

# 温热论

Ye Tian-Shi's *Wen Re Lun*

## Discourse on warm-heat disease

While comparatively short in Chinese, the discourse in English is too lengthy for a single issue, and therefore we have divided the translation. This is approximately the first third, in which Ye discusses the mechanisms of warm-heat pathogen transmission. Illustrative case histories have been added at key points. The next two issues will contain Ye's intriguing discussions of warm-heat diagnostics, observing tongue, teeth and skin.

**By Ye Gui 葉桂, (Ye Tian-Shi 葉天士, 1667)  
Translated by Charles Chace  
and Daniella Van Wart**

温邪上受, 首先犯肺, 逆传心包。

Warm pathogens are contracted in the upper [body], first attacking the Lungs, and they may be abnormally passed to the Pericardium.<sup>1</sup>

LGH, pp 54, 98–100

肺主气属卫, 心主血属营。

The Lungs master the qi and pertain to the defence [aspect]. The Heart masters the blood and pertains to the construction [aspect].

辨营卫气血虽与伤寒同, 若论治法, 则与伤寒大异。

Although [pattern] discrimination based on the construction and defense, qi and blood is similar to that of cold damage, there are major differences between the treatment methods used [in warm disease] and those used for cold damage.

LGH, pp 46–47

盖伤寒之邪, 留恋在表, 然后化热入里。

It is most likely that a pathogen caused by cold damage will linger in the exterior; only later will it transform to heat and enter the interior.

温邪则热变最速, 未传心包, 邪尚在肺。

With a warm pathogen, the heat transmutes extremely rapidly and if not passed on to the Pericardium the pathogen remains in the Lungs.<sup>2</sup>

LGH, p. 54

肺主气, 其合皮毛, 故云在表。

The Lungs master the qi and join to the skin and [body] hair, hence it is said to reside in the exterior.

LGH, p. 76

在表初用辛凉轻剂, 挟风则加薄荷, 牛蒡子, 之属, 挟湿加芦根、滑石之流。[When a pathogen is] in the exterior one should first use acrid, cool and light prescriptions. [For a warm pathogen] associated with wind, one should add medicinals such as *Bo He* (*Mentha Haplocalyx Herba*) and *Niu Bang Zi* (*Arctii Lappae Fructus*). [For a warm pathogen] harbored by damp then one should add diuretics such as *Lu Gen* (*Phragmitis Communis Rhizoma*) and *Hua Shi* (*Talcum*).

LGH, pp 141–142, 159–160

### Illustrative case histories

**Case One:** A Buddhist monk, age 52. In the previous days he contracted wind heat in the upper [burner]. The [only] remarkable quality of his wrist pulse is that it is large. The Lungs have contracted a scorching heat and he is unable to project his voice. First, administer acrid cooling methods to clear the upper [burner]. [Then, the patient should be] instructed to eat

lightly and take care of himself for 10 days.

<i>Niu Bang Zi</i>	(Arctii Lappae, Fructus)
<i>Bo He</i>	(Menthe Chinensis Herba)
<i>Xiang Bei Mu</i>	(Fritillariae Thungeberi Bulbus)
<i>Xing Ren</i>	(Semen Armeniacae)
<i>Dong Sang Ye</i>	(Mori Folium)
<i>Da Sha Shen</i>	(Adenophorae Radix)
<i>Nan Hua Fen</i>	(Trichosanthes Radix)
<i>Hei Shan Zhi Pi</i> <sup>3</sup>	(Gardeniae Pericarpium Fructus)

**Case two:** [Patient] Yang, The patient's left pulse was replete and large. His head and eyes were clouded [indicating] an impairment of the clear orifices. This was a case of wind warmth residing in the upper warmer.

<i>Gan He Ye</i>	(Nelumbinus Folium, dried)
<i>Bo He</i>	(Herba Menthe Chinensis)
<i>Xiang Bei</i>	(Fritillariae Thunbergii, Bulbus)
<i>Lian Qiao</i>	(Forsythia Fructus)
<i>Gou Teng</i>	(Uncariae Ramulus cum Uncis)
<i>Sheng Shi Gao</i> <sup>4</sup>	(unprocessed Gypsum fibrosum, pulverised)

**Comment:** The above two case records exemplify a basic tenant of Ye Tian-Shi's approach to warm disease in the exterior, the use of light, acrid, cool medicinals. Although they comprise the foundation of the treatment strategy, these are rarely the

only ingredients in a warm disease formula. In the first case, Ye gently engenders fluids with the sweet medicinals, *Da Sha Shen*, and *Nan Hua Fen*, while clearing heat from the chest with the bitter *Hei Shan Zhi Pi*. The pulse is large in both cases, but it is also replete in the second case indicating that the pathogen had begun to penetrate the qi aspect, hence the presence of the sweet cold *Shi Gao*.



或透风于热外，或渗湿于热下，不与热相搏，势必孤矣。

One may either evict wind to externalise heat or percolate dampness to precipitate heat. As long as [the wind or dampness] does not mingle with heat, [the heat] will remain isolated.

LGH, pp 359–360

不尔，风挟温热而燥生，清窍必干，谓水主之气不能上荣，两阳相劫也。If not, [and the two pathogens have mingled], then wind harboring warm-heat may engender dryness and the clear orifices will inevitably become dry, meaning that the qi controlled by water cannot ascend to nourish the upper [part of the body], and both yang [pathogens: the wind and the heat] plunder [the fluids].

LGH, pp 371–377

*It is most likely that a pathogen caused by cold damage will linger in the exterior; only later will it transform to heat and enter the interior.*

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Even when longstanding, warm heat presents in a single channel and does not [rapidly] transform [to other channels]...

湿与温合，蒸郁而蒙痹于上，清窍为之壅塞，浊邪害清也。

When damp and warm [pathogens] combine to produce a fuming constraint and a clouding impediment in the upper part of the body, this causes the clear orifices to become congested. Thus, the turbid pathogen harms the clear [orifices].

LGH, pp 443–444

其病有类伤寒，其验之之法，伤寒多有变症，温热虽久，在一经不移，以此为辨。

Diseases caused by warm-heat pathogens share some similarity with cold damage, yet cold damage is often characterised by transmuting patterns. This may be differentiated from warm [damp] heat in that, even when longstanding, warm heat presents in a single channel and does not [rapidly] transform [to other channels].<sup>5</sup>

前言辛凉散风，甘淡驱湿，若病仍不解，是渐欲入营也。

As previously stated, acrid and cool [medicinals] dissipate wind, and sweet and bland [medicinals] expel dampness. However, if the illness remains unresolved, it will gradually tend to enter the construction [aspect].

LGH, pp 412–414

营分受热，则血液受劫，心神不安，夜甚无寐，或斑点隐隐，即撒去气药。

Once the construction aspect contracts heat, the blood and humors are plundered. Thus, the Heart-spirit is not calm, one cannot sleep at night, and [the patient] may develop indistinct macular spots. [At this point] one should remove the qi [aspect] medicinals.

LGH, pp 166–169<sup>6</sup>

如从风热陷入者，用犀角、竹叶之属，如从湿热陷入者，犀角、花露之品，参人凉血清热方中。

If wind-heat sinks into [the construction aspect] then use medicinals such as *Xi Jiao* (Rhinoceri Cornu) and [*Dan*] *Zhu Ye* (Lophatheri Gracilis Herba). If damp-heat sinks into [the construction aspect] then use medicinals in the class of *Xi Jiao* (Rhinoceri Cornu) and *Hua Lu* (Indigo Naturalis) in a formula designed to cool the blood and clear heat.

LGH, pp 168, 198

若加烦躁，大便不通，金汁亦可加人，老年或平素有寒者，以人中黄代之，急急透斑为要。

If there are also [symptoms of] irritability, agitation or constipation, then one may also include *Jin Zhi*.<sup>7</sup> If [the patient] is elderly or is habitually cold (has a cold body constitution), then *Ren Zhong Huang* (Urinae Hominis) may be substi-

tuted [for *Jin Zhi*]. [In either case] it is essential to expedite the eruption of the macules.

LGH, pp 122–126

若斑出热不解者，胃津亡<sup>8</sup>也，主以甘寒，重则如玉女煎，轻则如梨皮、蔗浆之类。

If macules emerge but the heat does not resolve, this indicates that the stomach fluids are exhausted. To master [this situation] use sweet, cold [medicinals]. If [the condition] is severe then add *Yu Nu Jian* (Jade Maiden Decoction), and [if the condition] is mild then add medicinals such as *Li Pi* (Pyri Fructus) and *Zhe Jiang* (sugar cane pulp).

LGH, pp 124–126

或其人肾水素亏，虽未及下焦，先自彷徨矣。必验之于舌。如甘寒之中加入咸寒，务在先安未受邪之地，恐其陷入易易耳。

If a patient's Kidney water has been habitually depleted, but the [pathogenic heat] has not yet reached the lower burner, one may at first vacillate [as to how to proceed]. One must examine the tongue [to determine the degree of Kidney water deterioration]. By adding salty, cold medicinals to the sweet, cold [medicinals in the prescription], one's initial task is to safeguard the place where the pathogen has not yet reached, lest it easily sink inward.

若其邪始终在气分流连者，可冀其战汗透邪，法宜益胃，令邪与汗并，热达腠开，邪从汗出。

If a pathogen perpetually lingers in the qi aspect, one may opt to induce a shiver sweat to evict the pathogen. [If one adopts this] method one should boost the Stomach, so that [there will be sufficient fluids to] cause the pathogen to merge with the sweat, [and sufficient qi to make] the heat reach the striae and open them, thus allowing the pathogen to exit through the sweat.

LGH, p. 133

解后，胃气空虚，当肤冷一昼夜，待气还自温暖如常矣。

After [the pathogen] is resolved, the Stomach qi will be empty. The skin will likely be chilled for [about] a day and a night. One must wait for the qi to restore the normal warmth [to the skin] on its own.

LGH, pp 223, 263, 366

盖战汗而解，邪退正虚，阳从汗泄，故渐肤冷，未必即成脱症。

Once the shiver sweat has resolved [the exterior], the pathogen has abated, leaving the correct [qi] deficient; the sweating has drained the yang and hence the skin gradually becomes chilled. This must not be construed as a symptom of desertion.

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The acrid, cool, Lung-opening medicinals administered in warm disease diaphoretic formulas are not used the same way that acrid, warm medicinals such as *Ma Huang* and *Gui Zhi* are administered in cold damage.

此时宜令病者安舒静卧，以养阳气来复。旁人切勿惊惶，频频呼唤，扰其元神，使其烦躁。

At this time have the patient lie down and remain calm, comfortable and quiet to nourish the yang qi and promote its recovery. Other people in the vicinity most definitely should not [cause the patient] to become startled or afrighted [by their] frequent shouting which would disturb the patient's original spirit, and cause vexation and agitation.

但诊其脉，若虚软和缓，虽倦卧不语，汗出肤冷，却非脱症。

This cannot be considered a desertion pattern if upon examination [of the patient's] pulse it is found to be deficient, soft, harmonious and relaxed, even though the patient may be fatigued to the point of having to lie down, unable to speak [coherently], and sweaty with chilled skin.

若脉急疾，躁扰不卧，肤冷汗出，便为气脱之症矣。

If, however, the pulse is urgent and rapid and the patient is agitated, unable to lie down and has chilled skin with sweat, then, in this case, these are symptoms of qi desertion.

LGH, pp. 178–184

更有邪盛正虚，不能一战而解，停一二日再战汗而愈者，不可不知。

Furthermore, one should know that if the pathogen is exuberant and the correct [qi] is deficient, the first shiver [sweat] may not be able to resolve [the pathogen]; one must wait one or two days, and then [again induce] a shiver sweat to attain a cure.

再论气病有不传血分，而邪留三焦，亦如伤寒中少阳病也。

Now let us discuss a disease in the qi aspect that has not been passed to the blood aspect, leaving the pathogen lodged in the Triple Burner. This can resemble cold damage in a Shao Yang disease [stage].

彼则和解表里之半，此则分消上下之势，随症变法，如近时杏、朴、苓等类，或如温胆汤之走泄。

For that condition [of a cold pathogen in the Shao Yang], one harmonises and resolves a half-exterior, half-interior condition, whereas in this case [of a heat pathogen in the Triple Burner] one divides and separates [to regulate] the ascending and descending propensities, adjusting the method according to the symptoms. For instance, nowadays [this is accomplished use of medicinals] such as *Xing Ren* [Ren] (Pruni Armeniacae Semen), [Hou] *Po* (Magnoliae Officinalis Cortex) and *Fu Ling* (Sclerotium Poriae Cocos), or one may discharge [the pathogen] with *Wen Dan Tang* (Warm the Gallbladder Decoction).

LGH, pp 156–158

因其仍在气分，犹可望其战汗之门户，转疟之机括。

Because [the pathogen] remains in the qi aspect, one can still resort to a shiver sweat strategy to shift the dynamic of the malaria-like condition [outward].

LGH, pp 428-429

大凡看法，卫之后方言气，营之后方言血。

The general view is that what comes after the defence [aspect] is called the qi [aspect] and what comes after the construction [aspect] is called the blood [aspect].

在卫汗之可也，

[When a pathogen is] in the defence [aspect], one may use sweating [methods].

LGH, pp 146–147

辛凉开肺便是汗剂，非如伤寒之用麻桂辛温也。

The acrid, cool, Lung-opening [medicinals administered in warm disease] diaphoretic formulas are not used the same way that acrid, warm [medicinals such as] *Ma Huang* (Ephedrae Herba) and *Gui Zhi* (Ramulus Cinnamomi Cassiae) are administered in cold damage [patterns].

到气才可清气。

Once [a pathogen] reaches the qi [aspect], only then can one clear the qi.

LGH, p. 151

### Illustrative case history

**Case three:** [Patient] Du. Wind warmth has entered the Lungs and the qi cannot easily descend. The patient's body is cold, but there is interior heat and chest impediment. All of this is an indication of constraint. [We will employ] acrid, cold [medicinals] assisted by slightly bitter [medicinals] to focus on treating hand tai yin.

<i>Hei Shan Zhi Pi</i>	(Gardeniae Pericarpium Fructus)
<i>Xiang Dou</i>	(Soja Semen Preparatum)
<i>Xing Ren</i>	(Armeniacae Semen)
<i>Sang Ye</i>	(Mori Folium)
<i>Gua Luo Pi</i>	(Trichosanthes Pericarpium)
<i>Yu Jin</i>	(Curcumae Radix)*

**Comment:** This is a case of a warm disease pathogen that has become constrained in the qi aspect of the Lungs. Because the pathogen is in the qi aspect, Ye makes judicious use of bitter, cold medicinals to directly clear heat. Nevertheless, this method alone is not sufficient to resolve the pathogen. The qi of the chest must be made to flow freely, and the pathogen must be vented to the exterior. All of the medicinals in this formula function to open the Lungs and the chest in some way, as a

means of clearing heat from the qi aspect.

*Xing Ren* (Armeniace Semen) is bitter and slightly warm, and *Sang Ye* (Mori Folium) is light, cool and acrid. Together they stop cough by diffusing the Lung qi. Even though the pathogen is in the qi aspect, it is still essential to provide a means of venting the pathogen through the exterior. *Sang Ye* (Mori Folium) and *Xiang Dou* (Soja Semen preparatum) vent the pathogen through the defence aspect. *Hei Shan Zhi* is bitter and cold, and *Xiang Dou* is acrid and warm. Together they more vigorously vent constrained heat in the qi aspect from the chest. Both are decocted for only a short period of time to enhance their venting properties. *Gua Luo Pi* (Trichosanthes Pericarium) is sweet and cold and *Yu Jin* (Curcuma Tuber) is acrid bitter and cold. Together they assist the other medicinals in opening the chest and resolving the pathogen by transforming phlegm and clearing heat.

入营犹可透热转气，如犀角、玄参、羚羊等物。

Even when it enters the construction [aspect], one can still evict the heat and shift it back to the qi [aspect] using substances such as *Xi Jiao* (Rhinoceri Cornu), *Xuan Shen* (Scrophulariae Ningpoensis Radix) and *Ling Yang [Jiao]* (Saigaie Tataricae Cornu).

LGH, p. 169

入血就犹恐耗血动血，直须凉血散血，如生地、丹皮、阿胶、赤芍等物。Once it enters the blood, the fear is that [the pathogen] will both consume and stir the blood, so one must immediately both cool the blood and dissipate blood [heat], using substances such as *Sheng Di [Huang]* (Rehmanniae Glutinosae Radix), *[Mu] Dan Pi* (Moutan Cortex), *E Jiao* (Asini Corii Colla) and *Chi Shao* (Paeoniae Radix rubrae).

LGH, p. 169–170

否则，前后不循缓急之法，虑其动手便错，反至慌张矣。

Otherwise, if one altogether fails to administer [treatment] methods that are appropriate to the severity [of the disease], the concern is that [the situation] has been mishandled, ultimately confusing [the treatment].

LGH, p. 184

且吾吴湿邪害人最广，如面色白者，须要顾其阳气，湿胜则阳微也。Moreover, for those of us from Wu [in the Southern Provinces], harm from pathogenic dampness is most extensive, [so] if our facial complexion becomes pale, one must attend to the yang qi, because the dampness has become prevalent and the yang has consequently declined.

LGH, p. 180

法应清凉，然到十分之六七，即不可过于寒凉，恐成功反弃。

Hence, while the appropriate method [in such conditions] is clearing and cooling, when 60 or 70 per cent [of the heat] is gone, one must not [persist] in making excessive use of cold and clearing [methods], lest one lose the success [one had attained thus far].

何以故耶？湿热一去，阳亦衰微也。

Why is this the case? Because when dampness and heat are expelled together, the yang also declines.

LGH, p. 164

面色苍者，须要顾其津液，清凉到十分之六七，往往热减身寒者，不可就云虚寒，而致补剂，恐炉烟虽熄，灰中有火也。

However, when the facial complexion is dark one must attend to [the patient's] fluids. [This is because] six or seven times out of 10 when one administers clearing methods, the feverishness diminishes and the body becomes cold. [In this case] one cannot immediately declare this to be a condition of vacuity cold and assiduously administer supplementing formulas. The fear is that an ember remains in the ashes even though the stove no longer smokes.

须细察精详，方少少与之，慎不可直率而往也。

One must carefully examine the condition in detail to determine the essential details, using [supplementation] a bit at a time in the formula, not just proceeding recklessly.

又有酒客里湿素盛，外邪入里，里湿为合。

Also, in the case of heavy drinkers who are prone to an exuberance of internal dampness, once an external pathogen enters the interior it will combine with the interior dampness.

LGH, p. 184

在阳旺之躯，胃湿恒多，在阴盛之体，脾湿亦不少，然其化热则一。

Stomach damp is common in those with yang effulgent bodies, and Spleen dampness also occurs frequently in yin exuberant bodies, although they may both eventually transform to heat.

热病救阴则易，通阳最难。

Saving the yin in heat disease is easy, but freeing the yang is extremely difficult.

救阴不在血，而在津与汗；通阳不在温，而在利小便。

One does not save the yin by [nourishing] the blood, but by [supporting] the liquids and [arresting] perspiration. One does not free the yang

*In the case of heavy drinkers who are prone to an exuberance of internal dampness, once an external pathogen enters the interior it will combine with the interior dampness.*

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Have a brochure on pulse diagnosis ready to hand to the patient who says, just as you're concentrating on the pulse: "So! Tell me all about how you take the pulse!"



Loose stool that occurs after purging in cold damage indicates that the pathogen is gone, and one should not purge again. Loose stool in damp-warm disease indicates that the [damp-warm] pathogen is not completely gone, and one must continually purge until the stool is formed, then stop.

through warming, but through the promotion of urination.

然较之杂症，则有不同也

When compared to their use in miscellaneous disease, [these terms] have different meanings [when used in warm disease].

再论三焦不得从外解，必致成里结。Now, if a disease of the Triple Burner cannot be treated through exterior resolution, then interior binding will inevitably develop.

里结于何，在阳明胃与肠也。

Where does interior binding occur? In the yang ming [bowels of the] Stomach and [Large] Intestine.

亦须用下法，不可以气血之分，就不可下也

[Here too, as in cold damage], one must use precipitation methods. One cannot use [the fact that one has adopted the four] aspect [model] of qi and blood, as a reason for not precipitating.

LGH, p. 162

但伤寒热邪在里，劫烁津液，下之宜猛。

The difference is, when there is cold damage [transforming to] pathogenic heat in the interior that plunders and torches the fluids, then precipitation should be vigorous.

此多湿邪内搏，下之宜轻。

While in Triple Burner interior binding it is usually pathogenic damp fighting internally, and precipitation should be gentle.

伤寒大便溏为邪已尽，不可再下。

Sticky (loose) stool [that occurs after precipitation] in cold damage indicates that the pathogen is gone and precipitation cannot be administered again.

湿温病大便溏为邪未尽，必大便硬，慎不可再攻也，以粪燥为无湿矣。

Sticky (loose) stool in damp-warm diseases indicates that the pathogen is not completely gone and one must [continually purge] until the stool is formed. At that stage, one is cautioned against further [purgative] attack. Once the feces are dry there is no more dampness.

LGH, pp 164, 166

再人之体，脘在腹上，其地位处于中。按之痛，或自痛，或痞胀，当用苦泄，以其入腹近也。

Now, in a human body the epigastrium is in the upper abdomen, which is located in the position of the middle [burner]. If it is painful to palpation, if there is spontaneous pain, or there is glomus and distension, one should use bitter draining [medici-

nals] that will enter the abdominal area.

必验之于舌，或黄或浊，可与小陷胸汤或泻心汤，随症治之。

One must examine [the disease in the context of] the tongue [coat], for instance, whether it is yellow or turbid, [and this condition] can be treated with *Xiao Xian Xiong Tang* (Minor Sinking into the Chest Decoction) or *Xie Xin Tang* (Drain the Epigastrium Decoction) depending on the symptoms.

## Endnotes

1. Ye Gui made no mention of a normal transmission (*shun chuan* 顺传) of pathogens. The meaning may be more akin to a typical transmission. Abnormal transmission (*ni chuan* 逆传) is wei-to-ying-to-blood. That the pathogen first attacks the Lung thus may refer to the Lung organ. If a pathogen is transmitted from the Lung to the Pericardium then it is still on the organ level from qi aspect to ying level. Hence, it is not actually abnormal. If Lung refers to the nose, skin, and throat then this is wei level and the pathogen is transmitted to the ying level and this is "abnormal". It is a matter of interpretation.

2. Ye Tian-Shi (葉天士), *Case Histories as a Guide To Clinical Experience* (臨証摺南醫案 *Lin Zheng Zhi Nan Yi An*), in *The Complete Case Histories of Ye Tian Shi* (葉天士醫案大全 *Ye Tian Shi Yi An Da Quan*), edited by Pan Hua Xin (潘華信) and Zhu Wei Chang (朱偉常) et al., Shanghai Zhongyiyao Daxue Chubanshi, Shanghai 1997:227

3. Ibid.

4. The differences and similarities between damp-heat pathogens and cold damage are discussed in LGH, pp 43-49. Ye's assertion that cold damage patterns transmute while warm pathogens tend to stick to a "single channel," merits some further discussion. From Ye's point of view, cold damage initially presents in the exterior and readily transforms to heat where it enters the interior, shifting to the shao yang, yang ming, or deeper into the three yin channels. By contrast, the fuming, and cloying nature of damp heat pathogens causes them to linger in the qi aspect for an extended length of time, with little movement elsewhere. From this perspective, damp heat pathogens do indeed tend to present in a "single channel." Subsequent writers on damp heat pathogens such as Yang Xuan (1784) and Wu Tang (1798) would develop the notion of the transmission of damp heat from one burner to another in much greater depth. "Single channel" may also be interpreted simply as the location of the pathogenic factor. Liu Bao-Yi, on the other hand, interprets 'single channel' in slightly different manner. He believed that while cold damage moves from outside inward through the channels, warm disease moves from the inside out, and so the pathogen could be based in one 'channel,' such as the shao yin, while its influence raged variously throughout the body, manifesting for a while, then lying low, then flaring again somewhere else with different symptoms.

5. Liu Guo-Hui interprets the recommendation to remove the qi aspect medicinals as a shift in emphasis from the qi aspect to the construction aspect, not as an admonition that qi aspect medicinals should be removed altogether.

6. Jin Zhi ('golden fluid') is fecal fluid filtered through palm fibre and earth, then sealed within a clay vessel and buried for at least a year; used for epidemic fevers.

7. Wiseman: collapse

8. Ibid. Pg. 228

9. At least in the context of the preceding lines, in which pathogenic heat has linked to existing dampness.

■ The Discourse on Warm-Heat Disease by Ye Tian-Shi will continue over the next two issues.



## Farewell

Seeking a vessel, water flows:  
 But no vessel long abides.  
 Clouds disperse, heartless,  
 And fail to return.  
 For this river, the spring day  
 Has ended, now  
 The rueful wind goads  
 A lone duck, lost against the sky.

鴛 惆 雲 水  
 鴛 悵 出 流  
 一 春 無 逐  
 隻 風 心 器  
 失 楚 宜 知  
 群 江 再 難  
 飛 暮 歸 定

■ This is the second poem that Yu Xuan-Ji entitled *Farewell*; the first was published in *The Lantern* issue Vol. 2:1 and read:

Those nights of pleasure at the pavilion –  
 I never thought you could leave.  
 But clouds disperse, wordlessly  
 And I sleep alone;  
 Still, around the wicked lamp, now fading,  
 A wild moth flutters.

This subsequent poem is less intensely personal, and distinctly more abstract and philosophical: Yu writing about the same relationship perhaps after the passage of time. “Water seeking a vessel” is a very Daoist image, as the Dao will flow into any receptive container; but the flow of attraction is very similar, and similarly impermanent — unless there is a heart. The clouds, which disperse in both poems, show Yu’s perception that “a lover” is not just a body but a

total ambient presence of ideas and feelings and fragrances and visuals and more; unless “clouds” can coalesce around a “heart” they must disperse, with no return.

At the turn of the poem, where the images change, we get the feeling that Yu is the river here, flowing within the banks of herself; the word *chu* 楚 (translated here as “goad”) is usually left out of translations of this poem, as the modern definitions do not seem to fit. But in ancient Chinese it meant “thistles” or “a handful of thistles used as a whip”. So while in the first poem her “wild moth” of desire still fluttered dangerously around the lamp of love, even as it faded and failed, here the full painful effect of these feelings torture her, she who is also the lone duck, the bereaved survivor of a pair of mandarin ducks, who in legend mate for life. An alternative translation can be found at: <http://etext.virginia.edu/chinese/you/YuXuan.html> (the poem is #44).

