eXchanges

Three poems
Mark Francis

Three Poems
Meng Jiao

MOURNING THE COUNTRY'S DEAD

Vain to say, "Humanity is most numinous"—
all these pale bones scattered in confusion.
How is it they died in spring, less
than clumps of rising grass?
When Yao and Shun ruled the universe
they cast tools, not weapons.
But, Qin and Han robbed mountains and hills
and smelted death rather than plows.
Heaven and Earth should bear no metals:
metals bring men to blows.

弔 國 殤

徒 言 人 最 靈，
白 骨 亂 縱 橫。
如 何 當 春 死，
不 及 群 草 生。
堯 舜 宰 乾 坤，
器 農 不 器 兵。
秦 漢 盜 山 岳，
鑄 殺 不 鑄 耕。
天 地 莫 生 金，
生 金 人 競 爭。

LAMENTS OF THE GORGES (No. 3 of 10)

Three Gorges—one thread of Heaven.
Three Gorges—streams in ten thousand cords.
Sun and moon slant above, broken.
Rippling swirls squeeze beneath, mad.
One or two bits of torn souls,
centuries in darkness frozen.
Gorges in brilliance: no pause at noon.
Gorges of dangers: so much starved spittle.
Tree roots lock withered coffins,
dangling suspended lone bones.
Through perched frost weep branches,
clear and fresh their mournful tones.
The exile's stripped-down guts
to get here boil and simmer on fire;
his life is a fine-spun wire,
his path follows a rope in knots.
A libation of tears mourns ghost on the water—
ghosts in the water taking it in a shimmer.

其三

三峡一线天，三峡万绳泉。
上仄碎日月，下掣狂漪涟。
破魄一两点，凝幽数百年。
峡晕不停午，峡险多饥涎。
树根锁枯棺，孤骨袅袅悬。
树枝哭霜栖，哀韵杳杳鲜。
逐客零落肠，到此汤火煎。
性命如纺绩，道路随索缘。
莫泪吊波灵，波灵将闪然。

LAMENTS OF THE GORGES (No. 7 of 10)

其七

Verges of the Gorges cut up sun and moon.
Sun and moon are shattered in their brilliance.
All creatures grow slanted and bent,
bird-wings soar slanted and bent.
Teeth firmly locked on sunken stones,
called they do not return—souls of the drowned.
Blurred, hard shells in clear streams;
colored coatings on rocky green.
In starving gulps, the gurgling screams;
spittle thick as lard, swirling.
Do not wander by the Gorges in spring:
foul grasses rise up—faint, faint.

峡棱剚日月，日月多摧辉。
物皆斜仄生，鸟亦斜仄飞。
潜石齿相锁，沉魂招莫归。
恍惚清泉甲，班烂碧石衣。
饿咽潺湲号，涎似泓泆肥。
峡春不可游，腥草生微微。