

Large Waves to Large Obstacles

K. Lorraine Graham

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琵琶行
序

The Song of a Guitar

Jade and Jade Pieces Do Not Make Guitars (Making People to March Side By Side). An Altar Wall Sheltering This After Offering This Sequential Prelude

Bai Chuyi 白居易

郡 和
司 十
馬 年
,
予
左
遷
九
江
元

In the tenth year of Yuanbe I was banished and demoted to be assistant official in Jiujiang.

The primary origin: The place at the top of my head mouthing off in harmony, wearing amiable kimonos. Thousands of grains suggest exchange of goods; left hand helps with work. I rose, moved and migrated to a land nearly complete with bent objects, rivers and itinerant water. The prefecture belongs to the local lord but I am a prince reversed, a government office-managing village, the office of war and horses.

二女聲其聞明
善，；音船年
才嘗問，中秋
學其錚夜，
琵琶人錚彈送
琵琶，然琵琶客
於本琵琶湓
長有者浦
穆安京，口
曹倡都聽，

In the tenth year of Yuanhe I was banished and demoted to be assistant official in Jinjiang.

The primary origin: The place at the top of my head mouthing off in harmony, wearing amiable kimonos. Thousands of grains suggest exchange of goods; left hand helps with work. I rose, moved and migrated to a land nearly complete with bent objects, rivers and itinerant water. The prefecture belongs to the local lord but I am a prince reversed, a government office-managing village, the office of war and horses.

人年
婦長
色衰
,
委
身
為
賈

Upon inquiry, I found that the player had formerly been a dancing-girl there and in her maturity had been married to a merchant.

I held the instrument to my ear and the sound in my mouth. She was the base of a tree or a book before high tables and death changed her person and strength. Under a roof she is peaceful, and singing is flattery. She is a Woman—I write her a woman kneeling tasty. Try hands reaching down through a mind that is covered to teach or to learn or to study jade pieces with jade. Thereupon crows and grain in fine lines, and a rice paddy speaking and judging again east of court speaking one doubled two gentle sheep words. Altered. A good sprouting plant with such natural talent. Again thousands of grains grow the length of a year. Your seal is your face could be lust or risqué, clothes of straw or of fur for the rain. In decline she wanes. She is grain and woman meaning yielding. Entrusted commission of body and life and I write her with claws, which will act for convenience, and I'll cover her cost with shells. She is woman and broom. A wife. Movement follows proceeds and verbal decree commanded fate as alcohol acts as people acting as officials.

曲 遂
罷 命
憫 酒
然
，
使
快
彈
數
曲
，

I invited her to my boat to have her play for us.

I am an envoy, my heart is fast and she plays with a bow and strikes or she counts wood carved into a cup, her ability caught in accusations, dismissed as dog meat roasting, hearts in mourning and after. Naturally self or self-loathing self financed self immolate self defense knowledge government help self respect. Arrange these strikes in order and so recount what is taken away from what is already small and divided in lines as with sun and with time in this hour is a bird singing joyful drums of willing music.

漂自
淪敘
憔少
悴小
，時
轉歡
徙樂
於
湖事
間，
今

She told me her story, heyday and then unhappiness.

My job is scribe and is none of your business and is incident afterwards contact and union. Now water rises, now we float, drift in water and sequential ripples of haggard hearts worry. The heart of a slave is worry. A cart will convey or revolve into meanings extended to related meanings, right under the sun in the light of the day hence moving feet migrate thereupon crows. I see her I learn in water in sunlight through doors is the space in between the division. Again we exchange objects, take at will, sprout plants, put forward suggestions, we come and go, or betray or my background is legions in halls of officialdom. I am one doubled official dichotomous bureaucrat. Thousands of grains in tranquil sweet hearts, in dog meat roasting on fire however her nose is herself tranquil under a roof, biting heart feeling sense is an axe refined thus a person is people and words are the crime of the mouth in daylight correctly at dusk women and joy always see and we learn and feel consciously wired.

六歌有感予
言以遷斯出
，贈謫人官
命之意言二
曰，，，年
琵琶凡是，
六因夕恬
琵琶百為，然
行一長始自
十句覺安
，

Since my departure from the capital I had not felt sad; but that night, after I left her, I began to realize my banishment. And I wrote this long poem -- six hundred and twelve characters.

I rise and I move meaning sound from the heart surrounding people and causes her claws for convenience on table top death changes mouths entangled with chant and with song, so she stops to continue I donate my shells in summary of what was said as one who is common in square even numbers a clear alternative origin is one or one hundred the line or heaven or all four directions language spoken in criminal verbal decree. I order to say and I command life and jade pieces with jade with her step and stop lute. This is my line of business.

the patient deform spine ameba
plasmodium transformer alter to doctor
deceive pentatonic note number four
metamorphic rock mutant opportunism
variations of a pictograph

"Bian"

different becomes situation change
changes to milk gone sour alter
recycle waste material frogs
with tails were tadpoles once an
unexpected turn of events surprising
multi-variable stats the calculus
of variations sigma minus capricious
converter frequent conversion chameleon
light sensitive glasses metamorphasize
abnormal anomalous allergy abnormal
psychology the weather is bound to rain
soon bring on restore reactionary rule
specific conditions accommodate cold
blooded animals adapted Chinese classical
narrative rhyme adopting often Buddhist
themes and humor dark example "The Great
Madgalyayana Rescues his Mother from
Hell" and so on so to juggle corporal
conjure punishment covert disguised
inflation informed and out of shape

張 八
功 月
曹 十
五
夜
贈

On the Festival of the Moon to Sub-Official Zhang

Divining formulaic writing versed in prohibition in division is August or the crescent moon of menses cake and light eclipsed complete and at the center intersection halfway through the month a multicolor element. Moon under my side asleep on my side twice offering shells to Zhang: a bow that grows to stretch and measure none such matter. Zhang: the function of his work and strength to judge meritorious deeds while east of court, dreaming of red mansions, or their possible utility.

韓愈 Han Yü

織
雲
四
捲
天
無
河

The fine clouds have opened and the River of Stars is gone

Thread like wild scallion clouds in slender rising vapors everywhere
the world the courtyard all year round on all directions on all sides
the tones the classic arm and leg embroilment. You roll me in expansive
human heads enlarged with genius swan endowed with sky with overpass
and every day antenna in the heavens heavenly water. Early forms show
dancing now have not is people burning forest, having no alternative.
Irrelevant, wireless, pointless, limitless, endless, nameless invisible atheism.

清
風
吹
空
月
舒
波

A clear wind blows across the sky, and the moon widens its wave

Green insects borne by innocent blue. On Tomb-Sweeping Day we settle accounts, regain conscious clear pronunciation. Slack and purge unrest, tradition, scenery. We geomance, exhaling kites. We boast, we brag, we bullshit free. Time is empty time. A hole. In vain: the Air Force. Your lunar fantasies vary comfort twisting large waves to large obstacles.

沙
平
水
息
聲
影
絕

The sand is smooth, the water still, no sound and no shadow

Salon seagull. You chauvinist hoarse you exhale separation. In this Peking opera peaceful state I'm visible as little when there's little equilibrium. Reversing Gobi Desert sentences on average income power pipe or pool or pond: a reservoir of water. This standard is maladjusted. Climate flow and heart, life force through a nose. Close relative instrument ears express support your copy reputation. Shadow-film influence.

一
杯
相
屬
君
當
歌

As I offer you a cup of wine, asking you to sing

One representing one horizon line or generally heaven generally speaking half a lifetime on one side simultaneously again and again in the morning, early wooden boycott cup. I tell you no phonetically. Behind a tree. Mutually. Mutual love of gentlemen hypocrite rule by spoken order flunking field. Teaching when you want to military service then and there. Those years at the pawn shop those official years in service singing songs exhaled or chanted.

君
歌
聲
酸
辭
且
苦

But so sad is this song of yours and so bitter your voice

More spoken orders: mouth consenting breath reversed
repeated exhales of people breathing family breathe obstructed.
They threaten with sound with tone and fame. Difficult waking
liquor you sour. Aching threads untangling hands controlling
hand above to hand below offending serious superior sins.
You offered your ancestors aging multiple sprouts retold
and told through ten thousand mouths. Peculiar eccentric music.

不
能
聽
終
淚
如
雨

That before I finish listening my tears have become a rain:

Birds need not rise to heaven inconveniently. I cannot help but must but dare not disregard conform to incompatible. Regardless of dissatisfied immortal energy is body and flesh with claws or capable daggers. Thus the ear learns virtue, audits classes, obeys orders. And at the end with dogs in doorways: violent crouching streams.

洞
庭
連
天
九
疑
高

“Where Lake Dongting is joined to the sky by the lofty Nine-Doubt Mountain,

The lake is a hole formed by water rushing together insightful.
A cave of roofed courtyards, a court moving carts. Successively
joining conjunctions. A soap opera chain of celestial swans or
bodies or every astronomy object bent. Doubt you will stop or
shoot the child, children you left in the room below. Pavilion
brilliant stilts or red sorghum wine resounding entrance exams.

蛟
龍
出
沒
猩
語
號

Dragons, crocodiles, rise and sink, apes, flying foxes, whimper...

A dragon in flight scaly four-legged dragons sprout plants and offer suggestions, immerse into water. Orangutan beasts with stars and flying squirrels and crouching tigers beginning impressive howl you howl your breath.

十
生
九
死
到
官
所

At a ten to one risk of death, I have reached my official post,

Intersecting ground plants rising crushed bones inverted people everywhere with knives complete. Arriving smaller hills to legion halls of government officialdom. Chopping axes swing like doors like hospitals. The problem which you mentioned which you laughed at, met with, own, possess invincible enumerating places.

幽
居
默
默
如
藏
逃

Where lonely I live and hushed, as though I were in hiding.

In double-small secluded mountain recess I am spirit phantom humorless.
The lower body lives resides in corpse-like stories tracking dogs in dark
in windows dark by fire under world and black and white illicit tacit
understanding or lack of listen heed instructions mouthed to women
hushed as wished. You're spoils covered in grass attack and subjugate.
You split with lance you kneel concealing books concealing many cracks
on tortoise shells as omens moving fugitive evade invading taxes.

下
床
畏
蛇
食
畏
藥

I leave my bed, afraid of snakes; I eat, fearing poisons;

You sleep leeward, collecting food. Obscene, and dirty wooden under sheds with spirit heads and tiger claws. Dreading insect-like redundancy.

海
氣
濕
蟄
熏
腥
臊

The air of the lake is putrid, breathing its evil odors....

Where all the water goes you go with pirate customs over seas in tidal waves with seals and straits and seafood seaweed. Rice dispersed in air. Insects float in dispossessed in humid hibernation. Black vapor rising smoke and starry flesh the smell of carnage rancid bones.

昨
者
州
前
槌
大
鼓

Yesterday, by the district office, the great drum was announcing

Days suddenly past last night encased in sugar cane stalks. White land between rivers, your feet on the boat walking firmly with knives with your criminal record your previous life days ago. Standing people beaten standing struck by stick holding hands. Advocating courage.

嗣
皇
繼
聖
登
夔
皋

The crowning of an emperor, a change in the realm.

Thereafter a mouth full of documents proclaiming rule reconnected
thread the inverse of cut continuing flow of sages hear and report.
Make good with your mouth climbing vase-like carriage you go ashore
and register serving ceremonial dish to the one-legged monster walrus.

赦
書
一
日
行
萬
里

The edict granting pardons runs three hundred miles a day,

They strike large fires naked to the waist red inking correspondence.
One heaven one day in sunrise sunlight choose this auspicious day.
You step and stop. You walk a line of business, enter the ranks at
market price, commit murder. Buddhist monks, pedestrians, precinct
leaders leaving animal tracks with tail and scorpion claws in the fields
and earth one hamlet third of a mile wide, channeled by irrigation.

罪
從
大
辟
皆
除
死

All those who were to die have had their sentences commuted,

Altered net interwoven ropes over wrong opposing wings from
lower halves of cranes with feathers outstretched flying evidence
of guilt. Follow step-by-step engage one person behind the next
by step and small and stop your foot protruding toes. Mostly soybean.
Generally the earth with brave bold chives such rules are mouthed
to criminals' hardship suffering ruling the eighth heavenly stem.
Each person's nose self loathing self financed self immolate
automation. Hills separate joining of thatch and walls resembling
shed, three steps aside inflexible rigid devil the dead.

遷
者
追
回
流
者
還

The unseated are promoted and exiles are recalled,

Rise and move you migrate lowered hands and skulls your brain
inside his halting movement compromise. This person thing a
legion chase repeatedly trace back questions swirling enclosed a
double enclosed repaying transgression. You return to movement after
aftertaste delinquent meteor spreading influenza flowing birth
degenerate into streetwalker into government in exile into bleeding
popular blood. Enchanted, you forget let slip your coming home.

滌
瑕
蕩
垢
清
朝
班

Corruptions are abolished, clean officers appointed.

Washing water and twigs counting fish washing second skin jade
from marshy licentious vagrant plant soup. Such ripple and sweep
up your left-behind dirt as the earth is uncultured as Empress leans
forward as orders are mouthed and sober sun's waves rising early-
light banners knife jade into two in to class into leader in core.

州
家
申
名
使
家
抑

My superior sent my name in but the governor would not listen

Governing roof over pigs girding body of hands in spirit rebuke
Requesting extending Ninth Earthly Branches, mouthed in the dark of
evening. Countable name brand card brand term atavistic pronouncement
acting official sense of mission measure word stores for stamping inhibition.

坎
軻
祇
得
移
荊
蠻

And has only transferred me to this barbaric place.

Ground inducing exhalation dipping bumps on a personal name the
name of a sage or of legalized rules more an axel the name no one knew:
Only omens and roots rooting omen-roots only reach systems of clans
elemental above the heavens. Revealing the truths of the gods or goddess
in demonstration or protest you go obtain self-satisfied. Rice plant transplant,
emigrated thorns. Plants that push chaos words tangled as threads as
speaking the crime of the mouth in lands of snakes and unreasonable insects.

判
司
卑
官
不
堪
說

My rank is very low and useless to refer to;

Knives divide oxen judge princes reversed chauffer my sir name of statesmen
and author historian holding left handedly common. Depraved and base such
small seeds germinate shells and armor bone oracle. Beetle bone inscriptions
scribe first heavenly stems profiteering officials unofficial authorities. Why
tantamount excessive ground go in for a bit bear a mound enduring the sweetness
of marriage match something in mouth. We separate and roll cloth up in chests.

未
免
捶
楚
塵
埃
間

They might punish me with lashes in the dust of the street.

Grows a tree with extra branches modern meaning unrelated not yet have not
eight earthly branches. Never undecided could not future fiancé—my rabbit
with the missing dot—exempt from free of charge. Hand bringing staff down
to drooping plans with fruit and ground ditching last dying they drool over
coveting knee high forest. Old kingdoms and thorn brush. Clearly neat suffering.

同
時
輩
流
多
上
道

Most of my fellow exiles are now returning home—

We are objects under the same cover of sympathy. Time difference lagging hours where hours were longer than time in the middle of ages occupied at an opportune moment. Generations of carts in opposition to hands lined up for a lifetime of water and bleeding and walking the streets. Many moons of lines, on top or below. The movement ahead is the road, the doctrine, the Way.

天
路
幽
險
難
追
攀

A journey which, to me, is a heaven beyond climbing.

Expansive feet going separate ways. The road to expanse above humans, to small mountain recesses. Secluded secret rendezvous all hills obstructed gathering people talking dangerously. I am a short tailed-bird of yellow clay earth, a bird with golden wings, a rare disaster bird. Embarrassed, sad, a moving dilemma of legions. Hands pushing apart trees interwoven birds caught in a hedge.”

君
歌
且
休
聽
我
歌

...Stop your song, I beg you, and listen to mine,

Gentlemen rule by spoken orders monarchs rule sing songs exhaled repeatedly
brother, my older brother the other brother against a tree you dream of shock
of absence from school, of ceasing if only you listen to I which is we or me in
my hand holding lances my song singing songs, my brother the older the other.

我
歌
今
與
君
殊
科

A song that is utterly different from yours:

For I which is we or me in my hand holding lances thing song singing songs
singing breath to my brother. Union and contact they gather together today
this day. Hands giving you with you reach down they pull up. Crushed bones
bloody bones which I ladled with content. I study your red core divisions:

一
年
明
月
今
宵
多

“Tonight is the loveliest moon of the year.”

“One horizon one year in thousands of grains. Sun and moon window moon and clearly the moon evidently the moon understands how the crescent moon contacts and merges the same darkness indoors and outdoors. Too often we go for a midnight snack. Too often we’re out after curfew.”

人
生
由
命
非
由
他

All else is with fate, not ours to control;

Men are pictographs of persons and of people born unripe sashimi
raw because verbal decree is a murder case or set of set exam questions.
Cranes fly with opposing wings, opposable feathers spread out because.
He is people with funnels washbasins perhaps. He is other another or they.

有
酒
不
飲
奈
明
何

But, refusing this wine, may we choose more tomorrow?

With your right hand, grasp the abundance of the moon—have wine, redundantly water with wine. And if birds need not fly off cuff culinary culture, what miswriting apple tree, misrepresented particle. You know we exhale, for what and for where. Much less when what time. To tomorrow we go.”

Note on Procedure

琵琶行并序 (The Song of a Guitar) was written by 白居易 (Bai Juyi). It is poem No. 72 in the anthology 唐詩 (300 Tang Poems). It was written in 七言古詩 (seven-character ancient verse). The English lines in italics are from Witter Bynner's translations from *The Jade Mountain*. 八月十五夜贈張功曹 (On the Festival of the Moon to Sub Official Zhang) was written by 韓愈 (Han Yu). It is poem No. 67 in the anthology 唐詩 (300 Tang Poems). Like 琵琶行并序 (The Song of a Guitar), it was written in 七言古詩 (seven-character ancient verse) and the English lines in italics are from Witter Bynner's *The Jade Mountain*.

These poems are all loose procedural responses. To make these, I translated the characters more or less literally, but then I also translated the meanings of their roots, and the roots of their roots, and so on. Sometimes I also included translations of characters related to the characters in the poem through meaning or sound. Then, I made all these words into sentences. My syntax is fairly straightforward English, but the vocabulary I use in this poem is completely the result of process. My response to 琵琶行并序 is not a response to the entire poem, but only to the introduction to the poem. However, I did use the process to re-

spond to all of 八月十五夜贈張功曹. The poem “Bian” is response to only one character.

These poems are among the first I wrote at the end of college after being introduced to innovative poetry and poetics, especially Language Poetry and the work of John Cage and Jackson MacLow as well as Yunte Huang’s critical work. Until I began to go to readings in Washington, DC at Bridge Street Books, *In Your Ear*, and *Ruthless Grip*, I had read nearly no contemporary poetry. Instead, I was studying Chinese language and literature.

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Design by K. Lorraine Graham

First printed in Autumn 2011 in Carlsbad, California for the fifth Dusie Kollektiv. www.dusie.org

Many thanks to Jessica Smith for her editorial suggestions .

This is No. of

