

CLASSIC CHINESE
POEMS OF
MOURNING AND
TEXTS OF LAMENT

An Anthology

Edited by Victor H. Mair and Zhenjun Zhang

田翁筆意
非上人亦



Classic Chinese Poems of Mourning
and Texts of Lament

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中國古典悼亡詩與哀祭文

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Victor H. Mair and Zhenjun Zhang

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Introduction

Bathed with the blood and tears of countless poets and authors and expressing the most heartfelt emotions of an ancient people, poems of mourning (*daowang shi* 悼亡詩) and texts of lament (*aiji wen* 哀祭文) stand out in the colorful garden of classical Chinese literature as two of its most elegant and unique flowers. Composed and celebrated over three thousand years, they have been held in high regard, read widely, and appreciated by people in China and Chinese-speaking communities all over the world. Unfortunately, however, both are virtually unknown to English readers.

This volume is the first English anthology of Chinese mourning poems and sacrificial offering texts, featuring eighty masterpieces of the former and forty of the latter. With brief cultural and historical introductions, annotated translations, and explanatory notes for each piece, this book acquaints readers with the most moving elegiac writings from imperial China, reveals how the Chinese perceived and understood the world—their sadness and joy, what they loved and hated, what they worried about and pondered, and the various artistic and literary means through which they expressed their deepest affection, providing readers aesthetic enjoyment, philosophical satisfaction, and an opening to purification of the soul. This volume also opens a window into the daily private lives of people in imperial China, particularly the literati and their associates.

Poems of Mourning

As a literary genre, Chinese poems of mourning are similar to the elegy in Western literature, a verse of serious reflection, typically a lament for the dead.

The earliest extant poems of mourning can be found in the *Shijing* 詩經 (Book of Odes), a Confucian classic of 305 poems composed between the eleventh and seventh centuries BCE. However, it was not until the Jin 晉 dynasty (265–420) and the Northern and Southern Dynasties (386–589) that poems of mourning became widespread. Noted poets of the time, such as Pan Yue 潘岳 (247–300), Shen Yue 沈約 (441–513), Jiang Yan 江淹 (444–505), and Yu Xin 庾信 (513–581), all composed mourning poems.

During the Tang 唐 dynasty (618–907), the golden age of Chinese poetry, many noted poets, such as Wang Wei 王維 (701–761), Li Bai 李白 (701–762), Du Fu 杜甫 (712–770), Bai Juyi 白居易 (772–846), and Li Shangyin 李商隱 (c. 813–c. 854),

composed mourning poems. The most famous examples include Yuan Zhen's 元稹 (779–831) three poems titled “Qian beihuai” 遣悲懷 (Assuaging My Grieving Heart), which express his deep feelings and longing for his deceased wife. The influence of these three poems is incalculable. They are still memorized by many even today.

Besides Lu You's 陸遊 (1125–1210) “Two Poems on Shen Garden” 沈園二首, famous verses of mourning during the Song 宋 dynasty (960–1279) include lyrics such as Su Shi's 蘇軾 (1037–1101) “Jiangcheng zi” 江城子 (Tune: The River Town) and He Zhu's 賀鑄 (1052–1210) “Zhegu tian” 鷓鴣天 (Tune: Partridge Sky); “Bansi tong” 半死桐 (The Half-dead Sycamores). Among numerous followers of Su Shi and He Zhu in later times, Qing 清 dynasty (1644–1911) scholar Nalan Xingde 納蘭性德 (1655–1685) was the most notable, whose best-known lyrics include “Huanxi sha” 浣溪沙 (Tune: Sands of Silk-Washing Brook), “Qinyuan chun” 沁園春 (Spring in Fragrant Garden), and “Nanxiang zi” 南鄉子 (Southern Village).

As the term *daowang* 悼亡 was first used as the title of three well-known poems by Pan Yue, “Mourning the Dead,” the scope of poems of mourning in China was conventionally restricted to the content of Pan's three poems—mourning a deceased wife. Such poems thrived as popular verse, and poems mourning one's wife were composed up through the Ming 明 (1368–1644) and Qing dynasties.

Continuing this traditional understanding, some modern scholars consider only poems mourning one's wife as *daowang shi*. Hu Xu's 胡旭 *Daowang shi shi* 悼亡詩史 (A History of Poems of Mourning),¹ for example, discusses only poems mourning deceased wives by poets from the Zhou 周 (1020–249 BCE) to the Qing dynasty, excluding poems mourning husbands, other family members, or friends. Other scholars, such as Shang Yongliang 尚永亮, broadened the scope of *daowang* by including poems mourning husbands.² Still, the scope of the genre remains narrower than in Western elegies, which allow for other family members as well as friends.

However, the historical practice of writing poems of mourning is in accord with that of Western elegies. As early as in the *Book of Odes*, examples abound of poems mourning all sorts of the dead. Alongside “Lüyi” 綠衣 (Green Blouse), which is about a man mourning his wife, there are also “Ge sheng” 葛生 (Kudzu Grows), about a woman who mourns her husband, “Kaifeng” 凱風 (The Genial Wind), which expresses a son's deep feelings toward his deceased mother, and “Huangniao” 黃鳥 (Yellow Birds), which mourns the three sons of the Ziju clan who were buried with Duke Mu of Qin 秦穆公 (r. 659–621 BCE).

Later examples of poems mourning husbands include Bo Shaojun's 薄少君 (fl.1596) “One Hundred Poems Mourning My Husband,” Shang Jinglan's 商景蘭 (1605–1676) “Mourning the Deceased,” and Tong Jia's 佟佳 (1640–1715) “Poems Lamenting My Husband.” Poems mourning other family members are also quite numerous throughout the different dynasties.

Given the unique nature of the Chinese literati, poems mourning friends were very common, especially in the Tang dynasty and later, with examples such as Wang

¹ Hu Xu, *Daowang shi shi* (Beijing: Dongfang chubanshe, 2010).

² Shang Yongliang and Gao Hui 高暉, ed., *Shinian shengsi liangmangmang: Gudai daowangshi baishou yixi* 十年生死兩茫茫: 古代悼亡詩百首譯析 (Xi'an: Xianxi renmin jiaoyu chubanshe, 1989).

Wei's "Weeping for Meng Haoran," Li Bai's "Facing Wine, Remembering Director He [Zhizhang]" and "Weeping for Old-Timer Ji, Master Brewer of Xuancheng."

This volume considers poems of mourning in the broader view, including not only the most popular poems mourning a deceased wife, but also poems mourning a deceased husband (nos. 32–33, 61, 63–64, and 70–71), a father (no. 80), a mother (nos. 25, 50, and 79), a brother (no. 75), friends (nos. 10, 11–13, 17, 19, 54, 76), and officials (nos. 3, 16, 47, and 49). All the pieces here are masterpieces and highly evocative of the various persons remembered in the poems.

Texts of Lament

Generally speaking, *jiwen* 祭文, literally "text of sacrificial offering," refers to written texts of orations delivered in various worship and sacrificial rites. Beginning as early as the Shang 商 dynasty (c. 1554–1045 BCE), spirit worship and sacrifice were popular practices in Chinese religious life, continuing for thousands of years. As an essential part of worship and sacrifice, orations dated back to the early Chinese writings in bronze inscriptions. They were offered to various gods and spirits, including Heaven and Earth, spirits of mountains and rivers, local deities, as well as deceased ancestors, with the purpose of entreating for protection and blessings, expelling evil demons, and mourning the dead. As the *zhu* 祝 was the official in charge of reading the orations in the sacrificial rites, the sacrificial orations were officially called "prayers" (*zhuwen* 祝文 or *zhuci* 祝辭), but also called "supplications" (*qiwen* 祈文) or offerings (*jiwen*).³ This is the meaning of *jiwen* in a broader sense.

In a narrower sense, however, *jiwen* refers to those orations offered especially to one's deceased relatives and friends. It was singled out from the prayer that was offered to Heaven and Earth and other spirits during the period from the Han 漢 to the Six Dynasties. Ming scholar Xu Shizeng 徐師曾 (1517–1580) states clearly in his *Wenti mingbian xushuo* 文體明辨序說 (Clear Distinctions of Literary Forms, with Preface and Explanations):

Sacrificial offering texts are the words used in the memorial service for one's relatives and friends. The sacrificial rites of ancient times were limited to enjoining [the gods to] enjoy the sacrifice, but since the Middle Ages [Han and Wei], sacrificial offering texts also praised the words and conduct [of the dead], thereby adding a sense of lament and grief. It was a variant of a prayer.

祭文者，祭奠親友之辭也。古之祭祀，止於告饗而已。中世以還，兼讚言行，以寓哀傷之意，蓋祝文之變也。⁴

³ See Chu Binjie 褚斌傑, *Zhongguo gudai wenti gailun* 中國古代文體概論 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1990), 414.

⁴ Xu Shizeng, *Wenti mingbian xushuo* (Hong Kong: Taiping shuju, 1965), 154.

Regarding their characteristics, Liu Xie 劉勰 (465–521) says in the “Prayer and Oath of Agreement” 祝盟 chapter in his *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍 (The Heart of Literature and the Carving of Dragons) that the prayer “must be sincere and respectful” while the sacrificial offering “should be respectful and grieving” 祈禱之式，必誠以敬；祭奠之楷，宜恭且哀。⁵

Differing from the epitaph (*muzhi ming* 墓志銘), which mainly records the life of the dead and praises their accomplishments, sacrificial offering texts focus on mourning the dead, bearing a strong emotional tone and composed in lyric style.⁶ Another difference between the two genres is that epitaphs were mostly written by individuals who were not related to the deceased, while sacrificial offerings were written by the relatives and friends of the dead. Famous early works include Tao Yuanming’s 陶淵明 (365–427) “Funeral Offering for Myself” 自祭文 and “Offering Text for My Younger Sister Cheng” 祭程氏妹文, Yan Yanzhi’s 顏延之 (384–456) “Sacrificial Offering for Qu Yuan” 祭屈原文, Wang Sengda’s 王僧達 (423–458) “Sacrificial Offering for Yan Guanglu” 祭顏光祿文, and Liu Lingxian’s 劉令嫻 (fl. 525) “Sacrificial Offering for My Husband Xu Fei” 祭夫徐悱文. Some pieces were used to pray for blessings and for avoiding disasters, such as Han Yu’s 韓愈 (768–824) “Offering for the Deity of Chaozhou” 潮州祭神文 and Bai Juyi’s “Offering for [the Spirit of] Mount Lu” 祭廬山文. Since their function was that of a prayer, Xu Shizeng put them into the category of prayers.

Although sacrificial offerings became popular as a common type of writing in the medieval period, several similar genres already had appeared much earlier. These include the dirge (*lei* 誄), lament (*ai* 哀 or *aici* 哀辭), and condolence (*diaowen* 弔文). These four genres are listed close together in Xiao Tong’s 蕭統 (501–531) *Wen Xuan* 文選. All of them fall under the umbrella of “texts of lament” (*aiji wen* 哀祭文), which is precisely the focus of this book.

The dirge dates back to as early as the Zhou dynasty. It was originally composed and read at the funerals of nobles to laud their merits and achievements, which would be reflected in their posthumous titles. According to Zheng Xuan’s 鄭玄 (127–200) note in *Liji zhengyi* 禮記正義, “*Lei* (dirge) means *lei* (to accumulate), that is, to collect and enumerate the acts of the person whilst alive, and then read it to produce a posthumous title” 誄者，累也，累列生時行跡，讀之以作謚。⁷ But later, as an oration offered to the dead, it also featured expressions of grief. This can be verified in the dirges written no later than the Six Dynasties, as Lu Ji 陸機 (261–303) says in his “*Wen fu*” 文賦 (Rhapsody on Literature), “the dirge wrenches the heart and is mournful and sad” 誄纏綿而悽愴。⁸ Therefore, it seems the dirge was the earliest among the types of writings similar to sacrificial offerings. The earliest extant dirge is the “Dirge for Confucius” 孔子誄 by Duke Ai of Lu 魯哀公 (521–468 BCE), found in the sixteenth year of Duke

⁵ Liu Xie, *Wenxin diaolong* (Singapore: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1960), 2–10: 177.

⁶ See Chu Binjie, *Zhongguo gudai wenti gailun*, 415.

⁷ *Liji zhengyi* 禮記正義, in *Chong kan Song ben Shisan jing zhu shu* 重刊宋本十三經注疏, ed. Ruan Yuan 阮元 (1816; rpt. Taipei: Yiwen yinshuguan, 1960), 19.7a.

⁸ David R. Knechtges, *Rhapsodies on Natural Phenomena*, vol. 3 of *Wen xuan, or Selections of Refined Literature, Birds and Animals, Aspirations and Feelings, Sorrowful Laments, Literature, Music, and Passions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 219; Xiao Tong comp., *Wen xuan* 文選 (Taipei: Zhengzhong shuju, 1971), 17.4b.

Ai of *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (Zuo Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals). But it was during the Han dynasty that the dirge flourished. Having “the form of a biography and the wording of a eulogy, it began in glory and ended in grief” 傳體而頌文，榮始而哀終。⁹

The lament (*ai* 哀 or *aici* 哀辭) is a variant of the dirge. In his *Wenxin diaolong*, Liu Xie has a detailed depiction of the difference between prayers and sacrificial offerings and their relationship with, as well as the origin of, the lament:

As for the prayers in sacrificial rites [recorded] in the *Records of Rites (Liji)*, they were limited to enjoining [the gods to] enjoy the sacrifice, but the offerings of the transitional periods [Han and Wei] also praise the words and conduct [of the dead]. The inclusion of praise in sacrificial offerings was an expansion of the genre [prayer]. Besides, from the Han dynasty tombs in the mountains, slips of laments were passed down, and when [King Mu] of Zhou lost his [concubine] Shengji, the historian of the inner palace took charge of [making] the lament slips. This being the case, it appears that the lament slip was originally written to confer [a posthumous title] but also produced words as a lament in response to the sad occasion. So its content is identical with that of a dirge, but its words are addressed to spirits. It begins as a dirge but ends as a lament; it has the form of a eulogy yet the style of a prayer. The lament the grand historian read [during sacrificial rites] was in fact [derived from] the prayer of the Zhou.

若乃禮之祭祀，事止告饗；而中代祭文，兼讚言行。祭而兼讚，蓋引伸而作也。又漢代山陵，哀策流文；周喪盛姬，內史執策。然則策本書贈，因哀而為文也。是以義同於誄，而文實告神，誄首而哀末，頌體而祝儀。太祝所作之讚，因周之祝文也。¹⁰

According to Liu Xie, the dirge was originally used to confer posthumous titles, while the lament was used to express grief. Laments emerged during the Han dynasty, and the slip of lament (*aice* 哀策) was in a special format (written on a bamboo slip, a tablet of wood, or a piece of jade) of lament used particularly for emperors and empresses.¹¹

As a genre completely free from the function of the dirge, i.e., conferring posthumous titles, the lament reportedly originated in Eastern Han and was composed in the beginning to mourn those who died young, though this limitation disappeared after the Song dynasty (960–1279). Zhi Yu's 摯虞 (250–300) *Wenzhang liubie lun* 文章流別論 (Treaties on Literature Divided by Genre) says:

The lament is a branch of the dirge. Its early composers were Cui Yuan, Su Shun, Ma Rong, and others. It is suited to mourning children who died young without living out their full lifespan. During the Jian'an reign (196–220), both Emperor

⁹ “Lei bei” 誄碑 (Dirge and epitaph) Chapter of Liu Xie, *Wenxin diaolong*, 3–12: 213.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 2–10: 177.

¹¹ The slip of lament was initiated during the time of Emperor Jing of Han 漢景帝 (188–141 BCE) and became popular in later times.

Wen and the Marquis of Linzi (Cao Zhi; 192–232) lost their little sons, and they asked Xu Gan and Liu Zhen to compose laments for them. As a genre, the lament focuses mainly on the pain of grief, accompanied on either side by sighs and regret. The so-called slips of lament today share the same intent as dirges of old.

哀辭者，誄之流也。崔瑗、蘇順、馬融等爲之率，以適於童殤夭折不以壽終者。建安中，文帝與臨淄侯各失稚子，命徐乾、劉禎等爲之哀辭。哀辭之體，以哀痛爲主，緣以嘆息之辭。今所口哀策者，古誄之意。¹²

Liu Xie also says that, in a lament, “the emotion expressed is mainly the pain of grief; its words should find their fullest expression in love and adoration.” 情主於傷痛，而辭窮乎愛惜。¹³ For example, Cao Zhi’s “Lament for Jinhu” 金瓠哀辭 anguishes over his daughter who died at nineteen and it is full of grief.

The condolence (*diaowen* 弔文) is another type of writing similar to the lament, but for adults rather than children. It was originally intended to offer condolence to those who died of calamities, but later became a lamentation for ancient figures and a eulogy for historical sites intended to garner pity for the author. Jia Yi’s 賈誼 “Rhapsody on Lamenting Qu Yuan” (弔屈原賦), which expresses Jia’s own resentment over being demoted by mourning Qu Yuan’s fate, is an example.

Parallel prose dominated the sacrificial offerings during the Han, Wei, and Six Dynasties; its popularity waned in the Tang and Song, while old-style prose (*guwen* 古文) became more widespread. Noted works written in *guwen* style include Han Yu’s “Offering Text for the Twelfth Nephew” 祭十二郎文, Bai Juyi’s “Offering Text for Weizhi” 祭微之文, Ouyang Xiu’s 歐陽修 (1007–1072) “Mourning Shi Manqing” 祭石曼卿文, and Su Shi and Wang Anshi’s 王安石 (1021–1086) “Sacrificial Offering for Ouyang Wenzhong” 祭歐陽文忠公文. Some pieces were still being written in verse form, including Han Yu’s “Sacrificial Offering for Liu Zihou” 祭柳子厚文, Li Ao’s 李翱 (772–841) “Sacrificial Offering for Vice Minister Han of Personnel,” 祭吏部韓侍郎文, Wang Anshi’s “Eulogy for Prefect Fan of Yingzhou” 祭范穎州文, Ouyang Xiu’s “Eulogy for Su Zimei” 祭蘇子美文, and Su Zhe’s 蘇轍 (1039–1112) “Lamenting My Deceased Older Brother, Duanming” 祭亡兄端明文.

Beginning in the Tang and Song, the sacrificial offering, dirge, and lament almost melded into a single genre; furthermore, other terms, such as addressing (*gao* 告), weeping (*ku* 哭), grieving (*dao* 悼), burying (*zang* 葬), offering sacrifices (*dian* 奠), offering libations (*lei* 酌), and sorrowing (*bei* 悲) began to appear frequently in the titles of lament texts. As regards the length of these texts, both Li Qingzhao’s 李清照 (1084–1155) “An Offering to Zhao Huzhou” 祭趙湖州文 and Wen Tianxiang’s 文天祥 (1236–1283) “Weeping for My Wife” 哭妻文 consist of only two couplets, resembling the elegiac couplet (*wanlian* 輓聯) that had just taken its form.

¹² See Yan Kejun 嚴可均, ed., *Quan Jin wen* 全晉文 vol. 77 in *Quan shanggu sanguo liuchao wen* 全上古秦漢三國六朝文 (Taipei: Shijie shuju, 1982), 4: 803; *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 (Taipei: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1983); and *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 edition, 596: 11, 13.

¹³ Liu Xie, *Wenxin diaolong* 3–13: 240.

During the Ming and Qing dynasties, texts of lament continued to be widely written. Noted pieces in the prose style include Yuan Hongdao's 袁宏道 (1568–1610) “Lament for Exalted Lady Li’s Small Sacrifice for Auspiciousness” 李安人小祥文, Yuan Zhongdao's 袁中道 (1570–1626) “Sacrificial Address for Zhonglang” 告中郎文, Liu Dakui's 劉大櫨 (1698–1779) “Lament for My Uncle” 祭舅氏文, and Yuan Mei's 袁枚 (1716–1797) “Sacrificial Oration for My Younger Sister” 祭妹文.

Poems of mourning and texts of lament from imperial China are abundant. The 120 works presented here are a very small fraction of what is extant. Given the impossibility of comprehensiveness in such a short collection, the examples that are included here were selected based on our editorial judgment and personal preferences. Consequently, some important or moving pieces will unfortunately have been overlooked. Still, we hope this will be a welcome volume for anyone who loves Chinese literature, history, and culture.

Zhenjun Zhang and Victor H. Mair

May 18, 2023

Part One

Chinese Elegies: Poems of
Mourning 悼亡詩

Selections from the Zhou through the Six Dynasties (c. 1045 BCE–581 CE)

Shijing 詩經 (*The Classic of Odes*; c. 840–620 BCE)

The *Odes*, the earliest collection of Chinese poetry, is a collection of 305 largely anonymous works dated to the Zhou dynasty (1020–249 BCE). Traditionally said to be redacted and compiled by Confucius, the *Odes* consists of four sections: the “Airs of the States” (Guofeng 國風), the “Lesser Elegantiae” (Xiaoya 小雅), the “Greater Elegantiae” (Daya 大雅), and the “Hymns” (Song 頌).

1. “Green Blouse” 綠衣

Green is the blouse—
The green blouse has yellow linings
My heart is full of sorrow
How can it ever cease?

綠兮衣兮，
綠衣黃裏。
心之憂矣，
曷維其已。

Green is the blouse—
The green blouse pairs with a yellow skirt.
My heart is full of sorrow
How can it ever end?

綠兮衣兮，
綠衣黃裳。
心之憂矣，
曷維其亡。

Green is the silk,
A handiwork of yours.
I think of the one who passed on,
Who had made me blameless.

綠兮絲兮，
女所治兮。
我思古人，
俾無訛兮。

Linen cloth, fine or coarse—
Neither stands this frigid wind.
I think of the one who passed on,
Who had indeed won my heart.

絺兮綌兮，
淒其以風。
我思古人，
實獲我心。

2. “Kudzu Grows” 葛生

The kudzu grows, covering the thorns;	葛生蒙楚，
The bindweed spreads, all over the wilds.	蔽蔓于野。
My beloved is no more.	予美亡此，
With whom shall I be? —I rest alone.	誰與獨處。

The kudzu grows, covering the jujube trees.	葛生蒙棘，
The bindweed spreads, reaching the grave.	蔽蔓于域。
My beloved is no more.	予美亡此，

With whom shall I be? —I repose alone.	誰與獨息。
Glistening is the pillow of horn	角枕粲兮，
Gleaming is the coverlet of silk ¹	錦衾爛兮。
My beloved is no more	予美亡此，
With whom shall I be? —I await the dawn alone.	誰與獨旦。

The days of summer,	夏之日，
The nights of winter,	冬之夜，
One hundred years later,	百歲之後，
I shall retire to his abode.	歸於其居。

The nights of winter,	冬之夜，
The days of summer,	夏之日，
One hundred years later,	百歲之後，
I shall retire to his chamber.	歸於其室。

3. “Yellow Bird” 黃鳥

The yellow bird chirps,	交交黃鳥，
Lighting on a jujube tree.	止于棘。
Who would follow Lord Mu?	誰從穆公？
Yanxi of the Ziju.	子車奄息。
And this Yanxi,	維此奄息，
Was the most exceptional among a hundred men.	百夫之特，
Drawing toward his grave,	臨其穴，
He trembled in fear.	惴惴其慄。
The Gray One is Heaven—	彼蒼者天，
It takes away our best men.	殲我良人。
If he could be redeemed,	如可贖兮，
A hundred would give their lives.	人百其身。

¹ The pillow and the coverlet are both mortuary artifacts.

The yellow bird chirps,	交交黃鳥，
Lighting on a mulberry.	止于桑。
Who would follow Lord Mu? ²	誰從穆公？
Zhonghang of the Ziju.	子車奄息。
And this Zhonghang,	維此奄息，
Was one who could guard against a hundred men.	百夫之防。
Drawing toward his grave,	臨其穴，
He trembled in fear.	惴惴其慄。
The Gray One is Heaven—	彼蒼者天，
It takes away our best men.	殲我良人。
If he could be redeemed,	如可贖兮，
A hundred would give their lives.	人百其身。

The yellow bird chirps,	交交黃鳥，
Lighting on the thorns.	止于楚。
Who would follow Lord Mu?	誰從穆公？
Qianhu of the Ziju.	子車鍼虎。
And this Qianhu,	維此鍼虎，
Was one who could ward off a hundred men.	百夫之防。
Drawing toward his grave,	臨其穴，
He trembled in fear.	惴惴其慄。
The Gray One is Heaven—	彼蒼者天，
It takes away our best men.	殲我良人。
If he could be redeemed,	如可贖兮，
A hundred would give their lives.	人百其身。

Note: Despite the early Confucian exegetical tradition that interprets every piece in the collection as political commentary, scholars from the twelfth century onward, most notably Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200), began to recognize that some poems were of folk origin, therefore unlikely to be understood in political terms. Most such poems belong to the “Airs of the States” section, which also includes the three pieces on mourning presented here. Specifically, “Green Blouse” concerns a man mourning for his wife, “Kudzu Grows” is a woman’s poignant recollection of her deceased husband, and “Yellow Bird” was composed on a well-known occasion of ancient human sacrifice, where three worthy men from the Ziju clan were among the 177 people buried with Lord Mu of Qin (621 BCE).

(Tr. Xiuyuan Mi)

² Lord Mu of Qin 秦穆公 (r. 659–621 BCE).

Pan Yue 潘岳 (247–300)

Pan Yue, courtesy name Anren 安仁, was a native of Zhongmu 中牟 (in Henan province) and a famous poet of the Western Jin (265–317). He was also well known as Pan An 潘安, the most handsome man in ancient China.

4–6. “Poems Lamenting Her Death, Three Poems”

悼亡詩三首

No. 1

Winter and spring gradually pass on,
Cold and heat quickly course and alternate.
She has gone to the Deep Springs,³
The piled earth forever keeps her in the darkness.
Who can fulfill one’s personal longings,
So what good is there in my staying here?
I exerted myself to honor the court’s command,
And returned to former duties so to distract my mind.
But I gaze upon my house and think of her,
Entering the rooms, I recall the past.

Among the curtains and screens there is not a
semblance of her,
But there are lasting traces of her brush and ink.
Her lingering fragrance has yet to fade,
And her remaining scrolls still hang on the walls.
It is sadly perplexing, sometimes it is as if she is still alive,
I am nervous and upset, agitated and anxious.
We were like birds that flew together into the woods,
But of the nesting pair suddenly one day there was just one.
We were like fish that swam in the stream,
“Eyes once paired” but now parted midway.⁴
A spring wind comes skirting through the cracks,
Morning dewdrops drip from the eaves.
Lying awake, sighing, when will I ever forget?
This unfathomable sorrow intensifies with each and
every day.
Perhaps it will eventually diminish,
Zhuangzi’s pot can still be banged upon.⁵

荏苒冬春謝，
寒暑忽流易。
之子歸窮泉，
重壤永幽隔。
私懷誰克從，
淹留亦何益？
僂俛恭朝命，
回心反初役。
望廬思其人，
入室想所歷。

幃屏無仿佛，
翰墨有餘跡。
流芳未及歇，
遺掛猶在壁。
悵恍如或存，
回遑心驚惕。
如彼翰林鳥，
雙棲一朝只。
如彼游川魚，
比目中路析。
春風緣隙來，
晨雷承檐滴。
寢息何時忘，

沈憂日盈積。
庶幾有時衰，
莊缶猶可擊。

³ The Deep Springs, also known as the Yellow Springs, is a reference to the secular afterlife.

⁴ “Eyes once paired” refers to sole-like flatfish (*bimu* 比目) that swim with one eye paired with the eye of another flatfish. When unpaired, the fish do not swim.

⁵ This refers to a famous anecdote from the fourth century BCE Daoist founding text, *Zhuangzi* 莊子, in which Zhuangzi is banging on a pot rather than mourning his wife with proper rites. By singing