

VI. The Giant Tortoise

At Dawn, Climbing the Heavenly Pillar Peak of Mysterious Mountain

I shake my robe-and mists disperse, leaving clear autumn sky:

from the top most peak, I can see ten thousand miles

into empty distance.

This magic mountain must have flown toward the ocean:

how could the Hanging Gardens have grown here in the sky?

The Bright Spirit beams down its rays

to Yellow Gold Hall;

the Southern Dipper hangs high above

the Palace of the Red Emperor.

Carefully count the peaks: there are thirty-six;

every morning, they seem to clap their hands for joy

like the giant tortoise of paradise.

*Hsii Chung-hsing*⁴

VII. Quiet Birds

A Silvery World

The snow has taken all the fields
And hills, and nothing has been left..

*Joso*¹

Do not stand at my grave and weep
I am not there. I do not sleep.

I am a thousand winds that blow.
I am the diamond glint on snow.

I am the sunlight on ripened grain.
I am the gentle autumn rain.

When you wake in the morning hush
I am the swift uplifting rush
of quiet birds in circling flight.
I am the soft starlight at night.

Do not stand at my grave and weep.
I am not there. I do not sleep.

*Native American*⁶

Footnotes:

¹*Haiku from An Anthology of Haiku Ancient and Modern translated by Asataro Miyamori, Copyright 1932 by Asataro Miyamori*

²*Quatrain (#12) translated by John Moyne and Coleman Barks from Open Secret, Threshold Books, RD 4 Box 600 Putney VT 05346*

³*Quatrain (#91) translated by John Moyne and Coleman Barks from Love is a Stranger, Threshold Books, RD 4 Box 600 Putney VT 05346*

⁴*Excerpt from A Night for Departure translated by John Moyne and Coleman Barks from Love is a Stranger, Threshold Books, RD 4 Box 600 Putney VT 05346*

⁵*Chinese Poems from "The Columbia Book of Later Chinese Poetry translated by Jonathan Chaves, Copyright 1986 by Columbia University Press*

⁶*Native American poem translated by Joyce Fossen from Earth Prayers from Around the World edited by Elizabeth Roberts and Elias Amidon, Harper Collins Publishers.*