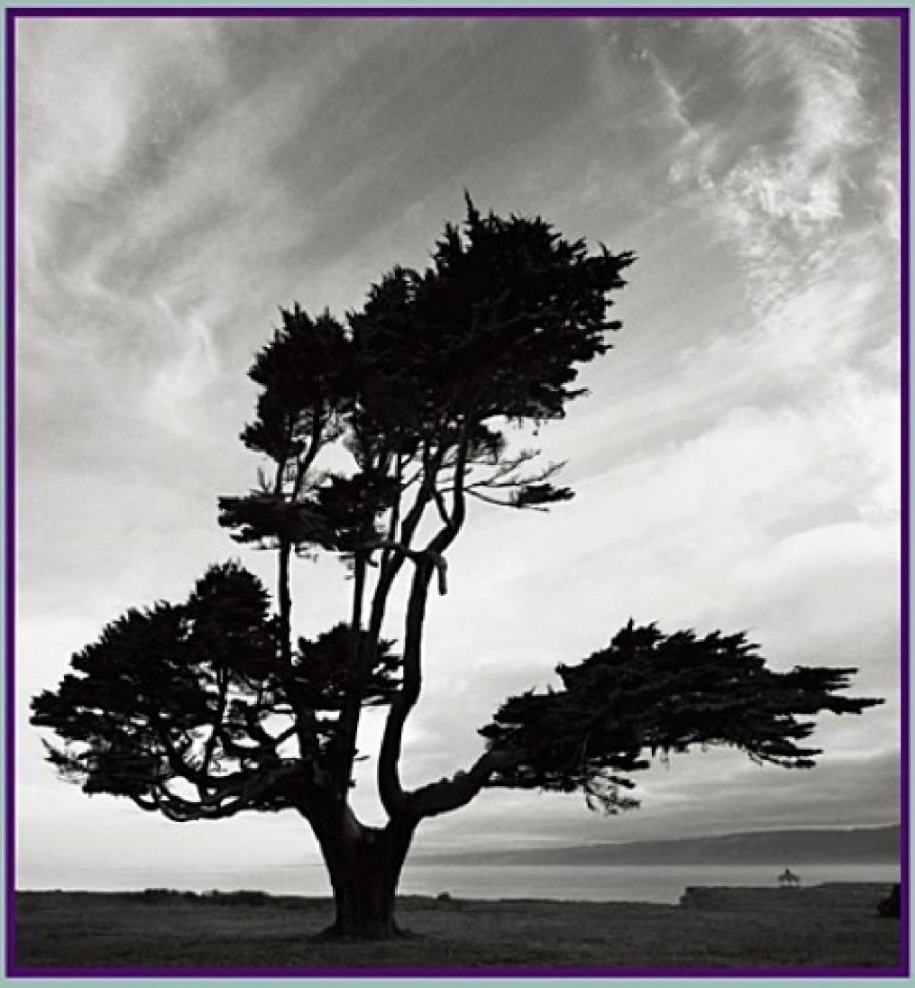
A LITTLE PRIMER OF TU FU

BY DAVID HAWKES



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A Little Primer of Tu Fu
By David Hawkes

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Author's Introduction

I have written this book in order to give some idea of what Chinese poetry is really like and how it works to people who either know no Chinese at all or know only a little. To write it I have taken all the poems by Tu Fu contained in a well-known Chinese anthology, *Three Hundred T'ang Poems*, arranged them chronologically, transliterated them, explained their form and historical background, expounded their meaning, and lastly translated them into English prose. The translations are intended as cribs. They are not meant to be beautiful or pleasing. It is my ardent hope that a reader who is patient enough to work his way through to the end of the book will, by the time he reaches it, have learned something about the Chinese language, something about Chinese poetry, and something about the poet Tu Fu.

Tu Fu (712–70) is regarded by many Chinese as their greatest poet, but his poems do not as a rule come through very well in translation, which makes him a particularly rewarding poet to study in the original. Partly for this reason, and partly because he lived in eventful times and often referred to them in his poems, he seemed a good poet to choose for the purposes of this book.

The anthology *Three Hundred T'ang Poems* dates from the late eighteenth century. It became the gateway through which generations of Chinese schoolboys were initiated into the pleasures of poetry, just as Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* became a schoolbook over here. Its selection of Tu Fu's poems (thirty-odd out of a total of more than fourteen hundred) is an intelligent one. The advantage of using it is that nearly all the poems of the anthology have been translated elsewhere, some several times over (see, for example, Soame Jenyns' *Selections from the Three Hundred*

Poems of the T'ang Dynasty and *Further Selections*), and the venturesome reader of this book who wishes to extend his conquests should have little difficulty in obtaining a copy of the Chinese anthology—in which the Tu Fu poems will be familiar landmarks—and continuing his study with the help of translations.

When preparing this book I gave a good deal of thought to the problem of transliteration. T'ang phonology was quite unlike that of any Chinese spoken today: indeed, its sounds have to be reconstructed; and though scholars can get a very good idea of what they were like, their exact nature remains a learned guess. Moreover the reconstructed sounds are as a rule written in complicated and unfamiliar phonetic symbols. If we use the modern sound-values of the characters, many of the rhymes and much of the musical effect of the verse disappears. On the other hand, to insist that a reader who knows no Chinese or very little should begin with a kind of learned algebra unintelligible to the majority of Chinese living today would be to deprive him of the chance of relating whatever he might learn from this book with any Chinese he might succeed in learning subsequently. And the modern pronunciation will give him *some* idea of the sound and feel of Chinese verse. Even the different tones of Mandarin Chinese will give him a notion of the effect of tonality.

Having decided to transliterate into the sounds of Modern Chinese—i.e. Mandarin, which is the dialect most often learned by foreigners and most widely taught in Chinese schools—I was still faced with the problem of spelling. Which of the many systems should be used? In the end I decided to use *Pin-yin*, the system officially adopted by the Chinese Government, as being the most 'international' form and also the simplest (compare *Pin-yin* **quán** with Wade–Giles **ch'üan**[2], for example). In the transliteration of T'ang verse it unexpectedly has the added advantage of producing eye-rhymes in many cases where the rhyme has been lost.

The most serious disadvantage in using *Pin-yin* is that in those cases where a reader is likely to know the Chinese word already—I am thinking particularly of place-names and

personal names—*Pin-yin* will produce forms which are weird and unrecognizable. 'Kiangsi', for example, becomes *Jiāng-xī* and 'Chungking' *Chóngqìng*; whilst even Tu Fu himself is transmogrified into *Dù Fǔ*. The answer to this particular problem seemed to be to keep the familiar spellings in the notes and translations while using the *Pin-yin* forms for transliteration of the text. This may strike some people as confusing but is, I believe, less confusing than any alternative would have been.

I should like to have given the reader a gramophone record of the sounds of these poems. As this is not possible, I recommend him to seek, if he can, a Chinese speaker who will make the noises for him. I do not propose to undertake the impossible task of trying to explain them in unscientific language. There are, however, a few symbols in *Pin-yin* which are used in unaccustomed ways, and these I shall explain briefly and approximately in the following table.

x is used for a 'sh' sound made with the tongue-tip pressed against the lower teeth. *Xī*, for example, is a sound midway between 'see' and 'he'.

q is used for a 'ch' sound made in exactly the same way.

c is like 'ts' in 'tsetse fly'.

z is like 'dz' in 'adze'.

zh can be achieved by omitting the first vowel from 'giraffe' and pronouncing the 'g'r' on its own.

After *s, z, c, zh, ch, sh*, and *r, i* contracts into a sound somewhat like the 'u' of 'suppose'.

After *j, q, x*, and *y, u* is narrowed into a sound like French 'u' or German 'ü'. (Elsewhere it is the Italian 'u'.) This sound is also found after *n* and *l*, when it is written with an umlaut: *nü, lü*.

After any of the above group of initials (*j, q, x*, and *y*) when labialized (i.e. when followed by a 'w' sound) or *any* initial when palatalized (i.e. when followed by a 'y' sound), *e* is pronounced like the 'e' in 'egg'. After any other initial an

open *e* is a sound like French 'eu' or German 'ö', whilst a closed *e* (one followed by *n* or *ng*) is a short, neutral sound like the 'a' in 'ago'.

The four tones of Pekingese, high level (first tone), high rising (second tone), low rising (third tone), and falling (fourth tone) are written with the signs ¯, ´, ˇ, `. I shall not attempt to explain them here. The signs themselves can be regarded as crudely diagrammatic representations of the tonal cadences.

I think the only other really important point to bear in mind when reading these transliterations is that each cluster of letters represents only one syllable. Thus *piao* is a monosyllable consisting of a palatalized initial (py ...) and a diphthong (... ow); NOT pee-ay-oh.

I make no apology for the inadequacy of this briefing, because I want the reader to meet Tu Fu straight away and to become acquainted with him through his poems. If, after reading them, he is still desirous of more information about Tu Fu's life and work, he cannot do better than turn to Dr. William Hung's excellent *Tu Fu* (Harvard, 1952), which contains a full biography of the poet and translations of many more of his poems than are contained in this little book.

D. H.
Oxford 1965

1
望嶽
Wàng yuè

岱 宗 夫 如 何
1. *Dài-zōng fū rú-hé?*

齊 魯 青 未 了
2. *Qí Lǔ qīng wèi liǎo.*

造 化 鍾 神 秀
3. *Zào-huà zhōng shén xiù,*

陰 陽 割 昏 曉
4. *Yīn yáng gē hūn xiǎo.*

盪 胸 生 層 雲
5. *Dàng xiōng shēng céng yún,*

決 眥 入 歸 鳥
6. *Jué zì rù guī niǎo.*

會 當 凌 絕 頂
7. *Huì-dāng líng jué dǐng,*

一 覽 眾 山 小
8. *Yì-lǎn zhòng-shān xiǎo!*

Title and Subject

Wàng means ‘gaze at’, ‘look towards’, and is commonly used in connexion with scenery or distant objects.

Yuè is a special word for ‘mountain’ used only of the Five Great Peaks of China: Sung-shan in the middle of China (Honan), T’ai-shan in the east (Shantung), Hua-shan in the west (Shensi), Heng-shan in the south (Hunan), and another Heng-shan in the north (on the borders of Hopei and Shansi). The ‘*yuè*’ of this title is T’ai-shan, which was from earliest times regarded by the Chinese with special veneration. The god of T’ai-shan was a judge over the dead, and formerly stones representing him stood opposite the openings of side-streets to scare away demons.

This poem was written in 736 when Tu Fu was a young unmarried man of twenty-four. His father was at the time assistant prefect of a city only a few miles from the foot of T’ai-shan. Tu Fu had recently returned there after failing the Civil Service examinations in Ch’ang-an.

‘Gazing at T’ai-shan’ is a typically Chinese title for a poem. Our titles are substantival: ‘Lycidas’, ‘Home Thoughts from Abroad’, ‘The Rape of the Lock’. The Chinese are partial to verbal constructions: ‘Mourning Lycidas’, ‘Thinking of My Homeland While in a Foreign Country’, ‘Raping the Lock’, etc. I should feel no compunction in translating this title ‘On a Distant Prospect of T’ai-shan’, or something of the sort.

Note that although this poem is about a view and not an ascent of T’ai-shan, Tu Fu does, in lines 5 and 6, imagine himself up on the mountainside. He may of course have climbed it a bit already. The poem merely tells us that he had never been to the top.

Form

Although this poem is eight lines long and observes strict verbal parallelism in the two middle couplets (lines 3–4 and 5–6), it is usually classed as a poem ‘in the Old Style’. The reason why it is not thought of as being ‘in the Modern Style’ (or ‘Regulated Verse’ as it is more usual to call it) is that it does not follow the elaborate rules of euphony which have to

be observed in Regulated Verse.

The metre is pentasyllabic (five syllables to the line). The rhyme is the same throughout, and is found in alternate lines. Chinese call this type of verse 'Five-word Old Style' or 'Five Old' for short.

Exegesis

In the parallel lines of Chinese text and English translation which follow it will be found that if every word or hyphenated compound or word-group is regarded as a single unit, there are as many units in each line of Chinese as in the corresponding English line; and since the English line follows the Chinese word order, the reader should experience no difficulty in correctly relating the English units to the Chinese units which correspond. The Chinese units will be found as separate entries in the Vocabulary section at the back of the book, the only exception being that hyphenated suffixes will sometimes be found as separate entries.

1. *Dài-zōng fū rú-hé*
   Tai-tsung then like-what?
2. *Qí Lǔ qīng wèi liǎo*
   Ch'i Lu green never ends

'Tai-tsung' is one of T'ai-shan's names as a god.

Ch'i and Lu were anciently the names of two states or principalities lying respectively north and south of the T'ai-shan mountain. Their combined area corresponded roughly to the modern province of Shantung. The names continued to be used as territorial designations long after these states had ceased to exist, rather as 'Wessex' and 'Provence' continue to be used although they long ago ceased to exist as political entities.

3. *Zào-huà zhōng shén xiù*
   Creator concentrated divine beauty

4. *Yīn yáng gē hūn xiǎo*
   Northside southside cleave dark dawn

Yin and *yang* are familiar enough not to need much explaining. They do not, of course, always mean 'northside' 'southside'. Their basic sense is 'dark' and 'sunny'. If you use them of river banks, *yin* rather confusingly becomes 'southside' and *yang* 'northside', since it is the north bank of a river which catches most of the sun.

5. *Dàng xiōng shēng céng yún*
   Heaving breast are-born layered clouds
6. *Jué zì rù guī niǎo*
   Bursting eye-sockets enter returning birds

Inversion is extremely rare in Chinese verse, for the obvious reason that the language contains no grammatical inflections and therefore depends on word-order as a means of expressing grammatical relationships. Any derangement of the usual order is liable to result in impossible ambiguities. These two lines look as if they *ought* to mean

'The heaving breast produces layered clouds,
The bursting eyes enter the returning birds';

but it has long been recognized that this is a case of poetical inversion. Tu Fu's poems contain several such instances. They are considered extremely daring and bizarre by Chinese critics.

7. *Huì-dāng líng jué dǐng*
   Really-must surmount extreme summit
8. *Yī-lǎn zhòng-shān xiǎo*
   Single-glance many-mountains little

Zhòng-shān: literally 'the many mountains', 'the multitude of mountains'; i.e. 'all the other mountains'.

Translation

On a Prospect of T'ai-shan

How is one to describe this king of mountains? Throughout the whole of Ch'i and Lu one never loses sight of its greenness. In it the Creator has concentrated all that is numinous and beautiful. Its northern and southern slopes divide the dawn from the dark. The layered clouds begin at the climber's heaving chest, and homing birds fly suddenly within range of his straining eyes. One day I must stand on top of its highest peak and at a single glance see all the other mountains grown tiny beneath me.

2
兵車行
Bīng-chē xíng

車 轔 轔
1. *Chē lín-lín,*

馬 蕭 蕭
2. *Mǎ xiāo-xiāo,*

行 人 弓 箭 各 在 腰
3. *Xíng-rén gōng-jiàn gè zài yāo,*

爺 孃 妻 子 走 相 送
4. *Yé-niáng qī-zǐ zǒu xiāng-sòng,*

塵 埃 不 見 咸 陽 橋
5. *Chén-āi bú jiàn Xián-yáng-qiáo.*

牽 衣 頓 足 攔 道 哭
6. *Qiān yī dùn zú lán dào kū,*

哭 聲 直 上 干 雲 霄
7. *Kū-shēng zhí-shàng gān yún-xiāo.*

道 旁 過 者 問 行 人
8. *Dào-páng guò-zhě wèn xíng-rén,*

行 人 但 云 點 行 頻
9. *Xíng-rén dàn yún: ‘Diǎn-xíng pín.*

或 從 十 五 北 防 河
10. ‘*Huò cóng shí-wǔ běi fáng Hé,*

便 至 四 十 西 營 田
11. ‘*Biàn zhì sì-shí xī yíng-tián.*

去 時 里 正 與 裹 頭
12. ‘*Qù shí lǐ-zhèng yǔ guǒ tóu,*

歸 來 頭 白 還 戍 邊
13. ‘*Guī-lái tóu bái huán shù-biān.*

邊 亭 流 血 成 海 水
14. ‘*Biān-tíng liú-xuè chéng hǎi-shuǐ,*

武 皇 開 邊 意 未 已
15. ‘*Wǔ-huáng kāi-biān yì wèi yǐ.*

君 不 聞 漢 家 山 東 二 百 州
16. ‘*Jūn bù wén Hàn-jiā shān-dōng èr-bǎi zhōu,*

千 村 萬 落 生 荊 杞
17. ‘*Qiān cūn wàn luò shēng jīng qǐ.*

縱 有 健 婦 把 鋤 犁
18. ‘*Zòng yǒu jiàn fù bǎ chú lí,*

禾 生 隴 畝 無 東 西
19. ‘*Hé shēng lǒng-mǔ wú dōng xī.*

況 復 秦 兵 耐 苦 戰
20. ‘*Kuàng fù Qín bīng nài kǔ-zhàn,*

被 驅 不 異 犬 與 雞
21. ‘*Bèi qū bú-yì quǎn yǔ jī.*

長 者 雖 有 問
22. ‘*Zhǎng-zhě suī yǒu wèn*,

役 夫 敢 申 恨
23. ‘*Yì-fū gǎn shēn-hèn*?

且 如 今 年 冬
24. ‘*Qiě-rú jīn-nián dōng*,

未 休 關 西 卒
25. ‘*Wèi xiū Guān-xī zú*.

縣 官 急 索 租
26. ‘*Xiàn-guān jí suǒ zū*,

租 稅 從 何 出
27. ‘*Zū-shuì cóng-hé chū*?

信 知 生 男 惡
28. ‘*Xìn zhī shēng nán è*,

反 是 生 女 好
29. ‘*Fǎn-shì shēng nǚ hǎo*;

生 女 猶 得 嫁 比 鄰
30. ‘*Shēng nǚ yóu dé jià bǐ-lín*,

生 男 埋 沒 隨 百 草
31. ‘*Shēng nán mái-mò suí bǎi-cǎo*.

君 不 見 青 海 頭
32. ‘*Jūn bú jiàn Qīng-hǎi tóu*,

古 來 白 骨 無 人 收
33. ‘*Gǔ-lái bái-gǔ wú-rén shōu*,

新 鬼 煩 怨 舊 鬼 哭

34. '*Xīn guǐ fán-yuàn jiù guǐ kū,*

天陰雨溼聲啾啾

35. '*Tiān yīn yǔ shī shēng jiū-jiū.*'

Title and Subject

Bīng means 'soldier', 'troops', 'arms', 'army'.

Chē is a general term for anything on wheels: car, cart, train, wheelbarrow, bicycle, or bus. Anciently it was the word for a chariot; but war-chariots went out of use with the introduction of cavalry before the beginning of the Christian era. The 'army carts' of the title are heavy baggage-wagons.

A *xíng* is a type of ballad. Poets of the T'ang era, in which Tu Fu lived, often wrote new words to existing tunes. Sometimes they wrote original lyrics which were set to new tunes, like Po Chüi's famous 'Song of Everlasting Grief' which was sung in every wineshop and teahouse of the Empire. Others again borrowed the themes of earlier folk-songs whose melodies had long since been forgotten, in order to write ballad-style poems which were not intended to be sung at all. For example, Li Po's moving poem 'Fighting South of the Wall' imitates an ancient ballad which was at least seven centuries old in Li Po's own day. Tu Fu's 'Ballad of the Army Carts' falls into none of these categories: it was not written to an existing tune; it was not written to be sung to a new tune; and finally it was not written in imitation of the words of any previously existing ballad. Rather it is a completely original poem written in the ballad style. I shall point out some of the features of that style in the following section. Let me for the moment explain why I think Tu Fu elected to write this poem about soldiers in a form which would remind his readers of the old ballads they had read in popular anthologies, probably while they were still school children.

Clearly one reason is that he wanted to put most of the poem into the mouths of his conscripts, and the popular ballad form would suit their homely, unsophisticated

language. Kipling's *Barrack Room Ballads* is a parallel which readily suggests itself.

There is another reason, however. '*Vox populi, vox Dei*' was from very early times a cardinal tenet of Chinese political thought, and it was held that the *vox populi* expressed itself nowhere so effectively as in the people's songs and ballads. According to a view commonly held in Tu Fu's time, much of the *Book of Songs*, the most ancient surviving corpus of Chinese poetry, consisted of songs and ballads which had been deliberately collected from among the peasantry by rulers who wished to determine the temper of their people. The enormous prestige of the *Book of Songs* meant that poetry had—in theory at any rate—to resemble it as much as possible, if not formally, then at least in spirit. Now much of the poetry in the *Book of Songs* was thought to contain criticism of rulers by their subjects. It followed from all this that the best poetry ought to be critical and didactic and that it ought, in some way or other, to resemble the songs sung by the peasantry of North China in ancient times. This, then, is the reason why a Chinese poet wishing to write satirical verses on a contemporary theme would be almost certain to employ the ballad form as a medium.

The 'Ballad of the Army Carts' was probably written in 750 (when the poet was thirty-eight) on the occasion of a new drafting of reservists and 'volunteers' to fight against the Tibetans. The 'passer-by' of line 8 is, of course, the poet himself.

The old system of militia service which took the peasants away for regular periods of unpaid National Service was superseded a generation before the date of this poem by the recruitment of paid regulars who were kept on reserve and called out intermittently as occasion arose. Unfortunately the new system did not produce an adequate intake of recruits, and press-gang methods were frequently resorted to in order to raise armies for unpopular campaigns. The most notorious recruiting campaign of this sort was that of 751. In order to raise troops to fight against the kingdom of Nan-chao in Yunnan, which was popularly thought of (and with some justification) as the graveyard of any soldier unlucky enough

to be drafted there, commissioners were sent out into all the northern prefectures who marched back their quotas of forcibly conscripted men tied up in files one behind the other, and with wooden collars or 'cangues' round their necks like common criminals. The historian's account of the distressing scenes witnessed on that occasion closely resembles the description contained in the opening lines of this poem.

Form

The Chinese ballad style differs from other kinds of Old Style verse in admitting a certain amount of metrical variety. Most of this poem is in heptasyllabics (lines of seven syllables), but the first two lines contain only three syllables each, and there is quite a long passage in pentasyllabics beginning at line 22.

Chinese ballad style also admits the insertion of certain stock phrases which are either outside the metre altogether or else, if they are in it, have a metrical value less than their syllabic content. '*Jūn bù wén*' in line 16 is outside the heptasyllabic metre altogether. It is a sort of enclitic introduction to the seven-syllable line which follows it. In line 32 the '*bú*' is clipped so short that '*Jūn bú jiàn*' reads like two syllables and the line counts metrically as a pentasyllabic. The stock phrases used in this way are very limited in number and all similar in meaning: 'Don't you know?', 'Haven't you heard?', 'Can you really be unaware?', etc.

Another feature of Chinese ballad poetry—as of ballad poetry all over the world, I suppose—is its partiality for iteration: the repetition of words or phrases for deliberate effect. A favourite form of this, which for want of a term I call 'linking iteration', is where the beginning of one line echoes the end of the line before—the sort of effect Keats used in his 'Ode to a Nightingale':

> … in faery lands forlorn.
> Forlorn! the very word is like a bell …

'*Xíng-rén*' in lines 8 and 9 is an example of this. Other examples are the repetition of '*kū*' in lines 6 and 7, of '*biān*' in lines 13 and 14, and of '*zū*' in lines 26 and 27. Another kind of repetition is found in lines 28–31: all those '*shēng nán*' and '*shēng nǚ*'. This kind of effect would as a rule be avoided in more formal types of verse, but is extremely common in ballads, traditional and imitation ones alike.

Finally the dialogue form, really a dramatic monologue provoked by the initial query of a lay-figure whom the reader identifies with the poet himself (Coleridge's 'wedding guest', Tu Fu's 'passerby'), is also characteristic of Chinese ballad style. But this again, I imagine, is a common feature of all ballad poetry. Sometimes the poet does not bother to assume any 'persona' when addressing the 'provoking' question to his chief character:

> O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,...?

A rather interesting example of this is to be found in No. 5 in this selection, which I shall explain when we get to it.

Exegesis

1. *Chē lín-lín*
   Carts rattle-rattle
2. *Mǎ xiāo-xiāo*
   Horses whinny-whinny
3. *Xíng-rén gōng-jiàn gè zài yāo*
   Service-men bows-arrows each at waist

Lín-lín and *xiāo-xiāo* are onomatopoeic expressions.

Gè: Chinese syntax often treats distributives (words like 'all', 'each', 'no', 'some', 'every') as adverbs modifying the verb rather than as adjectives qualifying the subject or object. It is as if, instead of saying 'No soldiers enjoy route-marching' or 'Every lassie has her laddie' we were to say 'Soldiers no-case enjoy route-marching', 'Lassies each-wise

have laddies'.

4. *Yé-niáng qī-zǐ zǒu xiāng-sòng*
   Fathers-mothers wives-children run see-off
5. *Chén-āi bú jiàn Xián-yáng-qiáo*
   Dust not see Hsien-yang Bridge

Xiāng-sòng: sòng on its own means to see someone off, whether for a mere twenty paces to the front gate or for a distance of eighty miles to a station or port of embarkation. *Xiāng* is a pronoun-prefix used with verbs which normally have a personal noun or pronoun for their object, when the person of the object is unspecified. Its translation has to be determined by the context. In 'Please don't bother to *xiāng-sòng*!' it would probably be 'see *me* off'. In 'Oh, but I insist on *xiāng-sòng*!' it would be 'seeing *you* off'. Here it is 'seeing *them* off'.

Xián-yáng-qiáo: the Hsien-yang Bridge crossed the R. Wei to the south-west of the city. We are meant to infer that the troops are setting out for a westerly or south-westerly destination.

6. *Qiān yī dùn zú lán dào kū*
   Pull clothes stamp feet stand-in way weep
7. *Kū-shēng zhí-shàng gān yún-xiāo*
   Weep-sound straight-ascend assail cloud-welkin

Yún-xiāo: yún on its own means 'cloud'. The compound word is one of a large number of poetic synonyms for 'sky'.

8. *Dào-páng guò-zhě wèn xíng-rén*
   Road-side passer-by asks service-men
9. *Xíng-rén dàn yún: Diǎn-xíng pín*
   Service-men only say: Mobilizing frequent

The *dào-páng guò-zhě* is, of course, Tu Fu himself.

Diǎn-xíng: diǎn on its own means 'prick off', 'mark down'. Here *diǎn-xíng* is to mark down for service, i.e. to mobilize

reservists.

10. *Huò cóng shí-wǔ běi fáng Hé*
    Some from fifteen north guard River
11. *Biàn zhì sì-shí xī yíng-tián*
    Even reaching forty west army-farm

Hé: the 'River' referred to here is the Yellow River. Its upper, western reaches were at this time under constant threat from the Tibetans.

Yíng-tián: a system of military colonies or settlements first used by the Chinese during the Han period (206 B.C.–A.D. 220) as a means of holding down their remote north-western conquests. The soldiers worked on the farms when they were not engaged in military duties, so that these outposts could be self-supporting and did not have to rely on the maintenance of long lines of supply. The expression is used here verbally: 'to do frontier duty in a military settlement'.

12. *Qù shí lǐ-zhèng yǔ guǒ tóu*
    Went time village-headman for-them wrapped head
13. *Guī-lái tóu bái huán shù-biān*
    Come-back head white still garrison-frontier

Guǒ tóu: the common soldiers of this period wore a sort of headcloth or turban, rather like the headcloths of white towelling still sometimes worn by the peasants of North China in modern times. The point of this line is, I think, that the new recruits were so pathetically young that they still didn't know how to tie up their own headcloths properly.

14. *Biān-tíng liú-xuè chéng hǎi-shuǐ*
    Frontier-posts run-blood form sea-water
15. *Wǔ-huáng kāi-biān yì wèi yǐ*
    Martial-emperor's expand-frontier notions not-yet ended

Wǔ-huáng: the 'Martial Emperor' is Wu-ti of the Han dynasty (reigned 140–87 B.C.). It was a well-established

convention among the poets of Tu Fu's time to substitute the names of Han persons and institutions when they were talking about contemporary affairs. Nobody was deceived by this convention, and yet for some reason it emboldened poets to be somewhat more outspoken in their criticisms than they might otherwise have been. Here *Wǔ-huáng* really refers to the reigning emperor Hsüan-tsung (sometimes called *Ming-huang*, the 'Brilliant Emperor'), just as '*Hàn-jiā*' in the next line really refers to the 'land of T'ang', i.e. contemporary China.

16. *Jūn bù wén Hàn-jiā shān-dōng èr-bǎi zhōu*
    My-lord not hear Han-land east-of-mountains two-hundred prefectures
17. *Qiān cūn wàn luò shēng jīng qǐ*
    Thousand villages ten-thousand hamlets grow briers thorns

Qiān cūn wàn luò: this type of hendiadys is very common in Chinese both in verse and in prose. *Cūn* and *luò* are exactly synonymous: in fact, *cūn-luò* regularly features as a compound word meaning 'village'. *Qiān cūn wàn luò* is simply a rhetorical way of saying 'very many villages'.

18. *Zòng yǒu jiàn fù bǎ chú lí*
    Even-if there-is sturdy wife handle hoe plough
19. *Hé shēng lǒng-mǔ wú dōng xī*
    Crops grow fields not-have east west

Lǒng-mǔ: lǒng on its own is used of the baulks of earth which divide the fields in the Chinese countryside. *Lǒng-mǔ* literally, then, means something like 'bordered fields'. I think the soldiers mean that the women can't plough straight and can't in any case manage to scratch up more than a few patches here and there. The edges of the fields are all overgrown, and you can no longer see where one ends and the next begins.

20. *Kuàng fù Qín bīng nài kǔ-zhàn*

Still-more also Ch'in soldiers capable-of hard-fighting

21. *Bèi qū bú-yì quǎn yǔ jī*
    Subjected-to driving just-like dogs or chickens

Qín, like Ch'i and Lu in No. 1, line 2, was the name of an ancient principality. It was used in Tu Fu's time to designate a geographical area corresponding very roughly to the modern province of Shensi.

22. *Zhǎng-zhě suī yǒu wèn*
    You-sir though have asking
23. *Yì-fū gǎn shēn-hèn*
    Conscripted men dare state-resentment?

Zhǎng-zhě, literally 'superior', is used here as a polite expression: 'sir'. Tu Fu would be wearing the long gown of a scholar and is addressed by the soldiers as a member of the officer class.

Yǒu wèn is also a polite form, more respectful than a simple *wèn* 'you ask' would be. 'Though you are good enough to ask, sir' is roughly the tone.

Yì-fū: 'conscripted man', i.e. 'I', 'we'. In polite language first and second person pronouns are seldom used, various substantival formulas being substituted, according to the status and relationship of the speakers.

Note that Chinese frequently uses a rhetorical question where in English we would use a negative statement. The oddity of much translation from the Chinese is due to the failure of translators to make allowance for this fact. It isn't English to say 'Dare I tell you?' when we mean 'I dare not tell you'.

24. *Qiě-rú jīn-nián dōng*
    Take-for-example this-year winter
25. *Wèi xiū Guān-xī zú*
    Not yet demobilize Kuan-hsi troops

Guān-xī: the 'Land West of the Passes', i.e. the metropolitan

area around Ch'ang-an: Shensi (which does, in fact, have the same sense as 'Kuan-hsi').

26. *Xiàn-guān jí suǒ zū*
    District-officers urgently seek land-tax
27. *Zū-shuì cóng-hé chū*
    Land-taxes from-what proceed?

28. *Xìn zhī shēng nán è*
    Truly know bear son bad
29. *Fǎn-shì shēng nǚ hǎo*
    On-the-contrary bear daughter good

30. *Shēng nǚ yóu dé jià bǐ-lín*
    Bear daughter still can marry neighbour
31. *Shēng nán mái-mò suí bǎi-cǎo*
    Bear son bury-lost along-of hundred-grasses

Bǎi-cǎo: the 'hundred' in such expressions is really little more than a plural prefix: 'the grasses of the field'. Compare Mao Tse-tung's famous dictum 'Let the hundred flowers bloom' in which the '*bǎi-huā*' could more accurately have been translated 'all the flowers' or 'every flower'.

32. *Jūn bú jiàn Qīng-hǎi tóu*
    My-lord not see Kokonor shores
33. *Gǔ-lái bái-gǔ wú-rén shōu*
    From-of-old white-bones no-man collect

Qīng-hǎi, literally 'Blue Sea', is the Chinese name for the Kokonor.

34. *Xīn guǐ fán-yuàn jiù guǐ kū*
    New ghosts complain old ghosts weep
35. *Tiān yīn yǔ shī shēng jiū-jiū*
    Sky overcast rain wet voices twitter-twitter

Jiū-jiū: onomatopoeic expression normally used of bird-

cries. The weeping and complaining of the multitudinous ghosts makes a thin, twittering sound.

Translation

Ballad of the Army Carts

The carts squeak and trundle, the horses whinny, the conscripts go by, each with a bow and arrows at his waist. Their fathers, mothers, wives, and children run along beside them to see them off. The Hsien-yang Bridge cannot be seen for dust. They pluck at the men's clothes, stamp their feet, or stand in the way weeping. The sound of their weeping seems to mount up to the blue sky above. A passer-by questions the conscripts, and the conscripts reply:

'They're always mobilizing now! There are some of us who went north at fifteen to garrison the River and who are still, at forty, being sent to the Military Settlements in the west. When we left as lads, the village headman had to tie our headcloths for us. We came back white-haired, but still we have to go back for frontier duty! On those frontier posts enough blood has flowed to fill the sea; but the Martial Emperor's dreams of expansion remain unsatisfied. Haven't you heard, sir, in our land of Han, throughout the two hundred prefectures east of the mountains briers and brambles are growing in thousands of little hamlets; and though many a sturdy wife turns her own hand to the hoeing and ploughing, the crops grow just anywhere, and you can't see where one field ends and the next begins? And it's even worse for the men from Ch'in. Because they make such good fighters, they are driven about this way and that like so many dogs or chickens.

'Though you are good enough to ask us, sir, it's not for the likes of us to complain. But take this winter, now. The Kuan-hsi troops are not being demobilized. The District Officers press for the land-tax, but where is it to come from? I really believe it's a misfortune to have sons. It's actually better to have a daughter. If you have a daughter, you can at least

marry her off to one of the neighbours; but a son is born only to end up lying in the grass somewhere, dead and unburied. Why look, sir, on the shores of the Kokonor the bleached bones have lain for many a long year, but no one has ever gathered them up. The new ghosts complain and the old ghosts weep, and under the grey and dripping sky the air is full of their baleful twitterings.'

3
麗人行
Lì-rén xíng

三 月 三 日 天 氣 新
1. *Sān-yuè sān-rì tiān-qì xīn,*

長 安 水 邊 多 麗 人
2. *Cháng-ān shuǐ-biān duō lì-rén.*

態 濃 意 遠 淑 且 真
3. *Tài nóng yì yuǎn shū qiě zhēn,*

肌 理 細 膩 骨 肉 勻
4. *Jī-lǐ xì-nì gǔ-ròu yún.*

繡 羅 衣 裳 照 暮 春
5. *Xiù-luó yī-shang zhào mù-chūn,*

蹙 金 孔 雀 銀 麒 麟
6. *Cù-jīn kǒng-què yín qí-lín.*

頭 上 何 所 有
7. *Tóu-shàng hé-suǒ yǒu*?

翠 微　葉 垂 鬢 唇
8. *Cuì-wēi è-yè chuí bìn-chún.*

背 後 何 所 見
9. *Bèi-hòu hé-suǒ jiàn*?

珠壓腰衱穩稱身
10. *Zhū yà-yāo-jié wěn chèn shēn.*

就中雲幕椒房親
11. *Jiù-zhōng yún-mù jiāo-fáng qīn,*

賜名大國虢與秦
12. *Cì-míng dà guó Guó yǔ Qín.*

紫駝之峰出翠釜
13. *Zǐ tuó zhī fēng chū cuì fǔ,*

水精之盤行素鱗
14. *Shuǐ-jīng zhī pán xíng sù lín,*

犀筯厭飫久未下
15. *Xī-zhù yàn-yù jiǔ wèi xià,*

鸞刀縷切空紛綸
16. *Luán-dāo lǚ-qiē kōng fēn-lún.*

黃門飛鞚不動塵
17. *Huáng-mén fēi kòng bú dòng chén,*

御厨絡繹送八珍
18. *Yù-chú luò-yì sòng bā-zhēn.*

簫鼓哀吟感鬼神
19. *Xiāo-gǔ āi yín gǎn guǐ-shén,*

賓從雜遝實要津
20. *Bīn-cóng zá-tà shí yào-jīn,*

後來鞍馬何逡巡
21. *Hòu lái ān-mǎ hé qūn-xún!*

當軒下馬入錦茵

22. *Dāng xuān xià-mǎ rù jǐn-yīn.*

楊 花 雪 落 覆 白 蘋
23. *Yáng-huā xuě luò fù bái-pín,*

青 鳥 飛 去 銜 紅 巾
24. *Qīng-niǎo fēi-qù xián hóng jīn,*

炙 手 可 熱 勢 絕 倫
25. *Zhì-shǒu kě rè shì jué-lún,*

慎 莫 近 前 丞 相 瞋
26. *Shèn-mò jìn-qián chéng-xiàng chēn!*

Title and Subject

Lì-rén means 'lovely woman' or 'lovely women'.

Xíng means 'ballad', as in the title of the last poem. The 'lovely women' are the great ladies of the court: Yang Kuei-fei, now Empress in all but name, and her sisters the Duchess of Kuo, the Duchess of Ch'in, and the Duchess of Han. Tu Fu, along with many other holidaymakers, watched them at a sort of *fête champêtre* by the lakeside in Ch'ang-an's principal park on the day of the Spring Festival in April 753. Yang Kuei-fei's cousin, Yang Kuo-chung, had become Chief Minister following the death of the dictator Li Lin-fu in 752. He was extremely unpopular, and the blatant extravagance of the Yang sisters was already a public scandal. Tu Fu's description of the scene contains just that mixture of admiration, envy, and disgust which exhibitions of high living and conspicuous consumption are liable to arouse in the bourgeois breast.

Form

Like the 'Ballad of the Army Carts', this is mainly in

heptasyllables. The 'interpolated' questions of lines 7 and 9 are typical of the ballad style.

Although Chinese editors do not as a rule divide this poem, I am almost sure that it is meant to be read as three stanzas of equal length. This is possible if one regards the questions of lines 7 and 9 as being outside the prosodic structure. We then have three stanzas of eight lines each: lines 1–10, lines 11–18, and lines 19–26. Many readers have found lines 19–20 of this poem puzzling. They understand the music of line 19 as part of the entertainment being offered to the ladies, and then experience great difficulty in extracting any sense from line 20, which seems totally unconnected. In fact, if you take lines 19–26 as a separate stanza, it is at once plain that the *whole* of this passage is about Yang Kuo-chung, who has just arrived on the scene preceded by a mounted fife-and-drum band. There is then no difficulty whatever about line 20.

Read in this light the whole poem very cleverly unfolds the scene as it must have appeared to the crowded onlookers. The first stanza describes the expensive dresses, beautiful complexions, and haughty manners of the court ladies; the second watches them eating—or wasting—a great deal of very rich and expensive food, and identifies various mounted couriers who come galloping up as palace eunuchs bearing additions to the feast from the imperial kitchens; and finally, in the last stanza, a sound of music is heard and the crowd watches the arrival of a mounted procession: Yang Kuo-chung and other male courtiers coming to join the ladies. Yang Kuo-chung himself appears last of all, looking very proud and grand. The onlookers, who would boo if they dared, shuffle their feet and move back a step or two.

Exegesis

1. *Sān-yuè sān-rì tiān-qì xīn*
   Third-month third-day weather new
2. *Cháng-ān shuǐ-biān duō lì-rén*

Ch'ang-an water-side many lovely-women

Sān-yuè sān-rì: *not* 3 March. In the Chinese calendar this day corresponded to 10 April 753. The third day of the third month was a festival on which everyone went out walking in their best clothes and picnicked in the open air, if possible beside some water. It may have been connected anciently with some ceremony of ritual purification. (The importance of the water suggests ritual lustrations.) In Ch'ang-an, the fashionable place to go to on this day was the *Qū-jiāng*, the Serpentine Lake in the large park which occupied the south-east corner of the city. The *shuǐ-biān* of line 2 refers to this lake.

3. *Tài nóng yì yuǎn shū qiě zhēn*
   Appearance gorgeous thoughts remote pure and true
4. *Jī-lǐ xì-nì gǔ-ròu yún*
   Complexions delicate bones-flesh well-proportioned

Shū qiě zhēn: I don't think Tu Fu is referring to their morals: it is their breeding and refinement that he finds so impressive—like those of the princess in the fairy-tale who was a *real* princess because she could feel a dried pea through several thicknesses of mattress.

5. *Xiù-luó yī-shang zhào mù-chūn*
   Embroidered-silk clothing shine late-spring
6. *Cù-jīn kǒng-què yín qí-lín*
   Gold-passement peacocks silver ch'i-lins

Cù-jīn was work done in gold thread on top of a silk ground. I think *passement* is about the nearest equivalent.

Qí-lín: a mythical beast, combining features of deer, ox, and unicorn.

7. *Tóu-shàng hé-suǒ yǒu*
   On-heads what-that-which there-is
8. *Cuì-wēi è-yè chuí bìn-chún*
   Greenish-blue bandeaux hanging-down-to hair-line

9. *Bèi-hòu hé-suǒ jiàn*
   Behind-back what-that-which seen
10. *Zhū yà-yāo-jié wěn chèn shēn*
    Pearl press-waist-aprons firmly fitting body

It is virtually impossible to get much idea of the clothing and jewellery described in the last few lines. We can be sure that they represent the height of fashion at the Chinese capital in spring 753, and the terms used must have been thoroughly familiar to Tu Fu's contemporary readers. Unfortunately the modern reader can only guess their meaning. I think *è-yè* may perhaps have resembled those jewelled head-dresses worn by players of female roles in the Peking opera which cover the hair almost down to the brows but leave the chignon exposed.

11. *Jiù-zhōng yún-mù jiāo-fáng qīn*
    There-among cloud-curtain pepper-chamber kin
12. *Cì-míng dà guó Guó yǔ Qín*
    Granted-as-titles great-countries, Kuo and Ch'in

Yún-mù: bed-curtains embroidered with cloud-patterns.

Jiāo-fáng refers to the apartments of the Empress. In the palaces of the Han era the Empress's apartments had their walls plastered with a paste in which dried pepper-flowers had been pounded. It was said to impart a subtle fragrance to the air.

'Cloud curtains and pepper-scented chamber' are used here by metonymy for their occupant, the Empress, i.e. Yang Kuei-fei, who at this time was Empress in all but name. *Yún-mù jiāo-fáng qīn* therefore means 'the kinswomen of the Empress', i.e. Yang Kueifei's sisters, the Duchesses of Kuo, Ch'in, and Han.

13. *Zǐ tuó zhī fēng chū cuì fǔ*
    Purple camel-hump emerges-from green cauldron
14. *Shuǐ-jīng zhī pán xíng sù lín*
    Crystal plate is-served white scales

Zhī is an unstressed particle which connects a noun with the preceding word or words that qualify it. In T'ang poetry it is very unusual to find the particle used (it is virtually *never* used in Regulated Verse), but it is extremely common in prose. For example, *hòu lái ān-mǎ* ('the rider who comes last') in line 21 of this poem would quite certainly become *hòu lái zhī ān-mǎ* in prose.

Roasted camel-hump was at this time a delicacy much in demand at the tables of the great.

I don't think the 'green cauldron' is a metal one. The word used for 'green' suggests the green glaze typical of T'ang pottery.

Sù lín ('white scales') is used by synecdoche for 'fish'.

15. *Xī-zhù yàn-yù jiǔ wèi xià*
    Rhinoceros-chopsticks sated long have-not descended
16. *Luán-dāo lǚ-qiē kōng fēn-lún*
    Belled-knife thread-cutting vainly busy

Rhinoceros horn is well known for its aphrodisiac and magical properties. Its use for chopsticks would be as a poison-detector. Spoons and chopsticks of rhinoceros-horn were among the lavish gifts sent on one occasion by the Emperor Hsüan-tsung to An Lu-shan.

The carvers had tiny bells on their knives and executed a kind of ballet as they carved.

17. *Huáng-mén fēi-kòng bú dòng chén*
    Eunuchs' flying-steeds do-not stir dust
18. *Yù-chú luò-yì sòng bā-zhēn*
    Imperial-kitchen in-succession sends eight-precious-foods

Kòng 'bridle': here by synecdoche for the horse itself. Tu Fu means they gallop so fast that their hooves hardly touch the ground.

Bā-zhēn: the Chinese have a passionate weakness for numbered categories. There is an ancient text which enumerates eight particularly delicious and costly dishes; but

bodies.

Amongst these ladies are to be seen the relations of the Mistress of the Cloud Curtains and the Pepper-flower Apartments, ladies dignified by imperial favour with titles that were once the names of great states: Kuo and Ch'in. Purple camel-humps rise like hillocks from green-glazed cauldrons, and fish with gleaming scales are served on crystal dishes. But the chopsticks of rhinoceros-horn, sated with delicacies, are slow to begin their work, and the belled carving-knife which cuts those threadlike slices wastes its busy labours. Palace eunuchs gallop up in continuous succession, bearing delicacies from the imperial kitchens, the flying hooves of their horses seeming scarcely to touch the dust beneath them.

And now, with music of flutes and drums mournful enough to move the very gods, surrounded by a shoal of clients and followers, the very fountain-head of power, with what disdainful steps this last rider comes pacing! Arrived at the balustrade surrounding the pavilion, he dismounts and takes his place among the diners sitting on the patterned carpet. The willow-down falls like snow and settles on the white water-weed. A blue-bird flies off, bearing a lady's red handkerchief in its beak. He wields a power you could warm your hands against, a power unequalled by any other man: beware of pressing forward within range of the Chief Minister's displeasure!

4
月夜
Yuè-yè

今 夜 鄜 州 月
1. *Jīn-yè Fū-zhōu yuè,*

閨 中 只 獨 看
2. *Guī-zhōng zhǐ dú kān.*

遙 憐 小 兒 女
3. *Yáo lián xiǎo ér-nǚ,*

未 解 憶 長 安
4. *Wèi jiě yì Cháng-ān.*

香 霧 雲 鬟 溼
5. *Xiāng wù yún-huán shī,*

清 輝 玉 臂 寒
6. *Qīng huī yù-bì hán.*

何 時 倚 虛 幌
7. *Hé-shí yǐ xū huǎng,*

雙 照 淚 痕 乾
8. *Shuāng zhào lèi-hén gān?*

Title and Suject

Yuè means 'moon'; *yè* means 'night'.

Yuè-yè, therefore, is 'Night of Moon' or 'Moonlit Night'.

In order to understand the circumstances in which this poem came to be written, it is necessary to know quite a lot about the history of this period and the part that Tu Fu played during it.

On 17 December 755, two and a half years after the date of the last poem, An Lu-shan, the illiterate barbarian soldier who in 751, as trusted favourite of the Emperor and protégé of the dictator Li Lin-fu, had become Military Governor over the whole eastern half of the northern frontier of China, raised the standard of revolt in Fan-yang (near present-day Peking), ostensibly to 'punish' his rival, the Chief Minister, Yang Kuo-chung. When T'ung-kuan, the pass controlling the approaches to the capital, was captured by a rebel army in July 756, the Emperor and his immediate entourage slipped out of the city during the night, and Ch'ang-an shortly afterwards fell into enemy hands. At Ma-wei, about forty miles west of the capital, the Emperor's military escort mutinied, killing Yang Kuo-chung and demanding the death of Yang Kuei-fei, who was strangled in order to placate them.

On continuing his journey to his destination in Szechwan—refuge, it will be remembered, of the Chinese Government throughout most of the Second World War—the Emperor, in response to popular representations, left the Crown Prince behind him to organize resistance in the North. In early August, while his father was still making his way down to Ch'eng-tu, the Crown Prince set up court at Ling-wu beyond the Great Wall, more than four hundred miles north-west of Ch'ang-an. Shortly afterwards he was proclaimed Emperor, the Imperial Seal was sent to him from Szechwan, and historians record the beginning of a new reign, that of the Emperor Su-tsung.

About the time when the T'ung-kuan pass fell, Tu Fu, who at forty-four, after long years of unemployment, had just received a small appointment in the capital, appears to have been visiting his wife and children at a place near Feng-hsien, eighty miles north of Ch'ang-an, where they were living in great poverty. Military operations made it

impossible for him to return to the capital, and after its fall and the setting up of a new Imperial government at Ling-wu, he seems to have decided to move his family to a place of greater safety and from there make his own way north and offer his services to the Crown Prince. After a nightmarish journey made mostly on foot, leading and carrying their hungry children through country infested with marauding bands of rebels, Tu Fu and his wife finally reached Fu-chou, some 130 miles north of Feng-hsien.

When he had deposited his family in Fu-chou, Tu Fu, disguised as a peasant, began the long journey north-west to Ling-wu, but on the way was captured by a band of rebel soldiers. Probably used by them as a porter to carry the forage or loot which had no doubt been the object of their expedition, he would appear to have been released when the party reached its destination in Ch'ang-an; for although, like other residents of the occupied city, he was not at liberty to leave it, he does not seem to have been harmed or imprisoned, which he certainly would have been if he had been identified as an official and a partisan of the Imperial government. It is not known where or how he lived in the occupied city during the several months which elapsed before he succeeded in making his escape from it, but one would assume that he found some relation or friend with whom to stay.

This poem was probably written in September 756, a month or two after Tu Fu's forcible re-entry into Ch'ang-an. The Mid-Autumn Festival fell in mid September that year. This is a festival traditionally celebrated by eating 'moon-cakes' and crabs and drinking wine and, of course, looking at the moon, and tends to be a family affair. The sight of the full moon on this occasion would therefore lend an added poignancy to Tu Fu's feelings of anxiety and nostalgia, and he could be almost certain that his wife would be looking at it too and experiencing the same feelings. There is nothing to indicate that the poem was in fact written on the night of the festival, or even that it was written at the full moon; but the assumption he makes in it that his wife would be watching too does make it seem rather probable.

Form

This is a pentasyllabic poem in Regulated Verse. I propose not to explain the complicated rules of euphony which govern the pattern of tones which have to be used in writing this kind of verse, for the simple reason that the tones of Modern Chinese are often not the same as the ones used in Tu Fu's day. One of the rules is that the rhyme—which must be the same throughout the poem—must always come on a syllable with a level tone. The rhymes of this poem are still recognizable as rhymes in Modern Chinese, but they are no longer all level-tone syllables: *ān* and *gān* in lines 4 and 8 are level-tone syllables, but *kān* and *hán* in lines 2 and 6 are not.

The rules that we do need to remember when reading poems in Regulated Verse are (1) that the poem must be one of eight lines in four couplets; and (2) that the two middle couplets (lines 3–4 and lines 5–6) must each be antithetically arranged: i.e. line 4 must parallel line 3 in both grammar and meaning, and line 6 must parallel line 5 in the same way.

Having said that, one has at once to observe that great poets do not always bother about the rules quite as much as their admirers and imitators; and this poem is in fact a rare exception to the general Rule of Parallelism in not having any antithesis in the second couplet (lines 3–4).

Exegesis

1. *Jīn-yè Fū-zhōu yuè*
   To-night Fu-chou moon
2. *Guī-zhōng zhǐ dú kān*
   My-wife can-only alone watch

Guī-zhōng, literally 'in the women's apartments', is a synonym for 'wife'. According to the traditional Chinese way of thinking, a wife is the 'person inside'.

3. *Yáo lián xiǎo ér-nǚ*

5
哀王孫
Āi wáng-sūn

長 安 城 頭 頭 白 烏
1. *Cháng-ān chéng-tóu tóu-bái wū,*

夜 飛 延 秋 門 上 呼
2. *Yè fēi Yán-qiū-mén-shàng hū.*

又 向 人 家 啄 大 屋
3. *Yòu xiàng rén-jiā zhuó dà-wū,*

屋 底 達 官 走 避 胡
4. *Wū-dǐ dá-guān zǒu bì hú.*

金 鞭 斷 折 九 馬 死
5. *Jīn biān duàn-zhé jiǔ mǎ sǐ,*

骨 肉 不 得 同 馳 驅
6. *Gǔ-ròu bū-dé tóng chí-qū.*

腰 下 寶 玦 青 珊 瑚
7. *Yāo-xià bǎo-jué qīng shān-hú,*

可 憐 王 孫 泣 路 隅
8. *Kě-lián wáng-sūn qì lù-yú.*

問 之 不 肯 道 姓 名
9. *Wèn zhī bù-kěn dào xìng-míng,*

但 道 困 苦 乞 為 奴
10. *Dàn dào kùn-kǔ qǐ wéi nú.*

已 經 百 日 竄 荊 棘
11. *Yǐ-jīng bǎi-rì cuàn jīng-jí,*

身 上 無 有 完 肌 膚
12. *Shēn-shàng wú-yǒu wán jī-fū.*

高 帝 子 孫 盡 隆 準
13. *Gāo-dì zǐ-sūn jìn lóng-zhǔn,*

龍 種 自 與 常 人 殊
14. *Lóng-zhǒng zì yǔ cháng-rén shū.*

豺 狼 在 邑 龍 在 野
15. *Chái-láng zài yì lóng zài yě,*

王 孫 善 保 千 金 軀
16. *Wáng-sūn shàn bǎo qiān-jīn qū!*

不 敢 長 語 臨 交 衢
17. *Bù-gǎn cháng-yǔ lín jiāo-qú,*

且 為 王 孫 立 斯 須
18. *Qiě wèi wáng-sūn lì sī-xū.*

昨 夜 東 風 吹 血 腥
19. *Zuó-yè dōng-fēng chuī xuè-xīng,*

東 來 橐 駝 滿 舊 都
20. *Dōng-lái tuó-tuó mǎn jiù-dū.*

朔 方 健 兒 好 身 手
21. *Shuò-fāng jiàn-ér hǎo shēn-shǒu,*

昔 何 勇 銳 今 何 愚

22. *Xī hé yǒng-ruì jīn hé yú!*

竊 聞 天 子 已 傳 位
23. *Qiè-wén tiān-zǐ yǐ chuán-wèi,*

聖 德 北 服 南 單 于
24. *Shèng-dé běi fú Nán-chán-yú,*

花 門 勞 面 請 雪 恥
25. *Huā-mén lí-miàn qǐng xuě-chǐ.*

慎 勿 出 口 他 人 狙
26. *Shèn-wù chū-kǒu tā-rén jū!*

哀 哉 王 孫 慎 勿 疏
27. *Āi-zāi wáng-sūn shèn-wù shū!*

五 陵 佳 氣 無 時 無
28. *Wǔ-líng jiā-qì wú-shí wú!*

Title and Subject

Āi means ‘mourn’, ‘lament’, ‘grieve for’.

Wáng-sūn literally ‘king’s grandson’: here ‘young prince’.

Āi wáng-sūn therefore means ‘Lamenting a Young Prince’; but in the light of what I have said on this page, I propose to translate it ‘The Unfortunate Prince’.

Tu Fu wrote this poem in occupied Ch’ang-an, probably in October 756, a month or so after the date of the last poem.

In July 756 the rebel leader An Lu-shan sent his lieutenant Sun Hsiao-che to Ch’ang-an to supervise the conveyance to his headquarters at Fan-yang of everything of value that could still be looted from the imperial palaces, parks, and treasuries. The eunuchs, officials, and palace ladies who had remained in the city were rounded up and sent under military escort to Loyang in batches of several hundred at a time, and the families of princes, officials, and high-ranking

men, pecking at the great roofs, warning the high ministers who dwelt beneath to flee from the barbarian. Golden whips were flailed until they snapped and the royal horses sank dead with exhaustion beneath them; but many of the Emperor's own close kin were unable to gallop with him.

With a precious jade emblem and blue coral pendant at his waist, a pitiful young prince stands weeping at the corner of the street. Questioned, he is unwilling to tell me his name; he will only say that he is in great distress, and begs me to take him as my slave. He has already been lying in concealment for a hundred days amongst the thorn-bushes and has not a whole piece of skin on his body; but descendants of the August Emperor all have the imperial nose; the Seed of the Dragon are not as other men are.

Wolves and jackals now occupy the city; the dragons are out in the wilds: Your Highness must take care of his precious person! I dare not talk very long with you here beside the crossroads, but I will stand with Your Highness just a little while.

Last night the east wind carried a stench of blood and the 'former capital' was full of camels from the east. The Shuo-fang veterans were splendid soldiers. How bold and keen they were a while ago, and how foolish they look today! I've heard tell that the Son of Heaven has abdicated. And they say that in the North the Khan is so indebted for the favours shown him by his Sacred Majesty that at Hua-men he and all his warriors slashed their faces and vowed to wipe out this humiliation. But we must mind what we say, with so many spies about. Alas, poor prince! Be on your guard! May the protecting power that emanates from the Imperial Tombs go always with you!

Chūn means 'spring'.

Wàng, as in the first poem in this selection, means 'gaze at'.

Chūn wàng is 'Spring Gazing': i.e. 'View in Spring' or 'Spring Scene'.

This poem was written in occupied Ch'ang-an in the spring of 757, half a year after Tu Fu's encounter with the hunted prince. Its occasion may well have been a walk in the deserted Serpentine Park, which is the subject of the next poem in this book. From contemplation of public disasters—so much in contrast with the joyful exuberance of the season—Tu Fu turns to contemplation of his personal griefs and worries.

Note the skilful way in which this poem exploits the ambivalence of its images. It is stated

(1) that nature, continuing unchangingly in its annual cycle, is indifferent to human sorrows and disasters;

(2) that, on the contrary, nature is grieving in sympathy with the beholder at the ills which beset him.

The propositions stating this thesis and antithesis are themselves couplets containing antithetical lines. It is partly this involutedness which gives Chinese poetry the extraordinary richness of texture we sometimes find in it.

Notice also the sudden shifting of mood which takes place in the poem. The sombre anguish of the first part ends, as the tragic figure of the opening lines turns into a comic old man going bald on top, on a note of playful self-mockery which is nevertheless infinitely pathetic.

Form

This is a formally perfect example of a pentasyllabic poem in Regulated Verse. Not only the middle couplets, but the first couplet, too, contain verbal parallelism. It is amazing that Tu Fu is able to use so immensely stylized a form in so natural a manner. The tremendous spring-like compression which is achieved by using very simple language with very complicated forms manipulated in so skilful a manner that they don't show is characteristic of Regulated Verse at its

best. Its perfection of form lends it a classical grace which unfortunately cannot be communicated in translation. That is the reason why Tu Fu, one of the great masters of this form, makes so comparatively poor a showing in foreign languages.

Exegesis

1. *Guó pò shān-hé zài*
   State ruined mountains-rivers survive
2. *Chéng chūn cǎo-mù shēn*
   City spring grass-trees thick

3. *Gǎn shí huā jiàn lèi*
   Moved-by times flowers sprinkle tears
4. *Hèn bié niǎo jīng xīn*
   Hating separation birds startle heart

Since this is a poem in Regulated Verse, every word and every phrase in this and the following couplet must be arranged antithetically. Notice the skill with which monotony is avoided by a change of grammatical construction. In this couplet the subjects ('flowers', 'birds') come in the third place in the line, whilst in the following couplet the compound subjects ('beacon-fires', 'letter from home') come at the beginning of the line.

5. *Fēng-huǒ lián sān yuè*
   Beacon-fires have-continued-for three months
6. *Jiā-shū dǐ wàn jīn*
   Home-letter worth ten-thousand taels

In our own history beacons were generally used in order to give warning of invasion. The Chinese used them a good deal in time of emergency, however, as a routine means of maintaining contact between garrisons. For example, two garrisons established at a distance of ten miles apart would light a beacon every evening, and each would know that the

jīn, *adv.*, now 5.22, 7.13, 13.7, 17.4, 23.4, 26.1, 31 pref., 34.2; *s.*, the present 24.15. *jīn-nián, jīn-xī, jīn-yè*

jīn, cloth 3.24

jīn, front of gown, bosom 16.8

jīn, *adj.*, golden *5.5; s.*, tael of silver 6.6. *Jīn-guāng-mén, Jīn-sù-duī, jīn-yuè*

jīn-gǔ, sinews and bones 24.30

Jīn-guāng-mén, the Gate of Golden Light 9.0

jīn-nián, this year 2.24

Jīn-sù-duī, the Hill of Golden grain 24.33, 31.21

jīn-xī, this evening 10.3

jīn-yè, tonight 4.1, 11.3

jīn-yuè, lit. 'brazen tracery': palace doors 8.5

Jǐn-guān-chéng, the City of the Brocade Officer: Ch'eng-tu 16.2

Jǐn-jiāng, the Brocade River 21.3

Jǐn-tíng, Brocade River Pavilion 25.9

jǐn-yī, brocade dress 31 pref.

jǐn-yīn, brocade (i.e. patterned) carpet 3.22

jìn, *distrib.*, all 5.13; *v.*, to finish off 17.8; to be exhausted, run dry 33.4; *auxiliary v.*, completely, all 24.34

jìn, *adj.*, recent 20.3; *v.*, to be near to 21.1. *jìn-qián, jìn-shí, jìn-shì*

jìn-qián, to approach, draw near 3.26

jìn-shí, recently, in modern times 24.14

jìn-shì, in close attendance, in the Emperor's retinue *9.5*

jìn-xián-guān, a sort of hat 23.13

jīng, to sustain, endure 25.22. *jīng-yíng jīng*, thorn-bush 2.17. *jīng-jí*

jīng, to be startled 6.4, 25.19. *jīng-hū*

jīng-hū, to give a startled cry 10.8

jīng-huá, the capital 14.11

jīng-jí, thorns, 'briers and brambles' 5.11

Jīng-mén, name of a mountain: the Gate of Ch'u 27.1

jīng-qí, banners 26.9

jīng-yì, the capital *9.5*

jīng-yíng, to plan, design 23.22

qīng-mén, a poor man, in humble circumstances 23.2
qīng-niǎo, blue bird 3.24
qīng-tóng, green bronze 25.2
qīng-zhǒng, the green grave (of Wang Chao-chün) 27.4
qíng, feelings, emotion 7.17, 18.2. *qíng-qīn*
qíng-qīn, affection, concern 14.4
qǐng, to ask leave to 5.25
qióng, to exhaust, cover the whole range of 23.30. *qióng-tú*
qióng-jiāng, drink of the Immortals 26.11
qióng-tú, desperate straits 23.37
qiū, maple 24.21
qiū, autumn 11.2, 22.1, 33.5. *qiū-shuǐ*
qiū-shān, mountains 25.18
qiū-shuǐ, autumn water 15.4, 26.3, 26.21
qū, bend 7.2. *Qū-jiāng*
qū, body 5.16
qū, to drive, chase 2.21, 10.16
Qū-jiāng, the Serpentine 7.2
Qú-táng, the Ch'ü-t'ang Gorge 31.22
-qǔ, verbal suffix 17.8
qǔ, tune, melody 27.8, 31.12, 31.23
qù, to go, depart 2.12, 7.16, 24.34, 27.3
quán-mén, powerful families 24.11
quán-shuǐ, spring water 12.17, 12.18
quǎn, dog 2.21
què, to turn back 19.3; take back, remove 23.25
qūn-xún, to advance hesitantly or disdainfully 3.21
qún-dì, lords of the sky 26.7, 31.6
qún-ōu, flocks of gulls 17.2
qún-shān, many mountains 27.1

rào, to run round, to wind round 25.9
rè, to warm 3.25; to inflame 10.8
rén, man, person 7.7, 15.6, 23.36, 25.6, 31.15. *rén-jiā, rén-jiān, rén-shēng, rén-shì, rén-xíng*