

How to Read Chinese Poetry Podcast

Topic 7 Han Ancient-style Poetry: The “Nineteen Old Poems”

Host: Zong-qi Cai (Lingnan University; University of Illinois)

Episode 21 Reflection through a Female Persona: a Mosaic of Emotions

I. Text

On and on, again on and on [you go] 行行重行行

On and on, again on and on [you go],

I cannot but live apart from you.

The distance has grown ten thousand li and more,

We are now at opposite ends of the sky.

The road is rugged and long,

How can I know when we shall meet again?

The Tartar horse leans into the north wind,

The Yue bird nests among southern branches.

Day by day our parting seems more remote,

Day by day robe and belt grow looser.

Drifting clouds hide the white sun,

The wanderer does not care to return.

Thinking of you makes one old,

xíng xíng chóng xíng xíng

行行重行行

yǔ jūn shēng bié lí

與君生別離

xiāng qù wàn yú lǐ

相去萬餘里

gè zài tiān yì yá

各在天一涯

dào lù zǔ qiě cháng

道路阻且長

huì miàn ān kě zhī

會面安可知

hú mǎ yī běi fēng

胡馬依北風

yuè niǎo cháo nán zhī

越鳥巢南枝

xiāng qù rì yǐ yuǎn

相去日已遠

yī dài rì yǐ huǎn

衣帶日已緩

fú yún bì bái rì

浮雲蔽白日

yóu zǐ bú gù fǎn

遊子不顧反

sī jūn lìng rén lǎo

思君令人老

Years and months are suddenly gone.

Forget all this—I will say no more about it,

But try my utmost to eat my meals.

sui yuè hū yǐ wǎn

歲月忽已晚

qì juān wù fù dào

棄捐勿復道

nǚ lì jiā cān fàn

努力加餐飯

[Translated by Zong-qi Cai]

The poem read in Mandarin by Zhao Wenxuan

II. Episode Outline

1. Male literati writers wear the persona of an abandoned woman
2. New perspectives of time and space in each couplet
3. Emotional brooding and mosaic poetic structure

III. Textual Source

Zong-qi Cai. "Pentasyllabic Poetry: "The Nineteen Old Poems." In *How to Read Chinese Poetry: A Guided Anthology*, ed. Zong-qi Cai. New York: Columbia University Press, 2008, pp. 103-117, especially pp. 105-106.

