

Tu Fu Dreams of Fishing
with Mrs. Tu

He pictures himself
beside her in Wu Gorge,
her pole lax beside his,
a basket of fish at her feet,
waiting to be scaled.

Carp always bite well
on rainy afternoons.

Their coats are damp
from the mist, but he has
a flask of plum wine
in his knapsack.

And despite the cold and wet,
Mrs. Tu, he notices,
has worn a bit of rouge.

They smile at each other.
He tries not to envy
her catch, luminescent
in the ebbing light.

It's nice to have her
beside him in travel,
even if it's a dream
and she talks too much.

*Gods, he thinks, if I write
that old scoundrel, Li Po,
he will jealously tease me.*

He'll have to replace
his wife in the poem, as if
it could delectate his heart.

It's a rueful thing to be
a homesick old goat,
drunk and howling at
the makimono moon.