

## FOUR POEMS FROM THE CHINESE

*Translated by Graeme Wilson*

### Secret

No. It is not enough to despise the world.  
It is not enough to live one's life as though  
Riches and power were nothings. They are not.

But to grasp the world, to grasp and feel it grow  
Great in one's grasp, is likewise not enough.

The secret is to grasp and let it go.

Wang Wei (701-761)

### Search

There's never an end to my search for untried places.

Perhaps to find myself, I tend to stray  
Down back-lanes, side-paths, foot-trails leading only  
To wilds more wild the further I wander away.

Once, I recall, I chanced on a sudden river  
Where the track ran out at the edge of an empty wood:  
There was no-one there from whom to ask directions  
But, white beside tall grass, an egret stood.

Chao Yi (1727-1814)

## Absent Husband

The steady breeze in the tree-tops lessens:  
Crow upon evening crow  
Labours home through the twilit glare.  
I close my door as though  
Closing a door might trap the last  
Gold warmth of afterglow.

Somewhere south of the river  
My husband's road has led.  
That he has not written hints at a sadness  
Such that I even dread  
To see the single lamp which lights me,  
Cold, to my early bed.

Chou Pang-yen (1057-1121)

## Yes

The whole night long she cannot sleep,  
So bright the moon's persistent glare.  
To who knows what imagined question  
"Yes," she answers to the empty air.

Tzu-yeh (4th century)