

## Returning to the Fields

by Tao Yuanming (365–427), translated by Arthur Waley

When I was young, I was out of tune with the herd:  
My only love was for the hills and mountains.  
Unwitting I fell into the Web of the World's dust  
And was not free until my thirtieth year.  
The migrant bird longs for the old wood:  
The fish in the tank thinks of its native pool.  
I had rescued from wildness a patch of the Southern Moor  
And, still rustic, I returned to field and garden.  
My ground covers no more than ten acres:  
My thatched cottage has eight or nine rooms.  
Elms and willows cluster by the eaves:  
Peach trees and plum trees grow before the hall.  
Hazy, hazy the distant hamlets of men.  
Steady the smoke of the half-deserted village,  
A dog barks somewhere in the deep lanes,  
A cock crows at the top of the mulberry tree.  
At gate and courtyard—no murmur of the World's dust:  
In the empty rooms—leisure and deep stillness.  
Long I lived checked by the bars of a cage:  
Now I have turned again to Nature and Freedom.

From *A Hundred and Seventy Chinese Poems* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1919).