



Moon Beyond the White Clouds
4 Songs to Classical Chinese texts in translation

Peter Seabourne

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I. Distant Bell

Wang Wei (699-761) trans. G.W. Robinson

Distant bell sounding at the mouth of the valley,
Fewer and fewer the fishermen and woodmen,
Away in the far mountains it is evening and
I am going home alone to-wards the white clouds home.

Water-chestnut flowers so delicate, so hardly still,
Willow catkins so light, so easily fly,
Colours of spring on the banks of the marsh to the east,
And I am melan-choly as I shut my door.

II. The Man of the Mountains

Wang Wei (699-761) trans. G.W. Robinson

The man of the mountains wants to go home,
Clouds dark, dark rain driving down,
Waters surging green, rushes swaying,
White egrets suddenly wheeling about. hsi*

My friend you must not hitch up your clothes.
Mountains many layered, all one cloud,
Heaven and earth confused, indistinguishable, hsi
Trees dim and dark, air heavy,

Monkeys not seen only heard, hsi
Suddenly west of the mountains evening light,
We see among the eastern fields a distant village,
Flat plain green, hundred miles clear, I am sad thinking of you.

[*hsi - a nonsense syllable to fill space]

III. Drinking Alone by Moonlight

Li Po (701 - 762) freely adapted PS

From a pot of wine among the flowers I drink alone,
'Til lifting up my cup I beckon the bright moon to be my guest, my shadow making three,
The moon, alas, is no wine drinker, my shadow emptily creeps beside,
Yet moon as friend and shadow as slave must cheer me 'til the spring is spent.

At my song the moon flickers her beams,
In my dance my shadow tumbles and twines.
Sober we were companions, drunk we lost each other.
May we meet at last on the Ri-ver of Stars.

IV. Looking at the moon and thinking of one far away

Chang Chiu-ling (673-740) freely trans. PS

The moon climbs bright above the sea, borne to its furthest rim
Through the endless night it holds the long-ing thoughts of distant hearts
I blow out my candle the radiance remains
I slip on my robe the cold persists
Since I can gather no moonlight to send you
Let me sleep and meet you in a dream.

Moon Beyond the White Clouds

Four classical Chinese songs in translation

I. Distant Bell

Wang Wei (699-761)

trans. G.W. Robinson*

Peter Seabourne

2003

Very Still - like raindrops
like a breeze ♩=60

8va-----1

mp *p* < >

p (simile)

Ped. _____

Damper pedal is intended *not* 3rd Pedal - i.e. R.H. staccato 'bell' notes are laissez vibrer

4

mp *p* *molto* *mp*

mp < >

p

8va-----1

8

p

3 3

poco

Dis-tant bell _____ soun - ding at the mouth of the

8va-----1

mp *p*

* By permission of Pequin Books and the family of the late Mr Robinson - translations are now placed in the public domain

12 *mp* (a little 'actually')

val - ley, Fe - wer and fe - wer the fi - she - men and wood - men,

15 *mp* *poco*

A - way in the far moun - tains it is

19 *sub. p*

eve - ning_ and I am go - ing home a - lone to - wards the white clouds home.

24 *mp*

Wa-ter-chest-nut flo-wers so

30 *mp* *sub. p* *poco*

de - li - cate, so hard - ly still, Wil-low cat-kins so light, so ea-si-ly

35 *mf* (with a little more warmth and forward movement)

fly, Co-lours of spring on the banks of the marsh to the east, -

39 *pp*

And I am me-lan-cho-ly_

p *pp* *ppp*

43 *pochiss.* *p* (immediately a little more composed and factual)

as I shut my door.

p *mp*

47 *molto ten.*

pp *p* *pp* *p* *pp*

II. The Man of the Mountains

Wang Wei (699-761)
trans. G.W. Robinson

Stormy - turbulent ♩=100

f
The man of the moun tains.

pesante
f
simile

[reminder accidentals are not written in each staff here as the chords are maintained throughout the bar and should be self-evident]

f
wants to go home, Clouds dark, dark

f

ff
rain dri-ving down, Wa ters sur - ging, green ru - shes

ff

12

swa - ying, White e - grets sud - den - ly whee - ling a - bout.

15

hsi * My friend

f

pesante

f come prima

* see note on words page

19

you must not hitch up your clothes. Moun - tains ma -

sub. mf

sub. mf

22

ny layered,

24

all one cloud, Hea-ven and earth con-
come prima

ff

Red.

27

fused, in - di - stin - qui - sha - ble,

30

hsi

8va

tr

3

3

3

33

sempre f

Trees dim and dark, air hea-vy,

8va

sempre f

poco

3

3

3

3

8^{vb}
Ped.

36

poco

Mon keys not seen, on - ly heard,

3

3

3

5

5

poco

come prima

39 *ff*

hsi

8va

ff

3 3 3 3

tr

41

molto

pp

mf

pp

Ped.

43 *p*

Sud - den - ly west of the moun-tains

pp

ppp

pp

ppp

pp

8va

3 3 3 3 3 3

8vb

47

eve-ning light, We see a -

8va

pp

ppp

8vb

51

mong the ea - stern fields a dis-tant

pp

pp

ppp

8va

8vb

54

vil - lage, Flat plain green, hun - dred miles clear,

pp

8va

8vb

57

The image shows a musical score for a voice and piano piece. The score is divided into two systems. The first system is the vocal line, written in a treble clef. It begins with a whole rest, followed by a series of notes: a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, a quarter note C5, a quarter note B4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note G4. The lyrics "am sad thin-king of you." are written below the notes. The dynamics include *pp* (pianissimo) and *non ril.* (non ritardando). The second system is the piano accompaniment, written in a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The right hand features a trill in the treble clef, marked *8va* (octave) and *non ril. 3* (trill). The left hand has a simple bass line with whole notes. The dynamics include *pp* (pianissimo).

III. Drinking Alone by Moonlight

Li Po (701 - 762)

freely adapted PS

Jerky, rather unsteady, 'on the edge' ♩=100

f *mp* 8^{va}7

R.H. L.H.

i.e. the lower note is restruck, the top one held

mf *mp*

mf From a pot of

mf 3

8

dryly mp

wine a - mong the flowers I drink a-lone, Til

8va

mp mf

11

lif - ting up my cup I bec - kon the

13

mp (explanation - matter of fact)

bright moon to be my quest, my sha-dow ma - king three,

mp

15 *f*

The moon, a - las, is no wine

17

drin - ker, my sha - dow emp - ti - ly creeps be -

19 *mp*

side, Yet moon as friend and sha-dow as slave must

22 *f*

cheer_ me 'til the spring is spent.

(8)

f *mp*

26 *f*

At my song the

f

28

moon_ fli - ckers her beams,

ff

31 *f*

In my dance my sha - - - dow

33 *p*

tum - bles and twines. So - ber we were com -

35 *p*

pa - ni - ons, drunk we

37

lost each o - ther.

pp *ppp*

3 3

Detailed description: This block contains the musical notation for measures 37 and 38. The vocal line is in 3/4 time, with lyrics "lost each o - ther." The piano accompaniment is in 3/4 time. The right hand features chords and rests, while the left hand has a triplet of eighth notes in measure 37 and another triplet in measure 38. Dynamics include *pp* and *ppp*.

rather dispassionately
39 *mp*

May we meet at last on the Ri - ver of Stars...

mp non rit.

Detailed description: This block contains the musical notation for measures 39 and 40. The vocal line is in 7/8 time, with lyrics "May we meet at last on the Ri - ver of Stars...". The piano accompaniment is in 7/8 time. The right hand has chords and a melodic line, while the left hand has chords. Dynamics include *mp* and *non rit.*.

4. Looking at the moon and thinking of one far away

Chang Chiu-ling (673-740)

freely adapted. PS

Very delicate ♩ = 120

p

poco

And.

beat groups in 2+3 but not exaggeratedly so

p

The moon climbs bright

15 *poco*

a - bove the sea, borne

20 *p*

to its fur - thest rim Through the

25

end - - - less night

29

it holds the long - ing thoughts

32

of dis - tant hearts

36

mp espress. *mf*

6/16 5/16

40 *mp* *p*

I blow out my can - dle the ra - diance re - mains

mp *espress.* *p* *mf*

Ped. Ped.

45 *mp*

I slip on my robe the cold per - sists

mp *espress.*

Ped. Ped.

51 *mp* *espress.* *pp*

mp *espress.* *pp*

Ped.

57 *mp* *espress.*

mp *espress.*

Ped.

63

Since I can

69

ga - ther no moon - light to

73

— send you Let me

77

sleep and meet you

81 *mp*

in a dream

p

85