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# Parting, Travel, and the Great Roc

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Poems of Li Bai  
Newly Translated *by* Brian Holton



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## TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

Li Bai (701–762) is, by common consent, China's best-loved poet.

He wrote with great bravura and, while not a great innovator in form or metre, is still much loved for his wit, his roguish charm, his swashbuckling, hard-drinking persona, his humorous fantasy, and his wide knowledge and deep understanding of Daoist esoterica, which he gained through years of study with the masters of his time.

We know little about the details of his life, but he was probably born in the north-west of China and was likely of Turkic origin, as his poems occasionally hint. It is possible his family were Silk Road merchants, and may have been quite well off, since he never seemed to have lacked money for drinking and roistering on his many travels. He also claimed to have been a travelling swordsman (*wuxia* 武侠, a kind of knight errant) in his youth.

Li Bai and his younger friend Du Fu stand head and shoulders above their contemporaries—and indeed most of the numerous poets who succeeded them—in the artless and spontaneous ease with which they disguise their vast technical skill in poetic composition. Just as Shakespeare and his contemporaries took the Italian sonnet and made it central to English language versification, Li Bai and Du Fu took *shi* (詩) poetry, a form previously used for occasional verse, and made of it a form that was malleable, musical, and capable of great grandeur and elegance. In doing so, they helped create a poetic genre that took its place at the very heart of imperial Chinese culture, a genre that remains vital and important to this day.

The work of Li Bai and Du Fu radically changed Chinese culture, and, unlike Du Fu, the value of whose magisterial and beautiful poetry was not recognised until long after his death, Li Bai's work was not only popular within his lifetime, but has remained so ever since.

Thanks to Thomas Mazanec for discussing these poems and their translations with me.

## PARTING FAR AWAY

Long ago an emperor had two daughters, Ehuang and Nüying,  
Who lived to the south of Dongting Lake,  
By the banks of the clear Xiang stream.  
Ten thousand leagues deep go the waves down below,  
But who would say this parting wasn't bitter pain?  
Pale, pale was the sun, oh, and gloomy were the clouds,  
Orangutans howled in the mists, see, and ghosts shrieked in the  
rain.

*Even if I spoke it out, what good would it do?*  
*The Vault of Heaven, I bumbly fear, will not see my loyal sincerity.*  
The thunder grumbled, oh, and longed to roar in anger,  
As Yao and Shun went to abdicate to Yu:  
A ruler losing power to vassals, see, a dragon become a fish,  
Power going to vassals, see, turning rats into tigers.

They say Yao was confined to a dark prison  
And Shun died in the wilderness.  
All alike are the unbroken peaks of the Nine Doubtful Hills,  
But where in them lies the grave of Double Pupils?

The royal daughters wept, oh, among the green clouds of  
bamboo,  
Off on wind and wave, oh, they went, never to return.  
Weeping in deep sorrow, oh, and gazing afar  
They saw the deep Greentree Hills;

Only when the Greentree Hills tumble into the Xiang and its  
waters are stopped,  
Will tears on bamboo be washed away.

《遠別離》

古有皇英之二女  
乃在洞庭之南  
瀟湘之浦  
海水直下萬里深  
誰人不言此離苦  
日慘慘兮雲冥冥  
猩猩啼煙兮鬼嘯雨  
我縱言之將何補  
皇穹竊恐不照餘之忠誠  
雷憑憑兮欲吼怒  
堯舜當之亦禪禹  
君失臣兮龍爲魚  
權歸臣兮鼠變虎  
或云堯幽囚  
舜野死  
九疑聯綿皆相似  
重瞳孤墳竟何是  
帝子泣兮綠雲間  
隨風波兮去無還  
慟哭兮遠望  
見蒼梧之深山  
蒼梧山崩湘水絕  
竹上之淚乃可滅

### PALACE PLEASURES: NO. 3 OF 8 LYRICS

The loquat, he was planted in Qin,<sup>1</sup>  
The grape, she came from the Imperial Palace;  
Mist and flowers suit the setting sun,  
Pipes and strings tipsy on the spring breeze:  
The flute, the sound of dragons calling in water,  
The whistle, phoenixes crying down from the skies;<sup>2</sup>  
Often the sovereign lord takes his pleasure,  
As his many subjects of all ranks do.

#### 《宮中行樂詞八首》（其三）

盧橘為秦樹  
蒲桃出漢宮  
煙花宜落日  
絲管醉春風  
笛奏龍吟水  
簫鳴鳳下空  
君王多樂事  
還與萬方同

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<sup>1</sup> NW China, modern Shaanxi Province. Here signifying a man from the capital, Chang'an (now Xi'an). The poem delicately alludes to erotic dalliance in the palace

<sup>2</sup> Xiao, a non-fipple end-blown flute like the Turkish ney or the Andean quena.

**SEEING OFF OLD MAN ZHAO THE METHOD-  
MASTER ON HIS WAY TO DONGPING**

Long Mulberry saw through it that night:  
The Five Organs are the thing, not the whole beef.  
Old Man Zhao was initiated into the esoteric arts,  
Then turned back to follow the method-master's road;  
When you're west, past Unicorn Capture Mound,  
Grieve old Confucius just for me,  
Then I'll say goodbye, ponder on the past,  
Weep, and let my useless tears fall.

《送方士趙叟之東平》

長桑曉洞視  
五藏無全牛  
趙叟得祕訣  
還從方士遊  
西過獲麟臺  
爲我弔孔丘  
念別復懷古  
潸然空淚流

## HARD'S THE ROAD NO. 2<sup>3</sup>

The Great Way's broad as the blue sky,  
But I alone, I cannot find the road to it;  
I'm loath to follow after the lads  
    from the wards in Chang'an,<sup>4</sup>  
Who bet on the white dogs or red cockerels  
    with chestnuts and pears;<sup>5</sup>  
I tap on my sword's hilt and sing a song,  
    strike up a bitter air,<sup>6</sup>  
For I've trailed my hem at princely gates  
    but found no hearty welcome;  
At the Huaiyin markets and wells  
    they laughed at Han Xin,  
Sukes and ministers at the Court of Han  
    they resented Jia Yi;<sup>7</sup>  
Oh sirs, don't you see—in days of yore the House of Yan  
    treated Guo Wei with respect,  
They swept the floor and bowed down  
    with no misgivings or ill-will;  
Ju Xin and Yue Yi, both of them  
    got their proper share,  
For all and whole with heart and soul  
    in good will were they paid;<sup>8</sup>  
The Illustrious Prince's white bones  
    are a tangle of bindweed now,  
And where will you find anyone to sweep  
    the prince's Terrace of Gold?<sup>9</sup>  
Hard's the road;  
Ho for home!

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<sup>3</sup> In this and the following poem, the historical allusions are from *Historical Records (Shi Ji)* by Sima Qian (c. 145-c.86BCE).

<sup>4</sup> now Xi'an in Shaanxi Province.

<sup>5</sup> i.e. gambling on racing dogs and fighting cocks.

<sup>6</sup> Feng Xuan became a trusted retainer of Lord Mengchang (d.279BCE) by singing about his woes and his poverty at the aristocrat's gate.

<sup>7</sup> Han Xin (d.186BCE): a poor orphan who rose to be a brilliant general and helped found the Han Dynasty (206-220CE); as a young man, he was laughed at for ducking a challenge to a fight. Jia Yi (c.200-169BCE): writer and politician, famous for his essay *The Faults of Qin*.

<sup>8</sup> Guo Wei, (fl.314BCE) politician who helped to revive the defeated princely state of Yan. Ju Xin and Yue Yi were two of the talented generals he recruited.

<sup>9</sup> King Zhao of Yan (d.279BCE): legend has it he built a terrace from which he dispensed gold to gentlemen and knights.



《行路難三首·其二》

大道如青天  
我獨不得出  
羞逐長安社中兒  
赤雞白雉賭梨棗  
彈劍作歌奏苦聲  
曳裾王門不稱情  
淮陰市井笑韓信  
漢朝公卿忌賈生  
君不見昔時燕家重郭隗  
擁簪折節無嫌猜  
劇辛樂毅感恩分  
輸肝剖膽效英才  
昭王白骨縈蔓草  
誰人更掃黃金臺  
行路難  
歸去來

### HARD'S THE ROAD NO. 3

If you've ears don't wash them  
    in Ying River water,<sup>10</sup>  
And if you've a mouth don't eat  
    the bracken on Shouyang Mountain;<sup>11</sup>  
Smother your light to muddle through the world,  
    noble, but lacking the fame of it,  
No use carrying your head too high,  
    higher than the clouded moon;  
I see since ancient times  
    the great saints and sages  
Who didn't retire, their great works done,  
    went down to death every one;  
Wu Zixu, now he was forsaken  
    by the Wu River's stream;  
Qu Yuan in the final end flung himself  
    off the Xiang River's banks,<sup>12</sup>  
Lu Ji, that bold lad of parts,  
    what shelter could there be for him?<sup>3</sup>  
When Li Si cast off his harness,  
    his sorrows he never expected:  
The shriek of the Huating cranes  
    the one would never hear,  
An the soaring Dongmen goshawk  
    for the other would never cry;<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> In deep antiquity the hermit Xu You heard that the sage king Yao (trad. r. 2356-2255BCE) wanted to abdicate and place him on the throne, he washed out his ears, considering them to have been polluted by such an indecorous idea.

<sup>11</sup> Bo Yi (fl. c.1046BCE) and his brothers were so loyal to the fallen Shang Dynasty, they refused to eat the food of the new Zhou Dynasty, and withdrew to Shouyang Mountain in modern Shanxi, where they lived on bracken and eventually starved to death. They are exemplars of the virtuous hermit.

<sup>12</sup> Wu Yun, aka Wu Zixu (d.484BCE): general, statesman ordered by his prince to fall on his sword: his body was thrown into the river. Now worshipped in Taiwan as God of the Waves. Qu Yuan (c. 340-278BCE): statesman and China's first named poet, author of the great collection *Songs of the South (Chu Ci)*. His suicide by drowning is commemorated in the annual Dragon Boat Festival.

<sup>13</sup> Lu Ji (261-303CE): critic, author of *On Literature (Wen Fī)*, minister. Before he was unjustly executed on a false charge of treason, he said he wished he could hear the cry of the cranes over Huating. Li Si (c.280-208BCE) philosopher, writer, Chancellor of the princely state of Qin under the ruler who became the First Emperor and unified China, he is one of the most important people in Chinese history, responsible for unification and creator of many of the institutions that

Oh sirs, don't you see,  
 Zhang Han in the State of Wu  
     was called knowing and wise:  
 The autumn wind reminded him of home  
 So eastward down the Yangtze he went;<sup>14</sup>  
 And anyway, pleasure in this life  
     is all in a glass of wine,  
 For what good is a thousand years of fame  
     and you dead and gone? <sup>15</sup>

### 《行路難三首·其三》

有耳莫洗潁川水  
 有口莫食首陽蕨  
 含光混世貴無名  
 何用孤高比雲月  
 吾觀自古賢達人  
 功成不退皆殞身  
 子胥既棄吳江上  
 屈原終投湘水濱  
 陸機雄才豈自保  
 李斯稅駕苦不早  
 華亭鶴唳詎可聞  
 上蔡蒼鷹何足道  
 君不見吳中張翰稱達生  
 秋風忽憶江東行  
 且樂生前一杯酒  
 何須身後千載名

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survived until the fall of the Empire in 1911. Before being unjustly executed on the orders of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Emperor of Qin, he wished he could hear again the cry of his beloved goshawk.

<sup>14</sup> Zhang Han (fl.3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup>C, CE): writer and statesman who grew so nostalgic for his home cuisine that he abandoned his duty. His disdain for fame and glory was much celebrated.

<sup>15</sup> A reference to Zhang Han (n.38 above): he reportedly said "Being famous after I'm dead? A glass of wine right now would be better". See *The Book of Jin, Life of Zhang Han*.

## RHAPSODY ON THE GREAT ROC

### *Preface*

Once in Jiangling I met Sima Ziwei of Tiantai Mountain<sup>16</sup> who told me I had the grace of a Transcendent and the look and build of an Adept, and that together we could make spirit journeys beyond the far side of the Eight Directions of this world.<sup>17</sup> So in consolation I wrote a *Rhapsody On The Great Roc Meeting The Seldom-Seen Bird*. This rhapsody has been passed around, and noticed from time to time by the public, but I regretted having written it when I was so young, because it conveyed little immensity or insight, and in middle age I rejected it. When I came to read *The Book of Jin*, I noticed Ruan Xuanzi's *Encomium On The Great Roc*,<sup>18</sup> and thought it crude. In due course, I thought back on my rhapsody, remaking it so it was not like the older text at all. Now here I have another manuscript, but dare I pass it on to those who appreciate good writing? Perhaps it might only be shown to young folk.

The Old Transcendent of the South,<sup>19</sup>  
He expounded Heaven-born wisdom in the lacquer gardens.  
His high unrivalled discourse poured out of him,  
Issuing forth wide-ranging and wondrous doctrine.  
From *Humourous Tales of Qi* he quoted a story of a marvel,<sup>20</sup>  
Telling of a great fish in the dark Northern Ocean.  
*I don't know how many thousand leagues long it is...*  
*Its name is Kun, the Smout.*<sup>21</sup>  
It metamorphoses into Da Peng, the Great Roc,

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<sup>16</sup> Sima Chengzhen (d.735CE, aged 80), the famous hermit and Daoist Adept, who lived on Tiantai Mountain in Zhejiang Province, where he was a master of the Arts of Longevity. Jiangling is in Hubei Province.

<sup>17</sup> The 8 points of the compass, in all directions.

<sup>18</sup> The official dynastic history of the Jin Dynasty (265-420CE). Ruan Xuanzi, aka Ruan Xiu (270-311CE) seems otherwise unknown.

<sup>19</sup> i.e. Zhuangzi, 'Master Zhuang', the philosopher Zhuang Zhou (fl. c.4thC BCE). He was enfeoffed by the emperor as *Nanhua Zhenren*, Perfected Adept of Nanhua (S. China), in 742CE. He is said to have been a minor official working in, or in charge of, lacquer gardens.

<sup>20</sup> *Qixie*: some authorities believe this to be a person's name; others, a book title: see *Zhuangzi* cap. I. Qi was a princely state in modern Shandong Province, 1046-221BCE.

<sup>21</sup> A quotation from *Zhuangzi* cap. I.

By congealing its substance into a shapeless embryo.  
Then it sheds its dorsal fins over the islands of the ocean,  
To spread its feathers at Heaven's Gate.  
Swiftly sweeps the spring tides of the Swelling Sea,<sup>22</sup>  
A Bolstered Mulberry sun at first light rising.<sup>23</sup>  
Its resplendence renowned across the universe,  
It out-tops the heights of Kunlun.<sup>24</sup>  
With each beat of its dancing wings,  
Haze and sand obscure the sky.  
The Five March Mounts are shaken,<sup>25</sup>  
And every waterway roils and breaks its banks.

So the Great Roc treads bountiful Earth,  
Lifted to the grand clarity of Heaven's Path.<sup>26</sup>  
It traverses the layered empyrean,  
Crosses the wide ocean.  
Whose waters spurt three thousand leagues high,  
As swift is its ascent to ninety thousand leagues.  
At its back lofty Mount Tai's towering height,  
Its wings raise the unbroken cloud's length and breadth.  
It circles left, wheels right,  
Now hidden in dark cloud, now in bright sun clearly seen.  
Through endless space gyring unconstrained,  
To reach the sheer heights of Heaven's Front Gate.  
It jolts Primordial Chaos,<sup>27</sup>  
Stirs up the thunder.  
The dipper turns off course and the sky shifts,  
Mountains quake and the sea tilts.  
Against its anger none can fight,  
Against its power none can contend.  
Just imagine its mighty presence,

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<sup>22</sup> The Bohai Sea, between Liaoning and Shandong Provinces.

<sup>23</sup> *Fusang*, or Bolstered Mulberry, is the name of the mythical mulberry tree at the eastern edge of the world, from where the sun rises.

<sup>24</sup> The *axis mundi* around which Heaven and Earth revolve, a mythical mountain in the far west, whose name also refers to the modern Kunlun mountain range on the Tibetan plateau.

<sup>25</sup> The five holy mountains which mark the centre and the 4 cardinal directions, where the Emperor offered sacrifices.

<sup>26</sup> The Daoist term *Tai Qing*, or Great Clarity, denoting the upper air, space, or the sky, the 3<sup>rd</sup> of the Nine-Layered Heavens.

<sup>27</sup> The chaos before Creation, which began with the emergence of light & dark (yang & yin).

The likeness of its seeming form.

Its foot, now, encompasses the rainbow,  
Its eye outshines the moon.

Agile and rapid,  
Puissant and swift.

It expels its breath and clouds in the Six Directions quicken,<sup>28</sup>  
It shakes its feathers and for a thousand leagues snowflakes fill  
the sky.

From the far Northern Wastes,

It's heading for the last corner of the South.

Now it leisurely wields its great wings to sideslip,  
Launching swift squalls, it sails fast and far.

The Torch Dragon lights the world with open mouth,<sup>29</sup>

Skyline lightning cracks the whip to open the way.

The Three Divine Mountains in its sight are as clods of earth,

The Five Lakes in its view are but beakers of wine.<sup>30</sup>

Its every move resonates with Divinity,

Every action conforms to the Way of Heaven.

Duke Ren saw it and gave up his fish hook,

Hou Yi of Youqiong dared not bend his bow.<sup>31</sup>

Didn't one cast aside his rod and the other lose his arrows,

As both looked up at it heaving long sighs?

And in its majesty the Great Roc is a spectacular sight,

Boundless and resplendent as the Milky Way.

It caresses the sapphire firmament above,

It covers the expansive Earth below.

When Pan Gu split Heaven from Earth he saw it face to face,

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<sup>28</sup> The 4 cardinal points, plus up and down, hence 'everywhere'.

<sup>29</sup> Mythical solar dragon with a human head, it brings dawn by opening its eyes, or as here, its mouth. See *Shan Hai Jing (The Book of Mountains and Seas)*, *Chu Ci: Tian Wen (Songs of the South, Questions to Heaven)*.

<sup>30</sup> The mythical Three Divine Mountains are the three Transcendent isles of Penglai, Yingzhou, and Fangzhang, in the Bohai Sea. The actual Five Lakes are on the Yangtze Delta: Dongting and Taihu are the best known of them, but there are several lists, and we don't know which set Li Bai had in mind.

<sup>31</sup> *Zhuangzi: Wai Wu* tells how the Duke of Ren made a great fish hook to catch monster fish. Hou Yi of Youqiong, legendary archer of antiquity, who shot out the 9 surplus suns, is sometimes seen as the god of archery (see *Shu Jing, The Book of Documents*).

Xi He leaned on the Sun and gasped alongside it.<sup>32</sup>  
It dazzles amid the world's Eight Wastelands,  
It blocks the sun over half the world's Four Seas.  
It hides the daylight with its breast,  
As if Primordial Chaos had not yet divided.  
Swiftly it soars to circle once more,  
As rosy clouds clear and mists disperse.

Six months later the Great Roc rests,  
Having reached the sea strand.  
Suddenly it mounts high on the wind, blocking the sunlight,  
Then turns its back to high Heaven and downward hangs.  
It rests above the never-ending wilderness,  
Enters the vast flood of the Ocean Pool.  
Where its fierce aspect it projects,  
Where it blasts out its breath,  
Deep dark tides bound and surge,  
High craggy hills in hordes are scattered.  
The sea-god Tian Wu is terrified by it,  
The sea-god Hai Ruo trembles at it.<sup>33</sup>  
The giant turtles that carry the Three Divine Mountains retreat  
at a run,<sup>34</sup>  
The mighty whales leap from the waves then dash for the  
depths.  
The first draw their heads in, the second lower their dorsal fins,  
None of them daring to catch a glimpse of the Great Roc.  
Neither do I presume to measure the mystery of such a creature,  
For without doubt the Shaper of Change created it.  
How can the Great Roc be compared to the yellow swans of  
Penglai,  
Who flaunt their golden tunics and chrysanthemum skirts?<sup>35</sup>  
It shames the Dark Mysterious Phoenix of Cangwu Mountain,

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<sup>32</sup> Pan Gu is the mythical creator of Heaven and Earth out of undifferentiated Primordial Chaos, and the first living being. Xi He is the sun goddess of myth and legend, who gave birth to ten suns, nine of which were shot down by Hou Yi (n.17, supra). See *Huainanzi*, and *Chu Ci: Tian Wen (Songs of the South, Questions to Heaven)*.

<sup>33</sup> See *Shan Hai Jing (The Book of Mountains and Seas)* for Tian Wu, who has 8 heads, 8 arms, and 8 legs, and is greenish yellow; for Hai Ruo see *Zhuangzi: Qiu Shui*

<sup>34</sup> See n.16 above, and *Shan Hai Jing (The Book of Mountains and Seas)*.

<sup>35</sup> An allusion (see *Xi Jing Zaji*) to Emperor Zhao of the Han Dynasty who wrote a song on the gloriously-coloured birds that came to the ornamental imperial lakes in 86BCE: the lakes had 3 islands, named after the Three Divine Mountains (n.16, above).

Who can only boast brightly-coloured plumage and brocade-  
 bonny markings.  
 Mastered by Numinous Ones and Transcendents,  
 Long controlled in foss and moat mayhem it brings.  
 Diligently the Jingwei Bird carries branches in her beak,  
 Mournful is the Yuanju Phoenix before the sacrificial goblets.<sup>36</sup>  
 Heaven's Cockerel proclaims the dawn from the Immortal Peach  
 tree,  
 Bright shines the Crouching Crow from the sun.<sup>37</sup>  
 They are not at ease and untrammelled in the vastness,  
 Why are they such sticklers for the old ways?  
 They are unlike the Great Roc in its unfettered freedom,  
 For there is no class or kind of creature to compare with it.  
 It is not overbearing or tyrannical,  
 It will advance or hide away at the appropriate moment.  
 It grasps the Mysterious Root and has the same lifespan,  
 To fill its belly it drinks from the Primal Pneuma.<sup>38</sup>  
 It sports in the Valley of Sunrise and goes to and fro,  
 It crosses the water to the Scorching Isle and looks up and  
 down.<sup>39</sup>

Before long the Seldom-Seen Bird saw it and said:  
 “Oh, majestic are you indeed Great Roc,  
 And what a joy is this!  
 My right wing covers the land's western ends,  
 My left wing spreads over the wastes of the farthest east.  
 I tread across the mountainous arteries of the earth,  
 I circle all around the starry net of the heavens.  
 Obscurity is my nest,

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<sup>36</sup> Jingwei Bird, a mythological bird goddess, a woman who drowned and was transformed into a bird: every day it drops twigs and pebbles into the sea, and will do so until it is filled in. See *Shan Hai Jing (The Book of Mountains and Seas)*. For the Yuanju Phoenix, which died rather than eat or drink, see *Zhuangzi, Outer Chapters, Zhi Le*.

<sup>37</sup> Mythological cockerel that is the first to crow at dawn: it roosts on the tree where the Peaches of Immortality grow. See Ren Fang (460-508CE) *Shu Yi Ji; Shan Hai Jing (The Book of Mountains and Seas)*, et al. The 3-legged Crouching Crow lives in the sun: see *Huai Nan Zi, Jing Shen Xun*.

<sup>38</sup> i.e. the Mysterious Root of the Dao; Primal Pneuma, the undifferentiated energy which existed before Yin and Yang split to create all things. See Laozi *Dao De Jing* passim.

<sup>39</sup> The Valley of Sunrise is where the sun rises in ancient myths; the legendary Scorching Isle, inhabited by Transcendents, is in the southern seas. See *Shu Jing, Yao Dian (Book of Documents)*.



The void my arena.<sup>40</sup>  
I call on you to travel,  
To soar with me".  
So the Great Roc consented to this,  
And followed gladly after.  
Then the two beasts mounted the Endless Empyrean—  
As the quail and its kind are ridiculed for fluttering about the  
hedgerows.<sup>41</sup>

## 《大鵬賦》

### 序

余昔於江陵，見天台司馬子微，謂余有仙風道骨，可與神遊八極之表。因著大鵬遇希有鳥賦以自廣。此賦已傳於世，往往人間見之。悔其少作，未窮宏達之旨，中年棄之。及讀晉書，睹阮宣子大鵬贊，鄙心陋之。遂更記憶，多將舊本不同。今復存手集，豈敢傳諸作者？庶可示之子弟而已。

### 其辭曰：

南華老仙，發天機於漆園。吐崢嶸之高論，開浩蕩之奇言。徵至怪於齊諧，談北溟之有魚。吾不知其幾千里，其名曰鯤。化成大鵬，質凝胚渾。脫髻鬣于海島，張羽毛於天門。刷渤澥之春流，晞扶桑之朝暉。燁赫乎宇宙，憑陵乎崑崙。一鼓一舞，煙濛沙昏。五嶽為之震盪，百川為之崩奔。

爾乃蹶厚地，揭太清。亘層霄，突重溟。激三千以崛起，向九萬而迅征。背葉太山之崔嵬，翼舉長雲之縱橫。左回右旋，倏陰忽明。歷汗漫以夭矯，弭閭闔之崢嶸。簸鴻蒙，扇雷霆。斗轉而天動，山搖而海傾。怒無所搏，雄無所爭。固可想像其勢，仿佛其形。

<sup>40</sup> i.e. the places/non-places of the Dao. See *Zhuangzi*, passim.

<sup>41</sup> See *Zhuangzi*, cap. 1.

若乃縈虹蜺，目耀日月。連軒沓拖，揮霍翕忽。噴氣則六合生雲，灑毛則千里飛雪。邈彼北荒，將窮南圖。運逸翰以傍擊，鼓奔飆而長驅。燭龍銜光以照物，列缺施鞭而啟途。塊視三山，杯觀五湖。其動也神應，其行也道俱。任公見之而罷釣，有窮不敢以彎弧。莫不投竿失鏃，仰之長吁。

爾其雄姿壯觀，塊軋河漢。上摩蒼蒼，下覆漫漫。盤古開天而直視，羲和倚日以旁嘆。繽紛乎八荒之間，掩映乎四海之半。當胸臆之掩畫，若混茫之未判。忽騰覆以迴轉，則霞廓而霧散。

然後六月一息，至於海湄。欸翳景以橫翥，逆高天而下垂。憩乎泱漭之野，入乎汪漭之池。猛勢所射，餘風所吹。溟漲沸渭，岩巒紛披。天吳為之怵栗，海若為之躡踞。巨鯨冠山而卻走，長鯨騰海而下馳。縮殼挫鬣，莫之敢窺。吾亦不測其神怪之若此，蓋乃造化之所為。

豈比夫蓬萊之黃鵠，夸金衣與菊裳？恥蒼梧之玄鳳，耀彩質與錦章。既服御於靈仙，久馴擾於池隍。精衛殷勤於銜木，鷓鴣悲愁乎薦觴。天雞警曉於蟠桃，踰鳥晰耀於太陽。不曠盪而縱適，何拘攣而守常？未若茲鵬之逍遙，無厭類乎比方。不矜大而暴猛，每順時而行藏。參玄根以比壽，飲元氣以充腸。戲暘谷而徘徊，馮炎洲而抑揚。

俄而希有鳥見謂之曰：偉哉鵬乎，此之樂也。吾右翼掩乎西極，左翼蔽乎東荒。跨躡地終，周鏃天綱。以恍惚為巢，以虛無為場。我呼爾游，爾同我翔。於是乎大鵬許之，欣然相隨。此二禽已登於寥廓，而斥鴳之輩，空見笑於藩籬。

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Holton regularly appears at conferences and literary festivals, and has lectured at universities in the UK, Europe, the USA, New Zealand, China, and elsewhere. He has also won prizes for his translations, and for his own original poetry. He sings and plays the music of the Scottish Borders, where he was born and still lives.