

Frontier Fortress

Of mulberry-trees too scrawny for their needs
The dry cicadas shrillingly complain,
Here at the frontier-pass in autumn's chill.

Down there, beyond the gate and back again,
The road shows nothing but dry yellow reeds,
Dry yellow reeds and grasses and the bones
Of soldiers herded here to stub their lives
In dirty sand among wind-stubborn stones:
Horse-handling men, they came from far away
To shorten here their insect-little span.

Never be moved by his boasts or his horsemanship
To envy the way of life of a cavalryman.

— *Wang Chang-ling (graduated 726)*

(Translated by Graeme Wilson)