

Two Translations of a Poem by Du Fu

Translation by Stephen Owen

“Writes of what he feels, traveling by night”

Slender grasses, breeze faint on the shore,
Here, the looming mast, the lone night boat.
Stars hang down on the breadth of the plain,
The moon gushes in the great river’s current.
My name shall not be known from my writing;
Sick, growing old, I must yield up my post.
Wind-tossed, fluttering—what is my likeness?
In Heaven and Earth, a single gull of the sands.

From Stephen Owen, *Traditional Chinese Poetry and Poetics: Omen of the World* (Madison: U. of Wisconsin, 1985): 12.

Translation by Burton Watson

“A Traveler at Night Writes His Thoughts”

Delicate grasses, faint wind on the bank;
stark mast, a lone night boat:
stars hang down, over broad fields sweeping;
the moon boils up, on the great river flowing.
Fame—how can my writings win me that?
Office—age and sickness have brought it to an end.
Fluttering, fluttering—where is my likeness?
Sky and earth and one sandy gull.

From Burton Watson, *The Columbia Book of Chinese Poetry: From Early Times to the Thirteenth Century* (New York: Columbia, 1984): 233.