

莫不
候期應節
沿濤汎湄
薄言采之
興言報之
發文局之麗什
動幽幌之情詩
使人結眷
令人想思

No one does not
Eagerly anticipate the coming of the time and
excitedly greet the arrival of the season,
When one can follow the current and coast the
water margins.
Ho, they go to pick lotus;
Lo, they come offering its blossoms.
Beautiful cantos push open ornately bedecked gates;
Sweet love lyrics draw apart securely shut curtains.
It causes one's heart to pang with affection;
It makes one's mind churn with longing. (ll. 235-42)

“So superb is the lotus,” Wang Bo next declares, that

色震百草
香奪九芝
棲碧羽之神雀
負青龜之寶龜
紫帙流記
丹經祕詞
豈徒
加繡柱之光彩
曄文井之華滋

Its beauty eclipses the radiance of all other plants;
Its aroma surpasses even the nine-peduncle magic
mushrooms.
Blue-plumed magic birds roost on its flowers;
Azure-shelled precious tortoises rest on its pads.
Purple satin pouches sheathe scrolls of transmitted
accounts [of lotus];
Books of cinnabar record instructions for secret
[lotus] incantations.
How can it merely be consigned
To add luster to the embroidered columns
Or to amplify the resplendence of ornate ceilings?
(ll. 243-50)

A poem can
have various
indentations. Always
follow the MS but
be aware of any
inconsistencies.

It is at this point, having praised the lotus with utmost hyperbole, that Wang Bo invites his readers to imagine life without the beauty and delight of lotus—to imagine a world in which the sighting of one is as rare as catching a glimpse of the mythical phoenix or birds of synced-wings (*biyi niao* 比翼鳥). The picture he paints is decidedly bleak:

必能使
眾瑞彩沒
群貺色沮
湯武齋戒

Verily,
Myriad things will lose their magical brilliance;
A multitude of others will cease to emanate their
heavenly luster;
It will lead Kings Tang and Wu to fast and be heedful
of auguries;

than the evident assertion that *this* is the model that the world has been lacking. *This*, he wants us to understand, is the Mother of All Lotus *Fu*.

Organizationally, we may read “Cailian fu” as an episodic poem consisting of a preamble and eight vignettes in which lotus picking figures. The preamble begins with a pronouncement that is startling for being both bold and odd: “Of those things that bring one to rhapsodize without ascending high,” Wang Bo asserts, “Nothing can match lotus picking!” 非登高可以賦者，惟採蓮而已矣 (ll. 1–2). He then elaborates:

況洞庭兮紫波	It is all the more so when the waves of Lake Dongting are coated purple
復瀟湘兮綠水	Or when the waters of Xiaoxiang River are colored green,
或暑雨兮朝霽	When the summer rain is just giving way to a clear morning sky
乍涼颿兮暮起	Or when the cool breeze suddenly stirs in the falling dusk.
黛葉青跗	Deep-green leaves and virescent sepals of lotus
煙周五湖	Spread like mist permeating the Five Lakes;
紅葩絳蕊	Their carmine blossoms and crimson blooms
電鑠千里	Irradiate thousands of miles in a blaze of brilliance. ²⁰

(ll. 3–10)

‘turnover lines’ indented

No justification of text, but

The fine beauty of the lotus, Wang Bo continues, is appreciated and treasured by everyone everywhere, regardless of one’s station or predilection. Men of lofty mind and ideals—the “solitary sojourners” (*youke* 幽客), the “superior men” (*junzi* 君子)—and the innocent, carefree damsels alike, all respond to lotus with an instinctual affinity. “Don’t you understand why this is so?” he asks in bringing the preamble to conclusion. His answer introduces the vignettes that follow and points ahead, as we will see, to the *fu*’s lessons: “Our attraction to things follows their bidding; / But our inner feelings direct our emotional response” 賞由物召，興以情遷 (ll. 33–34).

In the succeeding episodes of the poem, Wang Bo depicts an array of characters in diverse situations and diverse states of mind. There is the imperial consort feeling unfulfilled in her glamorous but isolated and loveless existence behind the palace walls. She nurses her loneliness and sorrow by gathering lotus blossoms, whose beauty, like her own, is soon to fade. There is the love-struck maiden blissfully basking in the affection and embraces of her prince charming. She picks lotus flowers with glee as her doting suitor takes

20 See n. 39 below regarding the anomalous rhyme scheme in the last four lines of this excerpt.

- 紫陽之真人
 邀我吹玉笙·
 餐霞樓上動仙樂
 嘈然宛似鸞鳳鳴·
- There the Perfected One of Purple Yang³²
 Blew a jade mouth-organ, inviting us
 To his Loft for Quaffing Rose-Clouds, where tran-
 scendent music played,³³
 So dulcetly mellisonant as the calls of simurgh or
 phoenix.
- 袖長管催欲輕舉·
 漢東太守酣歌舞·
 手持錦袍覆我身
 我醉橫眠枕其股·
- As the pipes hurried, sleeves swayed long, on the
 verge of lifting away,
 While the Prefect of Handong commandery tipsily
 sang and danced.
 Taking up in his hands a damask robe, he draped it
 over me,
 As drunkenly I lay insensate, pillowed on his thigh.

[stanza break]

no indentation in case of line numbers in the margin → add. of a stanza ends on the last text line

- 32 The Perfected (or Realized) One of Purple Yang is a Daoist priest surnamed Hu 胡, for whom Li Bo would later compose a memorial stele-inscription. See “Handong Ziyang xiansheng beiming” 漢東紫陽先生碑銘, *LBQJJP* “jiwai shiwen,” 4494–4510; *LBJJZ* 30.1734–38. The epithet “Purple Yang” is resonant in Daoist history as belonging to the Perfected Person born in 80 BCE as Zhou Yishan 周義山 and who eventually ascended to transcendence, later becoming one of the divinities who appeared to Yang Xi 楊羲 in the Shangqing 上清 revelations of 363–370.
- 33 “Quaffing rose-clouds” was a Daoist method of nourishing one’s spiritual essence, known to adepts. Li Bo also wrote a sixteen-line pentametric poem, likely during this same visit, inscribed on the wall of the Master Hu’s loft, “Ti Suizhou Ziyang xiansheng bi” 題隨州紫陽先生壁, *LBQJJP* 25.3563–68; *LBJJZ* 25.1437–38. A difficult question, which would take us too far afield to pursue here, is raised by a prose “preface” possibly also resulting from the same visit. It is called “Preface [to Poetry] on a Winter Night at the Master Ziyang’s Loft for Quaffing Rose-clouds in Suizhou, Seeing Off Yuan Yan, Master of Mists, on his Reclusion at Mount Xiancheng” (“Dongye yu Suizhou Ziyang xiansheng Canxia lou, song Yanzi Yuan Yan yin Xiancheng shan xu” 冬夜於隨州紫陽先生餐霞樓送烟子元演隱仙城山序), *LBQJJP* 27.4143–45; *LBJJZ* 27.1591–93. (“Master of Mists,” 烟子 was Yuan Yan’s Daoist byname, complementing that of his brother or uncle Yuan Danqiu which was “Master of Rose-clouds,” Xiazi 霞子.) In brief, the problem is that in this preface Li Bo states that Yuan Yan was convinced by Hu Ziyang’s description of Mt. Xiancheng as a spiritual environment to go immediately there for a period of reclusion, which was the very occasion for “seeing him off.” But in our poem Li Bo says (line 31) that upon their parting in Suizhou, Yuan headed to Chang’an. Also we note that in our poem Li Bo and Yuan Yan had roamed enjoyably together on Mt. Xiancheng before reaching Suizhou and being welcomed by Hu Ziyang. Full discussion must await another time, but perhaps the years that passed between the time Li Bo wrote the preface and when he wrote his reminiscing poem had caused him to confuse or telescope certain events.