To the Tune of P'u-sa man

Everyone has praise for Chiang-nan fair;
A traveler may well get old there.
The spring water is bluer than the unclouded sky.
In a painted barge listening to the rain I lie.

The tavern maid by the stove is fair like the moon
With arms white as frost and snow strewn.
Do not go home before you get old;
If you do, your heart'll get stone-cold.
To the Tune of Ho-yeh pei

I recall that year under flowers blooming
Late at night
The fair one and I had the first meeting.
In the water pavilion behind the west screen hanging low
Hand in hand we secretly pledged our vow.

At the orioles' first warbling under a waning moon
We lamentably parted.
Since then, we haven't met again, late or soon.
Now we are both strangers in different regions;
Far less pretense is there for reunions.
To the Tune of Nü kuan tzu

At midnight last night
I distinctly saw you in a dream
And talked with you in delight.

You've the same peach-blossom face,
Lowering your eyebrows like willow leaves,
Showing both coyness and happy grace,

Starting to go and yet lingering.
On waking up I realized it was a dream.
Deep sorrow keeps me agonizing.
To the Tune of *Pu-sa man*

I now recall Chiang-nan's days of delight:
Young I was, wearing a spring dress light.
On an arched bridge I was on horse back resting
When I saw on a tower red sleeves beckoning.

Behind a kingfisher blue screen with golden
Hinges in a flowery boudoir I slumbered drunken.
This time if flower-like beauties come in sight,
I won't go home till my hair turns white.
Parting at night in the red chamber evoked melancholy
With lamplight upon the half-lifted tasseled canopy.
As I sadly stepped outdoors under a moon waning,
The fair lady bade me farewell with tears streaming.

The *pi-pa* with a kingfisher feather plectrum
Issued on its strings an oriole’s warble blithesome,
Urging me to come home without delaying an hour
For at the green casement she waits, beautiful like a flower.
浣溪沙

夜夜相思更漏残
伤心明月凭欄干
想君思我锦衾寒

To the Tune of Huan hsi sha

Night after night I pine till the watches wane.
In grief I stand at the balustrade under moonlight
And think you imagine me freezing in my quilt of brocade.

The small painted hall is deep as the main.
When I think of you I take out your letters to recite.
When may we hand in hand into Ch’ang-an promenade?

浣溪沙

夜夜相思更漏残
伤心明月凭欄干
想君思我锦衾寒

幾時攜手入長安
To the Tune of *Huan hsi sha*

I wish to mount the swing but my limbs are languid.
To ask someone to give me a push I’m too timid.
’Twas windy and moonlit outside the hall, painted and tapestried.

On such a night what lover wouldn’t yearn deeply?
O’er the wall the snowy pear blossoms are lovely.
My pallid comely face blushes slightly.

浣溪沙
欲上鞦韆四體慵
擬教人送又心忪
畫堂簾幕月明風

此夜有情誰不極
隔墻梨雪又玲瓏
玉容憔悴惹微紅

浣溪沙
欲上鞦韆四體慵
擬教人送又心忪
畫堂簾幕月明風

玉容憔悴惹微紅
Rare indeed is a supreme beauty,
State-toppling,
Dateless for a tryst under flowers comely.
Her twin eyebrows like distant hills
Are too sad to bear more musings on ills.

Behind a blue screen with golden phoenixes unfolded
A dream wanes.
The silk-curtained painted hall is deserted.
No message can reach the trackless azure skies.
In the old chamber sorrow ever lies.
"Twas exactly a year ago today
— The seventeenth of the fourth moon —
When I saw you off on a long way.

I held back tears, bowing my head
And looked shy and half-frowning.
Not knowing my soul already dead,

I vainly followed you in dream.
Nobody knew the secret in my heart
Save the moon on the horizon agleam.
To the Tune of *Pu-sa man*

Friend, drink tonight till aglow;
With a jug in hand talk not about tomorrow.
Cherish the host’s hearty generosity;
Equally deep are his wine and hospitality.

Mind the brevity of the spring night;
Complain not about the fullness of the goblet bright.
With wine in hand laugh and cavort
For life is after all short.
To the Tune of P’u-sa man

Spring in Lo-yang is bright and fair
But the scholar of Lo-yang is aging elsewhere.
The shady willows on Prince Wei’s embankment
Charm my palpitating heart to utter bewilderment.

Peach blossoms on the green waters of spring
Float with mandarin ducks bathing and frolicking.
I gaze at the evening glow
And think of you but you won’t know.

To the Tune of P’sa man

Spring in Lo-yang is bright and fair
But the scholar of Lo-yang is aging elsewhere.
The shady willows on Prince Wei’s embankment
Charm my palpitating heart to utter bewilderment.

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And think of you but you won’t know.
Wei Chuang

As one of the pioneering tz’u poets, Wei Chuang 卫庄 (836?-910) set the pace for this literary genre, which flowered in the Sung dynasty (960-1279). His tz’u poems, some 53 in number, are noted for simplicity and beauty of diction, naturalness and elegance of style, and poignancy in the expression of love, separation and remembrance of the past.

Wei, born in Tu-ling near Ch’ang-an, came from a poor family but he was very studious and intelligent when young. In 880 he went to Ch’ang-an to take the Imperial examinations. But he was trapped there when the rebel Huang Ch’ao 黄巢 (died 884) took the capital and devastated the country. In 882 when Huang Ch’ao was defeated he escaped from Ch’ang-an to Lo-yang.

In 883 while in Lo-yang he wrote Ch’in-fu-yin (Ballad of the Lady of Ch’in), numbering 1,666 characters, one of the longest Chinese poems. It is a realistic poem describing the disturbance and devastation of the time through the lips of a woman refugee. Wei gained such popularity for this poem that he was nicknamed Ch’in-fu-yin hsiu-tsai 秦妇吟秀才. But because of certain remarks in the poem critical of the nobility he later suppressed it and it was not included in his collection of poems Huan-hua-chi 璽花集 compiled by his brother in 903. It had been lost for more than a thousand years until it was rediscovered among the manuscripts at a Tun-huang grotto in 1899.

In the same year when he wrote Ch’in-fu-yin Wei traveled to Chiang-nan or south of the Yangtze River. In 893 he returned to Ch’ang-an to take the examinations and in the following year he won the hsiu-tsai degree and served in the court of the T’ang Emperor Chao Tsung 趙宗. In 897 he was sent as an emissary to the principality of Shu (now Szechwan) and in 901 he went there a second time to become the secretary of Prince Wang Chien 王建 (died 918). An admirer of the earlier T’ang poet Tu Fu 杜甫 (712-770), he found in 902 the site of his dilapidated house in Cheng-tu and built a cottage on it. After the fall of T’ang in 907, Prince Wang Chien established an independent kingdom in Shu 私 and ascended the throne as Emperor of the Earlier Shu State. Wei assisted in the enactment of laws, statutes and institutions and rose to become the Prime Minister. He passed away in Cheng-tu in 910.