

# At Dusk Along the River

*For my father*

I WALK OUT at dusk along the river,  
Which runs shallow between she-

Oaks that smoke its steep banks. The day  
Slips from the afternoon's grasp; crickets

Pock the silence that wants to fall;  
The first star of evening lifts up its eyes

To hills that give back their heat and scent  
The air with hay.

The winter has been

Warm—none warmer, by day, since time  
Started keeping score. Winter only wants

To come at night these days, and here  
It comes again, wrapping its coat around

Me as I walk.

And the rain has forgotten  
Completely how to fall. A cherry blossoms

Among the weeds where the river bends,  
And everything could almost seem the same

As it always was. But nothing much is.

In all that isn't, my children remain

My children, and I their old man. And

You, my father, are the same sure ground

Beneath me, the same steady season

I've known all my days.

A place that stays,

When all else shifts. A thatched hut

In hills. The sun low in an orphan sky.

NOTE:

*A thatched/Hut in hills*: Thatch Hut, a mountain in China, holy to poets, a site of pilgrimage, and the home place of the poet T'ao Ch'ien (365–427), who, according to David Hinton, “reinvented Chinese poetry” (*Hunger Mountain*, p9)