

SEAN THOMAS DOUGHERTY

Hanzi in the Rain

I think I'm tired of auditioning.
I'm not dancing for bread anymore.
I'm not paying your fee.
Give the grant, the residency,
that place in a journal, that job
to someone else.
I'll be here under the Bodhi tree with Tu Fu.
He's sold a sheaf of poems.
He pours me a cup of wine
mixed with the glint of fisherman's lures.
He pours me a cup of sad songs
sung on a mountain pass.
At night, when I lie down in my cot
in our hut, I can hear him calling my name
to come out and dance.
He says my *aloneliness*
is long as a river.
He's drunk and silly
and counting characters.
Come out he says.
Stop being an orphan.
I open the door
but it is the door to the house
of sleep. I hear wind chimes
on the rising wind.
He's shouting me questions.
How can I write moon,
but mean mountain?
How can I write goose,
but mean grief?
Or a hanzi in the rain,
is it still the same
or something new
as it is washed away?
What is the page after?
Asks his voice of blurry ink.