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Li Po (AD 701-62) and Tu Fu (AD 712-70) were devoted friends who are traditionally considered to be among China's greatest poets. Li Po, a legendary carouser, was an itinerant poet whose writing, often dream poems or spirit-journeys, soars to sublime heights in its descriptions of natural scenes and powerful emotions. His sheer escapism and joy is balanced by Tu Fu, who expresses the Confucian virtues of humanity and humility in more autobiographical works that are imbued with great compassion and earthy reality, and shot through with humour. Together these two poets of the T'ang dynasty complement each other so well that they often came to be spoken of as one - Li-Tu' - who covers the whole spectrum of human life, experience and feeling.

Li Po, a legendary carouser, was an itinerant poet who is unsurpassed in the scope of his fanciful imagination and who soars to sublime heights in his descriptions of natural scenes and powerful emotions. He has been called 'the immortal of poets'. Tu Fu is a more popular poet. His experiences of civil war imbue his work with great compassion and earthy reality, shot through with humour and desolation, as he views everyday life with an artist's insight. Together these two poets of the T'ang dynasty cover the whole spectrum of human life and feeling, and are often appropriately referred to as one poet, 'Li-Tu'. Arthur Cooper's excellent introduction chronicles the lives and times of Li Po and Tu Fu, and sets the spiritual, social and aesthetic background to the translations, which are works of poetry in their own right. The Chinese calligraphy in this volume is by Shui Chien-tung.