” See the *Hanyu dazidian* 漢語大字典, poor cousin of the *oed*, *zhi*, s.v.

278  *The Bencao gangmu* 本草綱目, *Compendium of Materia Medica*, summa of all surveys of the Chinese pharmacopeia, completed in 1578 by Li Shizhen 李時珍. The fourth-century *Baopuzi* 抱樸子 notes, “It grows on all the Five Marchmounts, but especially on Mount Qi” (chap. 5). See Michel Strickmann, *Notes on Mushroom Cults in Ancient China* (Gent: Rijks-universiteit, 1966).


281  Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Han_Gan_Night-Shining_White.jpg. Painted about 750 by Han Gan 韓幹 (c. 706–83). The horse’s name is usually translated as

The Sephardic Baghdadi Indian banker Sir Percival David had acquired it in China in the 1930s.

Paul Kroll, “The Dancing Horses of T’ang,” *T’oung Pao* 67, no. 3 (1981): 240–68. Translated from the *Miscellaneous Records of the Bright Emperor* (*Minghuang zalu* 明皇雜錄) by Kroll, 244–45. Their activity is not entirely new—we have Han ceramics with acrobats standing on horses’ backs.


In Li Bo’s poem, a human Laozi left home and wandered west—this is the story told in chapter 63 of Sima Qian’s *Historical Records* (*Shiji* 史記). The Keeper of the Pass had seen purple haze in the distance, so he knew a sage was on the way. Laozi arrived and somehow agreed to spill the beans; the Keeper recorded them as the *Daodejing*. Then the two of them went off through desert sands. In Li Bo’s telling, they have now both died, and the alchemical stove cooking in the cinnabar field of their bellies has gone out.

We’ve mentioned that our access to Li Bo’s poetry is primarily through two sources, the eighteenth-century edition of Wang Qi 王琦 (*Li Taibo quanji* 李太白全集) and the mighty 1996 as-
semblage of Zhan Ying. Of this poem Wang Qi remarks, “It is definitely by Li Bo” (see his ch21v2p976). Zhan's team, however, cites evidence that, except for three words, it was instead composed by the Bright Emperor, on the occasion of his 749 visit to the Temple of Lord Lao just north of the eastern capital Luoyang: a stele at the temple was inscribed with the poem in the Emperor’s distinctive calligraphy. Section VII of our book, “The rebellion,” addresses the Emperor’s deep devotion to Laozi.

287 For a breathtaking version of this first sentence, and first chapter, see Peter Boodberg, to wit,

Lodehead lodehead-brooking: no forewonted lodehead;
Namecall namecall-brooking: no forewonted namecall.


Fig. 92. Alexey Pavlovich Budberg (1869–1945). Source: https://www.wikidata.org/wiki/Q4097978.

288 During the first decades of the People’s Republic of China, all philosophy—all thought—was either materialist (wewuzhuyi 唯物主義) or idealist (weixinzhuyi 唯心主義), either Good or Evil. Laozi was a round puzzle piece that was hard to
fit into square holes. See Mao Zedong, “Zai yifen jieshao Laozi zhexue shi weiwluzhuyi haishi weixinzhuyi di zhenglun cailiao shang di piyu 在一份介绍老子哲学 是唯物主义还是唯心主义的争论材料上的批语) [A one-minute critical comment to introduce the materials on the struggle as to whether Laozi's philosophy was materialist or idealist],” in 《建国以来毛泽东文稿(第八册)》 (北京: 中央文献出版社, 1993), 632.

289 The category that encompasses the most of these is fang-shi 方士, “gentlemen of the formulae.” The term is broadly conceived and spills out in all directions. See Kenneth deWoskin, Doctors, Divinners and Magicians: Biographies of Fang-shih (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).

Taijiquan 太極拳 is the most recent martial lineage to claim roots here. The Daodejing has several passages on using the military (see chap. 31, 50, and 57), and the Sun Tzu Art of War (Sunzi bingfa 孫子兵法) mirrors an allied way of working with the dual nature of phenomena.

290 The Celestial Masters 天師, beginning in 142 CE Sichuan under Zhang Daoling 張道陵 (34–156). The eighty-fourth patriarch of this sect now lives in Taiwan. Kristopher Schipper received transmission from him, see his excellent book, The Taoist Body (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993 [1982]).

291 Reading shi 始 “inception,” as its cognate tai 胎 “the pregnant womb.”

292 Silence may no longer be at the cutting edge of critical theory, but it remains the cutting edge of reality. (See Sanford Budick and Wolfgang Iser, eds., Languages of the Unsayable: The Play of Negativity in Literature and Literary Theory [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987].)

293 Naught and aught are the gifts of Peter Boodberg, “Some Philological Notes on the Lao Tzu.” Please also enjoy Paul Kroll’s presidential address to the American Oriental Society, “Between
Something and Nothing,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 127, no. 4 (2007): 403–13. We could also say *owt* and *nowt*, derived from Old English *a wiht* and *ne wiht*, meaning “anything” and “nothing” in Yorkshire dialect.

294 People continue to worry this, as if there really were two things. See, *inter alia*, David Chai, *Zhuangzi and the Becoming of Nothingness* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2019).


297 The *Extensive Records from the Taiping Period* (*Taiping guangji* 太平廣記), biography of Laozi, chap. 1 of the section on Divine Immortals (*shenxian* 神仙), quoting, among others, the *Biographies of Divine Immortals* (*Shenxianzhuan* 神仙傳).


In “Taoism, the Unofficial High Religion of China,” Anna Seidel writes of the numerous Japanese missions to the Great Tang, each of them seeking the most enduring Chinese principles of governance, calendar, art and religion on which to establish the new nation of Japan. In 753, a Japanese ambassador asked the Bright Emperor if he might take the Buddhist master
Jianzhen 鑒真 home with him. An awkward moment followed, writes Seidel, and instead

the Emperor suggested that they take a Daoist master whom he esteemed much more highly. The ambassador declined: “Our ruler is not fond of the teachings of the Daoists.”


300 At Mount Qingyuan 清原, just outside Quanzhou 泉州, the southern coast, from the Song dynasty. Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laozi#/media/File:Laozi_002.jpg.

301 In the rhapsody that follows this account, Sima becomes Zhuangzi’s huge, magnificent Great Bird, who soars over all (Dapeng fu 大鵬賦, ch25v7p3880). This bird is the peng 鵬—see the opening lines of Zhuangzi, his chapter 1. And please also note William Boltz’s remarkable article on it, “The Structure and Interpretation of Chuang tzŭ.”

302 Apart from recording him in a list of Highest Clarity Patriarchs in his paid eulogy for Hu Ziyang 胡紫陽 (“A Memorial and Stele-inscription for Master Hu Ziyang of Handong” [Handong Ziyang Xiansheng beiming 漢東紫陽先生碑銘], Ji- wai shiwen 集外詩文 v8p4494, see 4500).

303 ch2v1p50.

304 Descended from the Emperors of the Jin 晉 (265–420). Chap. 12 of the 1590 CE Complete Writings on the Zither (Qin- shu daquan 琴書大全) of Jiang Keqian 蔣克謙) discusses his compositions, both musical and literary, on the instrument. In general, see the account by Chen Guofu 陳國符 in his Daozang Yuanliu Kao 道藏源流考 [Investigations on the origin and

And then there are the private Daoists, scrupulously concealed within appearance.


Sima practiced in the Highest Clarity lineage (or, if you prefer, “Supreme Purity” [*Shangqing* 上清]). We can understand it as a church, with priesthood, texts, temples, doctrines, deities. But especially with individual meditative practices of breath and visualization. Yet we can’t quite call it “individual,” for the personal body consists of numerous gods, the same as you find in the various Heavens outside yourself, and the practices include sitting and forgetting yourself, and forgetting those deities as well—see, for example, Sima’s best known work, *Zuowang-lun* 坐忘論, translated into English by Livia Kohn as *Sitting in Oblivion: The Heart of Daoist Meditation* (St. Petersburg: Three Pines Press, 2010). I’m ashamed to speak so superficially about something so profound. If this material interests you, please seek out the wondrous writings of Isabelle Robinet.
307 Like his teacher, Li Hanguang 李含光 (683–769) was often sought by the Bright Emperor, but he always had some ailment that prevented his attendance at court. He and Li Bo traveled in overlapping circles, the way they hang out together here in this endnote, but there is no ostensible record of their interactions. On Li Hanguang, see Russell Kirkland, “The last Taoist Grand Master at the T’ang Imperial Court: Li Han-Kuang and T’ang Hsuan-tsung,” *T’ang Studies* 4 (1986): 43–67.

308 In fetal breathing (*taixi* 胎息) one breathes like an embryo, that is, through navel and pores, rather than the nose or mouth. Catherine Despeux notes an early mention in the fifth-century biography of Wang Zhen 王真 (of the Later Han dynasty) from the Hou Hanshu 後漢書, chap. 82 (see *Encyclopedia of Taoism*, 953).


Li Bo inscribes traces of immortality all through Madame Jiao. The gourd of Ying River belongs to another ancient hermit (Xu You 許油, see Chapter 65, “Mystery”); the Hemp Maiden Magu 麻姑 is often to the Eastern Seas (see Chapter 14, “Lines of a Short Song”); and Mount Song, wherein Madame Jiao conceals herself, itself conceals the chief Grotto-Heaven of the realm (see Chapter 31, “The Grotto-Heaven”). Thus arrayed,
Madame Jiao becomes empowered to hold Li Bo’s intention, she as Queen Mother, he as Dongfang Shuo (see Section VIII, “A Banished Immortal”).

310 Though she was a princess, no one now remembers when she was born or died. Most likely it was 692 and 762. She was, then, a decade older than Li Bo. Du Guangting 杜光庭 (850–933) writes of her: “Princess Realized-in-Jade loved Dao and took Heavenly Teacher Sima as Her Teacher” (in Records of the Divine Traces of the Heavenly Altar of Mount Wangwu [Tiantan Wangwushan shengji ji 天壇王屋山聖迹記], chap. 6). See also Yu Xianhao 郁賢皓, “Li Bo yu Yuzhen Gongzhu guo-cong xintan 李白與玉貞公主過從新探 [New investigations of Li Bo’s association with the Princess Realized-in-Jade],” in his Li Bo yu Tangdai wenshi kaolun 李白與唐代文史考論, 191–202, and Jinhua Jia, Gender, Power and Talent: The Journey of Daoist Priestesses in Tang China (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018).

311 ch7v3p1219. Li Bo’s phrase “to sound the drums of Heaven” can mean making thunder. But it also refers to a particular Daoist practice:

When you tap the two upper and two lower front teeth together, this is called “sounding Heaven’s drums…” In order to concentrate your practice so as to summon the most numinous beings, you should sound Heaven’s drums. Tap precisely the four center teeth, close the mouth, refrain from speech, and make a long, deep sound.

Zhan Ying (p. 1221) ascribes this text to the “Nine Truly High Most Precious Writings, the Scripture of Divine Brightness” (Jiuzhen gaoshang baoshu shenmingjing 九真高上寶書神明經), as quoted in the Seven Lots from the Bookbag of the Clouds (Yunji qiqian 雲笈七籤, juan 31. But I’ve found no trace of such a text. My edition of the Yunji qiqian instead ascribes it to the otherwise unknown Scripture of the High Preciously Divine Bright-

Tooth tapping is described in various parts of the Daoist canon, and one is advised to do it 3, 7, 9, 12, 24, 32, or even 160 times. The text translated above does not specify the number for sounding Heaven’s drums. Tapping the front teeth temporarily blocks the nerve channel that conducts conceptual thought, thus facilitating meditative concentration. When the tapping is done for longer periods at approximately ninety times per minute, it also produces the effect of shamanic drumming.


[Secrets of the heavenly banished immortal—collected investigations of Li Bo] (Taipei: Taiwan Commercial Press, 1997), 228ff.

314 Benn, *The Cavern Mystery Transmission*, 15. It was for the dedication of Sima’s Abbey of Sunlit Terrace (*Yangtai guan* 阳臺觀), which the Bright Emperor had had built for him, and where he was to live until his death in 735. See the *Old Tang History*, chap. 192. We translate Li Bo’s poem on the abbey in Chapter 40, “Climbing Yang Terrace.”


317 Benn, *The Cavern Mystery Transmission*, 50 discusses the visits of Wang Wei and also of the poets Zhang Yue 張說 (663–730) and Gao Shi 高適 (ca. 704–65).

318 It’s commonly thought that Wu Yun 吳筠 (d. 778) brought Li Bo with him when he was invited to Court in 742, but Jan de Meyer shows it’s unlikely that they knew each other. See his *Wu Yun’s Way: Life and Works of an Eighth-Century Daoist Master* (Leiden: Brill, 2006). Wu Yun’s poetry has been brilliantly translated by Edward Schafer in “Wu Yun’s ‘Cantos on Pacing the Void,’” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 41, no. 2 (1981): 377–415 and “Wu Yün’s 吳筠 Stanzas on ‘Saunters in Sylphdom’ 遊仙詩.”

319 On the Empress, see N. Harry Rothschild’s aptly entitled *Emperor Wu Zhao and Her Pantheon of Devis, Divinities, and Dynastic Mothers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).
Except for Princess Immortal-in-Gold, her other seven elder sisters were all married off politically by the time of her ordination.

The politics behind this are studied by Yao, “Contested Virtue.”

Benn, *The Cavern Mystery Transmission*, 73.

See Benn, *The Cavern Mystery Transmission*, 15, for this accounting.


*Bianhua bu ce* 變化不測, that is, the transformations of yin and yang, of the universe’s natural processes, which have no apparent constancy and thus cannot be known by common means. The *Old Tang History* adds:

There was a man named Xing Hepu who was skilled at reckoning people’s lifespans. The Bright Emperor ordered him to do a reckoning of Zhang, but no one could figure out when he’d been born. There was also a man named Shi Yeguang, who was good at inspecting people for demons. [His biography is found immediately following that of Zhang Guo in the *Old Tang History*.] The Bright Emperor commanded Zhang
to sit close by him and then ordered Shi Yeguang to inspect him. Shi Yeguang said, “Where is Zhang Guo just now?” Shi Yeguang was right across from him, but he still couldn’t see him.

327 Aconitum, a potent poison, known also as wolf’s bane, for its use in Europe for killing wolves. Employed in China for both medicine and warfare. “The main causes of death are ventricular arrhythmias and asystole, paralysis of the heart or of the respiratory center. The only post-mortem signs are those of asphyxia” (Wikipedia, “Aconitum,” s.v.).

328 The biography in Ouyang Xiu’s 歐陽修 (1007–72) New Tang History (XinTangshu 新唐書) is virtually the same, despite Ouyang’s propensity to purge elements of myth or superstition. (See Richard Davis, “Chaste and Filial Women in Chinese Historical Writings of the Eleventh Century,” Journal of the American Oriental Society 121, no. 2 [2001]: 204–18.) Ouyang adds Zhang Guo’s autobiographical statement: “I was born in the bingzi year of Emperor Yao [c. 2100 BCE], where I had the rank of palace attendant.”

329 The emperor on his throne, left. Zhang Guo, right. His young attendant, foreground.

Zhang Guo traveled by white mule, often seated backwards upon it. When he got to his destination, he’d fold up the mule like paper and stick it in his wallet. When he wanted to ride again, he’d take out the mule, spray water on it, and it would return to full size. In this painting the mule seems to have escaped its brocade container and eluded Zhang’s young attendant as well.

330 ch6v2p1032. And echoing in Li Bo’s ears is this line from Zhuangzi, “Do you know how it is, when heart and mind roam the inexhaustible?” (chap. 25, Zeyang 談陽).

The poem was written in 734, when the two were retreatants at Mount Song, the central Marchmount. One of its clusters has
thirty-six peaks, and from these flows the Ying River of this poem. See Yu Xianhao 郁賢皓, “Li Bo yu Yuan Danqiu jiaoyou kao 李白與元丹丘交遊考 [Investigations of Li Bo and Yuan Danqui’s roaming],” in Li Bo yu Tangdai wenshi kaolun 李白與唐代文史考論 [Essays on Li Bo and the literary history of the Tang].

331 From before there was time. Every Hells Angel receives a pair of Original Jeans at initiation, which he will never wash.


333 We’ve translated this piece in the “Wine” section, where it is dedicated to Billie Holiday. Yuan Danqiu is almost unknown, except through Li’s poems, a dozen of which are addressed to him. Nothing of him survives in the Complete Poems or Prose of the Tang, nor in the Old or New Tang History.

From the Songtexts of Chu, the poem “Far Roaming”:

I went on to see the feathered men of Cinnabar Hill, dwelling in their ancient home of deathlessness.

The commentator Wang Yi adds, “At Cinnabar Hill, day and night are always bright.”

Cinnabar, with also the meaning “the elixir of immortality.” On the history of cinnabar’s magic, see Guolong Lai’s essay,

334 From “For the Songshan Recluse Cinnabar Hill, with a Preface” (Ti Songshan yiren Yuan Danqiu shanju, bingxu 題嵩山逸人元丹丘山居并序), ch23v7p3589.

335 ch13v4p2151.

336 Chapter 2, “The Sorting That Evens Things Out” (Qiwu-lun 齊物論). For an ideal translation, see Graham, Chuang-tzu. What if they’re both awake at the same time? There can be a Lord Lao, the deified Laozi, but there can never be a Lord Zhuang—the Daoist Protectors won’t tolerate it.

337 Shiji 史記 of the Grand Historian Sima Qian 司馬遷. This is from chap. 53, “The Hereditary House of Chief Minister Xiao” (Xiao Xiangguo shijia 蕭相國世家).

338 On these fabulous isles, see “P’eng-lai” in Schafer’s Mirages on the Sea of Time, 51–60.

339 ch2v1p62.

340 As natural processing, as an ultimate truth irreducible to either oneness or multiplicity, as the magical powers of adepts to transform physical substances, and as the immortal’s mode of emancipation. See, inter alia, her magnificent “Metamorphosis and Deliverance from the Corpse in Taoism,” History of Religions 19, no. 1 (1979): 37–70).

Very different for Ovid. His metamorphoses are unidirectional, motivated and often violent. The epigram to this book: “Hir haire vnkembd about hir necke downe flaring.” So far this
could be a Li Bo poem. But in this instance Laurel/Daphne is fleeing Apollo. He wants her down-flaring hair, he wants to have sex with her. He is ready to rape. She prays to her mother goddess, who transforms her into a laurel tree. Still Apollo paws at her bark — his lust is not transmuted by her deliverance.

Apollo’s brother/alter ego is Dionysius. In Ovid’s telling, only one arrow from Eros is needed to resurrect their atavistic unity. (For the terms of their necessary interchangeability, and its roots in Greek matriarchy prior to the Indo-European invasions of 3,000 BCE, see Carl Ruch, *The World of Classical Myth* [Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 1994], chap 5, esp. 103ff.) This is Ovid’s idea of a joke. In China such anxieties were far more deeply concealed — the Greco-Roman mythopoeia is a whole different ballgame. Gary Snyder comments: “China cast off mythology, which means its own dreams, with hairy cocks and gaping pudenda, millennia ago” (“Technical Notes & Queries,” in *Earth House Hold* [New York: New Directions, 1969], 120).

I grew up in a small town where lived a scruffy drunken biker. He killed himself in a wreck. The funeral home dressed his body and beard, all combed out and neat. He was unrecognizable in that coffin.

![Fig. 93. Bernini, *Apollo and Daphne* (1622–1625) Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bernini_(c%C3%B3pia)_-_Apolo_e_Dafne.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bernini_(c%C3%B3pia)_-_Apolo_e_Dafne.jpg)
On Mount Wuwang, some fifty miles north of the Eastern Capital, a few days walk. The poet Gao Shi 高適 (704–765) was with them too.

It's the only piece of writing that everyone today agrees is in Li Bo's own hand. The Imperial Palace Collection held it until the Revolution of 1911, then it vanished. In the 1950s a private collector gave it to Chairman Mao, who himself composes verse in the style of Li Bo. Now in the Palace Museum, Beijing.

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Li_Bai#/media/File:Libai_shangyangtai.jpg.

Jiwai shiwen 集外詩文 v8p4522.


As we saw in Chapter 31, such caverns are underground pure lands, linked through subterranean networks of earth-channels across all the Great Tang.

Zhengao 真誥, chap. 5.

See Chapter 24, “The Moister South.”

The Encyclopedia of Taoism, 1086. Elsewhere, in Taoist Meditation: The Mao-shan Tradition of Great Purity (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993), she notes that the practices of Highest Clarity Daoism, into which Li Bo was initiated, “are situated halfway between bodily techniques and intellectual contemplation” (49), represented by the world of images.
Yin Keng (511–563), master of the five-word line. I’m so unschooled that I’d never heard of him, and so mistook his name Yin Keng 隴鏗 for the phrase yinjian 隴鑑, “a mirror made of Yin.” This is one of a dozen poems Du Fu sent Li Bo — for some others, see Wang Qi, Li Taibo quanji, ch32v31481ff.

Waishi 外詩, v8p4422.

See, on one side, William Hung, Tu Fu, China’s Greatest Poet (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952).

This was Paula Varsano’s dissertation project, now available as the first part of her scrupulous book on Li Bo, Tracking the Banished Immortal. See also Guo Moruo’s 郭沫若 unfortunate Li Bai yu Du Fu 李白与杜甫 (Beijing: Renmin, 1971).


Owen, Great Age, 128.

And if that’s not loving you, then all I’ve got to say, is
God didn’t make little green apples and it don’t rain in Indianapolis in the summertime.

—Burt Bacharach

360 Present-day Ji’ning 济宁, southern Shandong Province, on the way between the rice-rich south and the Eastern and Western capitals.

361 By Chuan Zehong 傳澤洪 of the Qing. From Wang Qi, Li Taibo quanji, ch26v3p1638.


363 In the introduction to Pound’s Selected Poems (London: Farber, 1928). Eighteen poems, out of the notes of the late Ernest Fenollosa. Perhaps best to call them collaborations as much as translations.

364 We could go further in our abbreviations. There’s a line in “Climbing Crane Tower” (Deng guanque lou 登鹳雀楼) by Li Bo’s contemporary Wang Zhihuan 王之涣 that reads in standard translation:

The Yellow River flows into the sea.

黃河入海流

A friend translates this as “Lunchtime.” She explains, “Yellow is egg is lunch, and flow is time.”

William Shakespeare explains:

SNOUT: O Bottom, thou art changed! What do I see on thee?
BOTTOM: What do you see? You see an ass head of your own, do you?
Exit SNOUT
Enter QUINCE
QUINCE: Bless thee, Bottom, bless thee. Thou art translated.
Bottom’s translation is more radical than Quine’s.
Reconstructions by William Baxter, out of Paul Kroll, *Dictionary*, modified. Reconstructions of medieval Chinese pronunciations were already coming into place a hundred years back. Some fifty years ago, Hugh Stimson had already urged us to deal with its implications for poetics in his “The Sound of a Targn poem: ‘Grieving about Greenslope,’ by Duh-Fuu,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 89, no. 1 (1969): 59–67. This has been accomplished analytically — see for example Elling Eide’s “On Li Po.” But it has not led to much musical translation.

In the 1950s Peter Boodberg inaugurated an allied sensibility, to tonal patterns in Regulated Verse, leading him to re-write a well-known Wang Wei poem. See “Philology in Translation-Land,” from his “Cedules from a Berkeley Workshop in Asiatic Philology,” in *Selected Works of Peter A. Boodberg*, ed. Alvin Cohen (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 174–75.

And then there is this fragment of another poem attributed to Li Bo, only twelve words survive, as in a dream:

Jeweled steps detain the bright moon for just one night,
for three full springs the gilded palaces are filled with falling flowers.
Propitious snow…

— Zhan Ying, 外集詩文 v8p4513.


ch13v4p2204. We’ve combined the two strongest witnesses of the third line.


From the sixth-century *History of the Southern Qi*, “Treatise on the Prefectures and Garrisons,” part two (*Nanqishu, zhoujunzhi xia* 南齊書·州郡志下). His story is in the *Arranged Accounts of Immortals* (*Liexianzhuan* 列仙傳) from the Eastern Han.

Chap. 3 of his *Record of Entering Shu* (*RuShuji* 入蜀記).

The letter is entitled *Yu Han Jingzhou shu* 與韓荊州書. Its recipient is Han Chaozong 韓朝宗 (686–750), a modest public servant. The letter was probably written in 734. It has been translated in full by Victor Mair, “Li Po’s Letters,” 129ff.

Riffing on the *Analects* of Confucius, chap. 2: “When I was fifteen, I set my will on study.”

By “Chronology” I mean two works, the first now nested within the second. The earlier was compiled by Xue Zhongyong 薛仲琶 during the Song dynasty. Xue relied on sources such as the two *Tang Histories*, prefaces to collections of Li Bo’s poems, collections of Tang miscellanea, and so on, as well as Li Bo’s poems themselves. His work is the *Li Taibo nianqian* 李太白年潛. Wang Qi 王琦 added his notes in 1759, supplementing and sometimes correcting Xue’s remarks. His work is the *Li Taibo nianpu* 李太白年譜. Their combined text offers a year-by-year account of Li’s activities, including surmises about which poems were written in which year. It constitutes *juan* 35 of Wang’s *Li
Taibo quanjì 李太白全集. The present entry is from Kaiyuan 8, v3p1576. As mentioned in the notes to our chapter 6, above, this juan has been translated in its entirety by Frederic Protopappas, entitled The Life and Times of Li Po. That Chronology is best read within another, more recent Chronology, the Li Taibo nianpu buzheng 李太白年譜補正 [Emendations to the Chronology of Li Taibo] by Lü Huaming 呂華明 and others (Zhonghua shuju, 2012), which incorporates five other chronologies of Li Bo.

376 c28v8p4214. Compared to the Chinese language, English is impoverished when it comes to dragon words. Just look at Michael Carr, “Chinese Dragon Names,” Linguistics of the Tibeto-Burman Area 13, no. 2 (1990): 87–90, which lists a ton. Here Li Bo speaks of jiao 蛟 and long 龍. It would be pleasing to distinguish these as “kraken” and “dragon,” but the two word-systems don’t pair up.


378 Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:%E9%9B%B2%E5%8D%9C%E5%BA%9C%E4%BD%BD%E9%A3%9B%E8%BB%8D.jpg.

379 ch3v1p489.

380 Source: https://www.moma.org/calendar/events/4272. This is Yojimbo, made in Japan, with apologies to veterans of the Kang Ri 抗日 campaigns.

The chivalric mode, the wuxia 武俠. Its ancestors are the independent, honor-driven warriors of the pre-Imperial period, its descendants the knights-errant of contemporary film and fiction. They cannot bear injustice, especially the suffering of the vulnerable. As such, they roam outside both law and custom, both state and family. But they are loyal past death to anyone who will see their true virtue. See the Historical records, chap.
86 (The Assassins, *Cike liezhuan* 刺客列傳) and the novels of Jin Yong 金庸.

You can find a gorgeous and materially correct variation of all this, set during the Great Tang, in *The Assassin* (*Cike Nie Yin-niang* 刺客聶隱娘), Hou Hsiao-hsien/Hou Xiaoxian’s 侯孝賢 2015 film. Hou states: “In the Tang Dynasty, a prominent poet named Li Bai wrote some verses about an assassin. This is the earliest example I know of wuxia literature” (Aliza Ma, “Killer Technique,” *Film Comment*, Sept.–Oct. 2015, https://www.film-comment.com/article/hou-hsiao-hsien-interview/).

This is Tennyson:

The great brand
Made lightnings in the splendor of the moon,
And flashing round and round, and whirled in an arch,
Shot like a streamer of the northern morn,
Seen where the moving isles of winter shock
By night, with noises of the northern sea,
So flashed and fell the brand Excalibur.

*Idylls of the King*—Sir Belvidere throws the dying Arthur’s sword Excalibur into the sea.


382 Does anyone think this is by Zhuangzi? Angus Graham (in *Chuang-tzu*) argues that this chapter, and its neighboring chapters 28–31, are not “Daoist” but come from the school of Yang Zhu 楊朱 (ca. 350 BCE), as they attend particularly to concerns of “keeping the body intact” and questions of “what are my true interests” (ibid., 221).
383 *Basic Annals* 9, 833.

384 Wang Qi, *Li Taibo nianpu*, chap. 35. This style of punishment dates from the immediate pre-Tang period.

All states seek to monopolize the power to give death. The traditional Chinese state also sought to control those powers that give life, to trees and grasses, poultry, the clouds and rain. In the 1960s Communist Party block-workers kept track of the menstrual cycles of all women in their jurisdictions.


386 ch23v7p3597.

387 He’s known both as Mi Ziqian and Fu Buqi 密子賤/宓不齊. See the *Lüshi Chunqiu* 呂氏春秋, chap. 108, *Jubei* 具備.


389 ch2v1p162.

390 You can visit their ancient capital at Dali 大理 — many Chinese tourists will be there, too.

391 Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yi_people#/media/File:Yi_woman_in_traditional_dressing.jpg. The woman pictured here is Yi 羌 — the Nanzhao may have been Bai 白.

392 The Comprehensive Mirror as an Aid in Governance (*Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑑) of Sima Guang 司馬光 (1019–86), *Tang ji* 唐記, §32.

394 Short for “flying feather call to arms.” A millennium previous, a general inserted a feather in his letter of emergency recruitment, the phrase stuck. See the Historical Records (Shiji 史記), the biography of Han Xin 韓信, chap. 93, and Pei Yin’s 裴駰 comments.

395 Source: http://s2.sinaimg.cn/orignal/46f178fenc423decd19e1. The photo’s title is “Lushan Flying Feather Call-to-Arms” (Lushan yanshuo feiyao guomin kangzhan tongfengqi 廬山演說飛羽檄國民抗戰同風起). The caption reads:

If warfare breaks out, then it makes no difference if you’re north or south, young or old, no matter who you are, everyone has the responsibility to hold our ground and resist, everyone must resolve to give their whole heart.

396 For a discussion, see Schafer, Pacing the Void, 89ff.

397 Chap. 9.6a. “Heaven’s Dog” migrates to Japan, where it takes up the role of tengu, long-nosed monster/protector:

Fig. 94. Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Karasu-Tengu-Statue.jpg.
The hero of the Roving Swordsman poem we translated in two chapters previous got his girlfriend to steal the king’s half of the tally, so that he could deceive a general with a false order. (As you may recall, the general didn’t fall for it, so they had to kill him anyway, but that tally got them in the door.)

The Celestial Palace is more literally a Purple Subtlety, 
Ziwei 紫微. But there’s a bit more to it. Zi, purple, the magic color of the Emperor — these days you can see its approximation on the walls of the Imperial City, Beijing. But we imagine it more like this:

Fig. 95. The color purple.

More fundamentally, though, Zi is luminosity emerging from darkness. In his Dictionary, Paul Kroll writes that it’s “associated emblematically with the depths of heaven, astral divinities, celestial phenomena, spectral visitations, cosmic totality and wholeness.”

Wei is another beautiful word. It means hidden, slight, profound, subtle, that is, hard to find. It thus names that luminous limn between nothingness and somethingness, the circumstance in which shadowy qi-energies start assembling on their way to becoming the poetry of apparent phenomena. In Daoist lingo, between Naught and Aught, wu 無 and you 有. There’s a divine host of possibilities hidden in that between, unknown to
either extreme. In Taoist studies, wei is often translated “tenu-
ity,” for its subtlety. But I think it’s more rugged than that.

The Emperor’s palace is this Ziwei, but only in reflection. The
real Ziwei is in the sky. It’s the fifteen stars that surround and
protect the Pole Star at the very center of Heaven. Thus Ziwei
stands as well for that center, that star, and that star is also the
Deity of Heaven, that ultimacy. And only in this sense is Ziwei
also the physical abode of the earthly Son of Heaven, His Majes-
ty. It’s a kind of enceinte (in Schafer’s words, Pacing the Void, 47
et passim), and see Paul Kroll, “Divine Songs of the Lady of Pur-
149–95, at 157. Here’s how it looks — you can see the fifteen stars
arcing around the Palace, with the Northern Dipper (beidou 北
斗) at the bottom.

![Fig. 96. The fifteen stars protecting the Pole Star.](image)

A Han dynasty scholar explains how this works:

The Deity of Heaven resides in Heaven the same way a ruler
dwells on earth. The ruler dwells within a double barrier, and
so it’s appropriate that the Deity of Heaven should be inside
a secret, hidden place. The ruler dwells within the buildings
of his palace, and so Heaven also has its Great Subtle Purple
Palace. (Wang Chong 王充, Luhneng 論衡, chap. 23 Leixu 雷
虛。”Our thanks to Schafer for identifying this passage, Pac-
ing the Void, 47.)

This Deity of Heaven is Taiyi 太一, the Great Singularity, Grand Monad, the ruler of everything. (Even if you don't know Chi-
inese, you can read these two graphs: the first is a person with
hands spread wide, the second is the numeral one.) In Highest
Clarity Daoism, Taiyi resides in the head and also represents
one's immortal identity or true self (zhenwu 真吾).

401 “Attain the One” is Laozi’s phrase. See chap. 39 of his
Daodejing.

402 See also his poem Zhanchengnan 戰城南 (Jiwai shiw
gen, v8p4449), which describes similar circumstances.
Arthur Waley has translated it as “Fighting south of the ram-
parts” in The Poetry and Career of Li Po, 35.

403 This is the story of Chinese civilization on the move, the
southward extension of a socio-logos of farming technology in
every direction that geography would allow. A Chinese friend
of mine had a Miao fabric posted on her office door. She said to
me, “Don’t you like this Chinese art?”

404 From the Taiping yulan 太平御覽 (part six of the Huang-
wang 皇王 section), also found in the Yiwen leiju 藝文類聚,
chap. 11. This account of earliest times survives only in Tang-era
collectania, but a number of pre-Imperial texts (the Lüshi chun-
qiu 呂氏春秋, the Yantielun 藝鐵論, the Hanfeizi 韓非子, etc.)
contain varyingly sanitized versions.

405 We have no direct knowledge of “the dance of shield and
axe,” but I imagine it as something like the Maori posture-dance,
the haka, which you may have seen in the movie Whale Rider.

406 There are further ways to inscribe military disaster. This
one is by Charles Minard (1781–1870), showing Napoleon’s Rus-
sian catastrophe. An army of 480,000 went out, 10,000 came home. The width of the orange band shows their outflow, the black their return.

Edward Tufte, great genius of information design, points out that

Six variables are plotted: the size of the army, its location on a two-dimensional surface, direction of the army’s movement, and temperature on various dates during the retreat from Moscow. It may well be the best statistical graphic ever drawn. (*The Visual Display of Quantitative Information* [Cheshire: Graphics Press, 1983], 40)

Tufte’s inquiry into what makes it so good: ibid., chap. 9 “Aesthetics and Technique in Data Graphical Design,” 176ff.)

Étienne-Jules Marey: “It defies the pen of the historian in its brutal eloquence.” (French scientist, physiologist and chronophotographer [1830–1904], as quoted in *Wikipedia*, “Minard,” s.v.)
Perhaps written in early 756, as the Rebellion sweeps over the Great Tang.

From the *Tangguoshibu* 唐國史補, chap. 3, story 100. I owe knowledge of this account, and all my knowledge of tea in China, to James Benn, *Tea in China: A Religious and Cultural History* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2015), where this story appears on page 46.

This king must be Trisong Detsen (r. 755–797), who had sent 200,000 troops into Chang’an in 763 and is said to have invited Padma Sambhava to Tibet to introduce the tantric teachings. Changlu ("Dzyanglu" in the Tang pronunciation) is unlikely to be Chinese, but I can’t track him down.

Lu Yu, literatus, raised as a monk, devout Buddhist layman, proselytizer for tea, soon after his death apotheosized as the Patron Deity of Tea (*chashen* 茶神).


413 The category is not so innocent: three of the women brought down a kingdom, dying in the process. China is afraid of vagina.

414 Li Bo’s “Song of Roosting Crows” tells of her time with the King of Wu (Wuqiqu 烏栖曲, ch3v1p342). Arthur Waley translates it on page 48 of his Poetry and Career of Li Po. See also Li Bo’s suite of songs on the beauties of Yue, Yuenüci 越女詞 (ch24v7p3733).

415 Following the account in Mozi 墨子, chap. 1.5, Qinshi 親士. It is often rumored that Li Bo was kicked out of the Bright Emperor’s court because a poem of his compared the Precious Consort to Xi Shi.

416 ch4v2p571. Or do their hearts break? Or does Li Bo ask, “Why does this break my heart?”


418 For Ludwig Kärnbach.

419 ch19v4p1735.


421 Now in southern Hunan, but the same latitude as Guilin 桂林, by the confluence of the Xiang and Xiao Rivers, where Shun’s two wives had mourned his death.

422 Of Deng Deming 鄧德明 (fifth century), as preserved in the Commentary on the Water Classic (Shuijing Zhu 水經註) of
Li Daoyuan 郦道元 (466 or 472–527), the hydro-geography of China's river systems, chap. 37.

423 From Wang Qi, ch36v3p1641. The text is now incorporated in the Huangshan zhi dingben 黄山志定本 by Min Linci 閔麟嗣 of the Qing. Fragrant Springs lies in today's He Prefecture 和縣, Anhui Province, not far from the Yellow Mountains range.


425 The view from Cambridgeshire:

Twitchett: Li brought a “tidy and precise approach to problems of administration.” Cambridge History of China, 3:415.

And Pulleyblank, “He possessed qualities that were much rarer among the Chinese of those days than a knowledge of obscure expression or the ability to compose in the balanced style. He had a passion for order and system” (The Background of the Rebellion of An Lu-shan, 55).

In another circumstance he would have made the trains run on time.

426 In Chapter 47 of this book, we've seen how Li Linfu had Li Bo's kinsman Li Yong beaten to death on an empty charge of treason.

427 His death, then, was “the real close of the brilliant epoch of Hsüan-tsung.” See Pulleyblank, The Background of the Rebellion of An Lu-shan, 102–3.

428 On his way to power Yang had served as military governor in his homeland, the present-day Sichuan province. As we saw in Li Bo's poem on the Yunnan war, Chapter 48, it was Yang who sanctioned the disastrous southern campaign of 752 that resulted in 80,000 Chinese deaths.

430 I have called this an error on Yang Guozhong’s part. But it was not a random error or an accident. Theorists of accidents like H.W. Heinrich speak of a domino effect, where each factor leads to the next in necessary sequence. Here, instead, we have a congeries of contradictory tendencies, whose qualities are already built into a configuration of politics. If the disaster had not been triggered at Tong Pass, it would have found another means of expression.


433 For half of history, parts or all of China have been ruled by nomad conquerors. (Khubilai Khan is just the most famous of these.) See Thomas Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier: Nomadic Empires and China* (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1989).

434 Turkic for khan of khans, king of kings. Thereupon thousands of leading Turkic families moved to Chang’an and assumed roles in government administration. See Wright, “The Northern Frontier,” 68.

And for these strategic reasons alone, Chang’an, capital of the world’s most powerful state, was located a hundred miles up a dry and agriculturally insufficient valley in China’s northwest, where food must be imported from the richer South.

What Max Weber calls patrimonialism or patrimonial-bureaucratic government. See ibid., 276, who notes that these ideals “had sufficient legitimacy in the Tang Empire to be incorporated into the dynasty’s eight canonical categories of loyalty” (ibid., 100).


*Xuanhe shu [hua] pu* 宣和書/畫譜, the catalogue of Song imperial archives of painting and calligraphy, quoted in Wang Qi ch36v3p1653.

And it was the steppeland Manchus who got it back for them, as the multi-ethnic Qing dynasty (1644–1911).


Which is the name of Alexander the Great’s third wife, princess of Bactria. See Pulleyblank, *The Background of the Rebellion of An Lu-shan*, 15.
442 Source http://www.sothebys.com/fr/auctions/ecatalogue/2015/important-chinese-art-n09393/lot.258.html. At Sotheby’s estimated between $180,000–250,000.

443 See his biography in the Old Tang History, which has been translated by Howard Levy as Biography of An Lu-shan (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960).

444 Zizhitongjian kaoyi 資治通鑑考異, for year Kaiyuan 24, month 4, translated by Pulleyblank, The Background of the Rebellion of An Lu-shan, 22. See also 116n67.

445 See Pulleyblank, The Background of the Rebellion of An Lu-shan, 84 and 162n15.

446 JiuTangshu, chap. 200.

447 Pulleyblank, The Background of the Rebellion of An Lu-shan, 56.

448 JiuTangshu, chap. 200.

449 “In Hook’s his dark nature there was a touch of the feminine, as in all the great pirates, and it sometimes gave him intuitions.” (J.M. Barrie, Peter Pan [New York: Penguin, 1938], chap. 8, “The Mermaid’s Lagoon”)

450 A pun. The phrase is “to wash good fortune into the baby,” but “good fortune” is written with the same “lu” as An Lushan’s name.

451 Zizhi tongjian 資治通鑑, chap. 216.

452 How much is that? Well, by the usual conversion, it’s only 170 pounds avoirdupois. I’m a skinny white guy, and I weigh that much — there must be some error in the record. “Catty
(kati)” is a Malay word (like “Mandarin”) that found its way into early Sino-European pidgeon.

453 JiuTangshu, chap. 200. Perhaps he suffered from diabetes, which might have then affected his eyesight.

454 And thus it’s said the Mongol siege of Vienna failed only when Ögedei, the Great Khan, died in 1241, and the hordes were recalled to determine his successor.

455 “Even Li Shimin’s rise to power through fratricide had more in common with the succession practices of the steppe than with those of Chinese tradition”— this is Mark Lewis, China’s Cosmopolitan Empire: The Tang Dynasty (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 150, drawing on Barfield, The Perilous Frontier, 139–44, and Pan Yihong, Son of Heaven and Heavenly Qaghan (Bellingham: Western Washington University Press, 1997), 181.

Thus a parallel overstatement from the great Japanese Sinologist Naitō Kōnan, in its summary by Hisayuki Miyakawa:

On his throne the Emperor was a representative of the aristocracy—the imperial position was its organ. He was, as it were, the common property of his aristocratic family and relatives. They could enthrone him, depose him, or murder him. (“An Outline of the Naitō Hypothesis and Its Effects on Japanese Studies of China,” The Journal of Asian Studies 14, no. 4 [1955]: 533–52)

456 So perhaps this is why the Bright Emperor didn’t suspect him of disloyalty. An Lushan was completely loyal as long as power was properly wielded.

457 There were no particular economic causes to the Rebellion. Thus a Marxian analysis would resemble The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon rather than A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy.
An example of the first is one of China’s most famous poems, Bo Juyi’s 白居易 “Song of Long-lasting Regret” (Changhen’ge 長恨歌). Regretfully, I would suggest that the poem reduces their relationship to a love story, with a bit of aestheticized religion thrown in at the end. A good translation is Paul Kroll, “Po Chü-i’s ‘Song of Lasting Regret’: A New Translation,” *T’ang Studies* 8–9 (1990–91): 97–105.

An example of the second is “Tales from the Tianbao Era in All Keys and Modes” (*Tianbao yishi zhugongdiao 天寶遺事諸宮調*), a chantefable that Chen Fan-pen believes to have been performed primarily in expensive brothels. See her “Yang Kuei-fei in Tales from the T’ien-Pao Era: A Chu-kung-tiao Narrative,” *Journal of Sung-Yuan Studies* 22 (1990–92): 1–22.


The historians’ silence: knowing the power of words, they could not bear to name the event. For this power of naming, see Ernst Cassirer, *Language and Myth* (New York: Dover, 1946 [1925]). Or the silence of Margaret Meade’s Trobriand Islanders when they were asked about incest and rape.


*JiuTangshu*, ch 51. Certeau would claim that history begins with separation — of the present from the past, the living from the dead — an alienation that the historian must overcome through rhetoric. But these people are not dead — you can ask them about each other, the way the Bright Emperor offers obligations to the Precious Consort after her death. In Li Bo’s poetry as well, past and present share a single ontology. See Michel de

461 Once more we have problems with our sources. Denis Twitchett explains how our knowledge of the Emperor derives from a single text, the *State History* (*Guoshi* 國史) of Liu Fang 柳芳 of the year 760, and why that account is unreliable:

Liu Fang was writing under singularly difficult political conditions. He was working at the command of the new emperor Su-tsung, who had deposed Hsüan-tsung by a flagrant act of usurpation, and needed to present the last years of his father’s reign as a period of misgovernment in order to provide some moral justification for his act. Meanwhile, however, Hsüan-tsung himself was still alive, and many of the leading figures of his latter years were still active and in positions of power. […]

The resulting account of Hsüan-tsung’s reign is thus a patchy one. It is well documented and generally favourable until about 741, but comparatively slender and extremely critical in tone for the last years of the reign.

The other contemporary records were lost in the fires of Chang’an. And thus the *Old* and *New Tang Histories* and the *Comprehensive Mirror* are similarly dependent on Liu Fang. (Twitchett, *Cambridge History of China*, 3:463.)

462 Twitchett:

He was still only twenty-eight years old, and the three years of vicious political intrigue and constant struggle which he had experienced since he led the coup against the empress Wei form a prologue indivisible from the political history of his reign and had a lasting effect upon his conduct of the empire’s affairs. (Ibid., 3:345)

464 Chinese dates are not assigned against a specific reference point, such as the Hegira of Mohammed. Rather, they are points within a period within a specific emperor’s reign. Thus the Bright Emperor called his first period Kaiyuan 開元, “Opening the primal,” and Kaiyuan 1 marks our year 713.


466 A poet’s image may be apt here: “We are extending constantly, expanding like a flood or an earthquake. There is a sense of spreading, shaking the earth, and creating more and more cracks in it.” Chögyam Trungpa, Journey without Goal (Boston: Shambhala, 2000), 80.


469 James Hillman’s Terrible Love of War begins:

One sentence in one scene from one film, Patton, sums up what this book tries to understand. The general walks the field after a battle. Churned earth, burnt tanks, dead men. He takes up a dying officer, kisses him, surveys the havoc, and says, “I love it. God help me I do love it so. I love it more than my life.”

And: “The whole bloody business reveals a god, therewith placing war among the authentic phenomena of religion. And that is why it is so terrible, so loved, and so hard to understand” (A
*Terrible Love of War* [New York: Penguin, 1988], 83). The French *guerre* (and its Romance language cognates) derives from the Germanic word we have in English as “war,” because of the confusion around Latin’s *bello/bella*.

470 Only deeply similar beings can deeply wound each other. When NASA brought rocks back from the moon, they sequestered them against the risk of bacteriological hazards. But the possibility of such infection requires millennia of prior intimacy.

471 The first was Śubhākarasimha (*Shanwuwei* 善無畏 [637–735]), the second Vajrabodhi (*Jin’gangzhi* 金剛智 [671–741]), with whom Amoghavajra apprenticed in his teens.

472 For these and other details, see Geofrey Goble, *Chinese Esoteric Buddhism: Amoghavajra and the Ruling Elite* (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 2012), 62–63. On page 124 he translates a story from chapter 8 of the *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 telling of Amoghavajra’s rain making abilities, which apparently drowned a few people across town:

In the courtyard of the temple, he hastily constructed five or six plaster dragons, then sprinkled them with water and scolded them in a barbarian language (*huyan* 胡言). After a long time he dismissed them and laughed. In a little while there was a cessation of rain.

473 *Cefu yuangui* 冊府元龜, chap. 53.

474 Ibid.

475 The text was several times carved in stone. For an informed instrumentalist sketch of these developments, see Barrett, *Taoism under the T’ang*, 54–73.

“Preface to the Bright Emperor’s Commentary on the Laozi” (*Tang Xuanzong yuzhu Daodejing xu* 唐玄宗御註道德經序).

Charisma, in Weber’s sense of an authority deriving from the divine.


Comme l’empereur Hiuan-tsong était depuis longtemps au pouvoir, petit à petit il s’abandonna à des désires extravagants and négligea les affaires gouvernementales.

The Emperor, having been so long in power, bit by bit abandoned himself to extravagant desires and neglected government affairs.

Lewis, *China’s Cosmopolitan Empire*, 40.

*Cambridge History*, 413.


The *Oxford Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* attributes the saying to both him and Frederick the Great. Already in the late first millennium BCE, Sunzi’s *Art of War* recommends living off the land. For the best study of this question in the early periods, see Donald W. Engels, *Alexander the Great and the Logistics of the Macedonian Army* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978).

I wish I could write of their daily life with the intimacy and warmth of Braudel. The human faces within the market, the simultaneity of small and large scales, the smells. “I may have taken too much pleasure in these details,” is his faux-confession in *Afterthoughts on Material Civilization and Capitalism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 20. The subtitle of volume one, omitted in the English-language edition, is “The possible and the impossible: men face to face with their daily life” (ibid., 6). Our own book would be very different had it been written in French.

When we eat red meat, as I do almost every day, we participate in this killing.


Kroll, “The Dancing Horses,” 102–3. Natasha Heller tells us of the elephants and rhinoceros that the Bright Emperor had received in tribute. An Lushan captured them, and he was certain that the animals would bow to him as the new emperor, thus demonstrating that all under heaven would recognize his rule. However, the elephants failed to kneel
when they were brought in, sending him into a fury. He ordered all the animals to be thrown in a pit, where they were stabbed and set afire. (“Why Has the Rhinoceros Come from the West? An Excursus into the Religious, Literary, and Environmental History of the Tang Dynasty,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 131.3 [2011], 353–70, at 359–60)


492 And thus

Knowing what was good and doing good were matters not of knowing the right forms to imitate but of having the right ideas in mind. This effort, which made ideas more real than culture and which required that each man think for himself and write in a style true to his understanding, undermined the goal of a shared, normative culture to serve as the basis for civil order. As long as the excitement of breaking with convention and several hundred years of cumulative tradition lasted, only a few worried about the consequences of doing away with universal cultural models, for the new ideas about learning promised to enable all shih [the literate elite] to transformed themselves into self-conscious, morally independent men of intellectual integrity. (Ibid., 109)


495 Ibid., ix.
496 The first to note this was the Japanese Sinologist Naitō Kônan, a good century ago. See the convenient summary of his ideas in Miyakawa, “An Outline of the Naitō Hypothesis and its Effects on Japanese Studies of China.”

497 This section is entirely in the debt of Geoffrey Goble and his revealing dissertation, Chinese Esoteric Buddhism, now a book of this name published by Columbia University Press.

498 Discounting rumors of an Indian father, Goble demonstrates his likely Sogdian parentage—his mother was surnamed Kang 康, suggesting she was from Samarkand. On the presence of that city in the Tang imagination, see Schafer, The Golden Peaches of Samarkand.

499 This is also the time of Padma Sambhava’s visit to the Tibet of King Trisong Detsen (r. 755–797), as we saw in Chapter 50, “Tea.”


501 Ibid.

502 In the traditional description:

...
left. He is engulfed in flame, and seated on a huge rock base. (Wikipedia, “Acala,” s.v.)

503 Source https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:%E4%B8%8D%E5%8B%95%E6%98%8E%E7%8E%8B%E5%9D%90%E5%83%8F-Fud%C5%8D_My%C5%8D%C5%8D_MET_DP356182.jpg.

504 Goble, Chinese Esoteric Buddhism, 158 quoting the Trisamaye II (T 21.1200).

505 Ibid, 160.


507 Old Tang History, chap. 68, citing the Sutra of Humane Kings (Renwang jing 仁王經).

508 Goble, Chinese Esoteric Buddhism, 160.


510 Or an infinite netting with diamonds at every knot, reflecting every other knot. Like this:


and this Texan insisted he was
payin for my girl’s time
and he could use it any way he
saw fit
as long as he was payin like
and I had to explain
a technical point to that Shareholder namely,
that he was payin for
her ass, which is not time!
OK, what he actually said was *shishi wuai* 事事無礙, “mutually interpenetrating non-obstruction,” because appearances aren’t in conflict — his song about Joe Schmo came later. This circumvents Hume’s demands that the two events of cause and effect be proximate in space. A modern philosopher explains it this way: “According to Hume, if I throw a rock, and at that moment someone’s window in China breaks, I would not conclude that my rock broke a window on the other side of the world” (http://www.iep.utm.edu/hume/#SH3b). Hmmm.

Fig. 99. Kali Puja at Roy Chowdhury House at Barasat. Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kali_Puja#/media/File:Kali_Fatakesto_Arnab_Dutta_2010.JPG.


516 The title of Sima Guang’s work, the first universal history of China in 1300 years, is *The Comprehensive Mirror to Aid in Governance* (*Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑑). This excerpt is from chapter 218. Among other things, Sima’s history is a status-based argument for an Emperorship responsive to the remonstrances of scholar-officials like himself. One bête-noire is the magical maneuvers of rulers like the Bright Emperor. The Mawei executions are, then, a moment for Sima Guang to voice own his views through the words of a Tang official, who spoke thus:

“That An Lushan embraced and laid up dire intentions was assuredly not a matter of only a single day. And yet, when there were those who came directly to the palace pylons to report of his schemes, Your Majesty time and again punished them, thus bringing it about that he has been able to carry out his treacherous revolt to the fullest degree and resulting in Your Majesty’s exodus and flight. Presumably it was in regard to situations of just this sort that the Former Kings made an effort to draw out and call upon the loyal and the well-born, so as to broaden their own insight and perception. But those vassals who have resided at court have regarded such utterances as ineffable, only ingratiating themselves through flattery and blandishments. Owing to this, Your Majesty has not in any instance been able to be cognizant of affairs outside the gates and pylons of the palace. Even your subjects in the weedy countryside have recognized certainly that this day was coming for a long time.”

His Highness said, “This is due to Our dim-sightedness, and Our regrets have nowhere else to extend,” and, with a consoling injunction, sent him away.
Sima Guang’s model Emperor is a Yes Man.

517 See Mao Zedong, “On Contradiction” (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1967 [1937]), 18: “Man’s knowledge of matter is knowledge of its forms of motion, because there is nothing in this world except matter in motion and this motion must assume certain forms.”

518 In Japanese Zen, the kōan student hopes to meet a similar moment, when his whole life-identity may be shattered like crystal skeet by a single blow of the master’s stick, Bright Emptiness.


520 See The Book of Documents (Shangshu 尚書).

521 The Bamboo Annals (Zhushu ji’nian 竹書紀年).

522 ch3v1p267. Like the late quartets, this poem is among the most analyzed in the literature. Editor Zhan Ying has collected some two dozen of these discussions, 273–81.


The opening line, “Aiyiiieyaw!”, is in Sichuan dialect, a startlement, a surprise, only sound, the first emergence of poetry before its surrender to words. It’s how appearance shows its lingerie to itself, in light, sound, touch. Then Li Bo weaves these into a human language. But that language isn’t oriented to nouns and pronouns, such as “Li Bo” or “you” and “I.”

524 ch7v3p1178.
Recorded as early as *The Book of Documents* (*Shangshu* 尚書) of the first millennium BCE. For these practices in the preceding Shang dynasty, see David Keightley, “The Late Shang State,” where the king “displayed his power in frequent travel, hunting and inspecting along the pathways of his realm [...] moving through a landscape pregnant with symbolic meaning, giving and receiving power at each holy place,” in Keightley, *The Origins of Chinese Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 552, as quoted in James Robson, *Religious Landscapes*, 32.

It was first secured in the third century by the great magus-strategist Zhuge Liang 諸葛亮 (181–234).

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jianmenguan.JPG.

In 280 of the Common Era the official Zhang Zai 張載 (no dates) visited his father in Shu and wrote this as an inscription, the *Jian’ge ming* 劍閣銘.

Li Shan 李善, his annotation to Pan Yue’s 潘岳 poem, “Rhapsody on the Western Excursion” (*Xizheng fu* 西征賦) in the *Wenxuan*.

Schafer, *Pacing the Void*, 120, man and star inseparable, “the one regarded as fused with the other.”

Zhan Ying, quoting Yang Qixian 楊齊賢 (of the Song), 1196.

I stole that phrase from the great eleventh-century compendium of Daoist texts, the *Yunji qiqian* 雲笈七籤 (Seven lots from the bookbag of the clouds) by Zhang Junfang 張君房, who in turn got it from the lore.
Another poem on Mount Hua can be found in the “Five Mountains” section of this book.


Chapter 8. For a longer story, see Campany, To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth, 271–72.

Source: https://artofninzuwu.com/2014/12/26/the-paces-of-yu-the-shamans-steps-and-ame-no-ukihashi/. Associated from the beginning with the sage-emperor Yu 禹. For a summary, see Schafer, Pacing the Void, 238–42. See also Poul Andersen, Taoist Ritual Texts and Traditions with Special Reference to Bugang, the Cosmic Dance (Ph.D. diss., University of Copenhagen, 1991). Li Bo says more literally that they “voidly pace” (xubu 虚步), but this must also be xubu, the pacing out of the void.

Douglas Penick writes: “Mushroom cloud burgeons. I see Li Bo on the shore, only making out what it is at the last possible moment.”

That official is Huangfu Shen 皇甫侁. The New Tang History, chap. 82, recounts:

Before the Prince had been captured, his father, the Retired Emperor, had proclaimed, “I degrade him to commoner status, with his sentence of banishment commuted to confinement within the palace.” When the Prince had been killed, Huangfu Shen hastily sent the Prince’s wife to the Retired
Emperor in Sichuan. The Retired Emperor grieved the longest time.

The Prince's older brother, the new Emperor Suzong, had raised the Prince himself, after his mother had died. He never publicly denounced his crime. He said to his followers, “How could it be that Huangfu Shen seized my younger brother and killed him instead of sending him to Sichuan?” After that he never appointed Huangfu to another post.

540 Waley, *The Poetry and Career of Li Po*, 79 and 80. The poem is *Zai shuijun yan zeng mufu zhushiyu* 在水軍宴贈幕府諸侍御, ch9v3p1601. The Dragon Pool Sword (*longyuan jian* 龍淵劍) was made by Ou Yezi 欧冶子 and Gan Jiang 干將 for the King of Chu more than a thousand years earlier. Looking at its blade is like seeing dragons swimming in a pool.

Albert Dalia has written a historical novel of Li Bo, this sword, and the Yangtze River, starring a blond ghost and a monkey who is usually drunk and functions as ghost hunter. It’s *Dream of the Dragon Pool: A Daoist Quest* (New York: Pleasure Boat Studio, 2007).


542 ch10v4p1638.

543 ch10v4p1646.


For a willingness to acknowledge the Yellow River as a living being, still in the 1930s and ’40s, see Micah Muscolino, *The Ecology of War: Henan Province, the Yellow River, and Beyond* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015). Muscolino explains, “The Yellow River was no passive object” (23).

For these years, see Guo Moruo, *Li Bai yu Du Fu* 李白與杜甫, 126ff. and Yu Xianhao, “Li Bo wannian xingji ji sixiang kaolun 李白晚年行跡及思想考論” in his *Li Bo yu Tangdai wenshi kaolun* 李白與唐代文史考論, 114–39. See also Waley, *The Poetry and Career of Li Po*, 85–97.


Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Fuding_-_Dianxia_Zhen_-_P1220446.JPG

But that text’s “Nine Songs” (*Jiuge* 九歌) and other plaints are present throughout this poem.

That mountain is the Continent of Ying, Yingzhou 瀛洲, east by some 700,000 li. As Dongfang Shuo, describes it, the Queen Mother of the West has just spoken to the Martial
Emperor of Han about Yingzhou, and the Emperor finally realizes that Dongfang Shuo has actually been there — that he is no ordinary person. The Emperor then invites Shuo into his private chambers to hear more. *The Record of the Ten Continents* (*Shizhou ji 十洲記*) transcribes their conversation:

Yingzhou is in the middle of the Eastern Sea. Its land is four thousand li square. It’s across from Yue, 700,000 li to the west. On its upper reach grow divine mushrooms and the plants of immortality. There’s also a jade rock, over ten-thousand feet tall. From it emerges a spring with water like sweet-flavored wine, named Jade Sweet Spring. If you drink it, you get drunk after only several pints. It confers long life. There are many immortals on this continent, and their customs are similar to the people of Wu. Its mountains and rivers are like those of the Central States.

Rob Campany, who has studied these matters extensively, supposes that the *Records of the Ten Continents* “consists of a core of Han-era material around which later accretions formed; the text as we have it was probably formed around 300 C.E.” He suspects that at an earlier point the text had been part of *The Esoteric Biography of Emperor Wu of the Han* (*Han Wudi neizhuan 漢武帝內轉*). See his *Strange Writing*, 53.

552 The Duke is Xie Lingyun 謝靈運 (385–433). From his much longer “Climbing Mount Linhai” (*Deng Linhaiqiao 登臨海嶠*). Once before Li Bo had also headed out to Sharp Stream, but it was already Tianmu that he was hoping to reach on some future day:

As we part, I turn toward Tianmu,  
I’ll brush off her rocks and sleep on the autumn frost.

辭君向天姥，拂石臥秋霜
From “Parting from Chu Yong on My Way to Sharp Stream” (Bie Chu Yong zhi Yanzhong 別儲邕之剡中), ch13v4p2177.

553 Elling Eide hears the sound of these shoes in Li Bo’s line “Wearing Duke Xie’s Clogs” 腳著謝公屐, in Tang pronunciation something like “kjak djak zia kung giok,” “On Li Po,” 375.

554 A picture of woman emphasizing her breasts. Attested from ca. 1000 BCE. Karlgren, Grammata Serica Recensa, no. 947.

555 The earliest known use is by his grandfather, the great calligrapher Wang Xizhi 王羲之(303–61), he’s trying to buy a goose from an Old Woman (mu 姥). See his biography in the Jin History 晉書, chap. 15. Wang lived just north of the mountain, and he’s the one who gave Mirror Lake its name.

For associations of Mu with the Southeast, see, inter alia:

1. “In the south, on New Year’s Eve, before they launch their boats, they kill a chicken and do divination with its bones, according to the old ways. If the prognostication is auspicious, they offer the meat to the Deity of the Boats, calling on the Primal Old Man and the Primal Old Woman (mengmu 孟姥).” From Duan Gonglu 段公路 (of the Tang), the Bei-hulu 北戶錄 (Record of the northern peoples), chapter on chicken bone divination (Jigu bu 雞骨卜).

2. When the Bright Emperor of Jin (rg. 323–26) is setting out on a perilous military expedition, he suddenly encounters an Old Woman (mu 姥) selling food at a shop along the road. He asks for her blessing. “She is not an ordinary person,” he concludes. From A New Telling of Tales of the World (Shishuo xinyu 世說新語), chap. 27 “Cunning Tricks” (Jiajue 假譎).

3. In his account of the Sui ruler Wendi 文帝, Sima Guang says that the Crown Prince often had an Old Woman Master do divination for him (Kaihuang 開皇 year 20, 600 CE). The commentator Hu Sanxing 胡三省 (fl. 1250s) explains that “An Old Woman Master (shimu 師姥) is a woman shaman.
"Mu is what you call an old woman—I can’t explain it more than that."

Speakers of Austronesian languages appear to have originated in the province of Fujian in China and the nearby island of Taiwan” (Ward Goodenough, “Introduction” Transactions of the American Philosophical Society 86, no. 5, special issue “Prehistoric Settlement of the Pacific” [1996]: 1–10, at 3), but by the first millennium BCE they occupied much of the lower Yangtze basin. Han, Tang and later dynasties pushed them further south, though they took their name with them—Yue or Yuet—landing now in what we call Vietnam, or “Yuet-nan (Yuet-South).” A number of Yue cultural practices, “such as tooth extraction, pile building, and cliff burial, continued until relatively recent times in places such as Taiwan” (Wikipedia, “Yue (State),” s.v.). See Erica Fox Brindley, Ancient China and the Yue: Perceptions and Identities on the Southern Frontier (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).


The regime-changing beauty Xi Shi is from Yue.

Though when it enters standard Chinese in the immediate pre-Tang period, it loses its attendant magic prowess and retains only the meaning of a female elder or, more generally, the mother of an adult male. See Gunabadra (394–468), Pronuncia-
tion and Meaning in All the Sutras (Yiqieijing yinyi 一切經音義), who defines mu simply as “a woman elder,” and the Yuan-bao jing 元包經 (The classic of the primordial bundle, modeled on Yang Xiong’s 楊雄 Taixuan jing 太玄經) of Wei Yuansong 魏元嵩 (fl. 560–580), which pairs her with gong 公, a male elder.

558 And thus she avoids incorporation into the Heavenly Mother, also pronounced Tianmu 天母. That name usually indicates the pan-Empire Queen Mother of the West (Xiwangmu 西王母), but the Heavenly Mother also appears in several Daoist scriptures under the name Purple Aura Heavenly Mother, Ziguang Tianmu 紫光天母. When she’s bathing naked, “nine lotus blossoms unfold, from which [the nine stars of the Northern Dipper] are born.” See the The true and unsurpassed Lingbao scripture from the Jade-Clear Heaven on the Spontaneous Origin of the Northern Dipper (Yuqing wushang lingbao ziran beidou bensheng zhenjing 玉清無上靈寶自然北斗本生真經, Schipper #45).

559 Du Guangting 杜光庭 (850–933) in his Record of Grotto-heavens, Sacred Lands, Mountain Sluices and Notable Mountains (Dongtian fudi yuedu mingshanji 洞天福地嶽瀆名山紀), but the list sometimes confuses her with the nearby “Mountain of Heaven’s Eyes,” also pronounced Tianmu 天目.

560 The The Later Record of Wu (Hou Wulu 後卿) is the anonymous continuation of the “Geography Treatise” of Zhang Bo’s 張勃 (first century BCE) Wulu.

561 From the Gazetteer of All the States (Junguozhi 郡國志), as quoted in the eleventh-century Imperial Survey of the Taiping Period (Taiping yulan 太平御覽), chap. 47. The Junguozhi is the geographical section of The Book of Later Han (HouHan shu 後漢書), though originally compiled separately as the Continuation of the Book of Han (Xu Hanshu 續漢書) by Sima Biao 司馬彪 (ca. 246–306). Except for this Gazetteer, Sima’s work is lost. But the passage quoted here is not part of the current Book of
Later Han and is likely stray lore that made its way into the Taiping yulan somewhere along the way.

562 As Fabrizio Pregadio and others have noted. See his remarks in the Encyclopedia of Taoism, 76.


564 The incomparable Dōgen 道元 (1200–1253), whom we may call the founder of Japanese Sōtō Zen, from his Treasury of the True Dharma Eye (Shōbōgenzō 正法眼藏), Book 29, “Mountains and Waters Sutra” (Sansui kyō 山水經).


566 Thus the title of one of Du Fu’s poems to Li Bo refers to him as “Li Twelve Bo.” This family business is a serious matter. Li Bo addressed poems to at least twenty of his father’s kin—“Almost all of them were officials, and some held high rank” (Waley, The Poetry and Career of Li Po, 7).

567 Huangfu Mi 皇甫謐 (215–82), Biographies of Eminent Men (Gaoshi zhuan 高士傳).

568 A New Account of Tales of the World (Shishuo xinyu 世說新語), chap. 25 “Taunting and Teasing” (Paitiao 排調).

569 In one early gloss, this Mystery is only said to be a color, “black tinged with red” (Mao’s comments on the Classic of Odes [Shijing 詩經], #154 “The Odes of Bin Mountain” [Binfeng 風], “The Seventh Month” [Qiyue 七月]). (“Darkness” is a good translation of xuan, except that it has a ready antonym, light.) See also Friederike Assandri, “Mystery and Secrecy in the Contacts of Buddhism and Daoism in Early Medieval China,” in Religious Secrecy as Contact: Secrets as Promoters of Religious Dynamics, eds. A. Akasoy et al. (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).
As quoted in the *Encyclopedia of Taoism*, 1139.

Ibid. A rending of space-time reality, surrendered to a something shining through. She looks a lot like the *khôra* χώρα, “location, place,” which for Plato is the interval between being and non-being, where the Forms/Ideas are held and through which they pass. See Jacques Derrida, *Khôra* (Paris: Galilée, 1993). Sanford Budick calls it “a place of passage, a threshold” (Budick & Iser, *Languages of the Unsayable*, xv).

At some point we may stumble into the ragged borderlands of language, where our grammar starts to sputter and our nouns miss their prey. Thus the joyful ejaculations of Estlin Cummings at age six:

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FATHER DEAR. BE, YOUR FATHER-GOOD AND GOOD,
HE IS GOOD NOW, IT IS NOT GOOD TO SEE IT RAIN,
FATHER DEAR IS, IT, DEAR, NO FATHER DEAR,
LOVE, YOU DEAR,
ESTLIN.
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Can’t even attribute perseity to it. Now, synecdoche is a trope in which part stands for whole, or whole for part. “I saw three sails,” where “sail” stands for “boat.” “Schenectady pulls it out in the third period,” where “Schenectady” stands for the Patriots, the city’s high-school ice-hockey team. This tautology sings love songs to itself.

Nanzen 南泉 cut the cat in two. Dōgen’s 道元 response was, “Yes, you can cut the cat in two, but can you cut it in one?” (*A Primer of Soto Zen: A Translation of Dōgen’s Shobogenzo Zuimoki* [Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1979], 37.) You can see why this lineage sets the Advaitists to quailing.
This is the view of the influential Heshang Gong 河上公 (Riverbank Master) commentary of the first century CE.

Li Bo calls it the Red Fruit. In late imperial and modern Warrior novels, the Red Fruit (zhuguo 朱果) is one of the Treasures of Earth, a magic substance of great power, which ripens once every hundred years. I haven’t been able to trace this tradition back earlier, nor determine when it began.

Always already. See Wikipedia, “Always already,” s.v. It seems that Laozi said only one sentence, but we’ve only been able to hear the first half of it.

An American poet writes:

Sometimes I think “I’ll give up words.” But then She comes, again, and I remember the day appearance became a bedroom and I became a bride.

Sometimes I decide “Enough of words! No more.” But then She whispers in my ear in the language of sunlight and longing — She entices, cajoles, seduces syntax, grammatical structure, illogical pronouns. She sighs “Silence is an ocean but Love! Love is a river flowing out …. in bright language. Silence is a deep but Love is a flood plain, a tumbling waterfall. Come on, my love, enter me with your love words!” and …. I do!! (TYD, https://www.facebook.com/groups/tsogyel-garsangha)

“The possibility of liberated desire finds its recourse in words” (adapted from Stephen Owen, Mi-Lou [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989], 156), a post-apophatic hum.

Or the Compact of Three-in-One according to the Classic of Change (Zhouyi cantongqi 周易參同契). I owe my fledgling understanding of this text entirely to the extraordinary labors of

580 In Kristopher Schipper’s words, “In Chinese physics, these minerals and metals are the products of the interaction of cosmic energies and time and thus constitute the quintessence of our planet” (The Taoist Body, 175).

581 Schipper, again: It is “a means to accomplish in a few days the cosmic process of returning to the True. This implies making a fabulous voyage in time, inasmuch as the same process would require millions of years in the macrocosm” (ibid., 178).

582 Source: https://www.academia.edu/5892149/Jouissance_of_Death_Han_sarcophagi_from_Sichuan_and_the_Art_of_Physiological_Alchemy.

583 Bokenkamp gives examples of Li Bo’s citation of “arcane names” from the Highest Clarity and Lingbao traditions (“Li Bai, Huangshan, and Alchemy,” Tang Studies 25 [2007]: 29–55, at 40)

584 Many terms, like White Tiger, are of course endemic to alchemical speech. However, Li Bo’s exultation on completing the work, “Fire-red and splendid, it has become the Great Refined Elixir” (heran cheng dahuan 赫然稱大還), is a direct quotation from the Three-in-One.

I’ll go through the middle section of Li Bo’s poem line by line to explore the similarities and differences of the two texts. First our poetic translation, accompanied by the Chinese text and a literal translation. Then the related passage in the Cantongqi, with commentary by Pregadio or me.
Line 1
Our translation: Heat Mercury until it steams off skyward
奼女乘河車
Literally: The Lovely Maid mounts the River Chariot

Cantongqi #68:

The Lovely Maid of the River
is numinous and supremely divine.
When she finds Fire, she flies away.

河上姹女，靈而最神，得火則飛

Pregadio comments:

The Lovely Maid of the River is True Mercury…. Aroused by fire, she escapes and flies away (205).


Line 2
then harness it with Lead and return it to the cauldron’s waters.
黃金充轅軛
its shafts and yoke are filled with yellow gold.

Cantongqi #68:

If you want to control her,
the Yellow Sprout is the root.

將欲制之，黃芽為根
The Yellow Sprout (huangya 黃芽) appears in this line as Yellow Gold (huangjin 黃金). But jin means both “gold” and “metal,” so the Sprout here stands for the metal Lead. Pregadio: “Only the Yellow Sprout, which is True Lead, can hold her. When they meet, they join and generate the Elixir” (Pregadio, The Seal of the Unity of the Three, 205).

Line 3
Master this water, the axis of Dao
執樞相管轄
Hold to the pivot and manage the lynch-pin

Cantongqi #22:

Water is the axis of the Dao;
its number is 1.
At the beginning of Yin and Yang,
Mystery holds the Yellow Sprout.
It is the ruler of the five metals,
the River Chariot of the northern direction.

水者道樞，其數名一。陰陽之始，玄含黃芽。五金之主，
北方河車。

Water is Mystery, Dao. It is prior to yin and yang. Water is also the axis of Dao, the pivot on which all activity hinges. Water is also the first of the Five Agents (here called the five metals), which constitute all natural processes. It thus precedes, permeates, envelopes and supports the whole of alchemical transformations.

line 4
and keep Mercury in the fiery pot until its impurities dissolve
摧伏傷羽翮
painfully strip away its wing feathers

Cantongqi #78:
It enters the boiling pot on its head, its feathers ripped off.

顛倒就湯獲兮,摧折傷毛羽

The volatility of Mercury must be brought under control.

*line 5*

The Vermillion Bird of Fire blazes its bright majesty,

朱鳥張炎威

The Vermillion Bird displays its bright majesty,

Cantongqi #78:

A blazing fire is made below…. The Vermillion Sparrow soars into play, flying upwards in the hues of its five colors.

炎火張設下,朱雀翱翔戲兮,飛揚色五彩

*line 6*

the White Tiger of Lead safeguards the space of transformation

白虎守本宅

The White Tiger preserves the fundamental home

Cantongqi #78:

The White Tiger leads the song ahead, the green liquid joins after.

白虎唱導前兮,蒼液和于後

Pregadio comments:

This section gives another poetical description of the compounding of the Elixir. Lead (the White Tiger, True Yang)
first liquefies, so that Mercury (the “green liquid” [Green Dragon], True Yin) can join it and become one with it. [...] The Vermilion Sparrow (Fire, Yang) spreads its wings and soars into the air. (ibid., 217)

_lines 7 & 8_
Reduce and mature the bitter liquid, evaporate and condense it.
相煎成苦老, 消鑠凝津液
Decoct it until it's bitter and mature, melt and congeal its vital fluids

Cantongqi #78:

Ceaselessly gurgling and burling, coalescing continuously, one after the other

暴勇不休止, 接連重疊累兮

The two passages are related, but there is no lexical overlap between them.

_lines 9 & 10_
It will look like dust on a clear windowpane, dead ashes fallen into silence.

髡鬚明窗塵, 死灰同至寂

Cantongqi #39:

Its form looks like ashes or soil, its shape is like dust on a luminous window.

形體為灰土, 狀若明窗塵
Pregadio comments:

[The elements inside the vessel] undergo transmutation, taking at first a liquid form and then a solid form, similar to ashes or dust. The compound obtained [...] serves as the basis for making the Elixir [which is described next] (ibid., 174).

*lines 11 & 12*

Then pound it and mix it, seal it in the red vessel, regulating the heat through twelve stages of perfection.

Then pound it and mix it, seal it in the red [vessel], regulating the heat through twelve times.

Cantongqi #40:

Pound it and mix it,
and let it enter the Red-colored Gates.
Seal the joints firmly,
striving to make them as tight as you can....
Watch over it with heed and caution,
inspect it attentively and regulate the amount of warmth.
It will rotate through twelve nodes,
and when the nodes are complete, it will again need your attention.

Pregadio comments:

The description of the refining of the True Lead and True Mercury that had begun in the previous section continues here. The compound obtained in the first part of the method is placed in a tripod and is heated in a furnace. The vessel,
this time, should be hermetically closed, as even the slightest leakage of Breath (qi) would prevent the Elixir from being compounded. The intensity of heat is regulated according to the system of the “fire times” (huohon), which subdivides each heating cycle into twelve stages (ibid., 175).

lines 13 & 14
Fire-red and splendid, it has become Great Refined Elixir, in essence no different from the Dao.

The second line is Li Bo’s own. But the first appears verbatim in Cantongqi #40. I think this is a direct quotation from that text—my rudimentary search through the Daoist Canon turns up nothing quite like it, except in later responses to the Three-in-One like the Taishang riyue hunyuan jing 太上日月混元經 (The supreme scripture of the sun and moon and their origin in chaos, Schipper #656; perhaps late Tang/extant in mid-eleventh century).

585 Perhaps, then, we are better readers of this poem if we know nothing of alchemy. Then the poem makes an impression, like the impression of wind on water.


587 From the preface to a collection of poems “At Nanjing with Assembled Worthies Seeing off Quan Zhaoyi” (Jinling yu zhuxian song Quan Shiyi Zhaoyi 金陵與諸賢送權十一昭夷序), ch27v8p4068. See also Li Bo’s exuberant praise for the well-known alchemist Sun Taichong 孫太沖, whose Great Refined Elixir was favorably received by the Bright Emperor in 744. Paul
Kroll discusses the background in his *Dharma Bell and Dhāraṇī Pillar: Li Po’s Buddhist Inscriptions* (Kyoto: Italian School of East Asian Studies, 2001), 66n154. The text in question is Li Bo’s “Inscription on the ‘Foding cunsheng’ Dharani Pillar at Congming Temple” (*Chongmingsi fodingzunsheng tuoluoni chuansong* 崇明寺佛頂尊勝陀羅尼幢頌), ch29v8p4237.

588 From “Ancient Airs #4” (*Gufeng 古風*), ch2v1p44. Compare

I took the Lead-gathering traveler by the hand, we washed beside the stream, tying lotus leaves together to make a shelter.

提攜采鉛客, 結荷水邊沐

From “Lodging at Shrimp Lake” (*Su Xiahu 宿琶湖*), ch2v6p3146.

589 From the poem “In the Sikong Uplands, Avoiding War, Speaking My Heart” (*Bidi Sikongyuan yanhuai* 避地司空原言懷), ch22v7p3484.

590 From “Ancient Airs #4” (*Gufeng 古風*), ch2v1p44.

591 From “A Lu Mountain Song That I sent to Empty Boat Lu” (*Lushan yao ji Lu Shiyu Xuzhou* 廬山謠寄廬侍御虛舟), ch12v4p1999.

592 From “Left with the Officials at Caonan as They Leave for Jiangnan” (*Liubie Caonan qunguan zhi Jiangnan* 留別曹南群官之江南), ch13v4p2115.

593 Fire is transformation.

We are going to study a problem that no one has managed to approach objectively, one in which the initial charm of the
object is so strong that it still has the power to warp the minds of the clearest thinkers and to keep bringing them back to the poetic fold in which dreams replace thought and poems conceal theorems. (Gaston Bachelard, The Psychoanalysis of Fire, trans. Alan Ross [London: Routledge, 1964], 1)

594 See “Drinking Alone at Pure Brook, on a Riverside Rock, Sent to Quan Zhaoyi” (Duyue qingxijiang shishang ji Quan Zhaoyi 獨酌清溪江石上寄權昭夷), ch12v4p1989.

595 My translation here uses the word “elixir,” but Li Bo’s poem never mentions the word dan 丹, the most common name for the elixir. Instead he refers to it as the Great Returned, da-huan 大還, or, more accurately, the Great Returning. Even this gerundive form is a concession to the illusion of imperfection. Laozi, too, “Reversion is the movement of Dao” (fan zhe dao zhi dong 反者道之動, chap. 40).

596 A.A. Milne, Winnie-the-Pooh (New York: Dutton, 1926), chap. 9, “In Which Piglet Is Entirely Surrounded by Water.”

In her fourth water, the “Devotion of Ecstasy,” St. Theresa cannot be kept on the ground. See also Edward Schafer, “A Trip to the Moon,” Journal of the American Oriental Society 96, no. 1 (1976): 27–37:

The real problem in investigating travel in outer space during the T’ang dynasty is to determine what or where outer space was. The Taoists, especially the masters and adepts of the celebrated school of Mao-shan, dominated large areas of thought and even of public life during this period, and for them outer space was indistinguishable from inner space. To put it another way, they made no significant distinction between interstellar and intercellular space. (ibid., 27)

597 See Barrett, Taoism under the T’ang, 83, 87, 91 et passim.


Scholar-bureaucrat Yang Shiqi 楊士奇 (1364–1444), as quoted by Wang Qi, ch28v3p1331.


Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wu_Daozi#/media/File:EightySevenCelestials3.jpg. Perhaps this is his draft of a


606 Soper, “T’ang Ch’ao Ming Hua Lu,” 208. The evaluation mentions one also-ran, but “all other 124 painters of Tang” are placed below him.

It is said of Wu that “When he lowers his brush onto the paper, divinity is present” (*xiabia youshen* 下筆有神). For a discussion, see Richard Edwards, *The Heart of Ma Yuan: The Search for a Southern Song Aesthetic* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2011), 177.


609 Chapter 27.
Chapter 11. Baozhi, then, lived under the Qi, Liang, and Chen dynasties, and Li Bo’s poem puns on these—the scissors that cut things to the same height (qi 齊) stand for the Qi dynasty, etc. I’ve compressed this into “cuts through three dynasties of kings.”


Source: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:%E6%80%80%E7%B4%A0_%E8%8B%A6%E7%AC%8B%E5%B8%96.jpg. This one is now called “The Silk Writing ‘Bitter Bamboo-shoots’” (Kusun tie 苦筍帖), presently in the Shanghai Museum.

Adele Schlombs, to whom I owe most of my knowledge of Huaisu, provides the transcription into modern kaishu 楷書 script. See her Huai-su and the Beginnings of Wild Cursive Script in Chinese Calligraphy (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1998), 126.

Zhang Xu 張旭 (675–750), a contemporary pioneer of the wild cursive style, is said to have improved his calligraphy by watching Lady Gongsun (Gongsun daniuang 公孫大娘) perform her sword dance, inspired by Persian or Turkestan styles. See Du Fu’s poem and preface, “Observing a Disciple of Lady Gongsun Perform the Sword Dance” (Guan Gongsun daniuang dizi wu jianqi hang 關公孫大娘弟子舞劍器行).
For evidence and argumentation, see Zhan Ying’s discussion in ch7v3p1237.

As she explains,

If the brushwork is examined, there is a strange contradiction between the compositional abbreviations on the one hand, and the hesitant execution on the other. The edgy waver- ing elliptical line in the character nai乃, the diminished momentum of the circular stroke of the character sun筍, or the abrupt contrast between the connecting line and the second stroke in the character ji及, are incompatible with the vigorous performance to be seen in the “Introducing Myself,” the Shiyu tie食魚帖, and the Lügong tie綠卍帖, where each stroke is executed with the artist’s full energy (Scholombs, Huai-su and the Beginnings of Wild Cursive Script in Chinese Calligraphy, 127).

It would be difficult, I think, to trace this world of forgery in Tang times. However, Mark McNicholas has done a swell job with early Qing, when bureaucratic procedures were still not fully clarified, that is, regularized, that is, inoculated against imposture. As a reviewer points out, his book describes a little-known world “where a great variety of counterfeits were in demand and supply, including imperial edicts, tax receipts, arrest warrants, and official seals.” See Mark McNichols, Forgery and Impersonation in Imperial China: Popular Deceptions and the High Qing State (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2016), reviewed by Li Chen in the Journal of Asian Studies 77, no. 3 (2018): 783–85.

I don’t mean to get technical, but sometimes it’s hard to keep things straight. In the comedy The Guru (2002), an Indian charlatan teaches fake tantric sex to a gullible American audience. But the teachings are the actual teachings, and they work, even in a shoddy knock-off. Lettriste Isidore Isou looked like Elvis Presley, and “his field of action may have been high art,
[but] physically, instinctively he was a hound dog” (Greil Marcus, *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989], 249).

![Fig. 100. Isidore Isou in 1951, a bit before the fact. Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isidore_Isou#/media/File:Isidore_Isou_1951.jpg.](image)

619 In the sociology of religion we could speak of Jesus’s power to effect large numbers of people, two thousand years after his death.

620 It’s hard to make confident authentication when you’re working only from reproductions or a translation. Plus you need an eye like Schlombs’s. Still, the poem seems extra hyperbolic to me, like Li Bo in a hurry. Our translation tones it a bit, to comply with our imagined poetic standards.

621 Lu Yu 陸羽, author of the *Classic of Tea*, also wrote the *Biography of the Monk Huaisu* (Seng Huaisu Zhuan 僧懷素傳). Here he quotes Huaisu, in the preface to this work.

622 “He was in all respects historical-minded,” and “his knowledge of past styles was essential to his calligraphy” (Schlombs, *Huai-su and the Beginnings of Wild Cursive Script in Chinese Calligraphy*, 31). An early source mentions that he
would bury his used brushes, “calling this a brushtomb (*bizhong* 筆塚)” (ibid., 14).

623 Photo by the publisher. In the Palace Museum, Taipei. Ah, but apparently this, and other surviving versions of the text, are Northern Song or later copies. See Vincent Poon, “Huaisu’s Autobiography,” http://www.vincentpoon.com/autobiography-of-huai-su.html.

624 A modern scholar, Guo Moruo 郭沫若 (1892–1978), takes Li Bo’s poem as genuine, arguing that it was written in the fall of 759, when Li Bo was visiting Huaisu’s hometown of Lingling 零陵 in present-day Hunan. But a key argument against the authenticity of Li Bo’s poem is its absence in this autobiography, where such praise is the norm and substance, and the power of Li Bo’s name the very currency of Huaisu’s self-presentation. Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037–1101) was the first to point this out. See Zhan Ying, ch7v3p1238-39.


626 Ibid., 1.

627 Ibid., 21.

628 He Zhizhang 賀知章 speaking. See our Chapter 17, above.

629 Wei Hao 魏顥 (fl. Kaiyuan period), preface to *Li Hanlin ji* 李翰林集 (The collected works of the Hanlin scholar Li Bo).

You may have already noticed that Li Bo has no shortage of individualities but no discernible identity. The following generations—let’s say the 780s to the 820s—saw a new concept of friendship, based on a necessary sense of identity. See Anna Shields, One Who Knows Me: Friendship and Literary Culture in Mid-Tang China (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2015).

Varsano, Tracking the Banished Immortal, quoting Yuan Zhen 元稹 (779–831), 39. Literally thousands of poems and essays survive from late Song on, attempting to come to terms with Li Bo. They have been collected in three volumes and 1,208 pages by Pei Fei 裴斐 as Li Bo ziliao huibian 李白資料彙編 [Collated materials on Li Bo] (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1994).

For a good collection, see Varsano, Tracking the Banished Immortal, 35ff.


As Varsano has shown. See especially her treatments of Yan Yu 嚴羽 (1195–1264), Tracking the Banished Immortal, 59–70 et passim.


And Li Bo can recede into a literary past, as a gesture of freedom made within regulation human culture. Max Weber speaks of this process as “the routinization of charisma”—how
successors seek to maintain the divine power/grace of a lost progenitor.

639 In present-day Hunan. Li Bo met Sima Chengzhen about two hundred miles north in Jiangling 江陵, Hubei.


642 Poceski writes: “Indeed, I have not been able to find a single piece of evidence to show that during the Tang periods there was any awareness of the existence of such a thing as the encounter dialogue model, let alone that it was the Chan School’s main medium of religious instruction or practice, as is often assumed” (*The Records of Mazu and the Making of Classical Chan Literature*, 156).

643 Like Seventeen magazine bad girls in black lipstick. The argument is most clearly made on ibid., 157–58.

644 A devout Buddhist might say that the two centuries of silence are the work of the dharmapālas, the dharma protectors, who oversee the safety of the teachings.

645 This is the earliest example I know of the work of art in an age of mechanical reproduction.

646 An ethical question: if someone steals private information and broadcasts it, does it become public information? Or are we committing the same act of theft and desecration each time we look? Receipt of stolen goods — accessory after the fact. There is no statute of limitations for this crime.
Of course the true Zen student is going to steal the teachings anywhere she can get them, without regard to propriety or property rights. But you won’t find her talking about it later in a bar.

647 The necessary endpoint of that thinking is this:

A huge number of Chan stories or exchanges, included in texts such as Jingde chuandenglu and Biyanlu, can be viewed as little more than nonessential ramblings, a peculiar type of religious gibberish. Basically, we are confronted with countless examples of mass-produced textual materials that tend to be highly formulaic, numbingly repetitive, and ostensibly pointless. One of the things that keeps amazing me is how otherwise intelligent or sincere people can take this sort of stuff seriously, although the history of religion is filled with blind spots of that sort. (Poceski, The Records of Mazu and the Making of Classical Chan Literature, 171)

Thus Mazu, “Patriarch Horse,” meets the same end as the dancing horses of the Bright Emperor. Mistaken identity can compel us to murder.

The feminine (yin 陰) is more adept at staying hidden (yin 隱) from the rapacious entification of being known. Schafer gives this account:

In A.D. 334 the purified being who had been known during her career on earth as Wei Hua-ts’un 魏華存 divested herself of her mortal remains to become, for all time, the spiritual mistress of the sacred mountain whose numen presides over the southern marches of China. Thirty years later she revealed the secret scriptures whose ineffable prototypes exist only in the Heaven of Highest Clarity (shang ch’ing 上清) to a young man named Yang Hsi 陽羲.

These became the foundation of Highest Clarity Daoism, over which Sima Chengzhen presided during Li Bo’s early lifetime. It was characteristic of this Daoism, Schafer continues,
that it appealed most of all to unique individuals, men and women who had both native talent and adequate strength of will to undergo long and arduous periods of scriptural studies and physical disciplines. Such rare persons might enjoy the ultimate reward of elevation among the Realized Persons (chen jen 真人) in the sky palaces of Highest Clarity. […] But none of them was worshipped or propitiated in the temples of China as were the great nature gods of the state religion; in a sense they were too exalted for this. […] These sublime beings engaged only in master-pupil relationships with gifted mortals whose physical bodies might ultimately be transformed into new, purified and immortal entities like their own—beyond ordinary human conception, even if they might occasionally reveal themselves in the masks and costumes of human beings.

It follows that the attempt to trace the icon of the Lady Wei in the surviving literature of the T’ang period is not, in the ordinary sense, the exploration of evidence for the survival of a public cult. It is the search for the persistence of a faded image, or perhaps a glorified one, in whatever sources may prove useful, including poetry and belles-lettres generally. It is as if one might search fragmentary texts for evidence of the honour and esteem in which Mary the mother of Jesus was held centuries after her death, not as a woman, nor as a goddess, the focus of a cult, but as a former human being who has achieved a higher kind of existence. (“The Restoration of the Shrine of Wei Hua-ts’un at Lin-ch’uan in the Eighth Century,” *Journal of Oriental Studies* 15 [1977]: 124–37, at 124)

There’s nothing much wrong with the sacred masculine, it’s just such a poor approximation of reality.

648 “Some thousand years” implies time, the passage of time implies continuity and history. Is there a history of immortality?
Gibt es eine ‘Naturgeschichte der Farben’, und wieweit ist sie analog einer Naturgeschichte der Pflanzen? Ist diese nicht zeitlich, jene unzeitlich?

Is there such a thing as a ‘natural history of colours’ and to what extent is it analogous to a natural history of plants? Isn’t the latter temporal, the former non-temporal? (Ludwig Wittgenstein, Remarks on Colour (Oxford: Blackwell, 1977), Section III, no. 8.

I once asked a topologist friend if he had any interest in the history of mathematics. “Oh,” he said, “like ‘In the eleventh century, the number Nine was slightly smaller than it is today.’”

649 Source: https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/106265. Matsumura Goshun (1752–1811), Portrait of Tung-Fang Shuo, ca. 1790, hanging scroll, ink and light color on paper, Brooklyn Museum.

650 For a summary of materials on Dongfang Shuo, see Aat Vervoorn, Men of the Cliffs and Caves: The Development of the Chinese Eremitic Tradition to the End of the Han Dynasty (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1990), chap. 4, “Eremitism at Court.”

651 The Historical Records (Shiji 史記), chap. 126 — in this case by Chu Shaosun 褚少孫 (ca. 105–ca. 30 BCE), not Sima Qian.

652 The Book of Han (Hanshu 漢書), chap. 65, the biography of Dongfang Shuo. But his quick wit soon got him back his post.

653 Opposing the Emperor’s plan to build a huge hunting preserve, enable a corrupt relative, and seek immortality from charlatans (the Shiji). See his autobiography, “Discourse of Master Nobody” (Feiyou xiansheng lun 非有先生論), translated by Burton Watson as “An Essay by Elder Nobody” in Courtier and Commoner in Ancient China, 96–105, with its praise for benevo-
lence and righteousness (*renyi* 仁義), prudence and frugality, etc. A kind of Heyoka, then, in the Lakota tradition, contrarian, buffoon, inscrutable.


655 The *Hanshu*.

656 Daoist practices of seclusion and longevity.

657 The *Shiji* again.

658 ch6v2p1002. Shuo makes several other cameo appearances in Li's poetry—early on we translated “Big words” and “Lines of a short song.” And in the introduction to Section IV, “Five Mountains,” there's a poem whose first line reads

Mornings I play in the Ocean of Purple Sand.

朝弄紫泥海

What are the purple sands where Li Bo plays? Another story of Shuo's mischievous youth explains it—he was three years old at the time:

Dongfang Shuo returned only after several months, and so his mother flogged him with a bamboo staff. Later he went away again, this time returning only after a full year. When his mother suddenly saw him, and she cried out in alarm, “You've only just come back now, after a full year! How can you be any consolation to me?”
He replied, “Your son went to the Ocean of Purple Sands. It has purple water in which to dye your clothes. I also went to Yuyuan, the pool where the sun sets, to wash away my faults. I left in the morning and returned at noon. Why are you talking about ‘a full year’?”

From the *Dongmingji* (A record of penetrating the mysteries), chap. 1, purportedly of Eastern Han, but, as Campany shows, likely to be much later (*Strange Writing*, 95).

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Fig. 101. Pietro Gonnella, jester to the Este family, Dukes of Ferrara. Portrait by Jean Fouquet (1420–81) Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jean_Fouquet_-_Portrait_of_the_Ferrara_Court_Jester_Gonella.JPG

For the name Kāśya, see William Soothill, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms*, s.v. He was posted to Huzhou, the Taihu area near Soochow. We call him “Magistrate,” but Hucker would prefer “Chief Administrator” and Kroll “Administrator Equestrian.”

See his Tea poem, Chapter 50, where he also calls himself by this name. That lotus doesn’t seem to grow in China, it’s a translation of the Sanskrit *utpala* (*youboluo* 優鉢羅), the blue lotus, to the shape of whose leaves the Buddha’s eyes are likened. See Soothill, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms*, s.v. Not to be confused with Hergé, *Tintin: le lotus bleu* (Paris: Casterman, 1936).

From the poem “Accompanying My Young Relative…” (*Pei zushu dangtuzai you Huachengsi sheng Gong Qingfengting* 陪族叔當涂宰游化城寺升公清風亭), ch18v6p2935.

In the sutra that bears his name, he debates an assembly of bodhisattvas on the topic of non-duality, that great intimacy within Buddhism. They do poorly, so Vimalakīrti asks Mañjuśrī, the bodhisattva of wisdom, his view.

Vimalakīrti asked Mañjuśrī, “How does the bodhisattva enter the Dharma gate of non-duality?”

Mañjuśrī said, “As I understand it, it is to be without words and without explanation with regard to all the dharmas—without manifestation, without consciousness, and transcending all questions and answers. This is to enter the Dharma gate of non-duality.”

Mañjuśrī then asked Vimalakīrti, “We have each made our own explanations. Sir, you should explain how the bodhisattva enters the Dharma gate of nonduality.” At this point Vimalakīrti was silent, saying nothing. (Translated by John McRae in *The Sutra of Queen Śrīmālā of the Lion’s Roar and
A Daoist recognizes this silence, and the sutra was translated into Chinese six times. Its insouciance was particularly valued by the Chan tradition, which we know as Zen from its Japanese incarnation. In the ninth-century Vimalakirti looked like this, as he silently manifests to Mañjuśrī:


664 And Li Bo’s contemporary, the sublime poet Wang Wei 王維, takes this “Weimo” as his sobriquet. The true hero of the tradition, known to us as Layman Pang 龐居士 (740–808), is born four decades after Li Bo.

665 Tathāgata, “come like that, gone like that,” the word the Buddha used instead of “I.”
Among Li Bo’s many lovely Buddhist poems, see his trip to a Buddhist monastery with his Daoist buddy Cinnabar Hill, “Made While Discussing Mystery with Cinnabar Hill at Fangchengsi” (Yu Yuan Danqiu Fangchengsi tan xuan zuo 與元丹丘方城寺談玄作), ch21v6p3251. And see especially Paul Kroll’s book on Li Bo’s inscription for a Buddhist monastery, Dharma Bell and Dhāraṇī Pillar.

Theurgy, from theos, “god,” and ergos, “work.” “Theurgy is a type of magic. It consists of a set of magical practices performed to evoke beneficent spirits in order to see them or know them or in order to influence them, for instance by forcing them to animate a statue, to inhabit a human being (such as a medium), or to disclose mysteries” (Pierre Riffard, Dictionnaire de l’ésotérisme [Paris: Payot, 1983], 340).


“To the best of my knowledge, such homage for an individual outside the imperial family was wholly unparalleled” (Kirkland, Taoists of the High T’ang, 127). Earlier, in 717, the Emperor had commissioned Li Yong (see Chapter 12) to compose epitaphs for his father and grandfather.

Ibid.

That Azure Lad (Qingtong 青童) is no casual youth. He’s partner of the Queen Mother of the West, and his Cloud Sauce (yunjiang 雲漿) the wine of immortals (see Han Wudi neizhuan 漢武帝內轉).

Taishang 太上, i.e., Taishang Laojun 太上老君, the deified Laozi, supreme god of the Daoist heavens.
On this Celestial Palace, see Chapter 48 on the Yunnan war.

Jiang Fang’s 蔣防 Record of Illusory Play, of the Late Tang (Huanxi zhi 幻戲志). From Tokyo University Rare Books collection, http://shanben.ioc.u-tokyo.ac.jp/main_p?nu=C6215000&order=ti_no&no=00723.

The Bright Emperor writes of him: “When disloyal ministers entertain schemes, evil and rebellion have never failed to ensue. When these matters were made clear to Ye Fashan, he sallied forth to extend his subtle assistance” (Kirkland, Taoists of the High T’ang, 130, modified).

These two meanings are mirrored in the English pair, “lax” and “relax.” The prefix “re” here has an intensifying force.

This immortality goes against the biologic of birth-and-death and thus, a fortiori, against its correlatives in the sociologic of praise-and-blame.

This sounds a bit like the Hindu notion of avatar, but I leave this matter for those with greater understanding.


As Kirkland suggests in the concluding section of his dissertation chapter. After all, no one needs magic in the magic realms, it isn’t even discernable there.

Thomas Jülch goes further:

Der Begriff ’zhexian‘ 諡仙 – hier mit ’Unsterblicher in der Menschenwelt‘ übersetzt – bedeutet wörtlich ’degradiertener Unsterblicher‘. Der Begriff bezeichnet eine Person, die bereits Unsterblichkeit erlangt hat, und sich, nur um den
gewöhnlichen Menschen erscheinen zu können, auf eine menschliche Inkarnation einläßt. Da die menschliche Gestalt nicht das wahre Wesen eines vollendeten Unsterblichen abbilden kann, spricht man von einem Unsterblichen, der sich in soteriologischer Absicht selbst zu menschlichem Dasein „degradiert‘ hat. (Der Orden des Sima Chengzhen und des Wang Ziqiao, 17n80)

The term “zhexian” — here translated as “an immortal in the human world” — literally means “degraded immortal.” The term indicates a person who has already achieved immortality but who takes on a human incarnation to be able to appear to ordinary people. Since a human form cannot represent the true essence of a perfected immortal, one speaks of an immortal who, in a soteriological sense, has “degraded” himself to human existence.

Here the banished immortal is something like a bodhisattva.

682 By Xiao Zixian 萧子显 (489–537).

683 Within the biography of Du Jingchan 杜京產 in the section “Biographies of eminent recluses” (Gaoyizhuan 高逸傳). In epidemiology a “vector” is the agent that carries and transmits an infectious pathogen into another living organism, as rats carrying plague-infested fleas.

The eponymous heroine of Gilbert and Sullivan’s Iolanthe is an immortal fairy, banished from fairyland for a different kind of negligence: she falls in love with a mortal. If the ensuing satire of government, law, society and manners had been performed before the Bright Emperor, everyone involved would have been put to painful death. Wikipedia concludes:

The confrontation between the fairies and the peers [buf-foonish members of the House of Lords] is a version of one of Gilbert’s favorite themes: a tranquil civilization of women is
disrupted by a male-dominated world through the discovery of mortal love.” (Wikipedia, “Iolanthe,” s.v.)

684 ch13v4p2146.

685 Shishuo xin yu, “Dissipation” (Ren dan 任誕).

686 Feiyou xiansheng lun 非有先生論.

687 ch23v7p3642.

688 Zhuangzi, chap. 3, “Essentials of nourishing life” (Yangsheng zhu 養生主). The Lord has asked his cook where he gets his cutting skills, and this is the response.

689 OK, it’s an imaginary friend.


Fig. 103. Source: http://www.wideawakeminds.com/2009/12/glimpse-into-great-mind-jonathan-z.html
Marianne Moore’s praise for the Americanisms of William Carlos Williams.

“I like legends, dialects, mistakes of language, detective novels, the flesh of girls, the sun, the Eiffel Tower, the Apache, *les bons nègres*” (Blaise Cendrars, “The Prose of the Trans-Siberian and of the Little Jeanne of France (An Article Which Blaise Cendrars Wrote for ‘Der Sturm,’ No. 184-185, Berlin, November 1913),” trans. Roger Kaplan, *The Chicago Review* 24, no. 3 [1972]: 3–21, at 3). “Many people have tried to make this essay less unreasonable” (Bruno Latour, *Nous n’avons jamais été modernes*, translated by Catherine Porter as *We Have Never Been Modern* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993], ix).

I’m wrong about this. Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice J. Michael Eakin often handed down his verdicts in verse. Responding to a drunken equestrian charged with driving under the influence, he wrote

A horse is a horse, of course, of course,  
but the Vehicle Code does not divorce  
its application from, perforce,  
a steed, as my colleagues said.

“It’s not vague,” I’ll say until I’m hoarse,  
and whether a car, a truck or horse,  
this law applies with equal force.


About a dozen of these poems have been translated by Elling Eide in his wonderful *Poems by Li Po* (privately published by the Anvil Press in Lexington, Kentucky, 1984). We take this overlap as a compliment from him on our good sense of things, but in only one case — the prose encomium to the monk Baozhi — did we first come upon the material through his book. A selection of twenty of Eide’s translations has been included in


Li Bo’s peer group: Hafiz, Ikkyū, Picasso, Kṛṣṇa, the Pseudo-Dionysius. As divinity, Li Bo has no antithesis. But as human, his opposite is the Hungerkünstler.

696 ch21v6p3267. I’m currently in discussions with Elysium Space to have this poem sent into a two-year sun-synchronous decaying orbit via SpaceX in the late spring of 2022. See also rocketlabusa.com.

697 Now we’ve opened the box, and we want to hear if Schrödinger’s cat is alive or dead. But is the cat alive or dead only after Schrödinger has told his friend Wigner?

698 Photo by author.