I. Texts

Xie Tiao (464-499), “Having for a Time been Posted to the Provinces, By Night I Set Out from Xinlin for the Capital and Sent This Poem to My Colleagues in the Western Administration”

The great river flows on, day and night;
the sadness of the traveler’s heart likewise does not end.

In vain I think how the passes are close,
but in the end I know the road back will be long.

The autumn water by day has shone brightly;
the cold isles by night are grey.

Craning my neck, I’ll see the royal abode;
the palace walls will look right at me.

Metallic waves will beautify Jaybird tower;

The “Western Administration” is Xiao Zilong’s office in Jingzhou, where Xie had recently been posted.
the Jade Rope will lower on Jianzhang palace.²
Yet speeding my carriage outside Ding Gate,
I will imagine seeing the sunlit side of Zhao Mound.³
That galloping sunglow cannot not be caught, and
how much worse for us, separated in two different places!
In the wind-blown clouds there is the bird-road,
but we’re hindered by a lack of bridges on Yangzi
and Han.⁴
I always fear the falcon will strike,
the season’s chrysanthemums withering in severe frost.
Send word to the fowler:
in the vast emptiness I am already soaring high.

Xie Tiao, “From the Rear Studio Gazing Far”
謝眺 後齋迥望詩
From the lofty railings I survey the wilds all ’round;
through the windows, I see lapel-like mountains
and sash-like rivers.⁵

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² “Metallic waves” are moonlight, and “Jade Rope” a stellar asterism. Both Jaybird and Jianzhang were Han-dynasty palaces, though there was also a Jianzhang palace in Jining.
³ Ding Gate is probably Settling the Cauldron Gate 定鼎門，supposedly established in the time of Zhou King Cheng 周成王 (ca. 1056-1025 BCE). Zhao Mound was the tomb mound of Chu King Zhao 楚昭王 (d. 489 BCE), located near modern-day Dangyang county 當陽縣; it serves here as a metonymy for Jingzhou, where Xie had previously been stationed.
⁴ Mountain paths were often called “bird-roads”.
⁵ This figure, which goes back to the Three Capitals rhapsodies 三毒賦 of Zhang Heng 張衡 (78-139), describes the surrounding landscape as the garments (often protective) of the capital.
I gaze at the mountains within white clouds,
and gaze at waters beyond the level plain.
Summer’s trees have turned into draperies;
autumnal lotuses are gradually resembling canopies.
I long always for Gong and Luo,
my wavering heart like a banner in the wind.⁶

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⁶ Gong and Luo were in the capital region in the Eastern Han and Western Jin, when Pan Yue 潘岳 (d. 300) wrote in his “Rhapsody on a Western Journey” 西征賦 of yearning for his father’s grave near Gong and Luo. The image of a heart wavering like a banner in the wind derives almost verbatim from a speech in Zhanguoce 戰國策 by the King of Chu, who recognized that his state would soon be destroyed by Qin.

[Translated by Lucas Rambo Bender]
Poems read in Mandarin by Zhao Wenxuan
II. Episode Notes

- Bao Zhao 鮑照 (ca. 414-466)
- Shen Yue 沈約 (441-513)
- Xiao Ziliang 蕭子良 (460-494), Prince of Jingling 竟陵王
- Xiao Zilong 蕭子隆 (474-494), the Prince of Sui 隨郡王
- Jiangling 江陵, present day Jingzhou 荊州, Hubei 湖北 province
- “South of the River, a land of beauty; Jinling, province of emperors and kings” 江南佳麗地, 金陵帝王州
- Emperor Wu of the Southern Qi 南齊武帝 (440-493)
- The “blending of scene and emotion” 情景相融
- Meng Haoran 孟浩然 (ca. 691-740)
- Wang Wei 王維 (699-759)
- Wei Yingwu 韋應物 (ca. 737-ca. 792)
- Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元 (773-819)
- The “three types of ease” 三易
- Xuancheng 宣城, Anhui 安徽 province

III. Textual Source
