

Ban Biao's 班彪 “*Fu* on Viewing the Sea” and Zhang Heng's
張衡 “*Fu* on Returning to the Fields”: Introduction, Translation
and Annotation

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List of Abbreviation

CCBZ *Chu ci buzhu* 楚辭補注 Supplementary Commentary to the *Chu ci*

HHS *Hou Han shu* 後漢書 History of the Later Han Dynasty

QHFPZ (in short PZ) *Quan Han fu pingzhu* 全漢賦評註 Comments and
Annotations on the Entire Han *Fu*

QHFJZ (in short JZ) *Quan Han fu jiaozhu* 全漢賦校注 Exegesis and Annotations
on the Entire Han *Fu*

QHHW *Quan hou Han wen* 全漢文 Entire Writings of the Later Han

WX *Wen xuan* 文選 Selections of Refined Literature

YWLJ *Yi wen lei ju* 藝文類聚 Anthology of Literary Excerpts Arranged by
Categories

ZHSWJJZ (in short SWJJZ) *Zhang Heng shi wen ji jiao zhu* 張衡詩文集校注
Exegesis and Annotations on the Zhang Heng's Poetry and Prose

Ban Biao and His “*Fu* on Viewing the Sea”

The first century writer and historian Ban Biao 班彪 (3-54 CE), courtesy name Shupi 叔皮, is a native of Fufeng 扶風 commandery (in modern Shaanxi 陝西 province).¹ Biao was born into the esteemed Ban family, whose prestige went back for generations. His aunt Ban Jieyu’s 班婕妤 (48 BCE – 2 CE) favor with the Emperor Cheng (r. 32 BCE - 7 CE) further enhanced Ban family’s standing. Biao also fathers the prominent Ban Gu 班固 (32-92 CE), Ban Chao 班超 (32-102 CE) and Ban Zhao 班昭 (45-116 CE) and mentors the great polemicist Wang Chong 王充 (27-97 CE). His domestic education, primarily Confucian, has made him a man of letters and “prudent and fond of antiquity” 沉重好古.² But Biao grew up in a country in turmoil, first by the Wang Mang 王莽 interregnum (8-23 CE), followed by the social chaos when it collapsed abruptly.

Biao fled Chang An 長安 in face of an imminent insurrection to find shelter under the aegis of a powerful local warlord Wei Ao 隗囂 (? – 33 CE). However, his sojourn in Wei’s court expired when he tried in vain to persuade Wei into supporting Liu clan’s legitimacy to the throne. The breakup resulted in his famous *Wang ming lun* 王命論 “Disquisition on the Mandate of Kings”, which argues that the Mandate of Heaven favors the Liu clan and this piece was quoted verbatim in his biography in *Hou Han*

¹ For a detailed and authoritative biography of Ban Biao, see HHS, 40A. 1323-1330. See also the entry of Ban Biao in Knechtges, *A Reference Guide (part one)*, 2-3 and Clark, *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, 3-9.

² HHS, 40A. 1323.

shu.³ He left Wei for another regional leader Dou Rong 竇融 (16 BCE - 62 CE), who shared his political view. After Emperor Guangwu 光武 (r. 25 CE – 57 CE) restored Han and noticed the talent of Biao, he was appointed prefect of Xu 徐 in modern Jiangsu province. Biao resigned from the post on grounds of illness and for a while devoted to intellectual pursuits, especially historical writing. He died in 54 CE when serving in another low-ranking post. In the concluding remarks in HHS, Biao is the “thorough Confucian and first-class talent” 通儒上才, with his “behaviors not trespassing the rules, utterances not deviating from orthodox” 行不踰方, 言不失正.⁴

Compared with Biao’s well-known “*Fu* on a Northern Journey”, “*Fu* on Viewing the Sea” unfortunately received less aesthetic attention and textual scholarship.⁵ Its first appearance is in the literary *leishu* 類書 (compendia or encyclopedia) *Yiwen lei ju* 藝文類聚 (Anthology of Literary Excerpts Arranged by Categories) in Tang dynasty.

⁶ It is the first extant Han *fu* that writes about the sea, and is credited, by later commentators, as having extended the scope of *fu* and inspired later *fu* on the same subject.⁷

³ HHS, 40A, 1325-1327.

⁴ HHS, 40A. 1329.

⁵ So far there are no traditional or modern monographs solely devoted to Ban Biao’s *fu*, despite a stream of pertinent articles of varying qualities. For modern annotations, there are the much-acclaimed QHFPZ by Gong Kechang 龔克昌 and QHFJZ by Fei Zhengang 費振剛, both of which provide useful annotations on this *fu* and are heavily consulted in this paper.

⁶ YWLJ, 8.152. All later versions of *Lan hai fu* in other collections quote verbatim from YWLJ. See for example QHHW, 23.231. In this paper, the analysis and translation is also based on the YWLJ version.

⁷ For a brief treatment on the sea in literature before Ban Biao, see Li, “Lan hai fu lun”, 21. For other *fu* on the sea after Biao, see Zhang, “Lun Han Wei Liuchao hai fu”, 17-19.

The *Lan hai fu* contains 36 lines in 212 characters and is written in the *Sao* style.⁸

There are various types within the genre of *fu* and the criteria of demarcation are more often than not arbitrary. Three major categories are the *Shi* style *fu* 詩體賦, the *Sao* style *fu* 騷體賦 and the prose *fu* 文賦. Already indicated by their names, *Shi* style *fu* is the type of *fu* inspired by the typical four character verse of *Shi jing* 詩經 (The Book of Songs). *Sao* style *fu* are after Qu Yuan's 屈原 "Encountering Sorrows" ("Li sao" 離騷). *Sao* style *fu* arose from imitating the songs of Chu, either in content or the stylistic features. The making of a *Sao* style *fu* usually necessitates it to contain the caesura marker *xi* 兮 (but not in the case of the *Lan hai fu*) and in content is usually about the author's lament on his talents not being valued by the world, the most famous example being Jia Yi's 賈誼 "Lament for Qu Yuan" 弔屈原. In this regard this subgenre is also often called "*Fu* on Frustration".⁹ In a mood shared by many frustrated literati before him, Ban Biao in this *fu* ruminates on "why Zhongni would resort to rafting out to the sea" 悟仲尼之乘桴 and expresses wish to "take the opportunity to elude the world and travel afar" 因離世而高遊.

In content and structure, the *Lan hai fu* has also the characteristics of a *Jixing fu* 紀行賦 (*Fu* on Recounting a Journey), only that Ban Biao's journey is a mixture of reality and fantasy. His journey starts with the spectacular view at the seaside. As he roamed along the sea in Huaipu 淮浦 ("I wandered on aimlessly at ease" 聊從容而遂行),

⁸ Both PZ and JZ call the *Lan hai fu* fragmentary but no evidence is given. Zhao Kuifu 趙逵夫 believes that the line "The fate, long or short, cannot be foreseen" 運之修短, 不預期也, accredited to Ban Gu in Li Shan 李善 edition WX, is in fact the missing part of Ban Biao's *Lan hai fu*. But his conclusion and analysis is at best speculative. See Zhao, "Lan hai fu", 54.

⁹ The influence of *Chuci* on *Lan hai fu* will be explained in detail in the translation footnotes. For a discussion on "*Fu* on Frustration" and the *Sao* style, see Knechtges, "Introduction", 22.

he is awed by the vastness of the sea (“I gazed at the vast sea that was boundless and indistinct” 覽滄海之茫茫), not much unlike the reaction of the ridiculed Hebo 河伯 in the Qiushui 秋水 (The Autumn Floods) chapter of *Zhuangzi*.¹⁰

The grand view from the physical journey stimulates his sentiments. Frustrated by the seaside as he stands, he embarks on the getaway spiritual journey, emulating the journey to seek immortality. He rises above the mundane human world, and flies to “search for the mythical mountains Fanghu, Yingzhou and Huliang” 索方瀛與壺梁, where he finds the divines’ jade palace and joins company with various immortals. He continues on, passes the Heavenly Gate, seeks audience with the Taiyi 太一 (The Supreme One) and receives blessing. The mention of praying to the deity Taiyi also reveals the influence of the State cult of Taiyi on *Lan hai fu*, since it is not until Emperor Wu 武帝 (r. 141 BCE – 87 BCE) before the Taiyi is incorporated or reinvented into the state religion that purports to lend legitimacy to the empire, while also fulfilling the pursuit of immortality.¹¹ By imagining the grand journey in the sea and Heaven, Ban Biao escapes from his political frustration and achieves a momentary spiritual transcendence.

¹⁰ Since Biao is born in central China, he has probably seen the sea for the first time.

¹¹ See Sterckx, “Religious Practices in Qin and Han”, 420-421 and Lewis, “The *Feng* and *Shan* Sacrifices”, 77.

Translation

“Lan hai fu” 覽海賦 (*Fu* on Viewing the Sea)¹²

余有事於淮浦，覽滄海之茫茫。悟仲尼之乘桴，聊從容而遂行。馳鴻瀨以漂鷺，翼飛風而迴翔。

When called to duty and traveled to Huaipu,¹³

I gazed at the vast sea that was boundless and indistinct.

Understanding anew why Zhongni would resort to rafting out to the sea,¹⁴

I wandered on aimlessly at ease.¹⁵

Wild ducks drifted with the galloping torrent,¹⁶

Rolling waves roared back and forth with strong winds as wings.¹⁷

顧百川之分流，煥爛熳以成章。風波薄其裊裊，貌浩浩以湯湯。指日月以爲表，索方瀛與壺梁。

¹² Note on translation: The *Lan hai fu* has not been translated into English before. The *fu* rhymes in every other line, but unfortunately the rhyming scheme is lost in this translation due to the difficulty in finding the right words as rhyming counterparts to the original Chinese. Paul W. Kroll's *A Student's Dictionary of Classical and Medieval Chinese* is consulted for the English word choices. The version of the original Chinese text is from YWLJ, 8.152.

¹³ 淮浦: name of the county beside the river Huai's 淮 estuary, not far from the county Xu, where he was posted in the year 37 CE as prefect. This is also generally believed to be the year in which the *fu* is composed, when Biao is in this region. See HHS, 40A,1324. See also the map in Tan, *Zhongguo Lishi ditu ji*, 20. PZ glosses the character 浦 as "estuary". It is not wrong per se, but fails to realize Huaipu is the proper name for the county. See PZ, 356.

¹⁴ 仲尼之乘桴: reference to Confucius' famous saying "The Way makes no progress. I shall get upon a raft and float out to sea" 道不行乘浮於海. In Waley, *The Analects of Confucius*, 108. 乘桴 "get upon the raft" has become a popular expression for one's frustration over the corrupt world or wish to escape from it. Confucius did not float out to sea. But having seen the grand sea with his own eyes, Ban Biao laments on his frustration, and entertains himself with the idea that he takes up what the Confucius did not do, and float out to the unknown sea.

¹⁵ 聊: might as well; 從容: at ease.

¹⁶ 鴻瀨: great currents. The character 鴻 is the loan word for 洪, meaning "flood". 漂鷺: floating ducks. The character 漂 is loan word for the verb 飄, meaning "making something float". PZ reads 漂鷺 as metonym for the colour of the sea (like that of the wild duck). See PZ, 24. This seems to be over-reading and unnecessary. I translate it here as what it literally means.

¹⁷ 迴翔: literary means flying back and forth. Here it is a metaphor for the sea waves roaring back and forth.

Looking back, various streams poured in from all directions.¹⁸

Suffused with light, their fully flaunted hues make fanciful embroidery.

When stormy waves draw near, the rapids are gushy.¹⁹

When they lurch away, the currents are unlimited and dashing.²⁰

Pointing out the sun or the moon as the marks,²¹

And search for the mythical mountains Fanghu, Yingzhou and Huliang.²²

曜金璆以爲闕，次玉石而爲堂。莫芝列於階路，涌醴漸於中唐。朱紫彩爛，明珠夜光。松喬坐於東序，王母處於西箱。命韓衆與岐伯，講神篇而校靈章。

Glittering is the golden jade palace,²³

Imbricated jade stones make the fore-hall.

Mingjia and numinous mushrooms grow in stairways,²⁴

Sweet liquid springs out and flows to the central path.²⁵

The red and purple flowers glow iridescently,²⁶

Luminous pearls scintillate in the night.

Chisongzi and Wang Ziqiao sit in the east wing,²⁷

¹⁸ 顧: looking back. In this line he is able to see hundreds of streams pour into the sea, which indicates that he is looking from a vantage point of view, i.e. when he is flying over the sea.

¹⁹ 薄: used as verb here, meaning “draw near”. 襄: the strong waves hitting back and forth.

²⁰ 浩浩湯湯: gushy and wavy. Cf. The “Book of Yao” 堯典 in the *Book of Documents*: “湯湯洪水方割...浩浩滔天”. (Surging and shaking... it floods rampant to Heaven). See Lewis, *Flood Myths*, 64.

²¹ 表: marks. Ban Biao has to rely on the sun and moon for direction now, which means he has flown far into the sea.

²² 方瀛壺梁: Fanghu、Yingzhou and Huliang are three mythical mountains in the sea that are reputed to be the dwelling places of immortals.

²³ 璆: a type of fine jade. Starting from this line, Biao Biao has entered the glamorous palace where immortals live. The description starts from outside to inside, following his footsteps entering from the entrance hall to the inner reception hall, where he meets those immortals.

²⁴ 莫芝: two mythical plant names. 莫 refer to 莫夾 Mingjia, it is a type of luminous grass that feature in various *Chuci*. 芝 is luminous mushroom.

²⁵ 中唐: the central path leading from the entrance hall to the main hall.

²⁶ 朱紫: red and purple. Glossed in JZ as metonyms for flowers. See JZ, 356.

Queen Mother of the West rests in the west chamber.²⁸

[They] order Han Zhong and Qibo,²⁹

To explicate and collate the spiritual texts.³⁰

願結旅而自託。因離世而高遊。騁飛龍之驂駕，歷八極而迴周。遂竦節而響應，
勿輕舉以神浮。

[I] wish to build a thatched hut to sustain myself.³¹

Take the opportunity to elude the world and travel afar.³²

To gallop in the troika of flying dragons.³³

Fare past the eight corners then voyage back.

Then hold aloft the wand, and respond [to the divine call] forthwith.³⁴

Instantly [I] ascend light and float in spirit.

遵霓霧之掩蕩，登雲塗以凌厲。乘虛風而體景，超太清以增逝。麾天閭以啓路，
闢閭闔而望余。通王竭於紫宮，拜太一而受符。

²⁷ 松乔: Chisongzi and Wang Ziqiao, reputed mortals-turned-immortals.

²⁸ 王母: Queen Mother of the West, famous goddess believed to possess the secret of immortality. Her primary residing place is Mt. Kunlun 崑崙 in the far west, and may be visiting friends here in this sea-bound jade palace. The “West Chamber” also indicates her original dwelling place in the west.

²⁹ 韩众: another example of *fangshi* 方士 (Master of Methods) successfully turned immortal. 岐伯: reputed physician in the Yellow Emperor’s 黃帝 court.

³⁰ 神篇靈章: spiritual texts. It is unclear what these spiritual texts are.

³¹ 結旅: glossed in JZ as “form company (with other immortals)”, but glossed in PZ as “build a thatched hut”, reading 旅 as the load word for 廬 “thatched hut”. The translation follows the PZ’s reading, since immediately following we find 自托 (resort to oneself), which seems to contradict the “company” reading.

³² This couplet follows the previous detailed description of the jade palace. Now having seen the magical immortal land, Ban Biao is lured into residing in this place, and never going back to his sorrows and frustrations in the real world. Starting from here he embarks on his second spiritual journey, this time to the Heaven, where an even more powerful deity, Taiyi, lives.

³³ 驂駕: chariot pulled by three horses as a troika. Dragon-pulled chariot is a common theme in stories that feature humans pursuing immortality.

³⁴ 節: wand, symbol of office that conveys authority. PZ glosses it as 鞭 whip. See PZ, 26. The translation favors the literal rendering as the official wand. Ban Biao is on his way to the Celestial Palace, which is like its terrestrial counterpart. Being an official in the earthly court himself, Ban Biao is now carrying a celestial version of wand that suits him.

Following the path that is hidden amid rainbow and fog,³⁵

And climb up the cloudy route valiantly.

Ride in the void air to apprehend the spectacular.

Surpass the heavens and advance high above.³⁶

Bid the Heavenly Porter to guide the way.³⁷

He opens the Celestial Gate and stares at me.³⁸

Present [myself] to the king's messenger to seek audience in the Purple Palace.³⁹

Pay respect to the Taiyi and receive the tally.⁴⁰

Zhang Heng and His “*Fu* on Returning to the Fields”

Zhang Heng 張衡 (78-139 CE), courtesy name Pingzi 平子, native of Nanyang 南陽 commandery (in modern Henan 河南 province), is one the most renowned polymath in Later Han dynasty (25-220 CE). He is an accomplished astronomer, cartographer, mathematician, engineer, historian and also a master of *fu* writer.⁴¹

³⁵ 霓: the secondary or interior bow of a double-rainbow.

³⁶ 太清: the sky or heaven. 增: loan word for 曾, meaning “high, aloft”.

³⁷ 天闕: the mythical Heavenly Porter

³⁸ 閭闔: the mythical Heavenly Gate. This couplet is a re-writing of the lines in “Encountering Sorrows”. Cf, “吾令帝閭開關兮, 倚閭闔而望余” (I asked Heaven's porter to open up for me/ But he leant across Heaven's gate and eyed me churlishly). See CCBZ, 55 and Hawkes, *Lisao*, 29.

³⁹ 王謁: palace messenger who delivers message. 紫宮: also called 紫微 Purple Tenuity. It is the constellation associated with the dwelling place of the supreme. According to correlative cosmology, it is the counterpart of the earthly imperial palace.

⁴⁰ The author's second spiritual journey to the Heaven culminates in his audience with the supreme deity Taiyi. He performs the ritual to pray to it, and in return he is granted blessing. Worship of Taiyi is already common in the Warring States period. But the deification of Taiyi into a central part of the state religion (for example the *jiao* 郊 Suburban Sacrifice) occurred only during and after the reign of Emperor Wu. *Fu*, especially the epideictic *fu* 大賦, depict scenes of state rituals. Cf, Yang Xiong 揚雄, “*Fu* on Sweet Springs”: “They are fit for the Hanging Garden of the Lord's abode/ Symbols of the awesome spirit of the Great Unity” 配帝居之懸圃兮象泰壹之尊神. The 泰壹 here is the same deity as 太一. See Knechtges, *Han Rhapsody*, 48. See also Xu, “Han fu si dian”, 39 and Tian, “Taiyi jisi”, 47.

⁴¹ The primary and authoritative source of the life of Zhang Heng is his biography in HHS. See HHS, 59.1897-1940. See also his entry in Knechtges,

Like Ban Biao, Zhang Heng is also born into a prestigious family that is “prominent for generations” 世為著姓, which is capable of providing him with the first-class domestic education and resources.⁴² He is a young literary prodigy, “good at writing since a kid” 少善屬文, and later traveled to the capital Luoyang 洛陽 to attend the Imperial Academy 太學, which forged him man of “thorough and comprehensive knowledge of the Five Classics and Six Skills” 通五經貫六藝.⁴³ His early endeavors in *fu* writing, epitomized by the “Er jing fu” 二京賦 (*Fu* on the Two Metropolises) emulating Ban Gu’s 班固 “Liang du fu” (Fu on the Two Capitals), is a great success and earns him fame among contemporaries. “Although his talent is above others, he is not a arrogant. He is always relaxed and indifferent to fame, and dislikes befriending unrefined people.” 雖才高於世，而無驕尚之情。常從容淡靜，不好交接俗人。⁴⁴ While Zhang Heng’s talent may well be “above others”, his political career does not fare well, albeit his high ambitions. This may have to do with his uncompromising character.⁴⁵ He served in Luoyang in middle or low ranking posts until an old age, giving him a weary heart and discontent for the unworthy and foul, and in the end died serving in another insignificant post in 139 CE.

Among his extant impressive oeuvre of *fu*, of which there are 16, “Gui tian *fu*” 歸田賦 (*Fu* on Returning to the Fields) is his masterpiece on frustration in his later years.

⁴² HHS, 59.1897.

⁴³ HHS, 59.1897.

⁴⁴ HHS, 59.1897.

⁴⁵ A best example is given in HHS. When he is summoned by the emperor for counsel and asked who everyone in the world hates, the eunuchs present gave Heng threatening eyes for fear of Heng informing on them. Although Heng did not do so, eunuchs speak ill of him to the emperor. See HHS, 59.1901.

It first appears in *Wen xuan* 文選 (Selections of Refined Literature), the Liang 梁 dynasty (502-587 CE) literary anthology arranged by category.⁴⁶ It is also included in the YWLJ (with a few lines missing, though), QHHW and various other compendia.⁴⁷ The best textual version is that of the annotated WX by the “six ministers” (Li Shan 李善 and five other commentators). All later commentaries on *Gui tian fu* are based on this edition. *Zhang Heng shi wen ji jiao zhu* 張衡詩文集校注 (Exegesis and Annotations on the Zhang Heng’s Poetry and Prose), QHFPZ and QHFJZ summarizes useful modern scholarship. Academic articles are also abundant, which greatly facilitates deeper understanding of this particular *fu*.

Unlike his earlier epideictic *fu* such as “Er jing *fu*” and “Nan du *fu*” 南都賦 (*Fu* on the Southern Capital) which deploy extensive parallelism, elaborate and obscure catalogues of nouns and phrases, “*Gui tian fu*” typifies a new trend of the “lyrical small *fu*” 抒情小賦, which in general are much shorter in length, concise in expression and multifaceted in the choice of emotions or objects they set out to portray. On the other hand, “*Gui tian fu*”, like Ban Biao’s “*Lan hai fu*”, is also a *Sao*-style *fu*, featuring the author’s frustration and dissatisfaction with the foul world. The mixture of these two styles has made “*Gui tian fu*” a lament for his fate hidden among his ostensible pursuit of bucolic pleasures. Also like “*Lan hai fu*”, “*Gui tian fu*” is an imagined journey to soothe the author’s frustration.⁴⁸ But unlike Ban Biao,

⁴⁶ WX, 15.269-270.

⁴⁷ YWLJ, 36.644-645 and QHHW, 53.519-520. For the missing lines in YWLJ, see translation notes.

⁴⁸ Quite some scholars believe that the “returning to the fields” is historical. See for example Knechtges, *A Reference Guide (part one)*, 2148 and Wang, “*Gui tian fu shangxi*”, 25. But most commentaries believe the close analysis of the text suggests otherwise. See for example PZ, 556.

Zhang Heng pursues the bucolic natural world, rather than the heavenly immortals. In short, “Gui tian *fu*” broadens the scope of *fu* as a genre. The innovation did not begin with Zhang Heng, but he deserves to be credited to having extending the boundary of *fu* and pushed it to a higher level aesthetically.

Translation

“Gui tian *fu*” 歸田賦 *Fu* on Returning to the Fields⁴⁹

游都邑以永久，無明略以佐時。徒臨川以羨魚，俟河清乎未期。感蔡子之慷慨，從唐生以決疑。諒天道之微昧，追漁父以同嬉。超埃塵以遐逝，與世事乎長辭。

[I] have drifted in the capital endlessly,⁵⁰

But have no wise strategies to assist our time.⁵¹

Standing in vain by the stream, hunger for the fish,⁵²

While impossible is to expect the River to clear.⁵³

⁴⁹ Note on translation: The text follows the WX version. Gui tian *fu* has been rendered into English at least twice by different hands, both of high quality. See Knetchges, *Wen Xuan (volume3)*, 139-143 and Hightower, “The *Fu* of T’ao Ch’en”, 214-216.

⁵⁰ 都邑: literally “city and town”, here it refers to the capital Luoyang. 永久: for ever, endlessly. The overstatement betrays Zhang Heng’s grumble for the city that does not value his talent.

⁵¹ In the words of Gong Kechang, “we do not see a poet who had no wise plans to aid the times, but instead we seem to find a noble-minded scholar with wise plans who was oppressed and cast aside.” Gong, “The *Fu* of Zhang Heng”, 294.

⁵² 臨淵羨魚: from *Huainanzi*, 淮南子 (Master of Huainan) “Instead of standing in vain by the river, hunger for the fish, one should go back to his house and make a fishing net.” 臨河而羨魚不如歸家而織網.

⁵³ 河清未期: from *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (Zuo’s Annals) “How long can man’s age be for him to wait for the River to run clear?” 俟河之清，人壽幾何. The “clear river” has since been a metonym for the uncorrupted politics. Here it indicates Heng’s despair about his times. See WX, 15.269.

[It] reminds me of the grim and glum Cai Ze,

Who approached Tang Ju to solve doubts.⁵⁴

Indeed the Way of Heaven is dim and gloomy,

[I shall] join the Fisherman to share his joy.⁵⁵

Rise above the dirt and dust to run afar, ⁵⁶

And cut off from the mundane affairs forever.⁵⁷

於是仲春令月，時和氣清；原隰鬱茂。王雎鼓翼，鸕鷀哀鳴；交頸頡頏，關關嚶嚶。於焉逍遙，聊以娛情。

In the finest month of early spring, ⁵⁸

The time is agreeable and the air fresh.

Highlands and lowlands are thickly massed in vegetation,⁵⁹

A hundred plants thrive and prosper.

The fish-hawks flap wings,⁶⁰

Orioles cry poignantly.⁶¹

⁵⁴ 蔡子、唐生: Cai Ze 蔡澤 and Tang Ju 唐舉, Warring States period politician and fortune-teller. The distressed Cai Ze approached Tang Ju to read his fortune. When he was assured that he had 43 years of age ahead of him, he decided and to go into politics again with confidence. See WX, 15.269. Here Zhang Heng compares himself to Cai Ze, hoping there could be a Tang Ju to tell his future. It also shows that Heng is still eager to go back into politics and that his retirement into bucolic life is only half-genuine.

⁵⁵ 漁夫: the Fisherman figured in the *Chuci*, metonym for hermit. For Heng, the world is “dim and gloomy” and he should consider retiring to be a hermit.

⁵⁶ 埃塵: dirt and dust, metaphor for the filth that stains the world.

⁵⁷ This couplet is missing from the YWLJ edition.

⁵⁸ 仲春: the second month in the lunar calendar in early spring. 令: good, beautiful. From here starts the acclaimed description of the bucolic idyll.

⁵⁹ 原: highland. 隰: lowland.

⁶⁰ 王雎: The Jujiu 雎鳩 fish-hawk. *Mao Shi zhuan* 毛詩傳 (The Mao Tradition of the *Songs*): “Jujiu is another name for Wangju” 雎鳩王雎也. See *Mao Shi*, 206.

⁶¹ 鸕鷀: written as 倉庚 in YWLJ edition. 哀: poignant, sad. The word choice requires our attention since 哀 is not usually seen in a merry scene. It suggests that even in the perfect bucolic ambience, the author is still thinking of the world that he so despised.

[Birds] cross necks, soar high and sweep low,⁶²

[Making pleasant noises of] *guanguan* and *yingying*.⁶³

I enjoy myself in this ambiance,⁶⁴

And [it could] entertain my sentiments.

爾乃龍吟方澤，虎嘯山丘。仰飛纖纖，俯釣長流。觸矢而斃，貪餌吞鉤。落雲間之逸禽，懸淵沉之魴鰈。

Then moan like dragons in the vast marshland,⁶⁵

Roar like tigers in the hills.

Up fly the thin-corded arrows,⁶⁶

Down fish in the long brook.

[Birds] meet with shafts and perish,

[Fish] lust after bait and bite the hook.

Down fall the elusive birds amid the clouds,⁶⁷

Up hang the goby fish from the bottom of deep water.⁶⁸

⁶² 頡頏: flying high and low, depicts a carefree scene with birds flying around. *Mao Shi* “flying up is called *xie*, diving down is called *hang*.” 飛而上曰頡，飛而下曰頏. *Mao Zhuan*, 233.

⁶³ 關關嚶嚶: onomatopoeia of birds singing in harmony. Cf. “guanguan cries the fish-hawk” 關關雎鳩. *Mao Shi*, 206.

⁶⁴ 于焉逍遙: quoted verbatim from the *Songs*. Cf. “The beautiful one enjoy herself in this place” 所謂伊人，于焉逍遙. *Mao Shi*, 388.

⁶⁵ 龍吟虎嘯: dragons moan and tigers roar. JZ interprets it as the sound of literary chanting of the author in the field. See JZ, 747. PZ propose a that it is metaphor for the author’s joy returning to the fields, just like the harmony between dragons, tigers and the nature. See PZ, 557. This translation follows the interpretation of that of JZ.

⁶⁶ 纖纖: thin-corded arrow.

⁶⁷ 逸禽: glossed in JZ as “goose”, and in PZ “birds in the sky”. See JZ, 747 and PZ, 557. The translation here renders it literally as “elusive birds”.

於時曜靈俄景，繼以望舒。極盤游之至樂，雖日夕而忘劬。感老氏之遺誡，將回駕乎蓬廬。彈五弦之妙指，詠周孔之圖書。揮翰墨以奮藻，陳三皇之軌模。苟縱心於物外，安知榮辱之所如。

At that time the Bright Spirit shifts rays,⁶⁹

And is succeeded by Wangshu.⁷⁰

Having attained the utmost ecstasy in the joyful jaunt,⁷¹

I forget travail even when the sun sets.⁷²

Reminded of Laozi's surviving admonitions,⁷³

[I] shall ride back to my thatched hut.

Play the five-string zither of delightful appeal,

And declaim writings of the Duke of Zhou and Kongzi.⁷⁴

Brandish the brush and ink into ornate writing,

To expound the patterns of the Three High Sovereigns.⁷⁵

[I] shall set my heart free beyond the exterior world,

And how would I know where the glories and dishonors would end?

⁶⁸ The previous eight lines are missing from YWLJ edition. 魴鰕: a kind of goby fish.

⁶⁹ 曜靈: the Sun. 景: load word for 影, "shadow".

⁷⁰ 望舒: refers to the moon. The sun sets and is succeeded by the moon, indicating that the time in the wild passes quickly. Heng has passed a most joyful day in the wild before he notices the night is falling.

⁷¹ 盤游: written also as 般遊, meaning "great joy and fun".

⁷² 劬: fatigue, travail.

⁷³ The admonition is left out and expects readers to know it by heart. It is "riding and hunting can drive a man mad" 馳騁畋獵令人心發狂. See Laozi, 12.187. In fear of overstaying his ecstasy, Heng reminds himself of Laozi's admonition and decide to restrain.

⁷⁴ 周孔: Duke of Zhou and Confucius.

⁷⁵ 三皇: which three sovereigns they are is not certain. Usual candidates are Fuxi 伏羲, Huangdi 黃帝 and Shennong 神農. But it can also be other trios. 軌模: laws and patterns. This line clearly shows that Zhang Heng is still a reverent Confucian who concerns himself with the well being of the world, even though it has constantly failed him.

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