

JOURNAL OF ORIENTAL STUDIES

東方文化

Editorial Board

Chief Editor

Cuncun WU

主編

吳存存

Executive Editors

Siu Fu TANG

Lucas KLEIN

執行編輯

鄧小虎

柯夏智

Editorial Board Members

John M. CARROLL

Kam Wing FUNG

Christopher M. HUTTON

Chung Mou SI

Gang SONG

Chaofen SUN

Yiu Kay TSE

Yuk Fung YEUNG

Isaac YUE

編委會成員

高馬可

馮錦榮

胡傑

施仲謀 (EdUHK 香港教育大學)

宋剛

孫朝奮 (Stanford University
斯坦福大學)

謝耀基

楊玉峰

余文章

© Copyright 2021 by The University of Hong Kong and
Stanford University

HK ISSN 0022-331X

Articles appearing in this journal are
abstracted and indexed in
Historical Abstracts

JOURNAL OF ORIENTAL STUDIES
東方文化

Editorial Advisers

Professor Chang Yu-fa 張玉法教授,
Institute of Modern History,
Academia Sinica,
Taiwan.

Professor Sin Chow Yiu 單周堯教授,
Honorary Professor,
The University of Hong Kong,
Hong Kong.

Professor V.H. Mair 梅維恆教授,
Department of East Asian Languages and
Civilizations,
University of Pennsylvania,
U.S.A.

Professor T.G. McGee,
Institute of Asian Research,
University of British Columbia,
Canada.

CONTENTS

目次

ARTICLES

論文

- | | | |
|------------------------------|---|-----|
| 盧本德
Lucas Rambo
Bender | 杜甫流亡西方邊疆的三個敘事組詩
Three Narrative Poetic Series from Du Fu's Exile on the Western
Frontiers | 1 |
| 白麗思
Alice Bianchi | 明清時期的災難繪畫：流民圖傳統及其演變
Picturing Disaster in Late Imperial China: The <i>Liumintu</i> 流民圖
Tradition and Its Transformations | 69 |
| 曾麗雯
Audrey Heijns | 從荷蘭殖民角度看香港
Hong Kong from a Dutch Colonial View | 119 |
| 劉燕萍
LAU Yin Ping
Grace | 從偽負情到至情——論唐滌生《紫釵記》(1957)劇本
From Pseudo Unfaithfulness to Profound Love—Discussion of dif-
ferent versions of Tong Di-sang's "The Purple Hairpin" (1957) | 135 |
| 歐陽開斌
OUYANG Kaibin | 浪漫英雄——穿越文革的木心與貝多芬
The Romantic Hero: Mu Xin and Beethoven through the Cultural
Revolution | 163 |

REVIEWS

書評

- | | | |
|--|--------------------------|-----|
| Nanxiu Qian, Richard J. Smith, and Bowei Zhang,
eds. <i>Reexamining the Sinosphere: Cultural Transmissions
and Transformations in East Asia</i> and Nanxiu Qian,
Richard J. Smith, and Bowei Zhang, eds. <i>Rethinking the
Sinosphere: Poetics, Aesthetics, and Identity Formation</i> . | Nicholas Morrow Williams | 201 |
| 張月、陳引馳編：《中古文學中的詩與史》 | 鍾書林 | 209 |

A SHORT GUIDE TO STYLE

稿件格式

213

THREE NARRATIVE POETIC SERIES FROM DU FU'S EXILE ON THE WESTERN FRONTIERS

LUCAS RAMBO BENDER *

ABSTRACT Towards the end of 759, Du Fu experimented repeatedly with long poetic series. Three of these series are narratives, structured by previously unrecognized internal architectures linking their constituent poems and even the series themselves. This article offers an extended discussion of these series' structures, an interpretation of their core narratives, and a new annotated translation into English.¹

KEYWORDS Tang poetry, narrative poetry, autobiography, Buddhism, Daoism

* Lucas Rambo BENDER is Assistant Professor of East Asian Languages and Literatures at Yale University.

1 Thanks for help with this article are due to Xiaofei Tian, Eric M. Greene, and Lucas Klein.

In the darkening months of 759, Du Fu 杜甫 (712-770) abandoned his government office in the capital corridor and fled with his family to the western frontier. Though the Tang imperial house had, just over a year before, recaptured the capitals from rebel armies under the command of An Lushan 安祿山 and Shi Siming 史思明, recent defeats had turned the tide against the loyalist forces, and Shi Siming was poised once again to take Luoyang.² Frustrated with a court that had scorned his advice and concerned that he and his family were directly in the path of Shi's army, Du Fu decide to forsake his lifelong aspiration of serving the state for a 450-kilometer trek through the mountains to Qinzhou 秦州 (modern-day Tianshui 天水, Gansu province). The reasons the poet had for choosing Qinzhou remain uncertain: he seems to have hoped he could rely for support on a nephew in the area, though that hope seems ultimately to have been disappointed.³ Perhaps he simply thought that, because the region was economically inconsequential, rugged of terrain, and unlikely to put up much loyalist resistance, the place would be safe from the rebels even if the dynasty did fall.

Ultimately, this decision seems to have displayed a characteristic lack of worldly foresight on Du Fu's part: the Tang would survive the Rebellion, and Qinzhou would be captured by the Tibetan empire, attacking from the opposite direction, less than three years later. But whatever its immediate consequences for Du Fu and his family, his flight to Qinzhou would prove a great boon for readers of his poetry, since it marked a turning point in his poetic career. Although he had begun over the previous three years of the Rebellion to write some of the verse that would eventually earn him common and lasting approbation as the greatest poet in Chinese history, it was not until he left the heartland that he began to produce at the prodigious pace that would define the rest of his life and eventually make him the tradition's most prolific poet to date.⁴ During the roughly six months he spent on the western frontiers, he wrote almost a poem per day—as if, now that his hopes for a government career had ended, he had decided to dedicate himself to poetry instead. With the partial exception of his contemporary Li Bai 李白 (701-762), who sometimes traded on his verse to earn a living, poetry was not a profession in the eighth century but rather an avocation in which most educated gentlemen engaged sporadically, often in social situations. If Du Fu began at this point to invest himself in his identity as a poet, therefore, it was perhaps because the art promised him a means of maintaining a connection to the elite tradition, even when he was far from

2 For this history, see Denis Twitchett and John K. Fairbank, eds., *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1979), pp. 453-63.

3 For Du Fu's biography around this time, see Chen Yixin 陳貽焮, *Du Fu pingzhuan* 杜甫評傳 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1982), pp. 485-587. In English, see William Hung, *Tu Fu: China's Greatest Poet* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1952), pp. 142-59.

4 It is worth noting, of course, how much has been lost, both from medieval literary culture in general and from Du Fu's collection in particular, which is listed at roughly twice its current length in the *Jiu Tang shu* 舊唐書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975), 190.5057.

the elite community of the capital region. Whatever his motivations might have been, he would spend the rest of his life in exile far from his hometown, writing scroll after scroll of increasingly experimental—and some might say increasingly interesting—poetry.

A surprising amount of the verse that Du Fu wrote in his six months on the western frontiers is organized into long sets. Poetic sets were not unprecedented at this time, but most were short, and only loosely or thematically interrelated.⁵ Du Fu had himself written a few such sets previously, but nothing matching up to the length or complexity of those he began to write in Qinzhou—not to mention the sheer number of such sets that he seems to have written in a relatively short span of time. At least four extended series are certain to have been written during this six-month period, comprising a total of fifty-one individual poems,⁶ and several other sets are good candidates for this date range as well, being included alongside these more certain series in the third and tenth scrolls of Du Fu's collection as it was collated by Wang Zhu 王洙 in the 1030s and published by Wang Qi 王琪 in 1059.⁷ Wang's ordering is often the best evidence we have for dating Du Fu's poems—it seems likely that some of the manuscripts he collated into his collection came to him in chronological order, perhaps through the poet's own work in editing his collection⁸—though it should be admitted that there are other ways of explaining this contiguity as well. It is possible, for instance,

5 For a useful discussion of premodern Chinese poetic series, see Joseph R. Allen "Macropoetic Structures: The Chinese Solution," *Comparative Literature* 45.4:305-29 (1993) and his recent expansion of this argument, *The Chinese Lyric Sequence: Poems, Paintings, Anthologies* (Cambria Press, 2020). It might be noted that these series challenge Allen's arguments, particularly in his recent book.

6 That is, as "certain" as the dating of Du Fu's poetry gets. The entire edifice of Du Fu studies is built upon such specious "certainty," though it is also possible (perhaps even likely) that Du Fu continued to edit his poetry throughout his life.

7 Our best evidence for this edition is the so-called *Songben Du Gongbu ji* 宋本杜工部集, Xu Guyi congshu facsimile edition (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan 1957). I will discuss this text below. The series in question include three sets of five poems under the title "Getting a Whim Out" 遣興; two sets of *yuefu* 樂府 ballads under the title "Going Out the Passes" 出塞, of five and nine poems, respectively; and one long run of twenty-eight eight-line regulated verses (律詩) each designated by a two-character title. Some of these poems are placed earlier in late-imperial and modern editions of Du Fu's collection. There is no evidence to support an earlier placement, however.

8 This suggestion has been made by Stephen Owen in an unpublished paper. As he notes, both Su Shunqin 蘇舜欽 and Wang Zhu complain that previous collections of Du Fu's poetry were "not ordered chronologically" 前後不倫 or "out of chronological order" 非當時第次矣 (see Xiao Difei 蕭滌非 et al., ed., *Du Fu quanji jiaozhu* 杜甫全集校注, 12 vols. [Beijing: Renmin wuxue chubanshe, 2014], vol. 12, pp. 6585 and 6587). Since other Song editors do not complain about such flaws in other Tang collections—few of which were arranged in chronological sequence—Owen hypothesizes that there was some pre-existing chronological sequence to Du Fu's collection, which both Su and Wang recognized was only partial and imperfect. The Taiwanese scholar Huang Yizhen 黃奕珍 has offered other evidence for this possibility more specifically focused around these series; see his *Du Fu zi Qin ru Shu shige xiping* 杜甫自秦入蜀詩歌析評 (Taipei: Liren shuju, 2005), pp. 83-128.

that some previous reader before Wang Zhu was interested in Du Fu's extended series, and had copied them into one manuscript that then served as a basis for Wang's compilation.

Whenever these other sets might have been written, however, three of the series definitely composed at this time display an even more striking innovation: they each offer a narrative, strung out over several poems. Elite Tang *shi*-poetry 詩 was, for the most part, a short, episodic, and occasional form: individual poems might contain simple narratives, but the art did not generally provide a sufficient canvas for even the most rudimentary sort of narrative depth.⁹ There were, to be sure, longer poems in the tradition, and Du Fu had himself written relatively extensive narrative poems in the past. Narrative series, however, offered a larger canvas than even the longest of his poems, and the form's built-in ruptures between individual poems allowed for multiple topics to be taken up and related paratactically, freed from the limitations of hypotactic logic. As a result, these series are more thematically diverse and their narrative progress more complex than even the richest of Du Fu's individual narrative poems, "Traveling North" 北征, written two years earlier.

Narrative seems to have been on Du Fu's mind in this period. Two of the less-easily datable series he might have written in these years are also narratives, albeit fictions: they imagine the development of a young man into a soldier in An Lushan's army, and then his reactions to the Rebellion. In these series, Du Fu considers the way a person's mind and character may change over time as he discovers what matters to him and learns about the world he lives in.¹⁰ This sort of spiritual progress is also the theme of the three series translated here, though they, by contrast, are autobiographical—and in a sense somewhat different from the way that we usually talk about most Tang poetry as autobiographical. As an occasional art, Tang poetry outside of a few genres generally begins from, describes, transfigures, or comments on situations presumed to have actually occurred in the lives of its poets. Yet relatively few Tang poems seek earnestly to explore the question of who their authors are as individuals, much less to track the development of these individualities over time. This is a theme that is quite difficult to fit into poems of forty characters, or even a few hundred. When Du Fu gathers twenty forty-character or twelve one-hundred-character poems into coherent sequences, however, the form becomes capable of developing sustained reflections upon who the poet is, what matters to him, and where his life is going. And though these sequences

9 For narrative in premodern Chinese poetry, see Joseph R. Allen, "Early Chinese Narrative Poetry: The Definition of a Tradition" (PhD diss., Univ. of Washington, 1982); Dore Jesse Levy, *Chinese Narrative Poetry: The Late Han through Tang Dynasties* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1988); and Tsung-Cheng Lin, "Time and Narration: A Study of Sequential Structure in Chinese Narrative Verse" (PhD diss., Univ. of British Columbia, 2006). None of these works deal with anything remotely like these series.

10 The first of these sequences has been translated and discussed by Stephen Owen in "A Poetic Narrative of Change: Du Fu's Poetic Sequence 'Going Out the Passes: First Series,'" in Maghiel van Crevel, Tian Yuan Tan, and Michel Hockx eds., *Text, Performance, and Gender in Chinese Literature and Music: Essays in Honor of Wilt Idema*, pp. 7-22 (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

individually all remain far shorter than narrative forms like the epic or the novel, they are structured by intricate interconnections that both enhance and complicate their narrative possibilities.

By stringing together short poems into extended chronological sequences of moments over time, Du Fu invents in these series what amounts to a new literary form, one that would become an important part of the repertoire for later poets. Taking this narrative innovation a step further, moreover, and beyond what later poets would themselves do, he then strings these series themselves together in a narrative chain, with the second picking up on the themes of the first, and the third serving as an explicit sequel to the second. By writing narratives that crossed the bounds of individual poems and ultimately even individual series, Du Fu thus encouraged his readers to think of his poetry collection as a whole as one long narrative of his life. This vision of the poetry collection as a narrative seems to have been basically unprecedented in his time, when poetry generally circulated in brief and fragmentary forms, out of chronological order, and without commentaries to inform the reader when a given poem was written. It would, however, set the template for many of the most famous poets of later eras, as well as for the way that nearly all premodern Chinese poetry is read today. In this sense, these three series can be said to represent an important step in Du Fu's redefinition of the Chinese poetic art.¹¹

"TWENTY MISCELLANEOUS POEMS OF QINZHOU"

The first series translated below, "Twenty Miscellaneous Poems of Qinzhou," is made up of twenty regulated verses. The "regulation" of regulated verse refers primarily to its fixed prosody, but the form is also structured by complex interconnections both between lines and between couplets.¹² The middle couplets, that is, must be semantically parallel: every character or phrase in one line must be paired with a commensurate character or phrase in the other line of the couplet. And the couplets of an eight-line regulated verse ideally follow a set structure of exposition, by which the first couplet of the poem broaches two topics that are then dealt with separately in the two middle couplets, and then related in a new way in the final couplet. These structural interconnections between the lines of a couplet and the couplets of a poem thus turn what might, to an uninitiated reader, seem a mere litany of eight fragmentary images into a sustained meditation upon the relationship between two ideas that

11 For a useful discussion of the circulation of poetry in Tang China, see Christopher M.B. Nugent, *Manifest in Words, Written on Paper: Producing and Circulating Poetry in Tang Dynasty China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Asia Center, 2010). For Du Fu's redefinition of the Chinese poetic art, see Lucas Rambo Bender, *Du Fu Transforms: Tradition and Ethics amid Societal Collapse* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Asia Center, 2021).

12 For an accessible introduction to the form of regulated verse, see Zong-qi Cai, "Recent-Style *Shi* Poetry," in Zong-qi Cai, ed., *How to Read Chinese Poetry*, 161-80 (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2008), pp. 161-73.

start out in tension. In this sense, each poem has a miniature narrative impulse as a process of thought and perception, and it is these minor narratives that Du Fu will string together into the more elaborate narrative of the series as a whole.

To illustrate this form, let us consider briefly the second poem of the series, which describes Du Fu's visit to a Buddhist monastery in Qinzhou (please refer to the full translation below, after this introduction). For the purposes of regulated prosody, the tones of Chinese characters are divided into two categories: level (平) and deflected (仄). In this poem, these categories alternate in perfect regulation, and the final characters of each couplet rhyme exactly as expected. Note the alternation of tone-category between the second and the fourth characters in each line, between corresponding characters in each line in a given couplet, and between each couplet (rhyme characters in **bold**, rhymes in parentheses):

平平仄仄，仄仄平平。(kjuwng)

平仄平平，平平仄仄。(khuwng)

仄平平仄，平仄仄平平。(pjuwng)

平仄平平，平平仄仄。(tuwng)

The first two lines of this poem each broach a topic that will repeat throughout the verse, the first line highlighting the *Buddhist* character of the monastery nowadays, and the second that it was *once the palace* of Wei Xiao 隗囂 (? - 33 CE), who set up a separatist regime and declared himself King of Ningshuo in the early days of the Eastern Han dynasty. The second couplet will pick up this second theme—the transience of worldly glory—in its parallel depiction of the ruined palace: while its *colorful paintings* are *fading* within its **empty halls**, *green lichens* are *growing* on its **ancient gate**. The third couplet then returns to the Buddhist character of the building nowadays, observing—in a common Buddhist image, symbolizing both the illusory character of the world and the presence, within all those illusions, of a transcendent reality¹³—the image of the moon repeated in the dewdrops hanging from the leaves in the courtyard. Buddhist insight was often evoked in Tang verse by visual naïveté: because the religion taught that the conventional substances of our experience are merely illusory conjunctions of unrelated phenomena, poets employed in Buddhist-themed poems the analytical technique of observing the world not as the mind constructs it, but as it truly

13 This image is pervasive and may not have a single source. For one early articulation, see the *Da zhidu lun* 大智度論 (Mahāprajñāpāramitāsāstra) as translated by Kumārajīva, T.1509:101c08: “You should understand that all dharmas are like illusions, like flames, like the moon in the water, like void emptiness, like an echo...” 解了諸法如幻、如焰、如水中月、如虛空、如響。

appears.¹⁴ This seems to be what Du Fu is doing in the sixth line here, which sees the clouds not being blown by the wind (as the poet knew they were, “conventionally” speaking), but rather chasing after the wind, doing their slow best to keep up with gusts that outpace them. This image then prompts the turn to the final couplet, wherein Du Fu recognizes that he similarly cannot “keep up” with the Wei River he sees flowing off to the east, towards his hometown. Drawing together the topics initially articulated in the first couplet and then dealt with singly in the second and third, this image combines both the Buddhist theme and the theme of human transience. Ever since Confucius had stood upon the bank of a stream and watched it “flowing off, day and night, without stopping,” the eastward flow of China's rivers had become a figure for the ineluctable passage of time.¹⁵ This river is, moreover, “without feeling” (無情): not only “cruel” in its abandonment of the aging poet, but also “beyond passions,” a central Buddhist ideal. Perceiving the Wei's callous continuity, therefore, Du Fu experiences the flash of insight expected in temple-visiting poems and reconciles thereby the two themes announced in the first couplet: it is the ultimate nature of things that the world has no regard for the ephemeral lives of men.

Within this one poem, we can already discern a rudimentary narrative, tracing the progress of Du Fu's encounter with the monastery—which might have been where he and his family first stayed when they arrived in Qinzhou, since monasteries often provided lodging and food to travelers as a charitable service—and his thoughts about finding himself there. First, Du Fu reflects upon the monastery's history as he approaches it, observes the moss upon its gate as he enters the temple grounds, and notices the fading paintings as he goes into the hall. In the second half of the poem, however, we sense a restlessness in the poet: apparently unsatisfied by what he finds in the monastery building, he goes back out into the courtyard, and then further to a vantage of the Wei river, which could, he reflects, take him back home. This last reflection is, finally, undercut by the second narrative implicit in the poem's architecture, by which Du Fu's yearning to return to the heartland is in the end overcome by his realization that all things must pass, including the once-glorious Tang empire. Implicitly, this realization convinces him not to leave Qinzhou, but to return to the monastery and plan his next move for setting up a dwelling here.

It is at this point that this poem's internal narratives connect both backwards to the previous poem in the series and forwards to the next. In the first poem, Du Fu arrived at Qinzhou, but found himself regretting his decision to come; in the third, he will begin examining the map of the region, in search of a place to settle down. Poem II thus serves to explain how he

14 For similar techniques of confused agency and visual naïveté in other temple-visiting poems in Du Fu's corpus, see Xiao et al, eds., *Du Fu quanji jiaozhu*, pp. 2115 and 2786. For just one example of the technique elsewhere, see Wang Wei 王維, *Wang Wei ji jiaozhu* 王維集校注, Chen Tiemin 陳鐵民, ed., 4 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1997), p. 176.

15 See *Lunyu jishi* 論語集釋, Cheng Shude 程樹德 et al., ed. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1990), 18.610.

went from an initial reluctance to remain in Qinzhou to taking a faltering first step towards establishing a residence nearby.

The poem also serves as a link in the overall narrative of the series as a whole. If we read the first poem and the last, the arc of that narrative becomes clear: Du Fu goes from regretting his decision to come to Qinzhou to resolving to remain here permanently as a recluse in Eastern Bough Valley. The narrative interest of the series lies in the complications of this resolution: Du Fu's changing perception of Qinzhou and its (partly non-Chinese) inhabitants, his reasons for hesitating to settle down here, the reasons he finally overcomes those hesitations, and the processes of thought and perception by which he does so. These vacillations and their resolutions are articulated not merely within the successive poems of the series—each of which contains an equally complex structure as the example analyzed here—but moreover (in a point I do not believe any critic has remarked previously) in the architectonic connections that obtain *between* the series' poems as well. Just as the lines of each regulated verse in the set are organized into couplets, so too is each poem of the series itself part of a couplet of poems. Poem I, for instance, makes a pair with poem XI, poem II with poem XII, poem III with poem XIII, and so on. This consistent pairing of poems across the first and second halves of the series allows Du Fu both to return to topics previously broached and dropped, and also to reflect upon how far his thinking has come in the interim.

Consider, for example, the relationship between poem II and poem XII. In the first line of poem II, Du Fu tells us that he is visiting a Buddhist monastery to the “north of Qinzhou's walls,” while in poem XII, the first line describes a later visit to “Southwall Temple.” In the second couplet, similarly, poem II's “empty halls” are matched by poem XII's “empty courtyard,” and the former's “ancient lichens” parallel the latter's “old tree.” The parallels in the third couplets are somewhat more subtle—I only recognized them myself when my discovery of the series' structure made me rethink my translation of these lines—involving in both cases the sort of “Buddhist” perceptual alteration we noted in poem II above. Where poem II employed visual naiveté to present moons in every dewdrop and clouds chasing the wind, poem XII's third couplet employs syntactical ambiguities to blur the distinctions between subject and object. In these lines, the middle character can apply equally well to both the nouns that precede it and the nouns that follow it, rendering it undecidable, first, whether the flowers are “imperiled beneath rocks” or are rather “beneath teetering rocks”; and second, whether the evening sunlight is “beside a fallen bell” or, more interestingly, “lies down beside the bell.” This blurring of subject and object through the ambivalence of one character in each line is one of Du Fu's more famous technical innovations, one that he uses elsewhere as well¹⁶—including, perhaps, in the second couplet of poem II here, wherein it is not clear whether the “gate” or the “lichens” are “ancient”, or whether the “halls” or the “paintings” are “empty” (if the paintings are “empty,” they are so in a sense drawn from Buddhist thought:

16 The most famous example is probably Xiao et al., eds., *Du Fu quanji jiaozhu*, p. 779.

that is, illusory, lacking self-being). Within poem XII, however, this vision of Buddhist non-duality leads to a flash of insight very different from the ending of poem II. Where earlier Du Fu had realized that it is the nature of things to be heartless, here he ends the poem with another Buddhist vision of the nature of ultimate reality: that is, as compassionate. As he attains a vision of the indistinguishability of “self” from “other,” the wind on the creek seems to be sighing for his sorrows.

The narrative point emphasized in the relationship between poem II and poem XII thus concerns the reasons Du Fu is considering staying in Qinzhou. In poem II, the reasons were negative: there was nothing in the nature of reality that cared enough about human suffering to prevent the Tang from collapsing. By poem XII, by contrast, Qinzhou has begun to seem to the poet a congenial location to settle down. If the Wei River in poem II had made him homesick for the heartland, the spring that flowed from Southwall Temple is now encouraging him to site a dwelling nearby, and to imitate the old tree nourished by its waters.¹⁷

This resolution will not last long, of course: in the next poem, we find him changing his mind and beginning to focus his interest on Eastbough Valley (modern-day Bahuaicun 八槐村, about thirty kilometers to the southeast of Qinzhou), which promised him melons and millet, better than mere sympathy. He will then go on in poem XIV to imagine even more visionary consummations in a hermitage on the famous Daoist site Matepool Mountain 仇池山 (in modern-day Xihe 西河, Daqiaoxiang 大橋鄉, roughly a 150-kilometer journey from Qinzhou), before resolving finally on the attractions of Eastbough Valley in poems XV and XVI. These vacillations certainly do not constitute the sort of dramatic narrative action we are used to as readers of novels, but they do represent, if we read closely enough, the working through of significant ethical dilemmas. Having recently abandoned his lifelong dream of serving in government, Du Fu was now trying to decide how to live out the rest of his life: what religious vision would prove compelling to him, what pleasures various sites might provide, what privations he could bear. Unforeseen complications would intervene as well, with the Tibetans beginning to mobilize against the Tang and threaten the Qinzhou region. With all the complicated ethical and practical questions that come to impinge on the decision over the course of the series, its narrative begins to resemble that of a real human life.

THE “LEAVING QIN PREFECTURE” SERIES

Given the conflicted feelings he evinces throughout the “Twenty Miscellaneous Poems of Qinzhou” series, it comes as little surprise that the resolution Du Fu reached at its end would not last. At the beginning of winter, just three months after he arrived in Qinzhou, Du Fu

17 Much of Du Fu's Qinzhou-era poetry considers different places in the region to site his hermitage. He also considered taking up residence by a spring flowing from the nearby Taiping monastery in in modern-day Yulancun 玉蘭村. See Xiao et al., eds., *Du Fu quanji jiaozhu*, p. 1503.

decided that he could not survive there. His nephew seems to have offered little help, and he received an invitation to come live instead at Tonggu, roughly 120 kilometers to the south.¹⁸ Reflecting with sardonic humor that Qinzhou was never a very propitious place for his reclusion anyway, he packed up his family and set out on a rugged overland journey through the desolate mountains and valleys of the far west, recording the stages of his travel in a twelve-poem set, beginning with “Leaving Qinzhou.”¹⁹

The twelve poems of this series are not prosodically regulated in the way “Twenty Miscellaneous Poems of Qinzhou” were. Instead, they are all in old-style verse (古體詩), a form that does not require that the tones of its characters alternate according to a settled pattern, that the poems be a set length, that the middle couplets be structured by parallelism, or that the couplets be interrelated according to a predetermined architecture. Instead, the form is far freer, a fact that makes these poems’ interpretation simultaneously less intensive and ultimately more difficult, especially since Du Fu employs highly compressed, archaic, and often ambiguous language throughout the series, mimicking the style of old poetry from the Han and early Six Dynasties.

Some assistance in interpretation is provided by Du Fu’s habit of writing in four-line blocks, with the major transitions of thought generally occurring between these blocks rather than within them.²⁰ Even more helpful is his consistent practice of echoing a given poem’s beginning near its end. When we identify these echoes, we can often appreciate the narrative that the poem tracks in Du Fu’s thought. Consider, for example, “Cold Gorge,” the fifth poem of the set. In the first couplet, the poet tells us that as he and his family travel on, they grow more depressed and more silent, speaking little to one another. In the penultimate couplet of the poem, however, after they have made a fire beside the waters of the gorge, people who live in the desolate cold nearby see the smoke of their cooking and come to talk with them.²¹ This gesture of human fellowship in adversity finally inspires Du Fu to get over the depres-

18 For Du Fu’s cousin, see Xiao et al., eds., *Du Fu quanji jiaozhu*, pp. 1597-1606. Du Fu had at least one acquaintance in Tonggu, a certain “Case Reviewer Wei (16)” 韋十六評事. Though he says in “Massed-Plant Ridge” that he has never met the person who invited him to come to Tonggu, it was perhaps through the good offices of Mr. Wei that he received this invitation. See *ibid.*, p. 861.

19 As Xiaofei Tian has noted, it is the autocommentarial note to the first poem in the series that instructs us to read these poems as a set, rather than as isolated travel verses. See Tian Xiaofei 田曉菲, “Juewu xushi: Du Fu jixingshi de fojiao jiedu” 覺悟敘事：杜甫紀行詩的佛教解讀, *Shanghai shifan daxue xuebao* 47.1:106-13 (2018) and *idem*, “Feeding the Phoenix: Du Fu’s Qinzhou-Tonggu Series,” in Xiaofei Tian, ed., *Reading Du Fu: Nine Views*, 93-108 (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Univ. Press: 2020).

20 Jin Shengtan 金聖歎 (1608-1661) famously argued that most of Du Fu’s “ancient-style” verse could be analyzed into four-line blocks, and made this observation the basis of his *fenjie* 分解 method. For a discussion, see Ji Hao, “Confronting the Past: Jin Shengtan’s Commentaries on Du Fu’s Poems,” *Ming Studies* 64: 63-95 (2011).

21 Tian has pointed out the contrast between the beginning of this poem and the end; see “Juewu xushi,” p. 109.

sion in which he started the poem, and to cease complaining about the hardships of the road that he had described in its body.

This echo—not speaking, speaking—allows us to trace through the poem a process of thinking and learning, one that will ultimately fit in with the larger narrative of the series as a whole. Du Fu begins the set with a fantasy of Tonggu as a “happy land” (樂土): a place he imagines will be beautiful, warm, rich with food, and distant from “human affairs,” not requiring him to partake in “social niceties” he claims are “far from his nature.” This fantasy is, in part, a continuation of the vacillations of “Twenty Miscellaneous Poems of Qinzhou”: Du Fu is still testing out visions of what is important to him, and of what sort of life he can live now that he has given up on government service. Over the course of the series, however, every element of his initial fantasy comes into question. In “Cold Gorge,” he learns that he does not, in fact, hate social niceties as much as he previously thought, as speaking with people relieves his depression. Just as important, he begins to recognize that paradise for himself alone will not satisfy him, as it turns out that others are suffering just as he is. These reflections are crucial to the overall narrative of the series, which ends with an alternate fantasy, this time of sacrificing himself for the common good of the empire. If he had begun “Leaving Qinzhou” hoping to finally escape not only the troubled Tang dynasty but even the necessity of social interaction in general, by the end he wishes there were some way he could forcefully confirm his commitment to the human community. Over his hard travels, he has learned something important about himself.

This larger narrative is articulated through a complicated motivic structure of images, topics, and echoes that repeat throughout the series. “Cold Gorge,” for example, recapitulates and inverts the imagery of the second poem, “Red Ravine.” There, Du Fu refused to pursue smoke on the horizon that signaled the warmth and social comforts of a distant inn; by enjoying now the way his own fire serves as the source of the smoke to which others are drawn, the transition between the second poem and the fifth foreshadows the larger progression of the series’ narrative as a whole, by which he comes to recognize his concern for other people. The cold of Cold Gorge also recalls to his mind the topic of his family’s too-thin clothes, which he had mentioned in the first poem as one of his reasons for traveling south; by returning to this topic nearly halfway towards Tonggu, Du Fu hints that he is beginning to doubt his fantasy that the place will be a paradise. Finally, the poem ends on the reflection that “In this life, I’ve escaped shouldering a lance, so I don’t dare refuse the hardships of the road.” The first of these lines alludes to a tradition of *yuefu* 樂府 ballads concerning military service on the frontiers, ballads that had been repeatedly invoked in the first two poems. It is not totally clear why speaking with the rustics of Cold Gorge brings Du Fu to the realization that his experience of the western borderlands is not comparable to that of a soldier: most likely, they impress him with tales of their families’ suffering, perhaps in being drafted into military service. Whatever the connection, though, he seems to decide in this final couplet that the imagery of frontier warfare through which he had previously depicted his journey is