



金枝梅雨

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*In the ancient days
I would have traveled to Lí Mo-River
and yielded a poem to the depths,
tied knots of colored silk
on a gold branch for you to discover. . .*

ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-SEVEN POEMS
by ERIC MILLER

Gold Branch,
Plum
Rain

167 Poems

by

Eric LeRoy Miller

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Author's Note

Gold Branch, Plum Rain is the result of the author's decades long fascination with and love for Chinese culture, art and poetry. Quite a few of the poems in this collection were written in the late 70's and 80's while I was living and studying in the hills outside of Taipei, Taiwan,—very near the the Taipei National Museum. Over the succeeding decades, after my first visit to Taiwan, I continued to study and analyze Chinese poetry, history and art and made repeated return trips to the far east to “refresh” myself in Chinese and other Asian cultures.

It is this poet's belief that “Chinese–style” poetry (with all the rich complexity and ancient roots implied by that term) due to its extreme melodic nature and parsimonious intellectual power of expression, will yet have a profound influence not only on Western poetry, in particular, but on world poetry of the future. What poetry will become, what shape and sounds will emerge in the future, of course, no one knows. Yet, were I to hazard a guess, I would imagine that, with the influence of Chinese poetry, a more precise, euphonious and supple poetry will arise in the West under its directing influence. If allowed to give wing to imagination, I can even conceive that the new English poetry of the future will be a kind of synthesis—a poetry somewhere between Shakespeare and Sophocles. We experimenters can only hope that, as we work toward a new poetry, the efforts on the path of our search will not be themselves entirely devoid of charm, insight, and a touch of beauty.

Eric LeRoy Miller
San Diego, California (Feb. 2010)

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Dedication

To

T'sai Chin Ch'ih

Whose friendship and caring
over the years
has enriched my life beyond description

Poetry is the light at the center of one's soul.

Anonymous

Gold Branch

73 Poems

by
Eric Miller

The Way

The way is without beginning, without end;
while all things live and die,
still, you cannot rely
upon their fulfillment.
One moment is empty,
another moment full;
mere form
can't be depended on
and the years cannot be stayed.
Decay, growth, fullness and emptiness—
all end, and, then, begin again.
Thus, we describe the Great Meaning's Plan
and muse upon the merits of Infinity.
O, the life of things is a headlong gallop,
one mad dash—
with every moment they alter,
with every moment they shift.
What should you do?
What should you not do?
Everything will change of itself, my friend,
that much at least is certain.

Based on a passage from Chuang Tzu, China's great poet-philosopher.

Rain In Taipei

Bright blue and red and green
characters dance with a lyric sheen
upon the rain-fresh pavement.
The playful air rustles through the lamp-lit trees,
and high above the skies at last are clearing.
Suddenly, all cares seem unimportant—
for this blest moment, for a moment
stands with sweet serenity
and justifies the sorrow of the ages.

A Poet's Complaint

The days and nights pass by—
how far away from home I am!
Tonight, I'm silent, not knowing why
this life is what it has become.

I dreamed of a new awakening,
hopes were brilliantly banner'd in my heart,
mind and spirit were alive, burning
with visions of a famous art.

Tonight, hopes still survive, though cares
weigh heavily and I miss my children.
O, it's true, whoever dares a dream
often suffers for that vision.

*Thinking of Tu Fu
In the Company of Crickets*

Were it not for singing crickets
and the small bracelets of blue lights
in the distant hill's dark thickets,
I would think myself alone tonight.
Long, moonless thoughts of you
stir deep inside, like a river breeze
issuing from the valley.
If Tu Fu were here
I think he'd seize this poignant night
with some immediate clear image
to character this calm loneliness—
with four lines this night would live an age!

*Tu Fu (712-770) is one of the great T'ang poets of early China.
He was famous, among other things, for his extraordinary skill at
writing great poems impromptu to amuse friends at parties.*

A Star-Fish Nibble

Last night the brilliant yellow moon,
like a cork bobbing in teasing cloud-waves,
appeared and disappeared.
When, for some moments it was not seen,
I wondered what great star-fish
nibbled in the depths on the bait?

Appearances

Dragons and phoenix have no need of shelter,
fish in the deep are unperturb'd by storms;
creatures of T'ai Shan are not bothered by famine
and the dawn-colored garments
of Hsi Wang Mu are ever clean.
Yet, sometimes the sweetest looking fruit
is bitter to the taste; a lovely mountain pass
proves treacherous to overcome;
a beautiful face may mask a demon,
and hoped for happiness by sorrow is undone.
Thus, the mortal and immortal in life combine,
as *yin* and *yang* to shape our destined time.

T'ai Shan is the easternmost of the five sacred mountains of ancient China; one of the five "pillars" that hold up the roof of heaven.

Hsi Wang Mu is the Queen of Heaven, the Royal Mother of the West, China's version of Juno.

Original Nature

Depicted in the paintings of a Ching master,
one sees a field of exquisite horses—
some stretch voluptuously in brilliant sunlight;
others, playful, nip at the necks of companions
who rear, arch, turn and squirm to new advantage.
It seems, if my finger touched the river,
where scores of horses slake their thirst,
like the legs and muzzles of these creatures
it, too, would penetrate and disappear.
How these scenes send longing-pangs to the heart
(as though one's own original nature
is somehow relived in the magic of this art)!

Paying Respects at Mi-Lo River

In the ancient days
I would have travel'd to Mi-Lo River
and yielded a poem to its depths;
I would have tied knots of colored silk
on a gold branch for you to discover.
I would have found
the finest kingfisher feathers
to adorn the sheen of your black hair,
or ransacked the kingdom for an artist
to feature the famous beauty of your stare.

*Mi-Lo river is famous for the fact that Ch'u Yuan author of
The Songs of Ch'u, the first rhythmic prose in Chinese,
drowned himself there.*

*In ancient China, as elsewhere, written language was
preceded with a rope knot language, messages were
communicated by the way the ropes were tied.*

Temple Visit With T'sai Chin Ch'ih

High in the mountains
the jade green landscape descends
deep into the silence of distant vistas.
A thousand people populated the widening paths,
wide-eye'd children were everywhere,
curio and souvenir shops abounded.
We paused for *ai yu* refreshments
before ascending the steep stairway.
Bright sunlight glittered on white rock steps,
the arch'd eaves of the mountain temple
shimmered in vermilion, green, and gold.
On the facade of the towering temple,
stone-cut dragons came clearly into view.
Entering the cool shade of the open pavilion,
smoking incense waved in a hundred hands.
Before the altar, on a square of polished black stone,
worshippers cast their fateful fortunes.
Deeper in the recesses of the temple,
red and black lacquered boxes, bronze urns,
golden tassels and gleaming jade implements
danced in the wavering candle light.
Into the open air again,
we took a path away from the festive throngs
and ventured to the highest verdant hill.
Loosing our way many times, we laughed.
You honor'd me with "gold dog-hair" memento.
Were such a thing available to me,
I would have gifted you a picture of that path
which we descended traveling home—
where the purity of the bright blue air
converged on cascading green hills
and billowing high-blown grasses.

The term, "gold dog-hair" refers to the root of a plant with golden hair-like roots; "ai yu" is a refreshment drink

A Bluebird's Message

Mandarin ducks nestle neck to neck,
phoenix prize only the wu-tung tree;
bluebirds and geese are famous messengers—
live then, my friend, in this imagery.

*Bluebirds and geese (and carp) are the messengers of
lovers; the fabled Phoenix are loyal only to the wu-tung
tree and only in it will they alight.*

Foolish, Like An Emperor

Foolish as it may seem,
I decorate with poems
these long days without you—
much as Emperor Yang–Ti, who,
unable to bear the bareness of winter,
ordered leaves and flowers of color’d silk
fashion’d to the court–yard trees.

The image is based on a real event in the life of Emperor Yang–Ti, the most “luxurious and depraved of the Chinese emperors.”

Writing in the Rain

I sit on my porch overlooking the city of Taipei.
It is evening and rain sweeps across
my papers, making it difficult to write.
The rain rattles window shutters,
knocks against nameless things in the dark,
stirs everything with excitement.
The mountain range before me
is totally obscured in a haze of milky-white,
yet, directly above, some stars still shine
amid the windows of the deeper night.
Typhoon will come tomorrow
and regardless what everyone does,
tomorrow waits like a secret in our hearts.
Now, the movement is wonderful,
it's in the trees, runs through the hair,
and moves the moonlighted clouds.
And 10,000 miles away, you are just rising
to greet a brilliant, calm, October day.

** In Chinese 10,000 is a number for many or an infinite number.*

Star-crowded Loneliness

Of beautiful women there are many,
of desires the world has more;
countless are the creatures of the ocean
and the treasure of spring's green store.
To set one's heart on a single love
is a foolishness, the wise agree;
yet, though heaven's net holds a billion stars,
without you the night seems empty.

Night-Pausing in High Hills

Mounting the stone steps late at night,
high in the hills above Taipei,
I pause before ascending the star'd heights.
Gazing below into a lake of jewel'd lights,
my heart is suddenly at peace
in the gentle stream of flower-scented breezes.

Moon-glistening Wet Ink

I cannot quit this night,
the breeze is cool, exciting, and gentle.
Bright moonlight tops the trees
and all about some sacred rapture
embraces the very air I breathe.
Now, even dear friends seem distant—
how like nature they are all melted
into this silence lit by shining stars!
Here on the balcony where I write
moonlight glistens for a moment
in the wet ink which dries so quickly
upon the scribbled page,
and I wonder how like life—
this moving miracle of night—
is but reflection of dark and light.

Moon Talk

Tonight I'm all alone.
What to write about? 'bout moon,
'bout night's deep sea?
Currents course by—the ring
of eternity sounds in my ear.
And, though 10,000 miles away,
I hear traffic in Taipei.
Ah, even this incredible star above
cannot undo my misery!

*For Yang Sho-Chuen
On Moon Festival Night*

Far below this high apartment roof
I hear the sound of Taipei's traffic.
Fire-crackers crackle, horns blare,
people, moon-dazed, stop and stare,
but I do not see them.
The roof's dark edge conceals all sights,
save, above, the huge wonder of heaven,
suddenly intimate with Ch'ang O's light.
How completely yielded and beauty-blest
is Ch'ang O, receiving her husband-guest.
How utterly transfixing is her charm!
I make myself a bed beneath the stars
and feast my eyes upon this 'mazed sight.
I dream and waken and dream and wake again;
thus, in a single night I see
nine dazzling moons,
night-famed with immortality.

Ch'ang O became the Moon Goddess, her husband, the Sun God. Moon Festival is celebrated in the ninth month of the year and commemorates the myth how Ch'ang O became the Moon Goddess.

Music Too Beautiful

No, I will not listen
to all the notes of this lovely music,—
this tragic song of love's deepening crescendo.
O, how this simple tale of an Emperor's loss
tells, too, my own heart's history.
No, your music is too deep and beautiful,
it runs through my aching veins
with the fire of love's dark-bright pain,
and threatens a flood of tears!

Lightning Nearness

The rain pours down
and bellys the awning canvass.
Lightning flashes majestic across the skies;
the loud crack of thunder
cleaves night's mystery to the core.
As rain beats down into the flooding streets,
I watch bright-eye'd cars skim over the road.
How far away you are!
But, suddenly, a flash of lightning
brings you very near—
my pounding heart!

Dreamless Nights, Morning Geese

Last night a blanket of darkness
totally obscured the hills. No stars
cut rivers of light through empty heaven.
Neither heaven nor earth provided a path
for my long journey of dreams.
This morning a cock splits all silence,—
gazing out the balcony window,
the huge shoulders of green hills
assume again their burden of clouds.
A flight of wild geese,
like the shaft of a dark arrow,
streaks across a grey-pearl horizon,
disappearing as it penetrates
the cloudy folds
of morning's
bosom.

Dream Traffic In Empty Valley

Blue mists conceal the tops of mountains,
the raucous sounds of wild cocks
send echoes through green hills.
Below my balcony, high above, butterflies
flirt in the luxury of flower'd trees.
Down a steep path, fast falling to the valley,
a lone figure moves among the bowing grasses,
stooped with a burden on his back.
I imagine he, too, dreams of his love—
far away in a foreign city full of traffic.

Memories of Youth

Sometimes in dead winter
lips turned blue with cold.
As far as the eye could see,
nothing but the jewel'd glitter of snow.
At spring's slightest advance,
while the lakes were still solid,
we'd see who first could break the ice
with our bare bodies.
Summers we caught catfish with our hands,
with tied ropes swung from tree to tree.
Even now, in later life, I dare not summon
the dizzying refulgence of spring—
as a man accustomed to a meager diet
shuns the opulence of a feast.

A Credo for Friends

Let's you and I be friends,
thoughtful of each other's needs,
understanding of our different creeds—
caring not for beginnings nor ends
of this or that, but for the middle
human ground we stand upon.
Let us, with loving kindness come,
to honor honest hearts and not belittle
what life and destiny have done.

Wa bu shih tao

Life's almost never smooth,
hardly a family doesn't suffer crisis.
The best children experience problems
and trouble's a knock on the door away.
Now life turns this way, now that;
rarely do we know where it's at.
Some err here, others there—
a terrible deed, an indifferent state—
small offenses are imagined great crimes,
while evil actions are publicly rewarded.
Where's the balance, where the Balancer?
Though right order was ever preestablished
and native knowing is the inheritance of man,
yet societies and individuals often go wrong.
O, when was the poise perfect?
Who could decide?
Yet, the moral order forever abides.

“Wa bu shih tao” –simply means “I not know tao,” (i.e., I don't know). “Tao,” of course, meaning “the way” can be taken in the metaphysical as well as its common sense meaning.

Storm Joy

Suddenly awakened from slumber,
the pure palace of sleep's empty silence
is charged with music of night-rain.
Asleep, I might have been a granite boulder
in the nameless tower of a stony peak.
Now, joy revels in the wind's commotion,
with bare arms I shall embrace this storm.

Love's Too-Much Fate

He who loves too much is fated
to receive in turn only hatred.
The sweetest dream is quickly fled
before we waken from the bed.

This poem is based on a well known Chinese proverb.

Existence

There are rivers and oceans,
deep forests and lands of strange rock,
amazing eyes that flash and glow
and hungry hearts,
impoverished arts,
and those
who are
alone.
Home
is where
one sees
the world in one,
deep in native dream,
where life comes and goes:
turning off the kitchen stove,
at ease in deep-pillow'd rest,
flushed with love's awakening desire.

Star Changes

Tonight the breeze is cool,
gentle, deep, and quiet is the dark.
Above the stars seem almost still,
so heavenly fixed and final.
But, love, within my heart I mark
the changing forms of night's geometry,
which shapes the living legends of our dreams.
O, what stories these stars still tell,
what human legends of heaven and hell!

Star Over Hong Kong Bay

The bay is surrounded with night,
and glittering liquid lights of Hong Kong's hills.
All is silent. The casino boat in the distance
glides along the jewel-mirror'd surface.
A sampan, its canvass secured, gently
rises and falls with the water's breath.
The city hums across the bay.
Above, only a small drifting white cloud,
and in night's deepest depths,
a sole radiant star hangs overhead.

Starless Darkness

The color'd clouds of the fiery sunset
ringed the horizon with brilliant flags.
I gazed out for a long moment,
though a sudden chill was rising. Bags
of darkness heaped up over the city;
not one star was visible within the hour.

Artist Performance in Nathan Park

The artists were singing in Nathan Park,
people gathered all around;
It was a wonderful Oriental art,
and I still hear that Chinese sound.

The musicians sold gifts to make a living,
pieces of dried fruit and chewing gum,
and all the while their hearts were giving,
as they sang and danced and beat the drum.

The music was excited, lovely, and quick—
but rain started pouring down,
and above dark clouds were growing thick.
O, how I love this Hong Kong town.
The streets were lit with brilliant characters,
a million people scurried by—
gold and jade and rich jewelry
gleamed amid their dark deep eye.

In Nathan Park the music sounds,
the dancers turn around and around
as the people stand and stare.
Their hearts are full of love and pain,
remembering a homeland's magic air,—
the heavenly greenness of their native ground.

O, dance you artists for us all,
for China and the human call.
Let your voices rise and sing
of love and sorrow and everything,
O, dance you artists for us all.

Let the intonations of your tongue
quicken the hearts of everyone,
as the music races to the heart
with this excited Oriental art—
O dance you artists for us all.

Autumn Meditation

Dogs are barking 'cross the bay
and a passing boat cuts in twain
the mirror'd surface of tranquil waters,—
(sending forth unto the shore successive waves,
in subtle stripes of varied colors).
Now is the hour sweet—set upon the day,
and a rounded silence perfects its song
in a sudden cessation of all sound.
Much as the heron with stretchéd wing
mounts, before my eyes, the buoyant blueness
of the morning air, so, too, my heart,
thinking on you ascends into the heavens,
wing'd with a wonder I can not name.

The Tao of Love

Talking with you your words sound
to my heart deeper than music can reach.
Your soul–spirit awakens in me
an awesome awareness, a union
of common dreams and rare realities.
Just to touch your hand is so tender
that satisfaction of no other passion
compares to the current of that completion.
The need I have of you
cannot be named by dear desires,
or musical visions of your lovely face,
or words dwelling on your figure,
but only by that unnamed Everything,
which is the Tao of my daily life.

At Yamato's Restaurant

A Japanese dinner
of many plates;
kyoto music, soft,
deftly played.
Across the room,
you in a lavender kimono,
leaning over accounting papers,—
the lantern light highlighting
your face.
You looked up and smiled at me;
now I know
that I have had a feast.

The Fast

Fingering the waters for a fish,
repeatedly the seagulls
assault the serene surface of the bay.
Yet, each time they go 'way—
fishers without a haul!
Suddenly, I cherish the wish
that for this special day,
heaven, a universal fast, would call.

Poem of No-Loneliness

Autumn skies,
seagulls hunting in the blue bay,
occasionally their cries
cut through the tranquil, silent, day.
It has been weeks since last you sat
next to me, your hand in mine,
sharing, without words, the sea's delight.
But now there's no loneliness; the sign
of your nearness is felt—
my heartbeat!

Changes

Wide is the world,
everywhere space expands;
butterflies flirt amid blossoms,
snakes move through tall grass;
trees and mountains ascend,
rivers and valleys run down;
sometimes the sun is amazing
with its season-heated blazing;
sometimes it interrupts the moon,
or is itself subject to eclipsing doom.
The five directions are determined,
yet all is ever changing.
Though love be constant, emotions are not,
even precious friends are sometimes forgot.
Sincerity, though rigorously practiced
a whole life may, in a moment, be lost.
Passion is, by nature, lacking patience,
but patience without passion has no force.
Mirror-calm is the sea's green surface,
tomorrow it may be bucking and thrashing.
In all these contrarities what is most true?
This, above all, love ever will
the world transcend,
the world renew.

Rain Moods

First a gentle drizzle, calming and pure,
as the last rays of day lay
on the horizon with mingled cloud.
Then, after a sudden eruption of thunder,
and darkened skies lit with fierce lightning—
a torrential downpour,
frighteningly exciting!
Now, the lonely monotony of steady
beating rain, and, occasionally,
heart-wrenching, world-crashing, thunder!

A Hermit's Muttering To His Old Dog

Ah, its a dark and dismal day, old dog;
packing clouds are heaping overhead;
in the air, commotions of coming chaos
begin first stirrings in the tossing sea.
But, here, in our habitat, we have
fresh fire, enough of foodstuffs,—
good thick, burning logs, chuck—full
of sparkable memories.

Illusion And Reality

A crescent moon knives night's bare bosom
with the brilliance of its curved blade.
The air is hot, motionless, thick laden
with the fullness of the dying season.
Such nights as these may give delight
to those who ponder how the night's parade
of distant stars gives some reason
to this destiny we call mankind.
Timeless, indeed, is this torpid weather,
Such nights as these cause one to wonder:
was there ever really a before, an after?
Or, is past and future an ever-present dream,
and not but this constant night is real?

Words Against The Night

This wet wind, sloshing waves—
the homeless darkness
of this drear November night,
with three lines
Basho would make cozy and intimate.

Basho, one of Japan's most famous poets, was particularly skilled at creating poignant moods

Autumn Change

Tossing anxiously tonight,
Old River in his troubled bed:
pyramidal waves,
triangles of restless moonlight!

Changes, Changes, Changes

Proverbial is a woman's inconstancy,
legendary her changing tune.
Yet, it did not occur to me
when we pledged your love in June,
that, by an August moon,
lips that kissed so tenderly
would, so quickly, mock me.

Not Right Time

In the cold room
At 4 a.m. I anxiously awake:
Not time for going or staying.

Departure

Cold moon high above,
My heart, too, is cut in two
As I leave my love.

The “Nothing Special” Time With You

The brilliant clarity of the green–blue bay,
a grey heron at the shoreline wading.
We study Zenki as seagulls fly by,
discuss the philosophy of no-thing.

Sun-set

Sugar-white beach sand,
rippled surface of blue bay.
Just beneath the horizon,
a great fish swallows
day's flaming sun.

Relativity

Sheet after sheet of rain,
the bank across the river
can't be seen. Yet, the ducks
sail forward through the storm,
smoothly as on a still pond!

The Sea Bird

The frothy waves, in constant toil,
sound against white sands of Perdido
on this sky-darkened day of November.
To the right and left the shore line
is merely a mist in the distance,
the din of ocean, loud, ceaseless,
like 10,000 aircraft near sea's horizon.
There's not one soul to be seen about,
unless one counts that small seabird,
weaving and darting busily about for morsels
washed to the ocean's edge.

Summer Sounds

Jewel'd stars necklace the throat of heaven
and give a special vibrance to the night.
Orion slumbers on the Western horizon,
while a single cricket sings.
Upon a sweet bed of grass I lay my head
as the varied breezes of the vast ocean
like river currents rush over me.
Here in the soft darkness of the night
thoughts of you bring rare remembrance.
Hardly can I see the words I write
on this expanding moonless night.
In the distance the ever-sounding ocean plays
its constant song upon the silent shore;
now even this verse is not needed anymore.

An Old River Meditation

In the warm starless night, cooling breezes.
The humid fragrance of Old River
hangs in the air. Sounds of leaping fishes,
unseen in the dark, how mysteriously they dare
impossible flights into unrealizable dimensions!
Across the bay, sea, horizon and heaven
are indistinguishable. O, sweet meditation,
lend the spirit of the fishes to my pen.

Divisions of Night and Day

Purple, violet and pink clouds
flag the horizon.
The sun descends in flaming gold.
Now, day and night's division,
dark—bright and deep.
Now, especially, as evening dares
its demanding stars
and puts the singing birds asleep,
I wonder where you are.

Is It Spring Or Autumn?

The earliest rose is scented 'specially sweet;
last blossoms, however beautiful, are traced
with acrid odors of their coming fate.
In what category may this love be placed,
and this heart, which is season to the sun?
I've seen the dark scowl of your brow
and eyes so brightly lit as to overcome
all resistance to your beauty. But now,
the seasons are confused in me,—
whether this be spring or final autumn
of time's moving force and mounting destiny.
I can not know or solve this conundrum,
but this, dear friend, let my pen engrave:
you never took but what you more than gave.

Song of Restless Spring

Last night many dreams sweated my bed;
a mass of ragged hanging clouds
was all that could be seen on the horizon.
Ah, many anxieties can assail a poet—
by day, a constant worry over simple needs;
sleeping, dark dragon–battles contend.
Like a detached water–flower adrift,
my life seems abandoned to careless currents.
Is it the roar of a waterfall I hear
fulminating on the horizon?
O, heart, even in the world's dark tumult
retain the rare silence of the lotus flower!

Morning Mist and Evening Rain

At the foot of Purple Mountain
I have made my hermitage;
here, alone, I listen to evening's rain.
Here I'm far removed from culture,
save the remnants that in my mind remain:
gathering wild blueberries is now my adventure,
singing birds my single heart's refrain.
In many mansions of the capital,
amid the bauble and glitter of the famous,
for years I served the promptings of the powerful.
Here it's ever so much easier to see
which snakes are harmless, which poisonous.
O, morning mists,
conceal forever from my sight
the brutal cruelties in which men delight.

*An Old Man's Response to Inquires
Concerning His Health*

The candle wick sputters out,
dying with a snake-like hiss.
Yet the added light isn't needed
this early morning
for an old man to pen a friend a poem.
Recently, I read a Chinese poet,
who, in speaking of the futile valor
of a famous general
distilled his anguished situation:
"A feather set next a flaming sky."
Now, I ask you, does one need be
a famous general for this to apply?

A Retired Scholar's Lament

Ah, had I been wiser in my youth,
heeded would have been the words of Lao Tzu.
Not to the lure and bait of fine wisdom
would I have set my sights,
but to a oneness with the sea itself.
Now, however, I am too old,
too wise to pursue Great Learnings.
Still, I do find solace
in my old dog's company at least;
for, he, too, finds difficulty enough
in rising to meet the morn.

Dividing The Willow Leaves

How long we stood upon the bank
in the river—coolness of the willow shade.
The glinting gold and rose of sunset
swam in sinewy movements of silken waves.
Little did we know then how bitter
sweet memories become on final parting.

Dividing willow leaves is a traditional allusion to lovers' partings and generally the image of the willow has the same kinds of associations as in the West.

An Encounter

"I must do what I must do,"
said the jackal to the duck.
"So long as your on land, my friend,
good luck, good luck."

Seasonal Perspectives

Suddenly the weather turned cold,
as mists of rain obscured the night—
sent troubling shivers through the old,
but, to the young, a season's fresh delight.

Fishing In Solitude

Today, not one friend could be found
with whom to share my poem.
Yet, in childhood, I remember,
it was alone, at the frozen river,
that, with a only a rope
and meat–bone,
my first dazzling bluefish,
was landed at the river's edge.

The Palpable Earth

How perfect is the night
how intimate yet open.
Above a majestic crown of stars
bejewels the wonder of far places
and the answering earth,
so near and palpable,
grounds cosmic love in simple presence.
How near yet far away
all thoughts now seem,
inward and outward in the night.

Unruly Winds

Morning was only slightly overcast
and a multitude of birds chorus'd me awake.
Now, in late afternoon, the trees
are thrashing their helpless arms
against the fury of a darkening storm.
O take me, too!
Take me into the night, ever-deepening;
my fate, like the struggling of high-born birds
is winged against unruly winds.

Sweet Complement

The sea's renewing music
calms the troubles of my heart,
and, rising now
in surging motions of its might,
I think I hear
a thousand waterfalls at once are sounding!
Yet, too, I hear most clearly
a sea-bird sweetly complement
the mighty ocean
with a single
note.

A Sun-Sea Mystery

As creatures deep within the sea
are ruled by a sun they never know,
although their lives depend upon its rays,
so, too, the lives of men assume their ways,
living and dying in mystery.

Love Links

Lovely is the highest praise
for any feeling, truth, or sound;
for any living thing that moves,
or any breathing flower found.

Beauty is for the eye to see
but lovely links the heart,
proclaiming feeling with love's meaning,
an active language from the start.

A Poet's Lament

Where are my images tonight?
From where I sit I can not hear
the ocean sing my sorrows
and no bright star teaches me.

A Gathering of Spirit Friends

Memories of you
like these streams of colored clouds
beautifully flag the evening skies.

It is silent all about,
the sweet October reminds me of Taipei;
I hear the sounds of distant voices,
the lovely voices of my friends
form in my mind as evening gathers.

Soon the Moon Festival will begin,
how brightly Ch'ang O's beauty will beam
as she dreams of her husband lover.
I, too, will mark that night
in praise of love's eternal flight.

But now I gaze out the window
watching tall trees darken in fading light.
Dew drops, like tears, form below
on leaves of night-blooming jasmine.

Time's Loops

The years revolve within my head,
circling round the darkness,
past the sun's magnetic heart,
yet still your loveliness
into my soul is fed
and suddenly read
is heaven's message envisioned in your eyes,
cosmic and complete.
I repeat,
time's lovely loop 'round the sun's bright light
frames you the most beautiful of sights.

A Living Message

Pray now my heart:
let love be fertile as the earth,
true as the season's certainty,
open as unending space.
Let sorrows have their say
and then be gone,
not over-dwelled in.
O, how the multitudes are lesson'd
by the living message of your light.

Tai

O great harmony,
native birthright of humanity,
perfect balance of the universe,
love's most perfect hour,
moment of spent passion,
servant hour of the heart,
descend into this soul
with your creative and receptive powers.

The above poem is based on the hexagram, by the same name, "Tai" (Peace) in the I Ching. The I Ching is probably the oldest "bible" in existence.

Evening's Majesty

A white full moon
in skies of gentle lavender
rounds silvered light in rosy hue,
and all across this blessed horizon
from beach to branch to sea
a solemn silence sings
with twittering birds
and whistled thrills.
How evening's majesty,
so valley-deep
girdles the horizon
in heaven's
sleep.

Summer Moment

The deep bark shade,
the sun-lit trunk,
the dappled shades of green;
the straight pole'd palm,
the fanning ferns,
the silence flowered dream;
the whistling bird,
the berries clustered red,
the fluted violet flower,
the gentle waning of the hour.