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THE GARNISHED ZITHER

by Michael Turner

translated from Li Shangyin (c. 813–858)

The garnished zither unending,
 its fifty strings.
One string for one peg:
 I think of handsome years.

The scholar Chuang lucidly dreamt
 of mystified butterflyhood.
The prestigious lord took his spring heart
 to form a cuckoo.

The deep sea, the moon luminous:
 a pearl with tears.
The indigo field, sun inviting:
 the jade uncurling smoke.

This bliss could wait
 for full recollect.
Still, this while
 has been burned forgotten.