



To the tune "Sands of the Washing Stream"—"Moments of time"

浣溪沙 · 一向年光有限身

Text Information

Author | Yan Shu

Language | Chinese

Period | 11th Century

Genre | Song lyric (ci)

Source | Tang, Guizhang 唐圭璋 (ed.). *Quan Song Ci* 全宋词. Vol 1. Beijing: Zhonghua shu ju, 1965. 90.

Collection | Love Songs of the Medieval World: Lyrics from Europe and Asia

URL | <https://sourcebook.stanford.edu/text/tune-%E2%80%9Csands-washing-stream%E2%80%9Dmoments-time>

Translation by Qian Jia. Introduction and notes by Nina Du and Runqi Zhang.

Introduction to the Text

Yan Shu, a powerful statesman in the early Northern Song court, had a long and successful career both as an official and as a poet. Among his many literary achievements (which include poetry, song lyrics and prose) his *ci* compositions are best known. His lyrics are elegant in their choice of words, controlled in the emotions they express, and not as playful as the *ci* of other well-known poets. They often capture feelings of solitude and sorrow, creating a melancholic mood, but the poet is rarely explicit about what triggers the worry or sadness.

This *ci* is focused on the dual themes of the passage of time and longing for a distant friend (or lover). As in many of Yan Shu's *ci*, we cannot tell if the speaker is male or female. In the course of the song, there is a shift from despair to revelation, as the speaker grasps the wisdom of *carpe diem* ("seize the day").



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浣溪沙

To the tune "Sands of the Washing Stream"

一向年光有限身。
等閒離別易銷魂
夕陽西下幾時回。

Moments of time and limited life,
Even casual partings can easily consume the soul.
Do not decline the chance to drink with friends and listen to songs.

滿目山河空念遠，
5 落花風雨更傷春。
不如憐取眼前人。

Mountains and rivers fill up my eyes, I yearn in vain for the one faraway.
5 The falling flowers and windy rains engrave the spring melancholy.
Best to love the one before your eyes.