

## Chapter One

# Poetic Insights

The early Quanzhen adepts wrote voluminous amounts of poetry, only a partial record of which survives. Poetry was by far the preferred means of expression in the early Quanzhen religious community. Wang Chongyang and his first-generation disciples employed all of the major Song-Jin genres of Chinese poetry, including lyrics (*ci*), songs (*ge*),<sup>1</sup> regulated verse (*lüshi*), and quatrains (*jueju*). Elegies (*zan*) are also included in some of the hagiographical collections (see chap. 6). While it is apparent that the early Quanzhen adherents studied and applied canonical Daoist scriptures (see chap. 5 herein), the preponderance of poetry and discourse records points toward the importance of context-specific teachings and personal spiritual direction. The extant poetry provides glimpses into the daily lives and activities of Quanzhen adherents as well as into their sociohistorical and communal contexts. Poems addressed to fellow adepts, lay people, and patrons reveal members of the Quanzhen community as engaged and committed teachers. There are also poems that address religious training in specific places at specific times (see Komjathy 2010). However, more often than not, it is difficult to determine the provenance of most poems contained in the literary anthologies.

The translation of Quanzhen poetry represents a major challenge, especially as so little Daoist poetry has been translated to date. One of the principal difficulties involves composing readable and sound English renderings. This challenge is complicated by the relative vagueness and hermeneutical openness of many of the poems. On the basis of literary merit, execution, and significance, few connoisseurs of Chinese poetry would probably designate Quanzhen poetry as worthy of “anthologization.” It might simply be categorized as “devotional” or “religious poetry” (cf. Schipper and Verellen 2004, 1127–33, 1142–43). However, the poetry does provide glimpses into the lifeworlds of these religious practitioners. In addition to the challenges of creating readable English poems and interpreting the technical terminology in accurate ways, the syntactic and hermeneutical openness of the poetry allows a number of equally viable and accurate translations/interpretations. Here it is important to note that I have translated certain poems using a personal voice (first-person; “I”), while others poems are presented as addressed to the reader, with frequent use of second-person pronouns (“you”) and an imperative voice. The former provide a sense of the personal dedication among the early adepts with respect to their own self-cultivation; the latter suggest a larger communal context, including a concerned attempt to inspire others to embrace and remain committed to Daoist practice. A third challenge involves selecting representative works. Every selection is an interpretation, and one is well advised to remember the partial nature of

---

1. Technically, *ge*-songs are not an independent genre. Instead, they may be composed in other poetic forms. Nonetheless, as many of the extant Quanzhen poems are *ge*-songs, I use the category as a method of identification.

any presentation. As I understand early Quanzhen as an ascetic, alchemical, and mystical movement (see Komjathy 2007a), I have selected poems that emphasize religious praxis. The poems translated herein provide clear glimpses into and representative expressions of the early religious community.

In the present chapter, I have thus selected poems that express some of the primary concerns and commitments of the early adepts. These include a rejection of ordinary and mundane ways of life, in which dissipation, distortion, and disorientation are the primary defining characteristics. For the early Quanzhen adepts, a dedicated religious life required ascetic commitments, self-cultivation, and alchemical transformation. The present selection includes poems by most of the early adherents, specifically by Wang Chongyang and the so-called Seven Perfected. The poems cover such topics as skeletons and marionettes,<sup>2</sup> renunciation and seclusion, meditative and alchemical praxis, and spiritual realization. I have included some of the most famous and influential verses, such as the “Wuzhen ge” (Song on Awakening to Perfection) by Wang Chongyang and the “Qingtian ge” (Song of the Clear Sky) by Qiu Changchun. In addition, I have included all of the extant poems that can be reasonably and reliably attributed to Sun Buer, the only senior female member of early Quanzhen.<sup>3</sup>

In the first three poems on skeletons and marionettes, we find the early adepts emphasizing the dissipation and meaninglessness of leading an ordinary life. For these religious adherents, ordinary human beings, those not engaging in Daoist cultivation, resemble walking corpses and puppets. These translations are followed by Wang Chongyang’s “Song on Awakening to Perfection,” a poem that contains biographical details on the founder of Quanzhen and provides one of the clearest expressions of his motivations for becoming a Daoist adept. In the next poem on the Four Hindrances, Wang emphasizes the importance of abandoning such sources of dissipation. The two subsequent poems, “Cultivation and Practice” by Wang Chongyang and “Cultivating the Dao” by Qiu Changchun, provide glimpses into basic Quanzhen cultivational concerns. These are complemented by the four poems by Sun Buer, wherein one finds a strong emphasis on alchemical transformation. Note that these “poems” are *ci*-lyrics, meaning that they are written to particular musical tunes (*cipai*) that follow a standardized formal structure. The next poem is one of a series of poems on the “five night-watches” (*wugeng*), also referred to as the “five drum-soundings” (*wugu*). In the context of early Quanzhen, *wugeng* training involved engaging in intensive Daoist practice during the five double-hours of darkness (see Goossaert 2000; Komjathy 2007a, 175–79). Next, I offer translations of two series on Quanzhen alchemical praxis, one by Wang Yuyang and the other by Hao Guangning. Although abstract and often frequently difficult to decipher, they are among a rare group of writings that assist one in reconstructing the Quanzhen alchemical system. As Hao’s thirty poems appear to

2. The frequent emphasis on “skulls” and “corpses” in early Quanzhen recalls chapter 18 of the *Zhuangzi* where Zhuangzi finds a skull in a field and has a subsequent dream-conversation about freedom from social identity.

3. There are a variety of other texts spuriously attributed to Sun Buer. Most of these date to the Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1644–1911) dynasties, during which time female alchemy (*nüdan*) became more systematized and Sun Buer was elevated to the position of matriarch. Relevant texts include the *Sun Buer yuanjun fayu* (Dharma Sayings of Primordial Goddess Sun Buer; JY 212; ZW 370) and *Sun Buer yuanjun chuanshu dandao bishu* (Secret Writings on the Way of the Elixir Transmitted by Primordial Goddess Sun Buer; JY 213; ZW 371) (see Boltz 1987, 155–56; Despeux 1990, 170, 292–301; Yao 2000, 578; Despeux and Kohn 2003, 212–14, 241–43). Later poems attributed to Sun appear in various collections, including the *Sun Buer nüdan shi zhu* (Commentary on Sun Buer’s Poetry on Female Alchemy; Chen 1934), *Nüdan hebian* (Collected Works on Female Alchemy; Tao 1989, 1–188), and *Nü jindan fayao* (Essential Methods of the Gold Elixir for Women; JH 48) (see Despeux 1990, 170, 291–302; 2000; Despeux and Kohn 2003, 206, 212–14). Sections of this text and the *Sun Buer yuanjun gongfu cidì* (Practices and Stages of Sun Buer; Tao 1989, 282–88) have been translated in Thomas Cleary’s *Immortal Sisters: Secret Teachings of Taoist Women* (1989b). Readers should note, however, that none of these works were actually composed by Sun Buer.

be a sequential and integrated series, I have included them in their entirety. The technical details of Quanzhen alchemical praxis may be clarified by consulting my translation of the *Dadan zhizhi* (see chapter 4). The alchemical poems are supplemented by three selections on the fruition or attainment that was expected to come from Quanzhen religious practice. Among the latter, I have included “Elegy on Abandoning Form” by Ma Danyang, which is commonly identified as his “deathbed poem.”

Some Quanzhen poetry has appeared in print previously, though readers of the present volume may be unfamiliar with those publications. Wilt Idema has published English translations of most of the poems on the theme of skeletons and marionettes (1993). As Idema has pointed out (1993, 197), the theme of skeletons, and the corresponding reflection on the fragility of human existence, finds a classical Daoist precedent in chapter 18 of the *Zhuangzi* (see Watson 1968, 193–94). Vincent Goossaert has published French translations of Quanzhen poems on the “five night-watches” (2000; also 1999). An English translation of the “Wuzhen ge” was also produced by Florian Reiter (1994). My own renderings have benefited from these earlier translations. In terms of technical terminology, I have provided essential annotations, but many of the commonly occurring terms will be found in the Quanzhen Technical Glossary at the back of the book (see appendix 1).

#### To the Tune “Groping for Fish” / Wang Chongyang<sup>4</sup>

I lament the skeleton  
Lying in the open fields.  
Your lonely white bones are scattered,  
A vagrant from some unknown place.  
There’s no way to tell whether you’re male or female;  
You’ve been cast aside and completely abandoned.  
This is because you did not practice cultivation in former lives,  
But rather played around like a foolish monkey  
And in this life you have now fallen down.  
Wind-blown, rain-drenched, and sun-bleached,  
You are beaten by the senseless herding boys.

I wish to inquire about how you came to such an end,  
But I still have compassion for your suffering.  
How could we converse about this anyway?  
Your mouth is filled with mud and sand fills your eyes—  
This is the way you will decay.  
Forever, day and night,  
You count the yearly change of autumn, winter,  
Of spring and summer too—  
Through all four seasons lonely and alone.<sup>5</sup>  
Come to your senses, people old and young  
And do not flaunt your smartness, flash your charms.

4. *Quanzhen ji*, DZ 1153, 3.8b.

5. “Lonely and alone” translates *guyua*, characters that have been used historically as a self-deprecating term by Chinese emperors.

**The Skeleton / Tan Changzhen<sup>6</sup>**

Skeleton, oh skeleton, your face is so ugly,  
Only because in life you loved beauty and alcohol.  
Cunningly smiling you became fattened on ideas and pleasures  
So your blood and flesh gradually wasted away.  
Gradually wasting away—But you still continued to lust.  
Through greed and avarice, you dissipated your vitality with no completion,  
Your desires were without limit but your body had its term  
And now today you have become a skeleton!  
Becoming a skeleton—Listen to me:  
It is not easy to acquire a human body with Seven Treasures!  
Realize that innate nature and life-destiny are like pulling-strings,  
So do not blindly follow your emotions!  
That's why I have painted this form to show to you  
And see whether or not you will today become awakened!

**The Marionette / Ma Danyang<sup>7</sup>**

Providing amply for my wife  
And lusting for a living,  
My body was like a marionette.  
Led by fame and profit  
I busily did my tricks.  
Pulled in a thousand different ways  
I was made to act out  
All kinds of postures and mad behavior.  
Flashing my style  
I shook my head, played with my shadow,  
And made a full display of my finest sides.  
  
But then I encountered my teacher<sup>8</sup> who told me  
My comportment was that of a walking corpse,  
My tramping around that of running bones.  
When anger resembles the pulling-strings,  
How can there be no impermanence?  
Hastily I recognized the clouds and streams within the gourd  
And tapped the Mysterious Pass,  
Where hemp and wheat smell so fragrant.  
The dragon coils around the tiger,  
And mercury and lead are refined:  
When the elixir congeals, I'll become an immortal.

6. *Shuiyun ji*, DZ 1160, 1.18b–19a.

7. *Jinyu ji*, DZ 1149, 10.19b–20a.

8. Wang Chongyang.

**Song on Awakening to Perfection / Wang Chongyang<sup>9</sup>**

At the age of nine, I had no concern for provincial affairs—  
 My paternal grandfather dead and mourned at eighty-two years.  
 At the age of twenty-three, I flourished among glorious days—  
 My elder uncle dead and mourned at seventy-seven years.  
 At the age of thirty-three, I realized my greed and lust—  
 My loving father dead and mourned at seventy-three years.  
 From antiquity to today, a lifespan of one hundred or seventy years is rare;  
 Observing this, the sequential passing away, how can I bear it?  
 At the age of thirty-six, I was soundly asleep within my slumber—  
 I began demanding that my elder brother share his livelihood.  
 With overbearing vitality I rushed against heaven, giving rein to my passions;  
 Morning after morning, day in and day out, I ruined myself in drunkenness.  
 Taking advantage of the weak, and cheating people, I passed my time;  
 I slandered my brother, scolded my wife, and had contempt for heaven and earth.  
 Tending to neither my family's property nor my own person,<sup>10</sup>  
 I only considered and craved the empty fortunes and reputation of others.  
 Wealth slipped through my fingers like floating clouds  
 As the resentment and disdain of my wife and child rose as high as heaven.<sup>11</sup>  
 Selling off my property to obtain three portions of cash,  
 Two portions went to my food and clothing, one to my alcohol bill.  
 I was completely ignorant about what everyone else wore and ate;  
 I repaid my drinking debts and spoke about my great misfortune.  
 At the age of forty-eight, I took up contention and warfare—  
 Through contention, I carefully examined my entire person.  
 Suddenly, one morning, my heart broke apart;  
 I became insane,<sup>12</sup> giving myself over to madness.  
 I ceased being afraid of people ridiculing and laughing at me;  
 With my whole heart, I only feared obscuring the luminosity of the Three Radiances.  
 Stillling worries and purifying thoughts, I attended to my own body;  
 As soon as awakening came, I abandoned wife and child.  
 I used to love washing my face and, alas, arranging my hair;  
 People around me would say I was quick to follow prevailing fashions.  
 With my family's wealth completely squandered, excelling at carelessness,  
 I dreaded to work like horses and oxen, all for the sake of children and grandchildren.  
 At the age of fifty-two, light and shade were passing quickly—  
 To live to seventy years, how many days were really left?  
 The dangers of the road ahead correspond to the reincarnation cycle—  
 Old karma is difficult to disperse; to wait in idleness is to be lost.

9. *Quanzhen ji*, DZ 1153, 9.11b–12b.

10. “Not tending” translates the Chinese *buxiu*, which in Quanzhen technical terms would be rendered as “not cultivating.”

11. It is unclear how many children Wang Chongyang had.

12. *Haifeng*, lit., “injurious wind.”

Once one loses this human body, one will cease to be for ten thousand *kalpas*;  
How can one find contentment under such circumstances?  
We must know this before it's too late, listening while robust and strong—  
Abandon grave and graveyard to wander among clouds and waters.<sup>13</sup>  
Is anything more enjoyable than wandering among clouds and waters?  
To be free from anxiety, free from thought, free from activity.  
My only pillow is the clear wind, a consequence of a previous existence;  
The luminous moon through one circuit, this is my connection to a former life.

### The Four Hindrances / Wang Chongyang<sup>14</sup>

#### Alcohol

Alcohol, oh alcohol,  
So hateful to the lips,  
Plundering the mouth.  
Innate nature overly obscured,  
And spirit unable to flourish.  
You injure and ruin the perfect and primordial;  
You disperse and wear away longevity.  
Half-intoxicated, anxiety fills the bowels;  
Completely drunk, the heart-mind's direction is lost.  
Toward oneself, unrestrained, mad and wild;  
Toward others, not even the most basic dignity.  
What is better than abandoning this and waking up to sobriety?  
Free from injury, free from calamity, cultivate the double nine.

#### Sex

Sex, oh sex,  
How much calamity,  
Dissipating good fortune.  
Injuring the golden essence,  
Harming the jade fluids.  
You diminish and destroy qi and spirit;  
You spoil and ruin humaneness and virtue.  
You cause the Three Fields to empty,  
And make the five organs confused.  
You ruin unified nature, numinous and bright;  
You exhaust the strength of limbs and sinews.  
What is better than abandoning this and becoming everlasting?  
Free from injury, free from calamity, extend your attainment.

---

13. This recalls the second discourse of the *Shiwu lun*, where Wang Chongyang discusses “cloud wandering.” See chapter 3.

14. *Quanzhen ji*, DZ 1153, 1.18a–19a.

### Wealth

Wealth, oh wealth,  
 How you produce retribution,  
 Making gradual injury come.  
 You can only buy appearances;  
 You can claim cups and glasses.  
 Yet again you cause virtue to be dispersed,  
 And then you provoke retribution to arrive.  
 You increase and extend suffering in the Three Realms,  
 Making it difficult to escape the calamities of the Nine Subterrains.  
 You may increase family prosperity and fortune,  
 But how can such life evade the inevitability of reincarnation!  
 What is better than abandoning this and gaining constant joy?  
 Free from injury, free from calamity, every day there is freedom.

### Anger

Anger, oh anger,  
 How you injure spirit,  
 Harming the stomach.  
 You invite wildness and ferocity,  
 And strong desires for worldly things rise up.  
 Before the Seven Cavities [of Hundun],<sup>15</sup>  
 The Two Luminants resembled a spring.  
 But now, the aspiration for the Dao cannot circulate,  
 And the imperial laws become subordinated to dread.  
 Quarreling and fighting expose the robber bands;  
 Contention and vying continue to make chaos and waste.  
 What is better than abandoning this and enjoying cessation?  
 Free from injury, free from calamity, you connect with worthiness.

### Cultivation and Practice / Wang Chongyang<sup>16</sup>

—1—

No one understands this cultivation and practice;  
 From the beginning it is only this: recognize perfect compassion.  
 Both criminals and superior adepts wander among mountains and streams;

15. An allusion to chapter 7 of the *Zhuangzi* (Book of Master Zhuang): “The emperor of the South Sea was called Shu (Brevity), the emperor of the North Sea was called Hu (Suddenness), and the emperor of the central region was called Hundun (Primordial Chaos). Shu and Hu from time to time came together for a meeting in the territory of Hundun, and Hundun treated them very generously. Shu and Hu discussed how they could repay his kindness. ‘All people,’ they said, ‘have seven openings so they can see, hear, eat, and breathe. But Hundun alone doesn’t have any. Let’s try boring him some!’ Every day they bored another hole, and on the seventh day Hundun died” (adapted from Watson 1968, 97).

16. *Quanzhen ji*, DZ 1153, 1.14a–16b.

Both scholars and gentlemen have entered the Fiery Pond.  
When the white horse neighs, the gold roars in response.  
When the azure ox tills the fields, the jade is without flaws.  
Between the celestial thoroughfare and terrestrial pillar, mists are luminous;  
When elder and matron meet among the dragon's shelter, a child is born.

—2—

The great vessel, cultivated through practice, does not involve discarding the ornamental;  
Precious gems, cast aside by the foolish and thoughtless, belong to my lineage.  
Facing the clear winds within, I complete the perfect qi;  
Raising my gaze to the luminous moon in front, I coalesce the precious sand.  
Constantly hold fast to earlier practices, and constantly check their lists;  
Then you may accept new developments, and select what's beneficial.  
A single pervasion hurled into the space above the clear empyrean  
Penetrates the empty Void and manifests in the appearance of sprouts.

—3—

The dragon hums, stretching and rising, while the tiger roars;  
Snow and breakers unite as wind, a spiraling whirlpool cast forth.  
Thoroughly purify the unified numen, increasing your effort until it is lustrous;  
Harmonize and unite the two qi until they become mutually conjoined.  
The raven and turtle move to face each other, playing within the ocean;  
The crimson phoenix flies forth, taking roost above the summit.  
Through one revolution, the luminous moon sends forth its own resplendence;  
In its elevated location, the jade peak illuminates the Three Reeds.

—4—

Ever since my first attainment, I have seen the celestial Perfected;  
On that very day I understood what the people of former times [knew].  
Separated from the mundane and returning to daily activities, I was a guest beyond the  
clouds;  
Casting off the dust and refraining from work, I was a visitor within the land.  
This is because in the past I took hold of the vermilion mercury,  
And because from the beginning I have stabilized the liquid silver.  
A spark of numinous luminosity returns to the realm of stillness;  
Peering into the perfect radiance within, I turn the golden wheel.

—5—

When the Mysterious Pass is obtained, there is no need to seek it out;  
When refinement reaches redoubled yang, yin is completely dissipated.  
From this point, you must urgently increase Fire over Wood;<sup>17</sup>

---

17. Associations unclear. In this combination, Wood may refer to the vital fluids in the heart (Fire). Another common association is Wood with innate nature and Fire with spirit. The line would thus suggest realizing the connection between innate nature and spirit.

From this point, you must once again decoct Metal in Water.<sup>18</sup>  
 The myriad spirits respond in kind and return to see who is there;  
 The single perfect numen alone naturally commands their respect.  
 When gathered it is form, and when scattered it is qi;  
 It comes and goes in the clear Void, eternally free of a heart-mind.

## —6—

The womb-immortal dances and emerges, becoming a spirit immortal;  
 All of the other immortals henceforth obtain their proper arrangement.  
 How should one employ the elixir field when the golden tiger surrounds it?  
 Don't wait for the jade dragon to coil around the precious cauldron.  
 Urge on the circulation of lead and mercury according to clarity and stillness;  
 Change the positions of yin and yang to reach unexcelled joy and contentment.<sup>19</sup>  
 One part of red vapor is produced in the mountain summit;  
 Circulate radiance as a luminous lad who illumines the azure Luan-bird.

## —7—

When you rend open the clouds, dispersing them completely, the moon becomes  
 luminous;  
 Reverting the luminosity, the spirit transport moves to shoreline.  
 When Water and Fire encounter each other, you open the proper route;  
 When Wood and Metal are divided from each other, you stabilize perpetual life.  
 Black lead and crimson mercury divide into south and north;  
 The white tiger and azure dragon exchange [stem positions of] *jia* and *geng*.<sup>20</sup>  
 In accordance with this cultivation and asceticism, perfection is fully realized;  
 In emptiness, you weave and bind the jade silken fibers into an awning.

## —8—

In this way, with clear illumination attained, you can abandon your search;  
 Then it will no longer be necessary for me to discuss “shallow” and “deep.”  
 The principle of aligned sitting involves connecting *zi* and *wu*.<sup>21</sup>

18. Associations unclear. In this combination, Metal may refer to the perfect qi and original yang in the kidneys (Water). Another common association is Metal with emotionality and Water with vital essence. The line would suggest decreasing emotional reactivity and sexual arousal in order to stabilize one's foundational vitality.

19. Most likely refers to exchanging the yin and yang lines within the trigrams Kan-water ☵ and Li-fire ☲ to become Kun-earth ☷ and Qian-heaven ☰, respectively. This alchemical process involves a movement from differentiation to undifferentiation. Under one interpretation, the yin-line of Li-fire represents fluids, while the yang-line of Kan-water represents the qi in the kidneys. Through the exchange of these substances, the alchemist creates pure spirit in the head (Qian-heaven) and pure qi in the lower abdomen (Kun-earth). This is alternatively explained as attaining clarity and stillness by rooting the movement of vital essence and activating the movement of spirit.

20. In internal alchemy texts, this more often appears as *gengjia*, a combination of the seventh and first celestial stems, respectively. *Geng* usually refers to Metal and the western direction as well as to the emotions and the tiger; *jia* usually refers to Wood and the eastern direction as well as to innate nature and the dragon.

21. *Zi* and *wu* are the first and seventh terrestrial branches, respectively. In the present context, this most likely refers to aligning the body by becoming aware of the relationship between the sacrum (*zi*) and the crown (*wu*).

Circulate [qi] to the head and back again by observing *ding* and *ren*.<sup>22</sup>  
Five kinds of variegated colors continually spread out;  
At the single mysterious pivot, they beautifully encroach.  
Take hold of the empty Void and the perfect and wondrous landscape;  
Accordingly, grasp these realms to create an unsurpassed sound.

—9—

The patterns of respiration, exhalation and inhalation, are subtle and refined;  
If nourished from the beginning, a single pearl becomes manifest.  
With child and mother in mutual accord, there is a perfect brilliant coalescing;  
Qi and spirit gather and assemble, and a strange radiant thing appears.  
Invert and wed them to divide the mysterious causal mover;  
Upper and lower become infused and harmonized, obtaining the essential pivot.  
Adeptly face the deep mountains, residing in the most elevated place;  
Now harmonized, you alone let loose the lunar, revolving solitude.

—10—

From the beginning altered and joined, you caught the wind's churning;  
Sown in the Turquoise Pond, the seeds became a jade lotus.  
It produces and emerges as a single stem, its sides bright and pure;  
It sways and opens as five petals, each one a perfect sphere.  
In the past, you had the ability to awaken, pervading the mysterious and wondrous;  
Today you have returned to understand how to realize suchness.  
When no longer bound by the four seasons, hasten to depart;  
Above the realm of perpetual spring, there is no ordering of years.

—11—

For cultivation and practice, you must employ the *Diagram of Nine Yang*;<sup>23</sup>  
If you understand and grasp this map of yang, various affairs will be settled.  
Those with wisdom know how to leap beyond the transformative process;  
Those who are unenlightened have distorted understanding, becoming lost in lesser  
attainments.  
If you can begin to investigate and uncover the being within Nonbeing,  
After completion, it will seem as though being is actually Nonbeing.  
Both the existence of Nonbeing and nonexistence of being lack actual form;<sup>24</sup>  
When there are no forms within being, you have reached the thoroughfare of the heavens.

---

22. *Ding* and *ren* are the fourth and ninth celestial stems, respectively. Here *ding* relates to the southern direction and the front of the body, while *ren* relates to the northern direction and the back of the body. The context suggests circulating qi up the spine and down the front centerline of the body, or through the Governing and Conception vessels.

23. Reference unclear. Possibly the eleventh-century *Shangqing taixuan jiuyang tu* (DZ 154).

24. An allusion to the Buddhist *Heart Sūtra* (T. 250–57): “Form is emptiness; emptiness is form. Form does not differ from emptiness; emptiness does not differ from form. Whatever is emptiness, that is form. The same is true for sensation, perception, cognition, and consciousness.”

## —12—

If you know how bestowed guidance [enables] avoidance of the Three Defilements,  
 Cry out the realization that existed before you were this ordinary human being.  
 Entering the fire [of *samsāra*], select the teachings that reform the burning;  
 Crossing the river [of liberation], struggle to rescue the drowning.  
 Within the sun, refined splendor is perpetually born as luminescence;  
 Within the moon, the precious forest is eternally undecaying.  
 This is the great elixir returning to the realm beyond things;  
 Wandering carefree, coming and going, you enter the empty Void.

**Cultivating the Dao / Qiu Changchun<sup>25</sup>**

## —1—

When the eyes and ears are divorced from sound and color,  
 The body and heart-mind withdraw from being and Nonbeing.  
 Abiding in suchness and pervading the transformative process,  
 Why bother discussing what is refined and what coarse?

## —2—

Adepts refining qi and purifying the heart-mind  
 Seek out the floating clouds and root up mundane markings.  
 Their heart-minds become like mountains, unable to be moved;  
 Their qi becomes like an ocean, constant amid the currents.

## —3—

The myriad karmic effects are like flickering candles,  
 And the Three Poisons are like melting ice.  
 When you discard the husk of yin and yang,  
 What's the point of discussing Greater and Lesser Vehicles?

## —4—

The Five Visions in origin are the same substance;  
 The Three Bodies together are a single pillar.  
 A concentrated heart-mind is free from what follows “me”;  
 Perfect realization becomes luminous when empty.

## —5—

What is naturally born is in due course naturally destroyed;  
 What is free from shallowness also lacks depth.  
 If you don't realize that the body is not “mine,”  
 It will be difficult to understand how things *are* the heart-mind.

---

25. *Panxi ji*, DZ 1159, 4.13b–15a.

—6—

Taking steps to break open the world of emptiness,  
You abruptly open the power of the transformative process.  
The floating clouds collect in the realm of stillness;  
The sun of wisdom illuminates the heaven of meditation.

—7—

Where can even a single word find a place to reside?  
The myriad affairs have no enduring significance.  
When the transformative process opens the Celestial Cavern,  
Vital essence and spirit can withstand the years and winter's cold.

—8—

Even if the eyes have their times of application,  
The ground of the heart-mind must remain at rest.  
Then you face the dream of this entire life,  
And accordingly wander among the myriad transformations.

—9—

The body resembles the narrowness of ten square-feet;  
The heart-mind resembles the vastness of the great Void.  
The Four Oceans are divided by a thousand peaks;  
The Three Numinosities are observable in a single body.

—10—

Serene and dissolved in the space of no-mind,  
Radiant luminosity illuminates the great Void.  
The dim opaqueness contains a precious moon;  
The woven network is threaded by a celestial pearl.

—11—

To ascend to Perfection, you must be free of turbid qi;  
To transcend the mundane, you must have clear markings.  
Quickly, urgently, separate yourself from the long night;  
Silently, deeply, lift yourself to the Great Emphyrean.

—12—

Inside the jade cauldron, the cinnabar sand issues forth;  
Inside the gold vessel, the blue liquid becomes fragrant.  
The heart-minds of ghosts and spirits are impossible to fathom;  
The longevity of heaven and earth are difficult to measure.

—13—

As though in a dream, you separate yourself from glory and kingdom;  
As spirit, you travel to the Heaven of the Purple Prefecture.

In splendor, you encounter the guests of the Three Islands;  
In leisure, you visit the immortals of the ten continents.

## —14—

Relying upon the Dao, you attain a condition free from affairs,  
But acting according to phenomena produces a heart-mind.  
If you liberate yourself and cast off the Three Poisons,  
You can also abandon the Five Phases.

## —15—

The Dao becomes manifest through nonaction,  
And the heart-mind is born because of phenomena.  
The Primordial Origin contains the myriad appearances;  
The Great One arises from that which “Emptiness” names.

## —16—

Motion is an effect of the motionless;  
Nonaction leads to deliberate action.  
The Three Radiances cannot illuminate this place;  
The myriad appearances manifest when it becomes luminous.

## —17—

Realization of the original self without a heart-mind—  
How can this be exhausted by using awareness and thinking?  
The Five Phases cannot reach this place;  
Each of the myriad transformations returns at its time.

## —18—

The moon rises, a glistening brilliance in the center of heaven;  
The wind arrives, a clear purity in the middle of the night.  
[Ordinary] humans cannot reach the grotto-heavens,  
But guests free of mundane concerns naturally meet each other.

## —19—

In the medicinal garden, the sprouting fields are pure;  
On the gold altar, the jade canopy becomes replenished.  
In the vessel, the heavens have no period of darkness;  
Beyond external things, the landscape has a perpetual spring.

## —20—

Among the ten caverns, the elevated Perfected are arrayed;  
In the Three Heavens, the highest sages reside.  
White clouds have the ability to escort any guest;  
The oriole is released to transmit the sacred writings.

**To the Tune “Casting Lots” / Sun Buer<sup>26</sup>**

When you seal the fists and loosen your robes,<sup>27</sup>  
The Water and Fire will immediately commingle and merge.  
The misty vapors of the myriad districts manifest below the ocean;  
With a single strike, the Three Passes become penetrated.  
Immortal bliss continually expands  
As you constantly drink the delicious wine.  
The wondrous medicine is completely beyond time limits;  
The nine-times-reverted cinnabar sand becomes complete.

**To the Tune “Accentuating Slender Eyebrows” / Sun Buer<sup>28</sup>**

—1—

Admonish people to awaken.  
In cultivation and practice, renounce the suffering of the Three Roads.  
Attain enlightened liberation,  
And leap through the doorway.  
[Remember] Tan, Ma, Qiu, Liu,  
Sun, Wang, and Hao Taigu.  
The ocean of divine law is a raft of compassion;  
Inside the kingdom, there is universal salvation.

—2—

Transform ignorance and delusion.  
Separate from husband and children in the Burning House.  
Rely on wisdom and discernment,  
And sever your ties to the Three Roads.  
Distinctions between self and other are landslides;  
The ocean of right and wrong results in personal decay.  
Old karma must be expelled;  
New misfortune must not be created.

—3—

Respond to the immortal offering.  
Mercury and lead, the black and white, are the path to longevity.  
Making progress from the beginning,  
Attend to your work through bitter determination.

---

26. *Minghe yuyin*, DZ 1100, 5.7a.

27. “Seal the fists” (*wogu*), which literally means “grasp firmly,” is an allusion to chapter 55 of the *Daode jing*. In alchemical practice, it refers to a specific sacred hand-gesture (Skt.: *mudrā*; Chin.: *shouyin*), wherein the tips of the thumbs touch the inside base of the ring finger and the other fingers fold over the thumbs.

28. *Minghe yuyin*, DZ 1100, 6.13a–15a.

Do not sleep day or night;  
 Coarse clothes and simple food are sufficient.  
 Beg and teach at the road heads;  
 Become a caretaker of the ten directions.

## —4—

Be free from grief and anxiety.  
 A solitary cloud and wild crane [recluse] beyond constraint  
 Within a thatched hut,  
 Leisurely read the golden books.  
 Forests and streams outside the window,  
 At the edge of the rolling hills, water and bamboo.  
 Luminous moon and clear wind;  
 Become worthy to be their companion.

## —5—

Nourish the original beginning.  
 The monkey-mind and horse-thought must be corralled and tied up.  
 With the Six Thieves completely exhausted,  
 Do not seek or be concerned about anything.  
 Vague and indistinct,  
 The place of darkness and silence.<sup>29</sup>  
 Deep and clear,  
 Innate nature settles and life-destiny resides.

## —6—

Realize true progress.  
 The path to pervasive mysteriousness is between Wood and Metal.  
 Within the four symbols of the body,<sup>30</sup>  
 The Five Phases completely assemble.  
 Qi coalesces and spirit congeals,  
 While yin and yang naturally revert.  
 The whole body fills with a fragrant mist;  
 The fire of the Celestial Cycle is sufficient.

## —7—

Break through the dark road.  
 When thunder shakes the earth, rain falls on mountain peaks.  
 The Yellow Sprouts grow,

---

29. The characters *yao*, *ming*, *hun*, and *mo* derive from the *Daode jing* where they are used to describe the Dao and the Daoist adept by extension. See, e.g., chapters 20 and 21.

30. The four directions.

And the White Snow floats down.  
Dew descends as precious nectar,  
While fragrant grasses fill the garden.  
The Jade Stamen unfurls and diffuses;  
The Gold Flower opens and reveals itself.

—8—

The landscape is covered by a map.  
Soaring like clouds and streams, one traverses it  
Above the winding Jiang River,  
Flying birds and running rabbits.  
The tiger encircles and the dragon coils;  
Kan-water and Li-fire join together.  
Revolving the wheel through the Celestial Pass;  
You shift and move the Terrestrial Axle.

—9—

The Dharmic Wheel is roused.<sup>31</sup>  
The Waterwheel is strong in its thirty spokes.  
Shift the sun and moon<sup>32</sup>  
So that they revolve to enter the gold furnace.  
The jade cauldron becomes warm,  
And the perfect fire of ninefold yang is decocted.  
Misty vapors emerge from the myriad districts;<sup>33</sup>  
A thousand-layered kingfisher-green mist.

—10—

Collect the luminous pearl.  
Through refinement and completion, the immortal embryo dances.  
In the Association of Perfect Blessings,  
The Maiden completely gathers.  
When thirsty, drink the precious nectar;  
The jade zither naturally pacifies.  
Its harmony stabilizes the immortal sound;  
Pound the gold and strike the jade.

—11—

Nonbeing is within being.  
Within Nonbeing, still other progeny are produced.  
Inside being and Nonbeing,

---

31. An alternate name for the Celestial Cycle.

32. The left and right eye, respectively.

33. Compare Sun's lyric "To the Tune 'Casting Lots'" that appears earlier in this chapter.

Practice inward contemplation and selection;  
 Inside Nonbeing, store perfection;  
 Inside being, maintain resemblance to Nonbeing.  
 When being and Nonbeing are both forgotten,  
 One returns to merge with the great Void.

## —12—

Practice and accomplishment become sufficient.  
 Among the Three Islands of Penglai, various immortals gather.  
 In the Association of the Turquoise Pond,  
 Sages and worthies are beyond number.  
 Each one completely cultivates perfection;  
 Study the Dao and become a companion of the arrayed immortals.  
 Focus on the elevated Perfected  
 And the sacred Queen Mother of the West.

## —13—

Present offerings to the celestial offices.  
 When immortal robes are bestowed, you become transcendent.  
 Mount the ascending phoenix,  
 And be carefree and enjoy the pure metropolis.  
 Among the treasure hall and precious tower,  
 Gold spikes fill the vermilion portals.  
 Perpetual spring without nightfall,  
 There is no longer coming or going.

**To the Tune “Tree Leaves Rustling” / Sun Buer<sup>34</sup>**

## —1—

Observing the white phoenix,  
 Watching the black raven,  
 I grope for fish and shrimp beneath the water.  
 Orioles thread the willow trees;  
 Butterflies seek out the flowers.  
 Shadowed in secluded retirement,  
 If not a disciple of clouds, no one can brag.

## —2—

With the forest of thought regulated,  
 And by broadening compassion,  
 In the end one establishes a foundation.  
 With a rap of the staff,

---

34. *Minghe yuyin*, DZ 1100, 6.15a–16b.

One leaves behind the splayed covering.  
Enjoying simple idiocy,  
Painful discomfort seems totally unknown.

—3—

When the tortoise scales are shaken off,  
And the rabbit's horn pierces,  
The toad leaps toward heaven and flies.  
The mud ox roars;  
The wood horse neighs.  
Few people know this—  
They are taken away by the times and dissipate the Celestial Pivot.

—4—

Wheat contains flour,  
Millet contains grains.  
And even cotton leggings have legs inside.  
Mountains contain stones,  
While oceans contain water.  
Discuss the perfectly real—  
Establish a foundation among the limitlessness of cavern mists.

—5—

Capture the horse of thought;  
Lock up the monkey of the mind;  
Then spirit and qi are nourished and join in completion.  
Do not put on coquettish airs,  
But merge with suchness.  
Embodying the silent mystery,  
Dharma-vision leaps beyond the great multitude.

—6—

Bringing the mysterious and wondrous to rest,  
Converting those among the cities and passes,  
Each footprint is a step toward return.  
The flower has a red space;  
The willow has green throughout.  
You do not have to fence yourself off—  
The countenances of immortals and buddhas are everywhere.

—7—

The moon in the sky,  
The moon aligned and whole,  
Travels to heaven after passing through the earth.  
Being and Nonbeing exist;

Inversion involves turning over.  
 The Wondrous is a twofold mystery;  
 For the orthodox Dao, you must seek oral transmission.

## —8—

The moon in the sky,  
 The moon high and thin,  
*Mao* and *you* are not empty transmissions.<sup>35</sup>  
 Eight *liang* of mercury,<sup>36</sup>  
 And eight *liang* of lead.  
 With one *jin* total,<sup>37</sup>  
 In enlightened breakthrough, one realizes three thousand reaches the multitude.

## —9—

The moon in the sky,  
 The moon resonant and crescent,  
 The wondrousness of the perfect Dao is infinite.  
 The dragon takes hold of the tiger,  
 And the tiger takes hold of the dragon.  
 When these two meet each other,  
 They coalesce into a Gold Flower playing in the wind.

## —10—

The moon in the sky,  
 The moon aligned in the south,  
 Forward and behind, each is three times three.  
 Li-fire is female;  
 Kan-water is male.  
 In discussing the wondrous and mysterious,  
 Do not speak about breakthrough, but teach people about what to consider.

## —11—

The moon in the sky,  
 The moon resonant and blazing,  
 The lead and mercury reside in the cauldron.  
 Gold depends on the fire;  
 Refinement completes the pearl.  
 A single calabash—  
 Three hundred and eighty-four *zhu* in weight.<sup>38</sup>

35. *Mao* and *you* are the fourth and tenth terrestrial branches, respectively. In this combination, *mao* usually refers to the heart and spirit, while *you* refers to the kidneys and vital essence.

36. *Liang* is an ancient Chinese measurement for object mass and monetary objects, often translated as “ounce” or “tael.”

37. *Jin* is an ancient Chinese measurement, consisting of sixteen *liang*. It is sometimes translated as “catty.”

38. *Zhu* is an ancient Chinese measurement for weight, equaling one twenty-fourth of a *liang*.

**To the Tune “Fragrance Filling the Courtyard” / Sun Buer<sup>39</sup>**

The radiance of the mineral fire is hidden;  
The human body does not last long;  
When reckoning comes, one realizes that life and death are difficult to guard against.  
Whether suddenly born or suddenly perishing,  
It is just like the brilliance of a lightning strike.  
Recognize and break through the provisional joining of physical form;  
Endeavor to obtain this  
And abandon the world for the immortal regions.  
After thinking reaches its limits,  
Turn the heart-mind back to the Dao  
And seek to know the ruler within these phenomena.  
Moment by moment constantly maintain these meetings—  
Be unified in walking and in sitting;  
Be unified in drinking the nectar of mists.  
Be unified as a companion of the clear wind and luminous moon;  
Be unified in a single aspiration;  
Be unified in perceiving celestial radiance.  
Be unified in mutually beneficial associations;  
Be unified with your master in seeking the Dao;  
Be unified in your singing as fragrance fills the courtyard.

**The Five Night-watches / Ma Danyang<sup>40</sup>**

At the first drum-sounding, I retire alone, guarded within.  
With a cloud, I thoroughly till the precious landscape.  
A mysterious kind of purple fungus sprouts;  
Then my grotto-heaven is without dissipation.  
Free from leakage, free from outflow,  
The tiger of Kan-water and the dragon of Li-fire commingle.

At the second drum-sounding, I retire alone, guarded within.  
With the cloud torn open, I align the celestial constellations.  
The sun and moon exchange their radiance;  
Then my precious jar is without dissipation.  
Free from leakage, free from outflow,  
Emerging from the earth, the dragon and snake engage in battle.

---

39. *Minghe yuyin*, DZ 1100, 6.16b–17a.

40. *Jianwu ji*, DZ 1142, 2.9b–10a.