SONG CYCLE FROM INNER MONGOLIA

1. THE JADE SCREEN

Green as spring grass that fine travelling dress
you wore as the train
rambled through brown mountains; sweet corn valleys
curving right to left
like some strange green tendril that searched our way
to Chingis Khan.¹

2. THE WOODEN SCREEN

On hilltops ovoo stones piled one by one².
Dry tufts of brushwood
surmount each cairn, like helmet plumes; remind
that signal fires
can tell of danger flaring up. So love
burns sacred at night.
3. THE MARBLE SCREEN

Shang-du\(^3\), is where Kublai Khan indeed built in rare marble his

*Hall of Great Stability*\(^4\), with its six wondrous meeting halls
to flank his summer palace, dream city.
Here I walk with you.

4. THE SILK SCREEN

On her carpet the trader spread fine wares:
bracelets, necklaces of silver and gold, leather bound bottles,
purses and silk scarves.
We want to choose our precious gifts of love bound with silken threads.

\(^{2008}\)

\(^1\)This spelling is more accurate than ‘Genghis’ or Cheng Ji Si in Pinyin. \(^2\)Ovoos are cairn-like shrines topped with brushwood beacons. \(^3\)Known in the West as Xanadu. \(^4\)A palace rather than ‘pleasure dome’. 