

Vol. 5 No. 1 Spring 2026

PIETAS

A Journal of Tradition, Place, and Things Divine



The Declaration of Independence at 250

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by Michael Driscoll

On the Philosophical Significance of Mary as New Eve
by Marco A. Andreacchio

Logos, Law, and Longing: Tarzan as Natural Man
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by Cen Shen
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Armies on the March: two poems
(while following the imperial army at Phoenix Flight¹)

Cen Shen

1

With sorrow I reflect upon my life,
Though forty years of age is yet not old.
The moment chaos comes with morning light
The setting sun cannot bring safety back.
Now foreign armies occupy Chang An²,
Wild grasses grow in empty palaces,
Felled trees 'round royal tombs aggrieve my heart³.
The road from Luo Yang to Chang An is gone⁴.

My sovereign now leads armies on the march⁵,
Sprawled out before him, army men and mounts.
Invading foreign beasts still roam the land⁶,
The generals beg to drive them out again.

Just yesterday came news of Xian yang's fall⁷;
The killing swept the city clean of life,
New mountains made of corpses piled high,
The bloodshed swells the rivers 'round Chang An.

The conflict rages through the countrysides,
The cities filled with greedy, vicious beasts.
The villages are empty, no one left,
They leave deserted groves of fruiting trees.

Confucian scholars make their long-term plans,
Yet find no place to bring such dreams to life⁸.
Alone, I grieve the plight of modern men.
I raise my head and weep unto the sky.

2

If early I'd known troubled times await,
In youth I would have set aside my books.
If only I had learned to bend a bow,
I'd shoot the wild invaders in the east!

By chance I joined the royal magistrates,
Not worthy to tread crimson palace steps!
Unable to assist my king in need,
In vain these years have I been called a man!

Hand on my sword, I grieve the way of things,
Through tears lament my unused stratagems.
For battle glory now's too late to hope,
I mourn at whiskers white seen in the mirror.
Thus far I've led a righteous, loyal life,
I dare not shrink away from danger now!

¹ Located in Shaanxi province in northwestern China, near Xi An, it's often written as Feng xiang, but translates to "phoenix flight."

² Chang An, today's Xi An, was the capital city at the time of the revolt.

³ The line refers to five tombs of former emperors that are all located near Chang An. A line from a poem by Li Bai also discusses this, mentioning sadness for the once-beautiful pine and cedar trees surrounding the tombs.

⁴ Luo Yang is another major city in Chinese history, itself having been a capital city at varying points in history, and thus was sometimes referred to as the "eastern capital."

⁵ Refers to Li Heng (titled Tang Su Zong), who is described in The Comprehensive Mirror (資治通鑑) as having seen the revolt coming while he was crown prince, but ultimately unable to stop it. After tactical failures on the part of his father Li Longji (titled Tang Xuan Zong), a year into the revolt, Li Heng took the throne. He reigned from 756-762 A.D.

⁶ The An Shi Revolt was led primarily by the general An Lushan, who was what was then referred to as a "胡人" or foreigner, from areas to the north and west of traditionally "Han" areas.

⁷ The fall of Xian Yang here refers to a failed attempt to retake the capital of Chang An that is said to have cost the lives of more than forty thousand soldiers.

⁸ At this time, the poet, Cen Shen, had a low-ranking position in the royal court where he could make suggestions and offer strategic advice, but these lines show that his suggestions were not accepted, leaving him once again only able to mourn in private.

Original Poem

行軍詩（時扈從在鳳翔）

岑參

1

吾竊悲此生，四十幸未老。
一朝逢世亂，終日不自保。
胡兵奪長安，宮殿生野草。
傷心五陵樹，不見二京道。
我皇在行軍，兵馬日浩浩。
胡雛尚未滅，諸將慙征討。
昨聞咸陽敗，殺戮淨如掃。
積屍若丘山，流血漲澧鎬。
干戈礙鄉國，豺虎滿城堡。
村落皆無人，蕭條空桑棗。
儒生有長策，無處豁懷抱。
塊然傷時人，舉首哭蒼昊。

2

早知逢世亂，少小謾讀書。
悔不學彎弓，向東射狂胡。
偶從諫官列，謬向丹墀趨。
未能匡吾君，虛作一丈夫。
撫劍傷世路，哀歌泣良圖。
功業今已遲，覽鏡悲白鬚。
平生抱忠義，不敢私微軀。