Three Poems by Xin Qiji (1140-1207)

瑞鶴仙

賦梅

雁霜寒透幕
正護月雲輕
嫩冰猶薄
溪奩照梳掠
想含香弄粉
艷妝難學
玉肌瘦弱
更重重
龍絹縈著
倚東風
一笑嫣然
轉盼萬花差落

寂寞
家山何在
雪後園林
水邊樓閣
瑤池歸約
鱗鴻更
仗誰托
粉蝶兒只解
尋桃覺柳
開遍南枝未覺
但傷心
冷落黃昏
數聲畫角

To The Tune: “Immortals’ Lucky Crane”

Plum blossoms

wild goose weather
heavy frost
chill seeps through the window screen
light protective clouds
veil the moon
new-formed ice is fragile

mirrored in the rushing stream
her hair seems combed
no need for scent or powder
that frail snow-white complexion
set off by ripples
in her blouse of dragon-silk

leaning on the east wind
one glimmer of her gracious smile
ten thousand lesser blossoms tumble

cold and lonely
where is home –
a garden after snow?
a lakeside tower?

for a tryst at Jade Lake
who can she trust
to be her messenger?

white butterflies know only
to search for peach and willow trees
southern branches in full bloom
won’t understand

so sorrow comes once more
with the chill of evening
to echoing bugle calls
一枝花

醉中戏作

千丈擎天手
万卷悬河口
黄金腰下印
大如斗
更千骑弓刀
挥霍遮前后
百计千方百计
似斗草儿童
赢个他家偏有

算枉了
双眉长皱纹
白发空回首
那时闲说向
山中友
看丘攋牛羊
更辨贤愚否
且自栽花柳
怕有人来
但只道今朝中酒

To the Tune “A Sprig of Blossom”

I wrote this for fun when drunk.

a thousand hands held high to heaven
swept along with a torrent of shouts
a gold seal hanging from my belt
big as a ladle

our riders came in swarms with bows and swords
I commanded them to quickly cover front and rear
we tried all kinds of subterfuge
like children fighting in the grass
determined to prevail

futility!
forget the furrow in my brow
with hair turned white
it’s useless to look back

idle now
I pass the time of day
with mountain friends

see those sheep and cattle on the hillside,
who could sort the smart from stupid?

I’ve taken to tending plants and willows
dreading visitors
tell them I’m drunk this morning
A Seven-Character Quatrain (Qijue)

right and wrong  gain and loss  each hard to picture clearly
so I began to study wisdom of the ancients willy-nilly
but closed the books  I’d double up with laughter
and have to get up  pace the floor  and rub my belly