Classic Poetry Series

Meng Haoran

- 28 poems -

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A Message from Lake Dongtin to Premier Zhang

Here in the Eighth-month the waters of the lake
Are of a single air with heaven,
And a mist from the Yun and Meng valleys
Has beleaguered the city of Youzhou.
I should like to cross, but I can find no boat.
...How ashamed I am to be idler than you statesmen,
As I sit here and watch a fisherman casting
And emptily envy him his catch.

Meng Haoran

A Night-mooring on the Jiande River

While my little boat moves on its mooring of mist,
And daylight wanes, old memories begin....
How wide the world was, how close the trees to heaven,
And how clear in the water the nearness of the moon!

Meng Haoran

A Spring Morning

I awake light-hearted this morning of spring,
Everywhere round me the singing of birds
But now I remember the night, the storm,
And I wonder how many blossoms were broken.

Meng Haoran

Asleep in the Spring

Asleep in spring I did not heed the dawn
Till the birds broke out singing everywhere.
Last night, in the clamour of wind and rain, How many flowers have fallen
do you suppose?

Meng Haoran

At a Banquet in the House of the Taoist Priest Mei

In my bed among the woods, grieving that spring must end,
I lifted up the curtain on a pathway of flowers,
And a flashing bluebird bade me come
To the dwelling-place of the Red Pine Genie.
...What a flame for his golden crucible
Peach-trees magical with buds !
And for holding boyhood in his face,
The rosy-flowing wine of clouds!

Meng Haoran

At the Mountain-lodge of the Buddhist Priest Ye Waiting in Vain for my Friend Ding

Now that the sun has set beyond the western range,
Valley after valley is shadowy and dim....
And now through pine-trees come the moon and the chill of evening,
And my ears feel pure with the sound of wind and water
Nearly all the woodsmen have reached home,
Birds have settled on their perches in the quiet mist....
And still - because you promised - I am waiting for you, waiting,
Playing lute under a wayside vine.

Meng Haoran

Evening. Anchoring at Hsuan-yang to See Mount Lu

Lofting sail a thousand miles
I could not find a famous mountain.
I moor my boat outside Hsuan-yang
to gaze at last at Hsiang-lu peak.
Once I read the master monk.
He walked outside this world of dust.
Now his Tung-lin hut lies near;
through evening sun I hear a bell.

Meng Haoran

From a Mooring on the Tonglu to a Friend in Yangzhou

With monkeys whimpering on the shadowy mountain,
And the river rushing through the night,
And a wind in the leaves along both banks,
And the moon athwart my solitary sail,
I, a stranger in this inland district,
Homesick for my Yangzhou friends,
Send eastward two long streams of tears
To find the nearest touch of the sea.

Meng Haoran

From Qin Country to the Buddhist Priest Yuan

How gladly I would seek a mountain
If I had enough means to live as a recluse!
For I turn at last from serving the State
To the Eastern Woods Temple and to you, my master.
...Like ashes of gold in a cinnamon-flame,
My youthful desires have been burnt with the years-
And tonight in the chilling sunset-wind
A cicada, singing, weighs on my heart.

Meng Haoran

In Summer at the South Pavilion Thinking of Xing

The mountain-light suddenly fails in the west,
In the east from the lake the slow moon rises.
I loosen my hair to enjoy the evening coolness
And open my window and lie down in peace.
The wind brings me odours of lotuses,
And bamboo-leaves drip with a music of dew....
I would take up my lute and I would play,
But, alas, who here would understand?
And so I think of you, old friend,
O troubler of my midnight dreams !

Meng Haoran

Memories in Early Winter

South go the wildgesse, for leaves are now falling,
And the water is cold with a wind from the north.
I remember my home; but the Xiang River's curves
Are walled by the clouds of this southern country.
I go forward. I weep till my tears are spent.
I see a sail in the far sky.
Where is the ferry? Will somebody tell me?
It's growing rough. It's growing dark.

Meng Haoran

On Climbing Orchid Mountain in the Autumn to Zhang

On a northern peak among white clouds
You have found your hermitage of peace;
And now, as I climb this mountain to see you,
High with the wildgeese flies my heart.
The quiet dusk might seem a little sad
If this autumn weather were not so brisk and clear;
I look down at the river bank, with homeward-bound villagers
Resting on the sand till the ferry returns;
There are trees at the horizon like a row of grasses
And against the river's rim an island like the moon
I hope that you will come and meet me, bringing a basket of wine
And we'll celebrate together the Mountain Holiday.

Meng Haoran

On Climbing Yan Mountain with Friends

While worldly matters take their turn,
Ancient, modern, to and fro,
Rivers and mountains are changeless in their glory
And still to be witnessed from this trail.
Where a fisher-boat dips by a waterfall,
Where the air grows colder, deep in the valley,
The monument of Yang remains;
And we have wept, reading the words.

Meng Haoran

On Returning at the Year's End to Zhongnan Mountain

I petition no more at the north palace-gate.
...To this tumble-down hut on Zhongnan Mountain
I was banished for my blunders, by a wise ruler.
I have been sick so long I see none of my friends.
My white hairs hasten my decline,
Like pale beams ending the old year.
Therefore I lie awake and ponder
On the pine-shadowed moonlight in my empty window.

Meng Haoran

Parting From Wang Wei

Quiet end what wait
Day day must go return
Wish seek fragrant grass go
Grieve with old friend separated
On road who mutual help
Understanding friend life this scarce
Only should observe solitude
Again close native area door
Quietly, I've waited here so long,
Day after day; but now I must return.
Now I go to seek the fragrant grass,
But I grieve to part from my old friend.
Who is there who would help me on the road?
Understanding friends are few in life.
I should just observe my solitude,
And close again the gate of my old home.

Meng Haoran

Returning at Night to Lumen Mountain

A bell in the mountain-temple sounds the coming of night.
I hear people at the fishing-town stumble aboard the ferry,
While others follow the sand-bank to their homes along the river.
...I also take a boat and am bound for Lumen Mountain
And soon the Lumen moonlight is piercing misty trees.
I have come, before I know it, upon an ancient hermitage,
The thatch door, the piney path, the solitude, the quiet,
Where a hermit lives and moves, never needing a companion.

Meng Haoran

Seeing off Du Shisi South of the River

Jingzhou Dongwu mutual meet water for place
You go spring river now wide
Sunset travel sail where moor
End of sky one look break person heart
Jingzhou and Dongwu are both on the water,
You travel down the river in spring, now the level is high.
A sail is underway at sunset, what place will it moor?
Looking to the end of the sky can break a man's heart.

Meng Haoran

Spending the Night on Jiande River

Move boat moor mist islet
Sun set person sorrow new
Land vast heaven low tree
River clear moon near person
The boat is moored beside the misty islet,
As sun goes down, my sorrow starts anew.
Out on the plain, the trees and heavens touch,
The moon seems close to me on this clear water.

Meng Haoran

Spring Dawn

Spring sleep not wake dawn
Everywhere hear cry bird
Night come wind rain sound
Flower fall know how many
I slumbered this spring morning, and missed the dawn,
From everywhere I heard the cry of birds.
That night the sound of wind and rain had come,
Who knows how many petals then had fallen?

Meng Haoran

Stopping at a Friend's Farm-house

Preparing me chicken and rice, old friend,
You entertain me at your farm.
We watch the green trees that circle your village
And the pale blue of outlying mountains.
We open your window over garden and field,
To talk mulberry and hemp with our cups in our hands.
...Wait till the Mountain Holiday
I am coming again in chrysanthemum time.

Meng Haoran

Taking Leave of Wang Wei

Slow and reluctant, I have waited
Day after day, till now I must go.
How sweet the road-side flowers might be
If they did not mean good-bye, old friend.
The Lords of the Realm are harsh to us
And men of affairs are not our kind.
I will turn back home, I will say no more,
I will close the gate of my old garden.

Meng Haoran

Thinking of Xin in South Pavilion on a Summer's Day

Mountain glow sudden west set
Pond moon gradually east up
Loose hair enjoy evening cool
Open window lie idle spacious
Lotus wind carry scent air
Banboo dew drip clear sound
Wish fetch sound qin pluck
Regret not perceive sound appreciate
Feel this think of old friend
Whole night labour dream think
The glow on western mountains quickly sets,
The moon is climbing over the eastern lake.
My hair loose, I enjoy the evening cool,
I lie in peace before the open window.
The wind spreads lotus scent all through the air,
The sound of dripping bamboo dew is clear.
Although I'd like to fetch my qin and play,
To my regret, there is no-one to hear.
So touched by this, I think of my old friend,
Throughout the night, I'm troubled by my dreams.

Meng Haoran

Thoughts in Early Winter

Tree shed goose south cross
North wind river on cold
My home Xiang water bend
Far distance Chu cloud edge
Home tears travel in exhausted
Solitary sail sky edge watch
Lost ferry wish have ask
Level sea dusk wide
Trees shed leaves, and geese are flying south;
The north wind blows, here on the river it's cold.
My home is at the bend of the waters of Xiang,
Far beyond the edge of the clouds of Chu.
Travelling, I've exhausted my tears for home,
I watch a lone sail at the heavens' end.
The ferry's gone- who can I ask where?
Darkness falls beside the level sea.

Meng Haoran

To Buddhist Priest Yuan From Chang'an

One hillock often wish lie
Three times hardship without money
North land not my wish
East forest think my master
Gold burn cassia exhaust
Great ideal each year decline
Sun set cool wind come
Hear cicada still increase sorrow
I'd often like to lie atop a hill,
Instead I suffer hardship, lacking money.
This northern land was never what I wished,
Instead I think of my teacher in the eastern forest.
Golden flecks in the ash of cassia wood,
My great ideals decline more year by year.
As the sun goes down, a chilling wind appears,
To hear cicadas makes me sorrow more.

Meng Haoran

To My Old Friend in Yangzhou From a Boat Moored at Night on the Tonglu River

Mountain dark hear ape sorrow
Dark blue river swift night flow
Wind cry both banks leaves
Moon shine one solitary boat
Jiande not my land
Still Yang recall old friend
Also be two line tears
Far send sea west edge
I hear the mourning apes on darkened hills,
The dark blue river flows swiftly through the night.
On each bank, leaves are rustled by the wind,
The moon illuminates my lonely boat.
This place, Jiande, is not my native land,
I still recall my old friend in Yangzhou.
Again two tears trace two lines down my face,
I'd send them to the ocean's western coast.

Meng Haoran

To Zhang, Climbing Orchid Mountain on an Autumn Day

North mountain white cloud in
Hermit self happy please
Mutual see try climb high
Heart like goose fly fade
Sorrow reason dusk increase
Desire be clear autumn cause
Now see return villagers
Sand walk crossing edge rest
Heaven edge tree like grass
River bank islet like moon
When bring wine bring
Together drunk near Yang festival
The northern mountain is hidden in white cloud,
A happy place for hermits to retire.
So we can meet, I try to climb the heights,
My heart is fading like a goose in flight.
My sorrow's prompted by the creeping dusk,
But then clear autumn spurs on my desires.
At length we see the villagers return,
They walk the sand and rest at the river crossing.
The trees against the sky are like shepherd's purse,
An islet by the shore just like the moon.
I hope you have some wine to celebrate,
We'll spend the autumn festival drunk together.

Meng Haoran

Visiting An Old Friend On His Farm

Old friend prepare chicken millet
Invite me to farm house
Green tree village edge join
Green hills city wall beyond slope
Open window face farm garden
Hold wine talk mulberry hemp
Wait come near bright day
Return come near chrysanthemum flower
My old friend's prepared a meal of chicken and millet,
And invited me to join him at his farmhouse.
The village is surrounded by green trees,
Blue hills slope up beyond the city wall.
The window opens onto the vegetable garden,
Where holding wine, we talk of mulberry and hemp.
We are looking forward to the autumn festival,
When I'll return to see the chrysanthemums bloom.

Meng Haoran

Waiting for Ding

Sunset sun limit west range
Group valley swiftly then dark
Pine moon begin night cool
Wind spring fill clear hear
Woodsmen return almost exhausted
Mist birds perch first stable
This person expect visit come
Alone qin wait ivy path
The sun is setting behind the western hills,
And swiftly all the valleys fill with shadow.
Between the pines, the moon brings in night's cool,
The sound of wind and stream is full and clear.
Now almost all the woodsmen have returned,
The birds are perching somewhere in the mist.
As I am expecting you to come and stay,
I take my qin and wait on the ivy path.

Meng Haoran