

LIFE AS DUST: A LITERARY SURVEY OF MOUNT BEIMANG

by

YIYI LUO

B.A., Fudan University, P.R. China, 2008

A thesis submitted to the
Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Colorado in partial fulfillment
of the requirement for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of Asian Languages and Civilizations

2011

This thesis entitled:

Life as Dust: A Literary survey of Mount Beimang

written by Yiyi Luo

has been approved for the Department of Asian Languages and Civilizations

Paul W. Kroll

Matthias L. Richter

Antje Richter

Date _____

The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we
Find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards
Of scholarly work in the above mentioned disciplin

Yiyi Luo (M.A., Chinese)

Life as Dust: A Literary Survey of Mount Beimang

Thesis directed by Professor Paul W. Kroll

Mount Beimang 北邙山 was located to the northeast of the historical Luoyang 洛陽. Ascending high on this mountain, one could enjoy a panoramic view of the capital city. The beautiful view of Beimang and its advantageous location just outside the capital city walls made it an ideal graveyard for the well-to-do and contributed to its role as a special poetic image in classical poetry. The purpose of this paper is to study this image and seek related aspects of it in poems from early medieval and medieval China. I shall first study poems composed in the pre-Tang period. Despite their paucity, these poems can be divided into two groups, each of which can be read within a similar pattern in terms of poetic sequences and motifs. Then I shall proceed to poems in the Tang, which display a more vivid and diverse picture of the mountain because of their vocabularies and images selected from a larger hoard. By surveying various tropes and themes in these poems, I hope to explore a full picture of the mountain and its cultural value in traditional China.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER

I.	INTRODUCTION	1
II.	MOUNT BEIMANG IN THE PRE-TANG PERIOD.....	2
III.	MOUNT BEIMANG IN THE TANG DYNASTY.....	25
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	6

Chapter I

Introduction

Mount Beimang 北邙山, commonly referred to as Beimang or Mangshan 邙山 (sometimes written alternatively with the graph 芒), is located to the north of the historical Luoyang 洛陽 (also today's Luoyang). Ascending high on this mountain, one can enjoy a panoramic view of the capital city. In a letter to his brother, Zhu Chaoshi 朱超石 (fl. ca. 416-420), a scholar of the Liu Song 劉宋 period (420-479), says: “Ascending Beimang and gazing afar, one can see all the beautiful things” 登北芒遠眺, 眾美都盡.¹ Also, because of its being to the north of the city, it faces south, and the auspicious location makes it an ideal burial place. The mountain began to serve as a graveyard in the Qin 秦 dynasty (221-206 BCE). In many of the poems we shall examine, the mountain is presented mainly as a graveyard. It brings visitors to the front of death and arouses their lamentations on the passage of time, remembrance of the past, and the constancy of nature in contrast with the transience of human life. Such motifs make frequent appearances in Chinese literature, yet in poems related with Mount Beimang they are intensely and almost exclusively explored. Also, because of its proximity to Luoyang, the capital of several dynasties, the mountain witnessed the rise and fall of history. It experienced chaos and plundering during the decline of the Eastern Han 東漢 (25-220), and enjoyed prosperity in the Tang 唐 dynasty (618-907). As we shall see in the following poems, the presentation of Mount Beimang is often framed in the context of Luoyang.

¹ *Yiwen leiju* 藝文類聚, ed. Ouyang Xun 歐陽詢 (557-641) (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1965; hereafter *YWLJ*), 7.137.

In this paper, I shall examine the poetic image of the mountain and seek related aspects of this image in literature of this topic in early medieval and medieval China. I shall first study poems composed in the pre-Tang period. Despite their paucity, these poems can be divided into two groups, each of which can be read within a similar pattern in terms of poetic sequences and motifs. Then I shall proceed to poems in the Tang, which display a more vivid and diverse picture of the mountain because of their vocabularies and images selected from a larger hoard. By surveying various tropes and themes in these poems, I hope to explore a full picture of the mountain and its cultural value in traditional China.

Chapter II

Mount Beimang in the Pre-Tang Period

The earliest poem pertaining to Mount Beimang among extant texts is “Ballad of Five Yees” (Wuyi ge 五噫歌) by Liang Hong 梁鴻, a poet from the Eastern Han.²

I scale this Beimang--Yee!

陟彼北芒兮，噫！ } 1

I look back and scan the thearchic metropolis--Yee!

顧覽帝京兮，噫！ } 2

Palaces and houses are towering and spiring --Yee!

宮室崔嵬兮，噫！

People are toiling and laboring--Yee!

民之劬勞兮，噫！ } 3

Enduring and lasting, without an end--Yee!

遼遼未央兮，噫！

² *Xian Qin Han Wei Jin nanbeichao shi* 先秦漢魏晉南北朝詩, ed. Lu Qinli 逯欽立 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983; hereafter Lu Qinli), 166. Lu does not specify the source of this poem, but it seems to come from Liang Hong’s biography in the *Hou Han shu* 後漢書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1965), 83. 2765-2768. This poem is also included in *Yuefu shij* 樂府詩集 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979; hereafter *YFSJ*), 85.1193 and attached as a commentary to Zhao Zhi’s 趙至 “Letter to Ji Maoqi” 與嵇茂齊書 in *Wenxuan* 文選, comp. Xiao Tong 蕭統 (503-551), comm. Li Shan 李善 (d. 689) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubenshe, 1986; hereafter *WX*), 43. 1940. Number 1, 2 and 3 refer to essential component 1, 2, and 3 respectively, which shall be discussed.

The form of this poem is noteworthy. It is composed of five lines and each of them ends with an exclamation, *yi* 噫, which causes a shocking effect and conveys sad feelings. The penultimate word that precedes *yi*, the carrier-sound *xi* 兮, serves as a pause between the description of the poet and his exclamation. Since *xi* and *yi* have no substantive meanings, this seemingly hexasyllabic poem may actually be considered a tetrasyllabic piece.

The first two lines, both starting with verbs, “scale” (*zhi* 陟) and “look back and scan” (*gulan* 顧覽), are a narrative of the poet’s movement. The third line shifts to the viewing of the capital city from the top of the mountain. The dominant image is the “towering and spiring” (*cuiwei* 崔嵬) palaces and houses, which represent the magnificence and luxury of the royal families. This scene, however, arouses the poet’s sympathy toward the common people, whose laboring is mentioned though not displayed in detail, and forms a sharp contrast with the preceding line. The transition from line 3 to line 4 and 5 is abrupt. “Enduring and lasting” (*liaoliao* 遼遼), normally used as descriptive of distant space, is borrowed here for time. The poet’s imagination of the suffering of people insinuates his criticism of the ruling house, which can be supported by Liang Hong’s biography in the *Hou Han shu*: we are told there that when Emperor Zhang of the Eastern Han 漢章帝 (r. 76-89) read this poem he was offended by it.³

Mount Beimang in this poem merely serves as a location from where the poet beholds the scene. Boldly speaking, we can even replace it with any other mountain from which one can see Luoyang, without changing the theme and tone of this poem. Yet its opening two lines and its thematic sequences are echoed in the three pieces on Mount Beimang that we will examine next, and its somber setting lays the sad tone for them. These poems start with the poet’s ascent of the

³ *Hou Han shu*, 83. 2767.

mountain, from which he gazes at the capital, continue with the description of the scene, and end with his reflection aroused by this vision. Of course there are many variants and developments in the later versions: each poet presents a different image of Luoyang and produces various thoughts, yet they never stray too far from the basic pattern embodied in the “Ballad of Five Yees.”

The ensuing poem is an expansion of “Ballad of Five Yees,” but a much more famous piece. It is the first of “Two Poems on Sending off Mr. Ying” (Song Yingshi shi ershou 送應氏詩二首) by Cao Zhi 曹植 (192-232),⁴ in which the poet describes the desolate scene of Luoyang when bidding farewell to the brothers Ying Yang 應瑒 (d.217) and Ying Qu 應璩 (190-252).⁵ The poem is dated to 211, when Luoyang was still in ruins after having been plundered by Dong Zhuo 董卓 (d.192) in 190.⁶ The dismal site of the former capital of the Eastern Han aroused the poet’s sadness and melancholy. Basic thematic sequences and essential components in the “Ballad of Five Yees” are preserved, but they are much expanded.

On foot I ascend the slope of Beimang;

In the distance I gaze at mountains around Luoyang.

步登北邙阪 } 1
遙望洛陽山 }

⁴ Lu Qinli, 454; also *WX* 20.974.

⁵ The main source for Ying Yang’s life is included in *Wenzhang xulu* 文章敘錄 by Xun Xu 荀勗 (d. 289), as quoted in the commentary to *Sanguo zhi* 三國志 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959), 21.601. For the details of Ying Qu’s life, also see *Sanguo zhi*, 21.604. Ying Yang was a member of the “Seven Masters of Jian’an” (*Jian’an qizi* 建安七子). Ying Qu is famous for his poems of political criticism, especially the set of “Bai yi” (*Baiyi* 百一) poems. For a comprehensive study of Ying Qu’s life and “Bai yi” poems, see David R. Knechtges, “The Problem with Anthologies: The Case of the “Bai yi” Poems of Ying Qu (190-252),” *Asia Major* 3rd ser. 23.1 (2010): 173-99.

⁶ On the dating of this poem, see Zhang Keli 張可禮, *San Cao nianpu* 三曹年譜 (Ji’nan: Qi Lu shushe, 1983), 117.

	How empty and lonely Luoyang is!	洛陽何寂寞	}	2
4	Palaces and houses utterly burned to ashes.	宮室盡燒焚		
	Ramparts and walls have all collapsed;	垣牆皆頓擗		
	Brambles and thorns reach up to the sky.	荊棘上參天		
	I do not see the familiar elders;	不見舊耆老		
8	But only behold new young men.	但睹新少年		
	Treading aside, there are no walking paths;	側足無行徑		
	Wasted fields, no longer ploughed.	荒疇不復田		
	The roaming traveler, not returning for a long time,	遊子久不歸		
12	Cannot recognize the trails and byways.	不識陌與阡		
	How desolate and bleak the wilderness is!	中野何蕭條		
	For thousands of leagues there are no hearth fires.	千里無人煙		
	I long for those who lived with me in former times;	念我平常居	}	3
16	My breath knots up and I cannot speak.	氣結不能言		

What came to be traditional elements related to “Sending-Off” (*songbie* 送別) poems, as indicated by the title, are absent in this piece. Instead, the bulk of the poem is devoted to the description of the bleak city devastated by war. The poem, like Liang Hong’s, opens with a couplet of ascending Mount Beimang. Here the two verbs of the first two lines in Liang Hong’s poem are replaced by synonyms, “ascend on foot” (*budeng* 步登) and “gaze in the distance” (*yaowang* 遙望). The following 12 lines (line 3 to 14) are much more descriptive than the

counterpart in the preceding poem and present many new images. “Towering and spiring” palaces and houses disappear and give rise to brambles and thorns that reach up to the sky. The burned palaces, collapsed walls, deserted fields, absence of old acquaintances, and appearance of new young men, all delineate an abandoned and desolate city. The figure of the “roaming traveler” (*youzi* 遊子) is a common trope in classical Chinese poetry, which usually arouses nostalgia and loneliness. All these images evoke a sense of loss and regret, and thus in the closing couplet the poet returns to himself and expresses his grief. Interestingly, though this poem does not touch on separation, the ending line “My breath knots up and I cannot speak” is exactly the same as in one of the “old poems” (*gushi* 古詩) not included in Xiao Tong’s “Nineteen Old Poems” (*Gushi shijiushou* 古詩十九首), a quintessential sending-off poem: “Sadly I bid farewell with my intimate friend, / my breath knots up and I cannot speak” 悲與親友別 / 氣結不能言。⁷

The next piece is a rhapsody (*fu* 賦), “Ascending Beimang” (Deng Beimang *fu* 登北芒賦) by Zhang Xie 張協 (d. 307).⁸ Though this piece is much more elaborate in landscape description than the previous two poems, a careful reader can still recognize the essential components. The poet’s description focuses on the natural landscape around it. Also, concerns about contemporary issues, namely, compassion for the common people’s laboring triggered by beholding the luxury of the royal palaces and houses in Liang Hong’s poem, and reflection of the downfall of the Eastern Han upon seeing the ruins of Luoyang in Cao Zhi’s piece, are replaced by the poet’s

⁷ Lu Qinli, 335.

⁸ *Quan Jin wen* 全晉文, 85.6b-7a, in *Quan Shanggu Sandai Qin Han Sanguo Liuchao wen* 全上古三代秦漢三國六朝文, ed. Yan Kejun 嚴可均 (1762-1843) (rpt. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1958; hereafter Yan Kejun); also *YWLJ*, 7.137.

grief over the passage of time and the briefness of human life, and his concern for history in a general sense.

Before reading the poem, it is necessary to comment on its textual history. The *Quan Jin wen* version comes from *Yiwen leiju*, an encyclopedia compiled in the early 7th century. The text is also preserved in the *Han Wei Liuchao baisan mingjia ji* 漢魏六朝百三名家集, a compilation of the early 17th century,⁹ and in the *Lidai fuhui* 歷代賦彙, a large collection of *fu* finished by the early 18th century.¹⁰ The original source of this text is not specified in these two compilations, but it might also come from *Yiwen leiju*, since these two texts were compiled later, and there are very few textual variants from the *Yiwen leiju* version, and most of these variants are graphic instead of lexical ones.

This poem is stanzaic and composed of hexasyllabic and tetrasyllabic lines. Stanza breaks in my translation reflect changes in rhymes. It reads as follows:

I scale the peaked hillocks, which twist and coil;	陟巒丘之麗陀	} 1
Ascend the long slope, which winds and meanders.	升逶迤之脩坂	
Reverse my carriage on the towering mountain pass;	迴余車於峻嶺	
4 For a while extend my sight to the four directions afar.	聊送目於四遠	
The numinous alp is lush and reaches to the sky;	靈岳鬱以造天	}
Linked mounds and crags, bending and curling.	連崗巖以蹇產	

⁹ *Zhang Jingyang ji* 張景陽集, in *Han Wei Liuchao baisan mingjia ji* 漢魏六朝百三名家集, ed. Zhang Pu 張溥 (1601-41) (Yangzhou: Jiangsu Guangling guji keyinshe, 1990), 1. 3b-4a. Jingyang is the agnomen of Zhang Xie.

¹⁰ *Lidai fuhui* 歷代賦彙, ed. Chen Yuanlong 陳元龍 (1652-1736) (Beijing: Beijing tushuguan chubanshe, 1999), 11:186.

	Rivers Yi and Luo mix and flow eastward; ¹¹	伊洛混而東流	}	2
8	The imperial dwelling is glorious, lofty and illustrious.	帝居赫以崇顯		
	Mountain rivers run on in their usual bends;	山川汨其常兮	}	3
	The myriad things transform and change around.	萬物化而代轉		
	How endless and boundless the sky and earth are!	何天地之難窮		
12	I grieve over the fragility and shortness of human life.	悼人生之危淺	}	3
	Sigh at the white sun's westward waning;	歎白日之西頹兮		
	And lament that this world's path is filled with hardship.	哀世路之多蹇		
	Thereupon I linger on the sheer mountain pass;	於是徘徊絕嶺	}	1
16	Stay for long and pace back and forth.	踟躕步趾		
	Ahead I survey Wolf Mountain;	前瞻狼山		
	Then I peep back at the Great Bluff.	却闕大岬		
	To the east I gaze at the Tiger's Pen;	東眺虎牢		
20	To the west I glance at the Bear's Ear. ¹²	西睨熊耳		
	They slant and extend to the edge of the sky;	邪互天際	}	
	To the side they reach as far as a myriad leagues.	旁極萬里		

¹¹ The River Yi enters Luoyang from the south and flows northeastwards to the River Luo. River Luo flows through Luoyang northeastwards to the Yellow River.

¹² Wolf Mountain, Great Bluff, Tiger's Pen, and Bear's Ear are mountains around the Luoyang area.

	The lush wilderness, blurred to sight, looks hazy and vague;	莽眩眼以茫昧
24	Truly, its clustered forms are hard to trace.	諒群形之難紀
	Upon a thousand-foot cliff, I look downward;	臨千仞而俯看
	As though I am roaming in clouds and rainbows.	似遊身于雲霓
	Caressed by the long wind, standing for a while;	撫長風以延佇
28	I long to soar to the sky and raise my pinions.	想凌天而舉翮
	Catching sight of caps and canopies, abundant and numerous;	瞻冠蓋之悠悠
	I behold merchants and travelers, in carriages one after another.	睹商旅之接轅
	As for the terrain of the ground, rising and falling;	爾乃地勢窟隆
32	Mounds and highlands, jutting and sinking.	丘墟陂陀
	Gravesites and tombs, protruding and overlapping;	墳隴嶮疊
	Are arranged as a chessboard, or like stars in the sky.	基布星羅
	Pine groves, scrubbing and shadowing, cluster in rows;	松林摎映以攢列
36	Dark trees, scattered and sparse, shake their branches.	玄木搜寥而振柯
	Admiring what was built up by the Han House;	壯漢氏之所營
	I gaze at the Five Tumuli, soaring and towering. ¹³	望五陵之嵬峨
	When death and disorder arose, the land was lost; ¹⁴	喪亂起而敗壤

2

3

¹³ The Five Tumuli are the tumuli of five of the first six Western Han emperors. They are Changling 長陵, Anling 安陵, Yangling 陽陵, Maoling 茂陵, and Pingling 平陵, located outside the Western Han capital Chang'an 長安 (today's Xianyang 咸陽 in Shaanxi province).

In this poem the three essential components (the poet's movement, description, and reflection) are preserved, but they are intertwined and thus cannot be distinguished as easily as preceding two poems. The opening four lines display the poet's movement, yet they are more descriptive compared with the plain narrative in the two previous poems, for example, "peaked hillocks" (*luanqiu* 巒丘), "twisting and coiling" (*lituo* 麗陀), "long slope" (*xiuban* 脩坂), "winding and meandering" (*weiyi* 逶迤), "towering mountain pass" (*junling* 峻嶺). In lines 5 to 10 the poet leads us through his roaming in nature. In lines 9 and 10 we behold the permanence of mountain rivers and incessant transformation of the myriad things and thus combine the landscape description and the poet's reflection. This helps the smooth transition to his grief over the fragility of life (ll. 11-14). In the second and third stanza, the poet ventures on, and his progression is nicely threaded by different verbs: "linger on...stay for long...survey...peep at...gaze at...glance at... look downward...caressed by...stand...long to...raise...catch sigh...behold." This journey is not only a physical movement, but also a spiritual one. It arouses the poet's imagination of himself as a bird, roaming above the clouds and flying in the sky.

In the last stanza, the poet draws back his imagination and focuses on what seems to be closer surroundings (ll. 31-36). This vision, however, abruptly jumps to the poet's contemplation and admiration for the past, namely, the Western Han dynasty, which is symbolized by the Five Tumuli. Yet the Five Tumuli might be the poet's illusion or a substitute word for Mount

¹⁴ I read 敗 (*bai*; "fail; lose") with *Han Wei Liuchao baisan mingjia ji*, rather than 啟 (*qi*; "open up") with *YWLJ*. Based on the previous lines, "...built up by the Han House," and "when death and disorder arose," what follows should indicate the downfall of the Han, and *qi* does not fit this context, whereas *bai* continues the chronological narration. Moreover, the graphs of *qi* and *bai* look similar, and thus *qi* might be a miswriting for *bai*.

Beimang, as it is impossible to see them from Luoyang. The last couplet is puzzling. Death and chaos might represent the Western Jin period in which the poet lived, marked by bloodshed among the aristocratic families and wars with the northern tribes. The “servant lad” (*tongshu* 僮豎), originally a term for peasants who worked the land for gentry families, in this poem is perhaps a humble self-reference by the poet, since no one else is mentioned in this context. If so, his “ascent” refers to the ascent of Mount Beimang, and the “song” alludes to the poem we are reading here. In this case, the last line serves as an explanation of his motive for this composition and also a proper ending for this piece. This suggests that this piece is a complete one, which is noteworthy, in light of the fact that many literary pieces included in the *Yiwen leiju* are merely excerpts.

One more point is worth mentioning about this poem. If we situate it in a broader background of classical Chinese poetry, it is a typical “Ascending High” (*denggao* 登高) poem, in which the action of ascending high on a mountain and looking afar evokes the poet’s looking into the past. As characterized by Hans Frankel, “‘Ascend to have a look,’ in the narrative context, means climbing to the mountain top and looking down; on the contemplative level means rising above the here-and-now and looking into the past.”¹⁵ Reflection on the past is often associated with the transience of human life and the inevitability of the passage of time. In the case of Mount Beimang, since it has been a graveyard for long in history, these emotions can be evoked even more easily.

The following poem, “Ascending Beimang, I Look back and Gaze at the Capital Luo” (Deng Beimang huanwang jing Luo 登北邙還望京洛), was written by Zheng Shiyi 鄭世翼 (fl.

¹⁵ Hans H. Frankel, “The Contemplation of the Past in T’ang Poetry,” in *Perspectives on the T’ang*, ed. Arthur F. Wright and Denis Twitchett (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 346.

ca. 620-37), a Tang poet.¹⁶ Since a strong echo of the above-mentioned components can be found in this poem, one can reasonably speculate that it is influenced by poems of this pattern, and thus I put it here, although out of chronological order.

	On foot I ascend the slope of Beimang;	步登北邙阪	} 1
	Pace back and forth for a while and gaze afar.	踟躕聊寫望	
	The splendid royal residence in Wan and Luo; ¹⁷	宛洛盛皇居	}
4	Its scale and dimension embarrasses Power of the Great. ¹⁸	規模窮大壯	
	The three rivers each establish a stronghold; ¹⁹	三河分設險	
	The Two Yao provide giant defenses. ²⁰	兩嶠資巨防	

¹⁶ Peng Dingqiu 彭定求 (1645-1719) et al. comp., *Quan Tang shi* 全唐詩 (rpt, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1960; hereafter *QTS*), 38.489.

¹⁷ Wan 宛 (today's Nanyang 南陽 in Henan province) and Luo 洛 (Luoyang) were major cities of the capital province during the Eastern Han and Western Jin dynasties.

¹⁸ Power of the Great (*dazhuang* 大壯) comes from the *Zhouyi* 周易, "In high antiquity they dwelled in caves and lived in the wilderness. In later ages the sages changed to buildings and houses. On top was a ridgepole. Below was a roof to fend off wind and rain. Presumably they took this from the hexagram Power of the Great." See *The I Ching or Book of Changes*, tr. Richard Wilhelm and Cary F. Bayne, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 355. Power of the Great (☰☳) is Hexagram 34, and is regarded as the exemplar of royal architecture in later ages.

¹⁹ The three rivers might refer to three of the four rivers that flow through Luoyang mentioned in Li Daoyuan's 酈道元 (472?-527) *Shuijing zhu* 水經註 (*Baibu congshu jicheng* 百部叢書集成 edn., 15.811-865). They are River Luo 洛水, River Yi 伊水, River Chan 瀍水, and River Jian 澗水.

²⁰ The Two Yao was a mountain peak on which were two mounds, the south mound was the grave of the legendary Xia 夏 emperor Gao 皋, and the north mound was where King Wen of the Zhou 周文王 reputedly sought refuge from a rainstorm.) It was located sixty *li* north of modern Yongning 永寧, in Henan province (See David Knechtges, *Wen xuan or Selections of Refined Literature*, vol. 1 [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982], 98 n. L. 13).

	There are soaring belvederes in the purple mist;	飛觀紫煙中	}	2
8	And tiered terraces above the bright-blue clouds.	層臺碧雲上		
	Dark locust trees flank royal causeways;	青槐夾馳道		
	Extending on and on, refined and wide.	迢迢修且曠		
	On the left and right abound mansions and villas;	左右多第宅		
12	Here and there reside generals and ministers.	參差居將相		
	In the early morning they return from audience with the emperor;	清晨謁帝返		
	Their carriages and horses following one another.	車馬相追訪		
	Officials and functionaries each form their various rows;	胥徒各異流		
16	Their refined trappings in abundance have distinct semblances.	文物紛殊狀		
	Din and dust arises to the dark sky;	囂塵暗天起	}	3
	The sound of flutes and pipes flies with the wind.	簫管從風颺		
	Alas! I am solitary and upright;	伊余孤且直		
20	Yet in my life I am unfortunate and abject.	生平獨淪喪		
	In the secluded mountain, there are clusters of osmanthus;	山幽有桂叢	}	
22	Why do I sit, depressed and despondent?	何爲坐惆悵		

This poem is mostly reminiscent of Cao Zhi's poem in terms of the form and the length of articulations of each component. The opening line, "On foot I ascend the slope of Beimang," is a complete borrowing from Cao Zhi's poem. The second line uses the same verb, "gaze" (*wang* 望), but the binomial verb "pace back and forth" (*chichu* 踟躕) displays the poet's hesitant movement and thus denotes that he is in a troubled and disturbed mood. The following

16 lines (ll. 3-18), the bulk of the poem, are devoted to the delineation of Luoyang. Yet the picture is different from that of Cao Zhi's poem. As in Liang Hong's piece, yet much more elaborately drawn, Luoyang is a grand capital, represented by splendid royal residences that surmount the Great Magnificence, soaring belvederes, tiered terraces, royal causeways, and mansions and villas where ministers dwell. Even the natural landscape is tinted with dignity. The three rivers and two peaks are visualized as strong military defense for the city, and the "purple mist" (*ziyan* 紫烟) is an auspicious sign that is often related with regality. The poet's focal point then switches from landscape to people, namely, officials. They leave for and return from the court, and the coming and going of their carriages helps to construct the image of a busy city. Everything looks positive, and the reader is expecting something praiseworthy. But the ensuing couplet (ll. 17-18) takes a sudden turn. The dark sky suggests the day's approaching night or a change of weather in the literal sense, but it also stirs gloomy thoughts and leads to the poet's reflections on his own situation. What was presented before now disappears and is replaced by dust and din, a symbol of troubling worldly matters. The last two couplets return to the poet's voice. Instead of showing general concerns for society or history, the poet, pitying himself, laments that he is not appreciated despite his uprightness. His abjectness contrasts with the nobility of ministers and generals described above. The closing couplet seems to be the poet's self-consolation. Unsatisfied with society, he turns his mind to the osmanthus, which grows in the secluded mountains and away from the crowd. The osmanthus, also unappreciated, is perhaps a mirror of himself. The comparison between the poet and the plant helps to relieve his depression, as indicated by the ending line. The conclusion falls into the tradition of expressing one's aloofness or uprightness through self-identification with plants that are regarded as pure and noble, which can be traced back as early as the *Chuci* 楚辭.

The thematic sequence of ascending high, depicting the scene, and expressing the poet's emotion is not uncommon in classical Chinese poetry. But it is remarkable that all ascending-Beimang poems unexceptionally preserve the same components, despite different articulations of each component in these poems. It seems that the opening lines, which are similar throughout the four poems we have read, determine how the main poetic progression. The prescriptive pattern prompts one to ask the question: what motivates poets to compose literary pieces on this topic within this convention? Each poem is shaped by its special historical setting and different personas behind it, and therefore each piece is a distinct one that embodies an individual tone. Yet the consciousness of the copious precedents often haunts the poets.²¹ They are more or less influenced by these literary predecessors. If we read these poems intertextually, we will find that poets treat their own writings as literary exercises and assimilate earlier pieces. In our case, I believe, poets were aware of their precedents and consciously adopted this pattern, yet they make variations to avoid verbal repetition.

Mount Beimang in these poems is a location where poets start their visionary journey and meditations. The ascent of the mountain might be regarded as an evocative image (*xing* 興, as used in the standard Mao interpretations of the *Shijing* 詩經) that opens up various imagery and themes, but the mountain is not a distinct poetic image. We almost forget that it is primarily a graveyard. In the next three poems we shall examine, the mountain as a graveyard is presented as the dominant image. These poems are grouped together and assigned under the category of “Unclassified Tunes, Songs, and Lyrics” (*za qu ge ci* 雜曲歌辭) in the *Yuefu shiji*, a collection of

²¹ The precedents of the same topic or form sometimes are called “tradition,” but I want to avoid this term, since sometimes “tradition” is a subjective concept that is imposed by later ages.

yuefu poems compiled by Guo Maoqian 郭茂倩 (1041-1099) in the Northern Song dynasty.²²

The first among the three is titled “Ballad on Driving the Carriage out the Upper East Gate” (Quche shang Dongmen xing 驅車上東門行) in the *Yuefu shiji*, but it is also poem 13 of Xiao Tong’s “Nineteen Old Poems.”²³

	I drive the carriage out the Upper East Gate;	驅車上東門
	And distantly gaze at graves north of the city wall. ²⁴	遙望郭北墓
	White poplars, how desolate and dreary;	白楊何蕭蕭
4	Pines and cypresses flank the wide avenue.	松柏夾廣路
	Below them, there are the ancient dead; ²⁵	下有陳死人
	Dark and dim is the enduring night.	杳杳即長暮
	They are sunk in slumber under the Yellow Springs; ²⁶	潛寐黃泉下
8	And for thousands of years they never wake.	千載永不寤
	Yin and yang shift in endless succession; ²⁷	浩浩陰陽移

²² See *YFSJ*, 61. 889-90.

²³ Lu Qinli, 332; *WX*, 29.1348.

²⁴ The Upper East Gate was in the walls of Eastern Han Luoyang. Mount Beimang is located to the north of Luoyang and can be seen outside the Upper East Gate, since the poet can see the graves when he went out the gate, and the graves are north of the city wall, the burial mound should be Mount Beimang.

²⁵ I read *chen* 陳 with Lu Qinli, rather than *dong* 凍 with the *YFSJ*. It is also possible read it as 凍 “frozen,” but 陳 “decayed” fits the context better.

²⁶ Yellow Springs (*huangquan* 黃泉) refers to the underworld.

²⁷ *Yin* 陰 and *yang* 陽 refer to cold and heat respectively, and thus the shift between *yin* and *yang* means the change of cold climate and hot climate, i.e., four seasons.

	But our allotment of years is like the morning dew.	年命如朝露
	Human life is fleeting as a sojourn;	人生忽如寄
12	Our life lacks the firmness of metal or stone.	壽無金石固
	For myriad years people take turns to see each other off;	萬歲更相送
	Worthies and sages, none can cross [the span].	賢聖莫能度
	Of those who take elixirs in pursuit of immortality;	服食求神仙
16	Many are harmed by drugs.	多為藥所誤
	One would rather drink fine wine;	不如飲美酒
18	To clothe himself in soft white silk. ²⁸	被服紬與素

The graves north of the city wall, which refer to Mount Beimang, are delineated as desolate. The image of the imagined dead is presented, marked by their deep slumber in the enduring darkness, unaware of the incessant shift among the four seasons in the natural world. The relentless passage of time evokes the poet's meditation on mortality. The lamentation that our allotment of years is like morning dew has a rich history, and its *locus classicus* is in the dialogue between Li Ling 李陵 (d. 74 BCE) and Su Wu 蘇武 (139 -60 BCE) that is recorded in Ban Gu's biography of the latter.²⁹ The grief that man's life is not as firm as metal and stone also

²⁸ Some of this translation is based on Stephen Owen's rendering; see *The Making of Early Chinese Classical Poetry* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006), 186-87.

²⁹ Su Wu encountered Li Ling, the Han general held captive by the Xiongnu 匈奴, when he was herding. By then Su Wu had been detained by the Xiongnu for 19 years upon his visiting as an envoy sent by the Eastern Han court. Li Ling, trying to persuade him to submit to the Huns, said, "Human life is like the morning dew, why have you suffered so long like this?" 人生如朝露, 何久自苦如此! (*Han shu* 漢書, 54. 2464) The phrase of "Man's life is [like]..." 人生[如] is an effective pathos in early Chinese poetry; see Paul W. Kroll, "Literary Criticism and Personal

has many echoes in early *yuefu* poems. Even the sages and worthies cannot transcend this situation. The possibility of seeking for immortality is also rejected. The only solution is to enjoy life: drink fine wine and don luxurious clothes. The tone of the last couplet is cheerful, compared with the opening somber mood.

The author of the second poem is unidentified in the *Yuefu shiji*, but in Lu Qinli's *Jinshi* 晉詩 it is attributed to Lu Ji 陸機 (261-303), who is famous for his imitative works on “Nineteen Old Poems.” Although this piece is not included in the set of twelve “Imitating the Old” (*nigu* 擬古) poems selected by Xiao Tong in his *Wen xuan*, we can observe from its thematic content, vocabulary, and length that it is heavily indebted to the preceding poem.³⁰ The poem, also in pentasyllabic lines, is titled “Ballad on Driving out of the Northern Watchtower” (Jia yan chu Beique xing 駕言出北闕行).³¹

I drive out of the Northern Watchtower;	駕言出北闕
To pace back and forth along the mountain graves. ³²	躑躅遵山陵
Tall pines, how lush and dense;	長松何鬱鬱

Character in Poetry ca 100-300 CE,” in *China's Early Empires: A Re-Appraisal*, ed. Michael Nylan and Michael Loewe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 529-532.

³⁰ C. M. Lai does not think this poem is necessarily an imitative piece of poem 13 of “Nineteen Old Poems.” She argues that the positive statement is based on the thematic content, yet the standard of thematic content could also apply to other poems Lu Ji composed in pentasyllabic verse. See “The Craft of Original Imitation: Lu Ji's Imitations of Han Old Poems,” in *Studies in Early Medieval Chinese Literature and Cultural History*, ed. Paul W. Kroll and David. R. Knechtges (Provo: T'ang Studies Society, 2003), 121 n. 12.

³¹ Lu Qinli, 662.

³² The first couplet indicates that the graveyard is located north of the Northern Watchtower. Also, Lu Ji moved to Luoyang in 289. The graveyard is to the north of Luoyang, which corresponds with the position of Mount Beimang.

4	Graves on the knolls are joined with each other.	丘墓互相承
	I recall those deceased in the past;	念昔殂沒子
	And I cannot bear the endless longings.	悠悠不可勝
	They slumber in the layered dark hut;	安寢重冥廬
8	Neither heaven nor earth can bring them back.	天壤莫能興
	Man's life, how limited and hastening!	人生何期促
	It is as brief as the frozen morning dew.	忽如朝露凝
	Toiling and laboring for one hundred years;	辛苦百年間
12	We are agitated and anxious as if treading ice.	戚戚如履冰
	What can the benevolent and wise restore?	仁智亦何補
	Transcending and transforming have clear signs.	遷化有明徵
	Of those who seek immortality, few can seize it;	求仙鮮克仙
16	How can one rise beyond the Grand Void?	太虛安可凌
	On joyful gatherings with musical stones and beautiful clothes;	良會罄美服
18	Facing the wine we banquet and share the same sound.	對酒宴同聲

A juxtaposition of poem 13 of “Nineteen Old Poems” and Lu Ji’s imitation piece demonstrates the similarity in terms of vocabulary and poetic sequence:

驅車上東門	駕言出北闕
遙望郭北墓	躑躅遵山陵
白楊何蕭蕭	長松何鬱鬱

松柏夾廣路	丘墓互相承
下有陳死人	念昔殂沒子
夭夭即長暮	悠悠不可勝
潛寐黃泉下	安寢重冥廬
千載永不寤	天壤莫能興
浩浩陰陽移	人生何期促
年命如朝露	忽如朝露凝
人生忽如寄	辛苦百年間
壽無金石固	戚戚如履冰
萬歲更相送	仁智亦何補
賢聖莫能度	遷化有明徵
服食求神仙	求仙鮮克仙
多為藥所誤	太虛安可凌
不如飲美酒	良會罄美服
被服紉與素	對酒宴同聲

The thematic sequence between the two poems is similar: driving out, gazing at the graveyard, imagining the afterlife of the dead, lamenting that human life is brief, stating that being virtuous and wise is futile, their quest for immortality is of no help, and thus a better solution is to have a jaunt of pleasure with carefree companions, wine, and refined clothes. Some lines are also exquisitely crafted to match closely the original poem, with the syntax unchanged and the counterparts replaced with higher-register words.

The first couplet opens with the same driving action, yet the Upper East Gate is replaced by the Northern Watchtower. The second line uses the binomial verb “pace back and forth” (*zhizhu* 躑躅), a more polished word than “distantly gaze” (*yaowang* 遙望) in the original. In the second couplet the image of white poplars turns into tall pines. The third couplet is an element of distinction: in the original, the image of the ancient dead is descriptive, whereas in Lu Ji’s poem the poet expresses his longing for the deceased. The sixth couplet also adds a new element: the hundred years (a metonym for human life) are toilsome, and living in this world is like treading ice, an image employed several times in the Book of Odes (*Shijing* 詩經) and denotes the difficulty of maintaining balance and security in the living world. This is also a variation of the statement that life lacks the firmness of metal and stone in the original. In the eighth couplet, the denial of the quest for immortality is less severe: that transcending and transforming have clear signs indicate that they won’t fall upon everyone, but that few can seize immortality doesn’t completely negate the possibility. The concluding couplet also becomes more lighthearted, and more solutions are provided: joyful banquet, companions, and music.

The third poem, “Ballad on Driving out the North City Wall Gate” (*Jia chu Beiguomen xing* 駕出北郭門行) is attributed to Ruan Yu 阮瑀 (d. 212),³³ one of the Seven Jian’an Masters.

It reads as follows:

I drive out the gate of the northern city wall;	駕出北郭門
My horse, impeded, is not willing to gallop.	馬樊不肯馳
Getting down from the carriage I pace back and forth;	下車步踟躕
4 Above I snap the withered poplar branches.	仰折枯楊枝

³³ Lu Qinli, 378.

	Turning back I heard from the grove on the knoll;	顧聞丘林中
	There is a sad wailing cry.	嗷嗷有悲啼
	Let me ask the one who cries out:	借問啼者出
8	“Why are you like this?”	何為乃如斯
	“My blood mother passed away, leaving me behind;	親母舍我歿
	My stepmother hates this lonely child.	後母憎孤兒
	Hungry and cold I have no clothes or food;	饑寒無衣食
12	Every action I take, the whip strikes me.	舉動鞭捶施
	My bones diminishing, skin and flesh disappearing;	骨消肌肉盡
	And my body is like the bark of a withered tree.	體若枯樹皮
	She keeps me in an empty chamber;	藏我空室中
16	My father still does not know it.	父還不能知
	I come up to the grave and examine the old dwelling;	上塚察故處
	Where the surviving and the dead are separated forever.	存亡永別離
	How can I see my blood mother?	親母何可見
20	My tears stream down, and my voice is hoarse.	淚下聲正嘶
	Abandoning me to this world;	棄我於此間
	How can my poverty and misery be measured?”	窮厄豈有賞
	I pass word to people of later generations;	傳告後代人
24	To take this as an illuminating compass.	以此為明規

Unlike the preceding two poems, this piece is more narrative than descriptive or lyrical. It starts with the poet's movement, mixed with his depiction of the dreadful surroundings, indicated by the horse's being impeded and unwillingness to gallop. It is not an agreeable place to stay. The withered poplar branches also add to the bleakness. This lays out the setting for the ensuing monologue, which occupies most of the poem. Called forth by the poet's one-line question, the orphan's explanation of his weeping tells of his pathetic experience of being mistreated by the stepmother after his blood mother died. The ending couplet comes back to the poet's voice, who explains that these words are for people to learn a lesson lest such unfortunate events happen again. Since the poet enunciates the didactic purpose of this poem, it goes beyond a simple narrative and takes on an instructive tone.

The role played by Mount Beimang in this poem is remarkable. The dialogue happens here because it is where the grave of the orphan's mother is located, and "where the surviving and the dead are separated forever" (line 18). Mount Beimang is for the first time explicitly depicted as a site where life and death are separated and thus provokes sadness, and this poetic image will be extensively explored by Tang poets. We will return to this image later.

A few more early poems on Mount Beimang are worth mentioning. In "Poem on the Traveler's Lodge at Beimang" (Beimang keshe shi 北芒客舍詩) by Liu Ling 劉伶 (221?-300), Mount Beimang only appears in the title.³⁴ Since the poem does not provide any evidence for the identification of the mountain, it cannot be related with Beimang for sure. In the first of the two "Poems of Sevenfold Laments" (Qi'ai shi 七哀詩) by Zhang Zai 張載 (d. ca. 304; Zhang Xie's older brother), the poet starts with Beimang but then shifts to the desolate scene of Luoyang.³⁵

³⁴ Lu Qinli, 552.

³⁵ Lu Qinli, 741.

To some extent this is reminiscent of Cao Zhi's poem. Pan Yue 潘岳 (247-300) has "At Beimang Sending off Wang Shizhou" (Beimang songbie Wang Shizhou 北芒送別王世胄), in which Beimang merely serves as a parting site.³⁶

By the time the Western Jin fell in 316, the court and most aristocratic families had moved to the south, along with the literary communities. During the following three hundred years, the northern border of the "Southern Dynasties" fluctuated around the Huai 淮 River but never reached as far as Luoyang. For poets of these dynasties Mount Beimang was remote from the literary center and became merely a memory. Very few literary compositions on Beimang can be found from this period. In Tao Hongjing's 陶弘景 (456-536) "Laud on Huayang" (Huayang song 華陽頌),³⁷ there seems to be nostalgia for the north, and Mount Beimang is mentioned: "The soil recalls the color of Beimang, / the well is as clear as the spring at Phoenix Gate" 土懷北芒色 / 井冽鳳門泉.³⁸ Interestingly, Tao had never been to the north during his entire life, and thus his description of the color of Beimang and the spring at Phoenix Gate must be pure imagination. Tao Qian 陶潛 (365-427), Xiao Gang 蕭綱 (503-51; Liang Jianwendi 梁簡文帝, r. 549-51), Yu Xin 庾信 (513-581), and Xu Ling 徐陵 (507-583) all employed the image of the mountain in their works, but none of them seem to have touched on as many themes as the

³⁶ Lu Qinli, 630-31.

³⁷ Tao Hongjing is a Daoist instrumental in the codifying of the Maoshan 茅山 scriptures and the compiler and annotator of *Zhengao* 真誥. The "Laud on Huayang" is a long poem in praise of the famous Huayang grotto 華陽洞 in Mao Shan. Huayang is the most important of the standard Daoist grouping of "ten greater grotto-heavens" 十大洞天 and was also taken as Tao's informal title as Recluse at Huayang (Huayang yinju 華陽隱居).

³⁸ *Quan Liangwen* 全梁文, 47.3220-a, in Yan Kejun. The Phoenix Gate is the northern gate of the historical Chang'an.

preceding poems. It would remain for Tang poets to explore more fully the topoi related with Mount Beimang.

Chapter III

Mount Beimang in the Tang Dynasty

A search of the word Beimang and its variants in the *Quan Tang shi* 全唐詩 database yields seventy results,³⁹ many more than extant poems on this topic composed in the preceding period. One can immediately relate this difference to the availability of Mount Beimang to poets. As mentioned above, the mountain was inaccessible to literary communities in the Southern dynasties, yet during the Tang, Luoyang was reestablished as the eastern capital and became a place where poets gathered, and thus Beimang was available and ascended the stage of the world of letters.

Interestingly, most of these seventy poems are attributed to Mid-Tang and Late Tang poets, whereas few come from the Early Tang and only one from the High Tang. Considering the manuscript culture of the Tang and the fact that many poems have been lost over the course of the following millennium, we know poems included in the *Quan Tang shi* only occupy a small portion of Tang literary production and do not represent the whole of the literary world. Yet the contrast of the number of preserved poems before and after the rebellion of An Lushan 安祿山 that began in December 755 and lasted through 763, reflects the change of the literary appreciation of the Beimang image. This change can also be observed in two Tang texts, the *Yiwen leiju*, compiled at the early-Tang court under the direction of Ouyang Xun 歐陽詢 (557-641) and submitted to the throne in 624, and the *Chuxue ji* 初學記, a compendium composed in

³⁹ For this search I have used the online database of the *QTS*: <http://www3.zzu.edu.cn/qts/>.

the Kaiyuan 開元 reign-era (713-42) presented to the throne in 729. *Yiwen leiju* has a section on Mount Beimang under the category of Mountains, together with other well-known mountains such as Mount Lu (Lushan 廬山) and Mountain Tiantai (Tiantaishan 天台山). This is indicative of the importance of Mount Beimang as a distinctive image in poems and the literary fame that it shared with other famous mountains in history. However, *Chuxue ji* juxtaposes the mountain and the Southern Mountain Pass (Nanling 南嶺) and briefly treats them as “Paralleled Items” (*shidui* 事對).⁴⁰ As an educational encyclopedia for the princes of Xuanzong 玄宗 (685-762, r. 712-56), *Chuxue ji* represents the acceptance of selected literary images to be adopted by literary communities, and thus the insignificance of Mount Beimang in this text probably suggests that by the early 8th century it was relatively unimportant for belletristic compositions.

The fact that most of the Beimang poems come from the mid-Tang and late Tang is perhaps related to the social background of that era. The Rebellion of An Lushan brought an end to the splendid High Tang era, a golden age in many respects. It not only resulted in drastic social changes, and numerous deaths, but also had an impact on the literary world. The diminished splendor evoked poets’ remembrances of the past, the impermanence of human affairs and, hence, reflections on death.⁴¹ Mount Beimang, itself a graveyard evoking images of mournfulness whose somber setting has now been established in the poems of previous dynasties, took on a mixture of these feelings as it ascended the literary stage of the Mid- and Late Tang.

⁴⁰ See Xu Jian 徐堅 (659-729) ed., *Chuxue ji* 初學記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), 14.360.

⁴¹ For a detailed analysis on the influence of the Rebellion of An Lushan, see Paul W. Kroll, “Nostalgia and History in Mid-Ninth-Century Verse: Cheng Yü’s Poem on ‘The Chin-Yang Gate’,” *T’oung Pao* 89 (2003): 286-366.

Most themes and motifs touched on by poems on the mountain can be easily found in other Chinese poetry, yet it is valuable to examine how portrayal of the mountain and its relevant imagery that is adopted to represent these themes. As we shall see, compared to their predecessors, who in later readers' eyes followed certain patterns, poems in the Tang dynasty represent a much more diverse world in terms of images, topoi, dictions, and forms.

The first poem, titled “A Poem on Beimang” (Beimang pian 北邙篇), is preserved in the Dunhuang 敦煌 manuscripts.⁴² Though the authorship of this poem is unclear, on the manuscript it is grouped with other poems attributed to Early Tang poets, hence it might have been written during the Early Tang.⁴³ It not only embraces the topoi that are associated with the imagery of Mount Beimang of the previous dynasties—reflection on the universality of human decline, grieving over the passage of time and the transience of human life—but also applies vivid natural imagery that is explored in other Tang poems as well: the exuberance of pines and cypresses in

⁴² This poem has three copies in the Dunhuang manuscripts. The first copy is in P. 2673 of the Pelliot collection. The other two copies, which have some textual variants from the first copy and are less well preserved, are recorded respectively in P. 2544 of the same collection and S. 2049 of the Stein Collection. Unless noted, I use the first copy as the main text.

⁴³ Wang Zhongmin 王重民 attributed this poem to Liu Xiyi 劉希夷 (d. 651-after 671). See his *Bu quan Tang shi* 補全唐詩, in *Quan Tang shi bubian* 全唐詩補編, ed. Chen Shangjun 陳尚君 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1992), 14-15. However, this attribution has been proved wrong by other scholars. See Xu Jun 徐俊, *Dunhuang shiji canjuan jikao* 敦煌詩集殘卷輯考 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2000), 119-20; Huang Yongwu 黃永武, “Dunhuang suojian Liu Xiyi shi sishou de jiazhi” 敦煌所見劉希夷詩四首的價值, in his *Dunhuang de Tang shi* 敦煌的唐詩, (Taipei: Hongfan shudian, 1987), 208. Xu Jun and Huang Yongwu both argue that there is another “A Poem on Beimang” 北邙篇 in the Dunhuang manuscripts that shares the same content with one of Liu Xiyi's poems in the transmitted texts, “Contemplation of the Past on River Luo” (Luochuan huaigu 洛川懷古), except for some textual variants; thus there is no doubt that it was written by Liu Xiyi (See P. 3619 of the Pelliot Collection). Wang Zhongmin apparently mixed these two different poems because of their identical titles and attributed the poem presented here to Liu Xiyi.

contrast with the fragility of human beings, the incessant flow of rivers, the constant alternations of the seasons, and the joyful outings and banquets held by people in the past.

Comprised of 38 heptasyllabic lines, the poem is divided into five stanzas, indicated by the change of rhymes, which also mark transitions of subjects or focus. However, the transitions are rather abrupt, making it difficult at times to find connections between different stanzas. The inconsistency of subjects in each stanza suggests that perhaps the poem in its present form is comprised of different sources. It raises the possibility that rather than being one poem, it is a group of heterogeneous poems centering on Mount Beimang.

On the southern bridge, at dusk and dawn, tens of thousands	南橋昏曉人萬萬
of people;	
At Mount Beimang, thousands of new and old graves.	北邙新故塚千千
You said you were imperious and extravagant in the imperial city;	自謂驕奢彼都邑
4 Never imagining you would decline and decay at this	何圖零落此山顛
mountain top.	
I do not know how the empty souls seek their returning path;	不知虛魄尋歸路
I only see the stiff corpses interred in the graveyard.	但見殭屍委墓田
Dark-green pines enjoy drinking but have lost their facial color; ⁴⁴	青松樂飲無容色

⁴⁴ The translation of *rongse* 容色 as “facial color” is based on Richard B. Mather’s translation of Shen Yue’s 沈約 (441-513) “Pitying Withered Plants at the End of the Year” (Suimu min aicao 歲暮愍衰草), “Mourning for the dying plants, / the dying plants have lost their facial color” 愍衰草 / 衰草無容色. See Richard B. Mather, trans. *The Age of Eternal Brilliance: Three Lyric Poets of the Yung-ming Era (483-493)*, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 179. In Shen Yue’s poem the plants are described as withered to set the background for the desolate winter. Likewise, the description of dark-green pines’ losing their facial color in this poem also helps to construct the bleak scene. However, even if we agree that pines are personified in this context, the image of their enjoying drinking is rather odd. Another possible reading is that the

8	Moss grows on white bones for many ages.	白骨生苔有歲年
	The earth lasts while dark-green pines are chopped down as firewood; ⁴⁵	地久[青]松摧為薪
	Heaven endures while white bones change into dust.	天長白骨化為塵
	The bright moon on the cyan mountains shines alone in vain;	碧山明月徒自曉
12	[Inside the] yellow residences and dark chambers they don't know the morning.	黃居闔室不知晨

The opening couplet, as many of the following lines are, is exquisitely crafted to be parallel. The description of tens of thousands of people on the southern bridge and thousands of graves at Mount Beimang present a contrasting scene between the living and the dead. In the next couplet (lines 3 and 4), the poetic narrator turns his attention to the imagined dead and addresses to him, who in his lifetime enjoyed extravagance yet declined after death. “Imperious and extravagant” (*jiaoshe* 驕奢) and “decline and decay” (*lingluo* 零落) demonstrate another contrast between the lifetime and the afterlife. The phrase 零落, whose literal meaning “wither and fall” normally describes leaves, is borrowed here to indicate death. The poet then switches to

dark-green pines, instead of being the agent of drinking, serve as a location word, and the hidden subject is the living people who visit the graveyard. The translation then would be “under dark-green pines, they enjoy drinking but have lost facial color,” i.e. comparing to the dead, the living people are more joyful while at the same time they are sorrowful. Whether this line describes the pines or people, the juxtaposition of “enjoy” and “without facial color” is contradictory and puzzling.

⁴⁵ The bracket in the Chinese text indicates a lacuna in the original manuscript. Considering the parallelism used in this poem, I suggest “dark-green” (*qing* 青) as a reasonable possibility for filling in the lacuna, since the counterpart in the next line is “white” (*bai* 白). *Qing* is often used to describe the color of pines, as in line 7, where “dark-green pines” are used to match white bones.

his ghastly depiction of the imagined dead and the graveyard, marked by the images of “empty soul” (*xupo* 虛魄), “stiff corpses” (*jiangshi* 殭屍), “dark-green pines” (*qingsong* 青松), and “white bones” (*baigu* 白骨). In the next couplet (lines 9 and 10), even pines and white bones, which usually outlive human beings, are shown to diminish along with time. The everlasting heaven and earth witness the rise and fall all living things. The ending couplet of this stanza offers another opposing scene between this world, represented by “brightness” (*ming* 明) and the underworld, characterized by “darkness” (*an* 闇). The imagination that the deceased live in forever darkness reminds us of poem 13 of “Nineteen Old Poems,” which we have read above.

The poem then continues with the remembrance of the splendid past:

The outer wall of the House of Han, the capital of the	漢家城郭帝王州
sovereign king;	

The robed and capped ones of the Jin coursed on	晉國衣冠車馬流
carriages and horses. ⁴⁶	

In the Golden Valley, ⁴⁷ in verdant spring, those in pearls and	金谷青春珠綺舞
fine silk were dancing;	

16	Upon bronze stairs, under cyan trees, jade-like people were	銅階碧樹玉人遊
----	---	---------

⁴⁶ The expression “robed and capped” (*yiguan* 衣冠) is a metonym for officials.

⁴⁷ The Golden Valley (*jingu* 金谷) was located northwest of Luoyang. During the Western Jin, Shi Chong 石崇 (249-300) built the Golden Valley Garden there. Later the Golden Valley came to represent the luxurious gardens of noble families which did not last. Here it probably refers to Shi Chong’s Golden Valley Garden, since the previous line talks about joyful outings of officials in the Jin. On the Golden Valley, see especially David R. Knechtges, “Jingu and Lantang: Two (or Three?) Jin Dynasty Gardens,” in *Studies in Chinese Language and Culture: Festschrift in Honour of Christoph Harbsmeier on the Occasion of His 60th Birthday*, ed. Christoph Anderl and Halvor Eifring (Oslo: Hermes Academic Publishing, 2006), 395-99.

roaming.

Clouds were rising, pure and abundant, and they were proud in 雲起清盈驕畫閣

their painted galleries;

By the waterside hall, bright and deep, they were riding in 水堂明迥弄仙舟

transcendent boats.

Now I begin to recall the truncated songs that hastened on each 始憶斷歌催一代

generation;⁴⁸

20 Soon I lament the long night that lasts a thousand autumns. 俄悲長夜曆千秋

The bulk of this stanza (line 13-18) is devoted to the nostalgic depiction of the happy old days. The remembrance of vanished glory is a familiar pathos that often arouses poets' reflections on the present not only in Chinese poetry, but also in Old English poetry, as in the "Wanderer."⁴⁹ But it is noteworthy that the poet has a special fascination with the Han dynasty (probably the Eastern Han, whose capital was Luoyang) and West Jin period, the former often associated with prosperity whereas the latter was famous for the luxury and indulgence of the

⁴⁸ There is debate on *duan* 斷. Some scholars suggest this character should be read as "short" (*duan* 短), since "short songs" 短歌 is a common phrase. Moreover, the counterpart in the next line is "*chang*" 長, thus *duan* would be a reasonable opposition. In my opinion, 斷, which literally means "cut off", overlaps with the meaning of 短. My translation "truncated" is an attempt to retain an ambiguity between these two understandings.

The meaning of this line is also baffling. In my understanding, the idea of "truncated songs that hastened each generation" (*duange cui yidai* 斷歌催一代) is that each generation has its own songs, and thus new songs supersede old songs when a younger generation replaces an earlier one. To see this in another way and on a larger scale, it is the songs that have driven this replacement, namely, hastened one generation. Since songs represent one generation, "truncated" also refers to the brevity of human life.

⁴⁹ See Charles W. Kennedy, *An Anthology of Old English Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), 5-8.

gentry class, but they both embody carefree jocundity. All the images presented provide a sense of light and liveliness, marked by “verdant spring” (*qingchun* 青春), “pearl” (*zhu* 珠), “cyan” (*bi* 碧), “jade” (*yu* 玉), and “bright” (*ming* 明). The pleasant roaming of jade-like people, echoing the “imperious and extravagant” 驕奢 in the preceding stanza, insinuates that their joy would never end. Yet this flashback is suddenly cut off and the audiences are brought back to reality, when the sad tone of the first stanza returns (line 19 and 20). This tone the poetic narrator has adopted is rather perplexing. Indicated by “the long night that lasts a thousand autumns” (*changye li qianqiu* 長夜歷千秋), it seems that the poetic narrator is viewing from the perspective of the deceased one; if so, the whole stanza then adopts this tone.

The motifs touched on in this stanza are traditional ones: compared with death, the prosperity, glory and happiness that one enjoys in his lifetime are never permanent. This impermanence is strengthened in the ensuing stanza:

Autumn wind arrives, then winter snow shines;	秋風至今冬雪明
Spring rain ceases, then summer clouds rise.	春雨息兮夏雲生
In the ink pond the sand is dry, overgrown with plants and vines; ⁵⁰	墨池沙枯通草蔓
24 The rouge pavilion, tiles gone, collapsed towards the grove.	妝樓瓦盡向林傾
In the old coffers the precious texts keep the traces of brushwork; ⁵¹	古篋重書宜筆跡

⁵⁰ The “ink pond” (*mochi* 墨池) is where writing brushes are washed.

⁵¹ The literal meaning of *yi* 宜, “be appropriate / suit well with,” seems not to fit the context here. Xiang Chu 項楚 suggests that this line should be read as “on the old bamboo-strips the insect-like characters resemble the traces of brushwork” 古策蟲書疑筆跡 (*Xu Jun, Dunhuang shiji canjuan jikao*, 130 n. 19). Xiang Chu’s reading makes more sense, and *yi* 疑 parallels perfectly with its counterpart *ruo* 若 in the next line. Yet if so, we have to assume that the scribe

On the high terrace the crane's longing sounds like a
stringed instrument.

路臺鶴思若弦聲

I do not believe that canons of elixirs could prolong my later years; 不信丹經延暮齒

28 I only wish that history may list my empty name.⁵²

惟求青史列虛名

The opening couplet, vividly presenting an appealing picture of the processions of the four seasons, brings the audience to the natural world. It also indicates the passage of time and bridges the past and the present, which co-exist in the following three lines (line 23-25). The ink pond and rouge pavilion symbolize human traces of the old days, that gradually are over-grown with plants. The images of the dry pond and that plants grow out of it recall Xie Lingyun's 謝靈運 (385-433) "Ascending the Pavilion by the Pond" (Deng chishang lou 登池上樓), "springtime plants grow out of the pond, / willows in the garden change into twittering fowls" 池塘生春草 / 園柳變鳴禽.⁵³ Human life is transitory and easily disappears, yet brushwork and stringed instrument keep the traces of people's former existence. It seems that the previous claim that history does not last long is slightly overturned here, since the poet begins to value history, suggested by line 28, "I only wish that history may list my empty name" 惟求青史列虛名. By treasuring history, he also distrusts the effect of Daoist elixirs and thus rejects the search for immortality.

miswrote this line because of the similarities between the sound of 重 and 蟲, and 宜 and 疑. However we read this line, the basic idea is that people are gone, but human traces remain.

⁵² "History in green" (*qingshi* 青史) originally meant history recorded on bamboo slips, since they are green before being prepared for writing on. At later times it began to refer to written history.

⁵³ Lu Qinli, 1161.

The poet's denial of the Daoist way of prolonging life, however, leads to his admiration for those on Penglai Island, i.e., immortals, in the last two stanzas, which are a quatrain and sestet respectively. They seem coherent, and therefore I put them together:

Alas! How sad! The path to Luoyang!	嗚呼哀哉洛陽道
Longing and gazing at Penglai Island—	相思相望蓬萊島
Where one's jade-like appearance, bright and glowing matches the spring;	玉顏暉暉並是春
32 With hair dark and full—never aging.	人髮青青未嘗老

The star-illuminated screen rolled up, the moonlit window opened;	星簾捲兮月牕開
Flowers in the mirror shaking, trees in the mountain swaying.	鏡花搖兮山樹迴
The transcendent robe, delicate and beautiful, is blown away by the wind;	仙衣窈窕風吹去
36 A feather canopy, misty and obscure, flutters round about.	羽蓋霏微舞遶來
With you at the top of the Three Mountains, ⁵⁴	與君攜手三山頂
How dark and silent the terrace of the Nine Springs is! ⁵⁵	如何冥寞九泉臺

The path to Luoyang, a city crowded with people and thus a symbol of the mortal world, arouses the feeling of impermanence of life; it contrasts with the Penglai Island, the immortal land. With the longing for immortality, the poet begins to imagine the appearance of people who

⁵⁴ The Three Mountains refer to Fangzhang 方丈, Penglai 蓬萊, and Yingzhou 瀛洲, immortal mountains in the eastern sea.

⁵⁵ The Nine Springs represent the traditional Chinese underworld.

reside in that land. The “jade-like appearance” (*yuyan* 玉顏) recalls “jade-like people” (*yuren* 玉人) in line 16, yet the former never decays, and the latter already faded away.

In the last stanza, the poet first draws a magic world in which none of the actions have subjects. The rolling up of the star-illuminated screen, the opening of the moonlit window, the shaking of flowers in the mirror, and the swaying of mountain trees happen naturally and herald the visit of an immortal. The beckoning for the one who never ages in line 30 seems to be received and a response was sent out. The descent of the immortal is mysterious and implicitly hinted by his/her robe and feather canopy. The delineation conveys a sense of lightness, represented by “blown” (*chui* 吹), “misty and obscure” (*feiwei* 霏微), and “flutter” (*rao* 遶). In the closing couplet, the poet is on the top of the Three Mountains, symbolizing immortality, and the “lord” (*jun* 君) perhaps refers to an immortal. With this image, the stanza ends with the poet’s hopeless lament about the dark underworld and the enduring afterlife. This specific image has a long tradition in Chinese poetry, and the wording adopted here can clearly be recognized in Ruan Yu’s “Sevenfold Sorrows” (Qiai shi 七哀詩), “Dark are the chambers of the Nine Springs, / stretching on, the Terrace of Endless Night” 冥冥九泉室 / 漫漫長夜臺.⁵⁶

As mentioned before, although appearing as one piece, this poem might be a patchwork of several different poems, demonstrated by the fact that each stanza has a distinct dominant image and motif. Moreover, if reading carefully, we will find that none of these stanzas, save the first one, can necessarily be associated with Mount Beimang. Since the imagery and topics employed are not hard to find in the standard poetic repertoire, these stanzas/poems can be

⁵⁶ Lu Qinli, 565. The translation is based on Stephen Owen’s rendering, see *The Making of Early Chinese Classical Poetry*, 188.

flexibly placed under many other titles and even read in totally different contexts. At any rate, no more supporting evidence can be found in the manuscript, and thus this is merely a speculation.

All the poems we have examined so far either take Mount Beimang as a site from where the poet's vista starts or as an evocative image that arouses death-related contemplation; none of them, except poem 13 of the Nineteen Old Poems and Lu Ji's imitative piece in which two lines provide rough outlines of the graveyard, are devoted to a detailed illustration. In several poems we will examine next, the poets' focus stays on the mountain itself, and the scenery is vividly presented. We will start with Liu Cang's 劉滄 (fl. ca. 840-854) "Stopping at Mount Beimang" (Guo Beimang shan 過北邙山), a pentasyllabic regulated verse (*lüshi* 律詩):⁵⁷

	Scattered and suffusive, the yellow dust covers the northern mesa;	散漫黃埃滿北原
	Broken steles lie across the path and flatten the mark of moss.	折碑橫路碾苔痕
	In the empty hills, the moonlight brings pine shadows;	空山夜月來松影
4	Deserted tombs, with the spring wind, have become trees.	荒塚春風變木根
	Dense and thick, dodder winds around the old temple;	漠漠兔絲羅古廟
	Flapping and fluttering, a cinnabar banner stops at the	翩翩丹旒過孤村
	lonely village. ⁵⁸	
	White poplars, setting sun, sorrowful wind arises;	白楊落日悲風起
8	In bleak dreariness, birds, one by one, flit from chilly nests.	蕭索寒巢鳥獨奔

The poem starts with the pervasive yellow dust and sets a gloomy background. Broken steles and the flattened marks of moss reveal that this is a neglected place that lacks restoration

⁵⁷ *QTS*, 586.6803.

⁵⁸ The cinnabar banner refers to the funerary banner that is used to summon the soul.

and human traces. This absence is intensified in the following two couplets that are neatly crafted to be parallel. The image of empty hill has many occurrences in Tang poetry. Its appearance with the moonlight recalls Li Bai's 李白 (701-762?) "The Way to Shu is Hard" (Shudao nan 蜀道難), "[the cuckoo's crying], in the moonlight, is sorrowful in the empty hills" 夜月愁空山.⁵⁹ The next line focuses on the change brought about by nature. That deserted tombs have become trees with the spring wind, together with dodder winding around the old temple, again shows their isolation from the human world and the power of nature; it also associates the passage of time. In the penultimate line, we see the "setting sun" (*luori* 落日), which suggests it was dusk and slightly contradicts the "moonlight" (*yeyue* 夜月). The last line closes with the moving picture of flitting birds featured "one by one" (*du* 獨), different from the familiar image that birds usually flock as a group or a pair. The employment of an action to end a poem is not common in Tang poetry, and it has the effect of bringing the reader out of the static picture and reminds us of the "meaning beyond the image" (*xiangwai zhi yi* 像外之意).

All the words adopted in the poem fit the scenario nicely on the image level, yet they also denote the poet's inner feelings. They are modifiers for the natural things, but they are also laden with loneliness and melancholy, i.e., "empty," "deserted" (*huang* 荒), "lonely" (*gu* 孤), "sorrowful" (*bei* 悲), "bleak dreariness" (*xiaosuo* 蕭索), and "one by one." This piece, like much late-Tang poetry considered this way, is internalized.

⁵⁹ *Li Bai ji jiaozhu* 李白集校注, ed. Qu Tuiyuan 瞿蛻園 and Zhu Jincheng 朱金城 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1980), 3. 199.

The abandoned tombs and broken steles construct a dreadful scene and are standard images in the repertoire of poems related to graveyards. Lu Cangyong 盧藏用 (664-713) says in one of his poems:

I weep for the Commissioner of Xizhou;	泣對西州使
In sorrow I visit the graves on Beimang.	悲訪北邙塋
New tombs are rampant with plants of last year;	新墳蔓宿草
Old watchtowers look ruined with damaged inscriptions. ⁶⁰	舊闕毀殘銘

This is a small portion from a long poem, which was written to commemorate one of the poet's old friends who had passed away. Based on the context, the Commissioner of Xizhou is perhaps the one recalled by the poet and was buried at Beimang. *Xi* 西, literally meaning “west,” makes a apt semantic complement to *bei* 北, or “north.” This parallelism continues into the second couplet by the pairing of “new” (*xin* 新) and “old” (*jiu* 舊). The reader is again brought to the desolate site. Instead of having old graves, something new is added, the “new tombs,” yet the last line is even more depressing, marked by “ruined” (*hui* 毀) and “damaged” (*can* 殘). In Liu Xiyi's “Contemplation of the Past on River Luo” 洛川懷古, a long poem comprised of 32 pentasyllabic lines, the image of rampant plants remains, and the scene is somewhat fearsome:

⁶⁰ “Song, the Chief Recorder, Dreamed of Zhao the Sixth at Mount Minggao; Before I could reply, He Said [Zhao] already Died; now I Compose this Poem to Reply to Song and also to Present it to My Old Companion of the Past” (Song Zhubu Minggao meng Zhaoliu, yu weiji bao er chen zi yun wang; jin zhuiwei cishi da Song jian yi pingxi youjiu 宋主簿鳴皋夢趙六予未及報而陳子云亡今追為此詩答宋兼貽平昔遊舊). *QTS*, 93.1002-1003. Song the Chief Recorder might refer to Song Zhiwen 宋之問 (656?-712?), who worked as the Chief Recorder of the Department of Honglu 鴻臚主簿. Zhao the sixth might be Zhao Yuan 趙元, whose byname is 貞固, since Song Zhiwen has a poem titled “Replying to Zhao Zhenggu, the Sixth” (Da Zhaoliu Zhengu 答趙六貞固).

My lord, please look at the paths at Beimang;	君看北邙道
Skulls and skeletons are entangled with rampant plants.	髑髏縈蔓草
[Two lines missing in the original text]	
Some steles and tombs are only half remaining;	碑塋或半存
Brambles and thorns collect secluded souls.	荊棘斂幽魂

The poem is a frame piece. It starts with the outer frame, in which the poet saw an old man weeping by River Luo and asked him the reason, and continues with the inner frame, the elder's monologue about his reflections on the rise and fall of Luoyang and self-lament, which is the bulk of the piece, and concludes with the poet's weeping. The excerpt presented here is the ending of the monologue, in which the speaker bemoans that human life is transitory and full of woes, and thus Beimang serves as a place where the living people will end up staying, and "skulls and skeletons" (*kulou* 骷髏) and "secluded souls" (*youhun* 幽魂) mirror their afterlife. Interestingly, the vivid description might be simply imagination, since the setting was by the river, i.e., neither of them really visited Beimang.

In the next piece, "Seven-word" (*qiyán* 七言) by Lü Yan 呂巖 (fl. ca. 874),⁶¹ the dominant image is "bones" (*gu* 骨):

Late at Nine-Crag, in drunkenness, I turn back and gaze;	晚醉九巖回首望
Below Mount Beimang, bones are pure white.	北邙山下骨皚皚

White is the standard color for human bones, and thus readers must be familiar with the image of "white bones" (*baigu* 白骨), yet the poet adopted the binome "pure white" (*aiai* 皚皚), which

⁶¹ *QTS*, 857.9687.

almost exclusively describes snow. 皚皚, suggesting brightness even to the point of dazzling, contrasts with the time setting of the poem (late in the day) and produces a strong visual effect.

The lateness of the day, which depending on context can be either “dusk” (*mu* 暮) or “night” (*ye* 夜), is a standard image of pathos in Chinese poetry. The end of the day is often regarded as a metaphor for the end of life and a symbol of the passage of time. This is a moment when poets begin to contemplate the past, his/her personal life, or vanished history on a large sense. Melancholy sentiments are easily aroused and often loom over these literary pieces. This is true especially when poets ascend on high, since the wider view can be internalized and viewed as reflection of the world in general.⁶² As for Mount Beimang, a burial place from where one can see the whole city of Luoyang, the evening or nighttime is even more affecting.

Mount Mang 邙山⁶³

Shen Quanqi 沈佺期 (656?-714?)

On Mount Beimang cairns and mounds are laid out;	北邙山上列墳塋
For myriad ages and thousands of autumns they face the city of Luo.	萬古千秋對洛城
When the sun sets, in the city arises the resonance of bells;	城中日夕歌鐘起
On the mountain only the sound of pines and cypresses can be heard.	山上唯聞松柏聲

⁶² The relation between ascending high and contemplation of the past is discussed in chapter 1 and analyzed in detail by Hans Frankel; see note 15.

⁶³ *QTS*, 97.1055.

This quatrain (*jueju* 絕句), whose AABA rhyming pattern is typical of Tang poetry in this form, presents a static picture of Mount Beimang. The second line embraces the sense of space and time. “Myriad ages and thousands of autumns” (*wangu qianqiu* 萬古千秋) indicates the passage of time and also bridges the past and present. “Facing the city of Luo” (*dui Luocheng* 對洛城) establishes a distance between the mountain and the city. In the third line this stretching of time and space disappears, and the poet’s scope focuses on this very moment, marked by the sun-setting image, which has a somewhat soothing effect. This image is often employed by Xie Tiao 謝朓 (464-499) and can be observed in at least a dozen of his works. In the closing line, the resonance of bells in the city and the rustling of pines and cypresses on the mountain, contributes to the tranquility of this scene.

In the following couplet, the concluding two lines from the second of Pi Rixiu’s 皮日休 (ca. 834-883) two poems of “Cold-food [Festival] in [the city of] Luo” (Luozhong hanshi 洛中寒食), the slanting evening sunlight on the Beimang is the only poetic image:⁶⁴

If you want to know what place depresses the powerful 欲知豪貴堪愁處
and wealthy;

Please look at the evening sunlight slanting on Mount Mang. 請看邙山晚照斜

Power, fortune, and fame, desired by many people and possessed by the preeminent and wealthy, become futile when confronting death. Mount Beimang’s being a place from which worldly matters are cut off arouses feelings of loss. The poet’s suggestion of looking at the evening sunlight on the mountain insinuates that its power to arouse this sentiment is even

⁶⁴ QTS. 613.7068.

stronger and more effective at dusk. The poet seems to insinuate a hidden irony towards the wealthy.

The setting sun features the dusk, yet when it comes to night, the image of the moon comes to our sight. The sentiments become more personal and center on longing, and they are more sorrowful than melancholic, as in the following poem:

Lyrics by Miaoxiang 妙香詞⁶⁵

Zheng Jichao of the Tang dynasty came across Tian, the Military Attendant, who gave [Zheng] the courtesan, Miaoxiang, as a gift. After several years, [Miaoxiang] bid farewell [to Zheng Jichao], and sang the lyrics on the moon at Beimang to present wine. The next day, they arrived at the foot of Mount Beimang together. [Miaoxiang] transformed into a fox and left; Mr. Tian was also a fox.

唐鄭繼超遇田參軍，贈妓女曰妙香。數年告別。歌北邙月詞送酒。翌日，同至北邙山下，化狐而去，田君亦狐也。

I urge you, my lord, to drink wine, don't refuse;

勸君酒莫辭

When flowers fall, they abandon old branches.

花落拋舊枝

Only the moon below Mount Beimang;

只有北邙山下月

Its pure light, even till my death, still follows along.

清光到死也相隨

Comprised of a pentasyllabic and a heptasyllabic couplet, the poem is an implicit farewell poem. The shedding of flowers and pure moonlight construct a beautiful, yet sad, picture. The natural images, if explored more carefully, have a deeper meaning. The flowers might allude to the poetic speaker, Miaoxiang (literal meaning: wondrous fragrance); their falling down and

⁶⁵ QTS, 867.9826.

abandoning the old branches (i.e. Zheng Jichao, her old patron to whom she was attached), thus insinuate her leaving the lord. But the moonlight provides a comparison and some comfort; it always follows along and never leaves. Interestingly, the moon, instead of hanging above the mountain, is below Mount Beimang.

In the following poem, the moon also looms, but the “fox spirit” is replaced by the soul.

Poem on Union with Zeng Jiheng in the Underworld 與曾季衡冥會詩⁶⁶

Wang Lizhen 王麗真

In the fourth year of the Taihe era, Jiheng, the grandson of Zeng Xiao'an, the Defense Commissioner of Jianzhou, dwelled in the west chamber of the Commissioner's residence. The former Commissioner Wang had a daughter named Lizhen, who died there because of a sudden disease. [One day] her soul appeared and intimately united with Jiheng, and this went on for nearly sixty days. The young lad was fond of sex. He did not regard what was happening as suspicious and he divulged it to others. Lizhen blamed him for breaking the promise and left one poem as a farewell. Jiheng couldn't compose poetry, but managed to write one as a reply, and [their relationship was] cut off. Later he inquired [about Lizhen] of a lady who did needlework at Wuyuan, who said, “The daughter of Wang the Commissioner was buried at Mount Beimang, which is dim and obscure, and people often see her soul roam around here.” [Beimang is] what is mentioned in the girl's poem, saying, “[Now] at Beimang I lament the clear autumn moon in vain.”

⁶⁶ *QTS*, 866.9800.

太和四年，監州防禦使曾孝安有孫季衡，居使宅西院。前使君王有女麗真，暴終於此。魂現，與季衡款合，近六十日。少年好色，不以為疑，偶洩之人。麗真責其負約，留詩為別。季衡不能詩，強為一篇酬之，遂絕。後詢五原紉針婦，云，王使君女，歸葬北邙山，隱晦，人多見其魂遊於此。此女詩所云北邙空恨清秋月也。

In my youth, with misty flowers, it was spring everywhere; 年少煙花處處春
[Now] at Beimang I lament the clear autumn moon in vain. 北邙空恨清秋月

As suggested by both title and preface, the purported author is the soul of Wang Lizhen, who died young and was buried at Mount Beimang. This heptasyllabic quatrain was written as a farewell piece after the secret love relationship between Wang's soul and Zeng Jiheng was divulged by the latter and thus had to stop. Although the preface mentions that Wang blamed Zeng for breaking the promise, the poem is more sorrowful than blameful, as suggested by "lament" in the last line. As a matter of fact, it is a love poem. The couplet presented here is the second half of the quatrain, and the second line, "swallows are separated and orioles apart" (*yanchai yingli* 燕拆鶯離), is clearly a metaphor for the parting between lovers. In the couplet Wang first recalled her lifetime as a young girl. The image of "misty flowers" (*yanhua* 煙花) has many appearances in poetry on spring, e.g., "In the misty flowers of the third month he [sails] downstream to Yangzhou" 煙花三月下揚州 in Li Bai's "At the Yellow-Crane Tower, Sending off Meng Haoran who is leaving for Guangling" (Huanghelou song Meng Haoran zhi Guangling 黃鶴樓送孟浩然之廣陵).⁶⁷ The phrase "everywhere was spring" (*chuchu chun* 處處春) is probably hyperbolic and symbolic of the young girl's joyful mood, since springtime often arouses merry emotions. In the last line she veers off to her afterlife, imagining her soul

⁶⁷ *QTS*, 174.1785.

lamenting the autumn moon, whose poetic image often evokes the grief over separation and lovesickness. Autumn also serves as a perfect semantic complement with spring in the preceding line on both the graphic and psychological level.

These two poems by Miaoxiang and Wang Lizhen are put under the same sub-category of “peculiarities” (*guai* 怪) by the editors of *Quan Tang shi*. This categorization might be credited to their prefaces, which provide intriguing stories that seem to be good material for Tang *chuanqi* 傳奇 stories. Neither of their poetic personae, the former being a fox spirit, the latter being a soul, is a real person. We already see the wandering of souls in the Dunhuang poem, but these two poems take a step further and bring something new: the connection between Mount Beimang and the non-human world.

The combination of Mount Beimang and the moon can also be found in Bai Juyi’s 白居易 (772-846) “Lamenting Shigao” (Ku Shigao 哭師皋), “Outside the mesa of Beimang, beside Yi village, / with the moon woeful, the mist sorrowful, the night has passed more than half” 北邙原邊尹村畔 / 月苦煙愁夜過半.⁶⁸ “Woeful” and “sorrowful,” words that normally describe a mental state, are externalized and applied to nature. The mist that modifies flowers and denotes happiness in Wang Lizhen’s poem here goes to the opposite and suggests vagueness and dimness. In Zhang Hu’s 張祜 (ca.792-ca. 854) “Sending out Sentiments on Luoyang” (Luoyang ganyu 洛陽感寓), a poem on the emptiness of fortune and fame after the poet’s brooding on the rise and fall that has happened in the city, he says, “Evening mist lies across the Luo River, hazy and blurry, / Mount Mang in the autumn sun appears towering and spiring” 洛水暮煙橫莽蒼 / 邙山

⁶⁸ *QTS*, 453.5130. Shigao is the byname of Yang Yuqing 楊虞卿 (before 800-ca. 835).

秋日露崔嵬。⁶⁹ Although “evening” and “autumn” occur in two different lines and seem to describe the Luo River and Mount Mount respectively, they actually apply to both. “Towering and spiring” is reminiscent of Liang Hong’s 梁鴻 description of the Eastern Han palaces in the “Ballad on Five Yees,” but here it is probably hyperbolic, since the height of the mountain is merely around 1,000 feet.

We might notice that some of the aforementioned poems adopt autumn as their time setting. Autumn, as a sign of the end of the year, is frequently employed in poems with the theme of melancholia. Images such as the moon and the setting sun in autumn can also evoke poets’ bemoaning the loss of his/her prime years and the passage of time. It corresponds with the tradition of “lament the autumn” (*beiqiu* 悲秋), whose origin can be found in Song Yu’s 宋玉 (ca. 290-223 BCE) “Nine Arguments” (Jiubian 九辨) in the *Chuci*.⁷⁰ In comparison with this tradition, however, there is a deeply-rooted “grieving the spring” (*shangchun* 傷春) convention, in which the luxuriance of springtime plants, is contrasted with the brevity of human life. One of the earliest pieces of this convention is Song Yu’s “Summoning the Soul” (Zhaohun 招魂),⁷¹ and Li Bai exquisitely explored this theme in his two “lesser fu” (*xiaofu* 小賦), “Begrudging the Late Spring” (Xi yuchun fu 惜餘春賦) and “Sorrow on the Sunlit Spring” (Chou yangchun fu 愁陽春

⁶⁹ *QTS*, 511.5826.

⁷⁰ For the translation of “Nine Arguments,” see David Hawkes, *Ch’u tz’ü: The Songs of the South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), 92-100.

⁷¹ For the translation of “Summoning the Soul”, see Hawkes, *Ch’u tz’ü: The Songs of the South*, 101-108.

賦).⁷² In the ensuing poems, we see Mount Beimang set in the spring, especially marked with the topos of green lush plants, which is the starting point of Wu Shanghao's 吳商浩 (?-?) "Mount Beimang," a heptasyllabic regulated verse:⁷³

	Plants on Mount Beimang once more become lush and luxuriant;	北邙山草又青青
	My soul melts on this day, things can be seen clearly.	今日銷魂事可明
	I am drunk from the green ale, but the springtime hasn't waned; ⁷⁴	綠酒醉來春未歇
4	Above white poplars the wind arises, the willows just turn sun-lit.	白楊風起柳初晴
	A sward of mounds just buried, with pines newly grown;	岡原旋葬松新長
	For ages there are no people, the watchtower is half flattened.	年代無人闕半平
	Let me procure a nine-times-transmuted elixir from	堪取金爐九還藥
	the furnace of gold; ⁷⁵	
8	To keep me from following the dreams of this floating life.	不能隨夢向浮生

We notice here the constancy of nature, suggested by "once more" (*you* 又) that comes before "lush and luxuriant" (*qingqing* 青青). Nature is able to renew itself each year, and at a gravesite it contrasts with men's decline. The second line turns to the poet's feelings upon seeing this surrounding. The "melting of the soul" (*xiaohun* 銷魂) here refers to the poet as

⁷² *Li Bai ji jiaozhu*, 19-26.

⁷³ *QTS*, 774.8772.

⁷⁴ "Green ale" (*lüjiu* 綠酒) is newly-brewed ale, with dregs still floating on the surface. Since the dregs are green, the ale looks green too.

⁷⁵ The nine-times-transmuted elixir (*jiuhuan yao* 九還藥) refers to the Daoist elixir of immortality that goes through nine refinements.

overwhelmed by sorrow. “Things can be seen clearly” (*shi keming* 事可明) is baffling; if we read it with the last couplet, it probably means visiting the burial place makes the poet understand that human life is short. Lines 3 to 5 delineate the beautiful springtime that is featured by brightness and freshness; even some of the tombs and pines take on a new picture. Yet line 6 provides a desolate scene, the flattened watchtower, a familiar image we have seen before, implicitly indicates the passage of time. Upon this realization, the poet turns to the Daoist elixir for help.

The constancy of nature on Mount Beimang arouses the idea that living in this world is like a “floating life” (*fusheng* 浮生), the concept of which might be borrowed from a boat that floats in the water and cannot decide its direction or fate, and thus is often called “following the wave and chasing the current” (*suibo zhuliu* 隨波逐流). The floating life therefore refers to the insubstantial and impermanent nature of life in the mortal world. In Shen Tingrui’s 沈廷瑞 “Poem Left in the Grave” (Longxue yishi 壟穴遺詩), we can also see the juxtaposition of green plants and floating life:

Let me just sigh over things of past and present in this 堪歎浮生今古事
floating life;

While Below Mount Beimang plants grow in verdant luxuriance. 北邙山下草芊芊

The cycle of life and death in the natural world, marked by the growth of plants, never stops, yet human life is impermanent. The poet thus cannot do anything but sigh over the nature.

Up until now we have read poems that explore the landscape of Mount Beimang and different natural images relevant to it. The mountain is presented as a static picture in which

human activities are absent. In the next several poems, however, we see living people send off funerals and what they do for the dead. The gravesite is not only a place where the deceased are buried, but also where life and death are interrelated. It is more lively and vibrant. We will see that Luoyang frequently appears in these poems. Because of the mountain's proximity to Luoyang, the capital with a large population, it serves as the major cemetery for the city. In the following poems it is depicted as a crowded site, over-used with little spare land.

The first poem is the second of Liu Yanshi's 劉言史 (742?-813?) trilogy, "Sentiments on the Northern Mesa" (Beiyuan qing 北原情).⁷⁶ It is comprised of twelve pentasyllabic lines:

	The mountain north of the walls of Luoyang;	洛陽城北山
	From past to present buries dead travelers.	古今葬冥客
	Clustered bones have decayed and become mud;	聚骨朽成泥
4	Thus most earth of this mountain is white.	此山土多白
	Those who recently send off the dead;	近來送葬人
	When they have just left, one can hear the sounds of their return.	亦去聞歸聲
	How can it be that the wheels of carriages are [rolling] faster?	豈能車輪疾
8	It's that tombs are encroaching upon the city.	漸是墓侵城
	In the city there are always people;	城中人不絕
	In grief and mourning they travel one after another.	哀挽相次行
	Could it be that after [being buried in] Beimang;	莫非北邙後
12	They once again are born in the city of Luo?	重向洛城生

⁷⁶ *QTS*, 468.5332.

Here we see an alternative name for Mount Beimang, the “northern mesa” (*beiyuan* 北原) or “northern mountain” (*beishan* 北山). Starting with a plain narration of the past and present of the graveyard, the poem goes on to describe its color as white, which is of course symbolic. We can infer from line 3 that the whiteness comes from the white clustered bones, as we have seen in Lü Yan’s depiction that “bones are pure white” (*gu aiai* 骨皑皑). In the third couplet we see people who send off funerals, and the poet presents a somewhat strange phenomenon: one (probably in the city) can hear them return as soon as they leave. We find the reason for this in the fourth couplet: the gravesite is enlarging toward the city, probably because of the increasing number of the dead. Note that the poet uses the verb “encroach” (*qin* 侵), which literally means “invade” and conveys the sense of aggressiveness. The graves are thus personified. The encroachment of the cemetery brings forth the impression that there might be fewer living people in the city. Yet the next couplet (lines 9-10) presents a contradictory scene: there are always people. *Bujue* 不絕 exhibits a vivid picture of the unceasing stream of people. The closing couplet offers an interesting speculation: those who are buried at Beimang are reborn in Luoyang. This speculation indicates that instead of a definitive separation between the living and the dead, there is a cycle. After the living pass away, they are buried at Mount Beimang, but they do not reside in the underworld forever; in the end they are reborn in the city and join the younger generations. Here for the first time we see a more lighthearted tone. The thought that death is only one step in the processions of human life can be found in Zhuangzi’s reply to Hui Shi, who asked why the former didn’t seem sad upon his wife’s death; Zhuangzi answered by comparing the progression of one’s life from the formation of his *qi* 氣 to his death with the alternations of the four seasons.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Here is what Zhuangzi said to Hui Shi, “I peered back into her beginnings; there was a

In the ensuing poem we see the same scene: a large number of the dead and people sending off funerals in grief. Yet what the living do for the deceased is much more elaborately displayed.

Ballad on Beimang 北邙行⁷⁸

Wang Jian 王建 (766?-ca. 830)

	On top of Mount Beimang there is little unused earth;	北邙山頭少閒土
	Everywhere are old graves of people from Luoyang.	盡是洛陽人舊墓
	Families of these old graves bring many offerings to the burial;	舊墓人家歸葬多
4	So much gold piled up, with no more place to put it.	堆著黃金無置處
	Heaven's edge is distant and remote, yet burials come fast;	天涯悠悠葬日促
	On the mound and slope, the funeral carriages do not cease.	岡坂崎嶇不停轂
	Hanging the white curtain high, winding the inscribed banner;	高張素幕繞銘旌
8	At night singing lamenting songs, staying at the mountain foot.	夜唱輓歌山下宿
	North of Luoyang's walls and also to the east;	洛陽城北複城東

time before there was a life. Not only was there no life, there was a time before there was a shape. Not only was there no shape. There was a time before there was energy. Mingled together in the amorphous, something altered, and there was the energy; by alternation in the energy there was the shape, by alternation of the shape there was the life. Now once more altered she has gone over to death. This is companion with spring and autumn, summer and winter, in the procession of the four seasons” 然察其始而本無生. 非徒無生也而本無形. 非徒無形也而本無氣. 雜乎芒芴之間, 變而有氣, 氣變而有形, 形變而有生. 今又變而之死. 是相與為春秋冬夏四時行也. See: Guo Qingfan 郭慶藩 comp., *Zhuangzi jishi* 莊子集釋 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2004), 18.614-615. Translation is adopted from A. C. Graham's *Chuang-tzŭ: The Seven Inner Chapters and Other Writings from the Book Chuang-tzŭ* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1981), 123-124.

⁷⁸ QTS, 298.3375.

- One always meets carriages loaded with souls and horses
burdened with ancestors.⁷⁹ 魂車祖馬長相逢
- The ruts made by carriages are as wide as avenues in Chang'an; 車轍廣若長安路
- 12 Wormwood and weeds are fewer than pines and cypresses. 蒿草少於松柏樹
- On top of the mountain, at the bottom of creeks, rocks grow scarce; 山頭澗底石漸稀
- All end up as sheep and tigers in front of cairns. 盡向墳前作羊虎
- When the inscriptions on somebody's stone stele fade; 誰家石碑文字滅
- 16 People of later ages must again write the year and month. 後人重取書年月
- Morning after morning carriages and horses return from funerals; 朝朝車馬送葬回
- 18 And still grand mansions and high terraces are built. 還起大宅與高臺

The theme of death still looms, but the focus in this poem has completely shifted to the living. The opening couplet specifies the mountain's close relation with Luoyang by saying the graveyard is full of tombs of people from the capital. That little unused land is left shows that the mountain is largely covered with graves, and a similar phenomenon can be found in Bao Rong's 鮑溶 (fl. ca. 800-809) "A Traveler's Thoughts on the Way" (Tuzhong lüsi 途中旅思), "Days that are gone and yet to come are to be mourned, / at Beimang the fields are narrow" 來往日相

⁷⁹ The *zu* 祖, which literally means "ancestor," was the ceremony of worshipping the dead person as ancestor, carried out in the courtyard, and thus *zuma* 祖馬 refers to horses for carriages that carry coffins.

悲 / 北邙田土窄。⁸⁰ The following couplet that describe what the living do for the dead is also marked by crowdedness: too much gold as sacrifice is piled up and there is no more place to put it, carriages to the cemetery never stop, people sing mourning songs and live at the mountain foot. All these activities are carried out as if they are daily routines, and they bring about some changes to the mountain: ruts by carriages are as wide as the avenues of Chang'an, more pines and cypresses (trees that often appear in graveyards as symbols of eternity) are planted, and rocks on the mountain become fewer because they are made into stone sheep and tigers as tomb guards. The last couplet seems to imply that going through funerals and witnessing death do not affect people's life. Instead, they move on, as indicated by what they do when they return, "Morning after morning carriages and horses return from funerals, / and still grand mansions and high terraces are built."

In this poem we see images that are typically related with graveyards: funerary carriages, mourning songs, pines and cypresses, steles, and stone sheep and tigers as tomb guards. These images are kept alive in the following poem, another "Ballad on Beimang" by Zhang Ji 張籍 (766?-ca. 830),⁸¹ who shared fame with his contemporary Wang Jian.

Outside the northern gate of Luoyang, on the path to Beimang; 洛陽北門北邙道

A mourning carriage rumbles along into the autumn weeds. 喪車鱗鱗入秋草

In front of the carriage, people sing together the song of 車前齊唱薤露歌

⁸⁰ *QTS*, 486.5517.

⁸¹ *QTS*, 382.4283; also see *YFSJ*, 94.1323.

“Dew on the Shallots,”⁸²

- 4 A high cairn is newly built, the sun is distant and aloft.⁸³ 高墳新起日峨峨
Morning after morning, day after day, people send off the dead; 朝朝暮暮人送葬
And within the walls of Luoyang there are even more people. 洛陽城中人更多
- A thousand in gold spent to set up a stele, as high as a 千金立碑高百尺
hundred feet;
- 8 But in the end it becomes the rock under the pillars of 終作誰家柱下石
somebody’s house.
- On the mountain top half of the pines and cypresses 山頭松柏半無主
have no owners;
- Under the ground there are more white bones than earth. 地下白骨多於土
On “Cold Food” festival every household sends paper money; 寒食家家送紙錢
- 12 But crows and gledes carry it up to make nests in the trees. 烏鳶作窠銜上樹

⁸² “Dew on the Shallots” is a mourning song. According to Cui Bao 崔豹 (fl. 290-306), “[The song of ‘Dew on the Shallot’] was written by one of Tian Heng’s disciples. After Tian Heng 田橫 (d. 202) committed suicide, his disciple grieved for him and wrote a song for him, saying that human life is like the dew on a shallot, which easily disappears in the sunshine” 出田橫門人，橫自殺，門人傷之，為之悲歌，言人命如薤上之露，易晞滅也 (*Gujin zhu* 古今注, Cui Bao [*Baibu congshu jicheng* 百部叢書集成 edn.], 3.11b).

⁸³ In this line I read *ri* 日 with *YFSJ*, rather than *bai* 白 with *QTS*. It is possible to read *bai*, in which case the line would be, “A high grave is newly built, white, tall, and somber,” yet ABB-structured adjectives are not common in Chinese poetry.

Those who dwell in the court and market cannot be relieved from sorrow;
人居朝市未解愁

14 Please visit Beimang for a moment. 請君暫向北邙遊

Firstly, some words need to say about the rarely seen form shared by these two poems, both comprised of heptasyllabic lines. Wang Jian's poem has 18 lines, including one octet with the AABA rhyming pattern, one quatrain rhyming AABA, and three rhyming couplets. Zhang Ji's piece has 14 lines and contains two quatrains rhyming AABA and three rhyming couplets. Rhyming couplets are not uncommon in Tang poetry, but their employment here is noteworthy, because in many cases they are associated with more colloquial poems that connote joyful emotions and rarely appear in sad poems. The fact that the poems are titled "ballad" indicates they are colloquial poems; however, since their focus is on Mount Beimang, the images and themes explored arouse sorrowful sentiments. It is interesting that our poets take the theme of Mount Beimang and put it into a different form that is normally not adopted to describe sad images.

This poem also shares a similar vocabulary and syntax as the previous piece. Both poems use the rhetorical question word "somebody's" (*shuijia* 誰家), "mountain top" (*shantou* 山頭), and *yu* 於, an indication of comparison: "more than" (*duoyu* 多於) in Zhang Ji's poem, and "less than" (*shaoyu* 少於) in Wang Jian's piece. Line 5, "Morning after morning, day after day, people come to send off funerals" 朝朝暮暮人送葬, has a strong echo with line 17 in the preceding poem, "Morning after morning carriages and horses return from funerals" 朝朝車馬送葬回.

The resemblances in these two poems in terms of images, titles, forms, and vocabulary suggest that one of the two poets might have been aware of the other's poem and had written a

response to it. This speculation is supported by the fact that Wang Jian and Zhang Ji lived in the same period sharing the same fame, and according to the *Tang caizi zhuan* 唐才子傳,⁸⁴ there was communication between them.

Some images are new. Line 2 has “autumn weeds” (*qiucào* 秋草), indicating that the time is late in the year, when the withering of plants provokes the feeling of men’s decline. In this mood, even the sunlight is cold, since the sun is “distant and aloft” (*e’e* 峨峨; line 4). The coldness of the sun aggravates men’s sorrow upon other people’s loss. Line 6 and 10 are reminiscent of Liu Yanshi’s 劉言史 “Sentiments on the Northern Mesa” 北原情, with the former saying that there are many people in Luoyang, and the latter describing white bones.

The description of human activities is given the same weight as in the preceding poem, yet here the poet seems to adopt a more sarcastic attitude towards these deeds, which in the poem are denied by the passage of time and nature: the stone stele that costs one thousand in gold as a symbol of eternity becomes the rock under the pillar of someone’s house, and paper money offered by the living with their wishes for the dead in the underworld is taken away by crows and gledes that represent nature. The contrast between the constancy of nature and transience of the human world that has somewhat become a platitude is again presented.

The ending couplet of the preceding poem shows that people forget about death and move on upon returning from funerals and thus has a lighthearted tone, yet the closing part here is more cheering, “Those who dwell in the court and market cannot be relieved from sorrow, / please visit Beimang for a moment.” “Court and market” here is a metonym for the mundane world. The idea might be that upon visiting Beimang, the desolate site where human power is

⁸⁴ *Tang caizi zhuan*, comp. Xin Wenfang 辛文房 (fl.ca.1304-1324) (Shanghai: Gudian wenzue, 1957), 5.91.

denied, people can realize that they are still living in this world and human life is precious. The lighthearted tone implied here recalls some of the “Nineteen Old Poems,” in which lamentations of the poetic persona end with his/her self-encouragement.

The next heptasyllabic quatrain, Ouyang Zhan’s 歐陽詹 (756?-800?) “Watching the Sending off of Funerals” (Guan songzang 觀送葬),⁸⁵ is also a poem on people attending funerals, but the poet sees it from another perspective:

For what matter are you sad and grieved, with tears soaking your kerchiefs?	何事悲酸淚滿巾
The floating lives are all dust of Beimang.	浮生共是北邙塵
In the past one could not see paths on the northern mountain;	他時不見北山路
The dead were still sending people off in weeping.	死者還曾哭送人

The poem seems to address those who are bidding farewell to the deceased in grief, since it starts with a question, “for what matter...?” The poet then tries to comfort them by saying all people will become “dust/soil of Beimang” (*Beimang chen* 北邙塵), referring to the dead that ultimately merge with the soil after being buried. Here we encounter again the phrase “floating life” 浮生 as an indication that human life is insubstantial and impermanent. In the second half of the poem the speaker looks back into the past, marked by “at that time” (*tashi* 他時), when there were no paths on Beimang and the deceased whom people were lamenting were still alive and themselves weeping over others’ death. The familiar contrast between the past and present once more suggests the passage of time and inconstancy of worldly affairs.

⁸⁵ *QTS*, 349.3912.

The dust of Beimang seems to have been a common poetic image for Tang poets, since the phrase has more than ten occurrences in the *Quan Tang shi*. Literally it symbolizes the dead, yet the deeper implication behind might be the Buddhist idea of 塵, dust or impurities of the mind caused by desires in this mundane world. Like dust of the mind that should be disposed, the mortal body never endures. The following are some examples that employ this term:

His voice and countenance have nowhere to stay;	音容無處所
And return to become the dust of Beimang. ⁸⁶	歸作北邙塵
In a hundred years all will wither with the sun over the West Mountain;	百年同謝西山日
For a thousand autumns and myriad ages they will be the dust of Beimang. ⁸⁷	千秋萬古北邙塵
Early and late visitors to Beimang;	北邙前後客
Mourn for [those who have become] dust. ⁸⁸	相吊為塵埃
Upon returning to the ornamental pillars;	歸來華表上
One should mock the dust of Beimang. ⁸⁹	應笑北邙塵

⁸⁶ Quan Deyu 權德輿 (fl. ca. 794-806), “Weeping over Secretariat Liu, the Fourth” (Ku Liusi Shangshu 哭劉四尚書), *QTS*, 326.3657.

⁸⁷ Liu Xiyi, “Ballad on the Young Gentleman” (Gongzi xing 公子行), *QTS*, 82.885.

⁸⁸ Meng Jiao 孟郊 (751-814), “Mourning for Lu Yin” (Diao Luyin 吊盧殷), *QTS*, 381.4277.

Haven't you seen, my lord, those of old days who refined mercury;君不見古來燒水銀

Have changed into dust on Mount Beimang.⁹⁰ 變作北邙山上塵

[The one in] golden thread transforms into dust of Beimang; 金縷化邙塵

Distress and glory move the passers-by. 哀榮感路人

Phoenixes used to be her company; 鳳凰曾作伴

But mole crickets and termites have suddenly become her 螻蟻忽為親

intimates.⁹¹

The last example is the second and third couplets of a regulated verse, an elegy for the Princess of Huaiyang 淮陽公主. We know nothing about her except that she was one of Tang Ruizong's 睿宗 (r. 684-690 and 710-712; 662-716) daughters. "Golden thread" (*jinlü* 金縷) refers to what she wore in her lifetime and indicates that she lived a luxurious life, and it forms a sharp contrast with the dust of Beimang that she becomes after death. The other contrast is her companions: before they were phoenixes, symbols of royalty, yet mole crickets and termites,

⁸⁹ Yu Ye 于鄴 (fl. ca. 867), "Presented to Wang the Daoist Adept" (Zeng Wang Daoshi 贈王道士), *QTS*, 725.8316.

⁹⁰ Gu Kuang 顧況 (727?-815?), "Travelling the Road is Hard" (Xinglu nan 行路難), *QTS*, 25.344. Those who refined mercury refer to alchemists who seek for longevity by refining minerals into elixirs. Note that Gu Kuang was a Daoist poet who spent much of his life at Maoshan 茅山. It seems contradictory that as a Daoist he rejected people's seeking elixirs in hope of immortality. It also contrasts with the desire for immortality in the "A Poem on Beimang" 北邙篇 from the Dunhuang manuscript.

⁹¹ Li Yi 李乂 (647-714), "Mourning Song for Princess of Huaiyang" (Huaiyang gongzhu wange 淮陽公主輓歌), *QTS*. 92.997.

insects that feast on the dead, immediately replaced them. That glory disappears with death echoes the second couplet of “A Poem on Beimang” from the Dunhuang manuscripts, “Before you were imperious and extravagant in the imperial city, / never imagined you would wither and fall at this mountain top.” Since Mount Beimang as a graveyard brings visitors closer to death, it arouses their fear and dismay for the loss of everything they enjoyed in their lifetimes. The ensuing several examples display the poetic image of the mountain that denies worldly binds.

When passers-by carelessly talk about the glories of Jin and 行人誤話金張貴

Zhang;

He smiles and points at the mounds and burials at Beimang.⁹² 笑指北邙丘與墟

Jin 金 and Zhang 張 refer to Jin Midi 金日磾 (134-86 BCE) and Zhang Anshi 張安世 (d. 62 BCE) respectively. They were both well-known officials in the Former Han dynasty. Their fortune and merits were inherited by their descendants and lasted for the next seven generations. Here the fisherman is portrayed as idle and aloof from troubles in the world. When he points to Mount Beimang as a response to people who talk about the two historical figures, this gesture provides a reminder of the emptiness of glories and fortune.

Above the Beimang slope, below dark-green pines; 北邙坡上青松下

There are all tombs of tinkling gold and pendant-jade.⁹³ 盡是鏘金佩玉墳

⁹² Luo Ye 羅鄴 (fl. ca. 877), “Fisherman” (Diaoweng 釣翁), *QTS*, 654.7518. This poem is also attributed to Zheng Gu 鄭谷. The figure of the fisherman as a distinct image in Chinese poetry is briefly discussed in Stephen Owen’s *The Late Tang: Chinese Poetry of the Mid-Ninth Century (827-860)* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006), 2-3.

⁹³ Xu Yin 徐夔 (fl. ca. 890), “Veiling Mist of Ten-li” (Shili yanlong 十里煙籠), *QTS*, 708.8144.

Tinkling gold and pendant-jade are what aristocrats wore and thus are used as a metonymy for them. It might be exaggerated to claim all the tombs are those of the upper-classes in order to highlight that it is vain to pursue official titles, as indicated by the preceding couplet, “in this floating life official fame is merely as if a dream, / for half of my lifetime in toil and woe, I have been deceptive in compositions” 浮世宦名渾似夢 / 半生勤苦謾為文.

In Bai Juyi’s “Ballad on Singing out Loudly” (Haoge xing 浩歌行),⁹⁴ the poet suggests people should be at ease with reputation and fortune, since human life is short; here the mountain seems to accommodate all people:

The worthy, foolish, noble, and humble all return to their end;	賢愚貴賤同歸盡
On Beimang tombs and graves are tall and steep.	北邙塚墓高嵯峨

A similar statement is also found in Li Shanfu’s 李山甫 (fl. ca. 870) “Sending off My Cares” (Qianhuai 遣懷):⁹⁵

The wise and foolish,	智者與愚者
All return to Mount Beimang.	盡歸北邙山
There is only the eastward-flowing water;	唯有東流水
Which in the passage of time is not at leisure even temporarily.	年光不暫閒

These two couplets are the ending part of a twelve-line piece. Note that both Bai Juyi and Li Shanfu use “return” (*gui* 歸), a directional verb that indicates the mountain is the origin where people came from and thus the final destination. We also see that the mountain is put in opposition to the river. The former represents an unchanging situation, whereas the latter,

⁹⁴ *QTS*, 25.334.

⁹⁵ *QTS*, 643.7369.

marked by its unceasing flow that never returns, a familiar trope in Chinese poetry, symbolizes the relentless passage of time.

In another poem by Bai Juyi, “On Qingming Day, Ascending the Pavilion of Lord Lao and Gazing at Luo City, I Present This Piece to Han the Daoist Adept” (Qingmingri deng laojunge wang Luocheng Zeng Han daoshi 清明日登老君閣望洛城贈韓道士), the river becomes a sweeping power that takes away everything.⁹⁶

There is nothing that does not flow eastwards with River Luo, 何事不隨東洛水
Somebody is always to be buried on Mount Beimang. 誰家又葬北邙山

The poet seems to lay more emphasis on the semantic complement of the word 東 and 北, not the poetic image of Mount Beimang. In the fourth of Bai Juyi’s “Five Poems on Speaking out Words” (Fangyan wushou 放言五首) there is “Beimang never saves spare land, / In the Eastern Sea when will the waves ever be stilled? 北邙未省留閒地 / 東海何曾有定波.”⁹⁷ Another of his poems, “On the Fifty Day of the Second Month, Composed below the Flowers” (Eryue wuri huaxia zuo 二月五日花下作), juxtaposes 北 with 西, or “west,” “Xihe drives the sun and makes it sink in the western sea, / The Lord of Souls urges people on and has them buried at Beimang” 羲和趁日沉西海 / 鬼伯驅人葬北邙.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ *QTS*, 456. 5167.

⁹⁷ *QTS*, 438. 4874.

⁹⁸ *QTS*, 443.4958. Xihe 羲和 is the charioteer of the sun in Chinese legends. The sinking of the sun into the western sea suggests the setting of the sun, i.e., the end of the day. The Lord of Souls (*guibo* 鬼伯) is also known as the King of the Hell (*yanwang* 閻王), who governs the underworld.

Moreover, Mount Beimang as a gravesite where physical bodies are buried, is sometimes put in antithesis with the Eastern Marchmount (*dongyue* 東嶽), which sometimes is referred to alternatively as Mount Dai in the east (*dongdai* 東岱), i.e., Mount Tai (*taishan* 泰山), the place where a person's soul travels after death.⁹⁹ Liu Xiyi's "Reflection on the Past by River Luo" says "Beimang is my residence, / the Eastern Marchmount serves as my hometown" 北邙是吾宅 / 東嶽為吾鄉.¹⁰⁰ In Bai Juyi's "Facing Wine" (*Duijiu* 對酒), there is "On Mount Dai in the east, early and late souls, / on Beimang, new and old bones" 東岱前後魂 / 北邙新舊骨.¹⁰¹ The thirty-first of Hanshan's 寒山 (?-?) "Three Hundred and Three Poems" 詩三百三首 says "I am moving to a residence on Mount Dai in the east, / and will stay in a mansion at Beimang" 移向東岱居 / 配守北邙宅.¹⁰² We have seen the juxtaposition of 北 with 東 or 西, and one might expect its appearance with *nan* 南, or the "south," since geographically speaking the south is in perfect antithesis with the north, yet no poems show such a combination.

Some portrayals of Mount Beimang as a graveyard are reminiscent of the poetry of the Graveyard School genre of 18th-century British poetry. The gloomy and dreadful imagery is similar, for example, night, cypresses, tombs, and funerals. Poets of both cultures contemplate on the mortal world and death. However, unlike the British poetry, which was written within the

⁹⁹ For a detailed study of Mount Tai in medieval poetry, see Paul W. Kroll, "Verses from on High: The Ascent of T'ai Shan," in *Vitality of the Lyric Lyric Voice: Shih Poetry from the Late Han to the T'ang*, ed. Shuen-fu Lin and Stephen Owen (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 167-216.

¹⁰⁰ *QTS*, 82.883.

¹⁰¹ *QTS*, 433.4785.

¹⁰² *QTS*, 806.9067.

Christian tradition and reflects on transcendence and the relation between men and the divine, poems on Mount Beimang, hardly touching on religion, stay at the level of the human world. A few records about the mountain can be found in the *Zhengtong daoze* 正統道藏 and *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經, but there is nothing remarkable except three events. *Zhengtong daoze* mentions that the mountain was established as one of the twenty-three Blessed Lands (*fudi* 福地) without specifying the period, and *Taishō* states that Laozi descended in the Temple of the Lord (Laojun miao 老君廟) on the mountain in 677 and the Monastery of Bright Enlightenment (Zhaojue si 昭覺寺), a Buddhist monastery, was built around 621. The secularity of Mount Beimang corresponds nicely with its accommodation of the human body but not the soul, which is traditionally considered to go to Mount Tai, the divine mountain.

Bibliography

- Charles W. Kennedy, *An Anthology of Old English Poetry*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1960.
- Chuxue ji* 初學記, ed. Xu Jian 徐堅 (659-729), Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962.
- Hawkes, David, *Ch'u tz'ü: The Songs of the South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959).
- Frankel, Hans H., "The Contemplation of the Past in T'ang Poetry," in *Perspectives on the T'ang*, ed. Arthur F. Wright and Denis Twitchett, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973, 345-365.
- Graham, A. C., *Chuang-tzū: The Seven Inner Chapters and Other Writings from the Book Chuang-tzū*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1981, 123-124.
- Gujin zhu* 古今注, *Baibu congshu jicheng* 百部叢書集成 edn.
- Guo Qingfan 郭慶藩 comp., *Zhuangzi jishi* 莊子集釋, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2004.
- Han shu* 漢書, comp. Ban Gu 班固 (32-92), Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1997.
- Hou Han shu* 後漢書, comp. Fan Ye 范曄 (398-445), Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1965.
- Huang Yongwu 黃永武, "Dunhuang suojian Liu Xiyi shi sishou de jiazhi" 敦煌所見劉希夷詩四首的價值, in his *Dunhuang de Tang shi* 敦煌的唐詩, Taipei: Hongfan shudian, 1987.
- Knechtges, David R. trans., *Wen xuan or Selections of Refined Literature*, vol. 1, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982.
- , "The Problem with Anthologies: The Case of the "Bai yi" Poems of Ying Qu (190-252)," *Asia Major* 3rd ser. 23.1 (2010): 173-99.
- , "Jingu and Lan ting: Two (or Three?) Jin Dynasty Gardens," in *Studies in Chinese Language and Culture: Festschrift in Honour of Christoph Harbsmeier on the Occasion of His 60th Birthday*, ed. Christoph Anderl and Halvor Eifring (Oslo: Hermes Academic Publishing, 2006), 395-99.
- Kroll, Paul W., "Literary Criticism and Personal Character in Poetry ca. 100-300 CE," in *China's Early Empires: A Re-Appraisal*, ed. Michael Nylan and Michael Loewe, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, 529-532.
- , "Nostalgia and History in Mid-Ninth-Century Verse: Cheng Yü's Poem on 'The Chin-Yang Gate'," *T'oung Pao* 89 (2003): 286-366.

----- "Verses from on High: The Ascent of T'ai Shan," in *Vitality of the Lyric Lyric Voice: Shih Poetry from the Late Han to the T'ang*, ed. Shuen-fu Lin and Stephen Owen (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 167-216.

Lai, C. M., "The Craft of Original Imitation: Lu Ji's Imitations of Han Old Poems," in *Studies in Early Medieval Chinese Literature and Cultural History*, ed. Paul W. Kroll and David R. Knechtges, Provo: T'ang Studies Society, 2003, 117-148.

Lidai fuhui 歷代賦彙, ed. Chen Yuanlong 陳元龍 (1652-1736), vol.11, Beijing: Beijing tushuguan chubanshe, 1999.

Mather, Richard B., trans. *The Age of Eternal Brilliance: Three Lyric Poets of the Yung-ming Era (483-493)*, vol. 1, Leiden: Brill, 2003.

Owen, Stephen, *The Making of Early Chinese Classical Poetry*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006.

----- *The Late Tang: Chinese Poetry of the Mid-Ninth Century (827-860)*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006.

Qu Tuiyuan 瞿蛻園 and Zhu Jincheng 朱金城 ed., *Li Bai ji jiaozhu* 李白集校注, Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1980.

Quan Shanggu Sandai Qin Han Sanguo Liuchao wen 全上古三代秦漢三國六朝文, ed. Yan Kejun 嚴可均 (1762-1843), rpt., Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1958.

Quan Tang shi 全唐詩, comp. Peng Dingqiu 彭定求 (1645-1719) et al., rpt, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1960.

Sanguo zhi 三國志, comp. 陳壽 (233-297), Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959.

Shuijing zhu 水經註, Li Daoyuan's 酈道元 (472?-527), *Baibu congshu jicheng* 百部叢書集成 edn.

Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō 大正新脩大藏經, Tokyo: 1922-1933.

Tang caizi zhuan 唐才子傳, comp. Xin Wenfang 辛文房 (fl.ca.1304-1324), Shanghai: Gudian wenxue chubanshe, 1957.

The I Ching or Book of Changes, tr. Richard Wilhelm and Cary F. Bayne, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967.

Wang Zhongmin 王重民, *Bu quan Tang shi* 補全唐詩, in *Quan Tang shi bubian* 全唐詩補編, ed. Chen Shangjun 陳尚君, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1992.

Wenxuan 文選, comp. Xiao Tong 蕭統 (503-551), comm. Li Shan 李善 (d. 689), Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubenshe, 1986.

Xian Qin Han Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi 先秦漢魏晉南北朝詩, ed. Lu Qinli 逯欽立, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983.

Xu Jun 徐俊, *Dunhuang shiji canjuan jikao* 敦煌詩集殘卷輯考, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2000.

Yuefu shij 樂府詩集, comp. Guo Maoqian 郭茂倩 (1041-1099), Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979.

Yiwen leiju 藝文類聚, ed. Ouyang Xun 歐陽詢 (557-641), Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1965.

Zhang Jingyang ji 張景陽集, in *Han Wei Liuchao baisan mingjia ji* 漢魏六朝百三名家集, ed. Zhang Pu 張溥 (1601-41), Yangzhou: Jiangsu Guangling guji keyinshe, 1990.

Zhang Keli 張可禮, *San Cao nianpu* 三曹年譜, Ji'nan: Qi Lu shushe, 1983.

Zhengtong daoze 正統道藏.

Website:

<http://www3.zzu.edu.cn/qts/>