

Li Ho

The Northern Cold

The sky glows one side black, three sides purple.
The Yellow River's ice closes, fish and dragons die.
Bark three inches thick cracks across the grain,
Carts a hundred piculs heavy mount the river's water.
Flowers of frost on the grass are as big as coins,
Brandished swords will not pierce the foggy sky,
Crashing ice flies in the swirling seas,
And cascades hand noiseless in the mountains, rainbows of jade.

Poems of the Late T'ang, trans. A.C. Graham
London, Penguin Books, 1977 [1965]:98