I.  Texts

Xie Lingyun (385-433), “Fuchun Isle”

By night I cross Yupu Pool,
at dawn to reach the walls of Fuchun.

Mt. Ding is far off in clouds and mists;¹
at Red Pavilion there is no berth.

Going against the current, lashed by its startled hurrying,
looking over the bank, I’m blocked by its jaggedness.

Clearly I lack Bohun’s endowment,²
and the dangers here surpass Lüliang Gorge.³

¹ Mt. Ding (Mt. “Stable”) is east of Qiantang gorge, which has Xie looking backwards east towards his estate at Shi’ning.
² This line refers to a story found in both the Zhuangzi 莊子 and the Liezi 列子. Bohun Wuren’s spiritual attainments were such that he was capable of standing backwards on a precipice with his heels hanging off and having no fear.
³ Again mentioned in both Zhuangzi and Liezi. Lüliang Gorge was a terrible cataract in which Confucius was shocked to find a man swimming.
But what comes continuously one should become used to;\(^4\) in doubled mountains, stopping and lodging is right.\(^5\)

All my life, I’ve had an affinity for plans of reclusion, but floundering and stumbling, I’ve been trapped by my feeble weakness.

For a long time I sought position and emolument; now I begin to fulfill my pledge to travel far.

My long-suppressed aims are gradually unfolding: all human business withers and falls away.

Since what I hold within is bright and expansive,\(^6\) beyond things, I am merely doing “inchworm and dragon.”\(^7\)

[Translated by Lucas Rambo Bender]

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\(^4\) “Come continuously” 浔至 is a reference to the Kan 坎 (Water) hexagram of the Yijing 易經, which is the repetition of two Kan 坎 trigrams: “Water flowing on continuously forms the repeated Kan. The superior man, in accordance with this, maintains constant virtue and conduct, and practices constantly the business of instruction.” 水浔至，习坎；君子以常德，習教事.

\(^5\) “Doubled mountains” 兼山 is a reference to the Gen 艮 (Mountain) hexagram of the Yijing 易經, which is made up of two mountain trigrams: “Doubled mountains forms Gen. The superior man, in accordance with this, does not seek to transcend his position.” 兼山，艮，君子以思不出其位.

\(^6\) This line refers to the Zhuangzi 論語: “Zhun Mang, on his way to the ocean, met with Yuan Feng on the shore of the eastern sea, [and told him:] ‘Men of the highest spirit-like qualities mount up on the light, and the limitations of the body vanish. This we call being bright and expansive. Their joy is that of heaven and earth, all human business melts away and disappears, and all things return to their proper nature.’” 論語: 論語之大壑，適遇苑風於東海之濱……上神乘光，與形滅亡，此謂照曠。天地樂而萬事銷亡，萬物復情。Note that Xie Lingyun was on his way to the seaside province of Yongjia when he wrote this poem.

\(^7\) “Inchworm and dragon” derives from the Xici commentary 漢書 to the Yijing: “The inchworm draws itself together in order to advance; dragons hibernate in order to preserve their bodies.” 尺蠖之屈，以求信也。龍蛇之蛰，以存身也.
It’s true the southern provinces have fiery virtue
cassia trees rise over wintry mountains.\(^9\)
Copper Hill shines in emerald torrents;
a red spring pours over stone steps.
This place lured an immortal to visit
and it’s perched worthies flown from the world.
Its precarious paths cannot be measured;
the road to heaven is no city street or country lane!
Following it, I climb to the head of the many mountains
far in the distance, I rise into clouds and mist.
But the feathered people have cut off their traces;
Cinnabar Mound is just an empty fishtrap.\(^{10}\)
Their diagrams and documents have all been destroyed;
and who has heard of them carving stone steles?
Nothing can be made out after a hundred generations,
so how could we know what happened a thousand years ago?
For a while, then, I’ll carry out my intention of going off alone,
in moonlight playing with the slow-flowing water.

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\(^8\) According to legend, this was the mountain upon which Huazi Qi 華子期 attained immortality.
\(^9\) This couplet alludes to “Far Roaming” 遐遊 from the Chuci 楚辭: “I glory in the fiery virtue of the southern provinces, where cassia trees bloom in winter.” 嘉南州之炎德兮，麗桂樹之冬榮
\(^{10}\) “Fishtrap” alludes to the Zhuangzi: “A fishtrap exists to catch a fish; once you have the fish, you can forget the trap... Words exist to hold a meaning; once you have the meaning, you can forget the words” 荒者所以忘魚，得魚而忘筌……言者所以在意，得意而忘言. Cinnabar Mound was a legendary mountain dwelling of the immortals.
Its permanence supplies the needs of this brief moment: has, in fact, it always been this way?

11 Heng恆 might be a reference to the Yijing hexagram “Permanence” 恆: “Heng denotes long continuance—the sun and moon, having attained to heaven, can shine long.” 恆，久也……日月得天，而能久照

[Translated by Lucas Rambo Bender]
Poems read in Mandarin by Zhao Wenxuan

II. Episode Notes

- Shanshuishi 山水詩
- Yongjia 永嘉, in modern-day Wenzhou 温州, Zhejiang 浙江 province
- Zhuangzi 莊子
- Yijing 易經, the Classic of Changes
- Shining 始寧, modern Shangyu 上虞, Shaoxing 紹興 prefecture, Zhejiang province
- Analects 論語 6.23: “Confucius said: ‘The wise take joy in waters; the virtuous take joy in mountains’ 子曰: 知者樂水，仁者樂山
- Fuzhou 撫州, Jiangxi 江西 province
- Guangzhou 廣州
- “Yuanyou” 遠遊, from the Chuci 楚辭

III. Textual Source