

Yan Li
Poems and a story

SPINNING POLYHEDRAL MIRROR
(Collection of Poems 1990--2000)

1.

Walking along
If you don't kick something, you start to look effete
He has the word "door" embroidered on his trouser leg
The door to a nation

2.

Tomorrow I will rest in a museum by fixing up a few hours of war
Tomorrow
Smuggling peace to other planets I will not accept U.S. dollars

3.

Wish my towel could get out of this washwater
Wish you'd give me a good wringing out
Maybe this towel of mine is worn a bit thin
But it's a perfect match for your wrinkles

4.

If the winter were a little colder
It could freeze artillery shells to death
And then, in depths of a convalescent ward
Sunlight wearing a slip-off gown
Would sip afternoon tea by mankind's stove

5.

A series of repulsions
Relates to a poet's saliva
Like the shimmer of a streetlight in rain
And spattering of mud underfoot

6.

Every cell suffused with juice of love
I take the position of candy, so you can package me
When the sale is made, please be careful

If the price is wrong
I may deteriorate into poison

7.
For poetry's sake keep standing at a century's graveside
Still no end to the elegies in my hand

8.
In places where my countrymen have wept for a long time
They begin to make salt

9.
The piece of candy called love
Has now become my teeth

10.
The flame of love will be kindled once again
Dreams that have faded away
Aren't worth sleeping one more night for

11.
Every dark twig of winter
Is loaded with bullets of green
Just waiting for Spring to pull the trigger

12.
Lie down with an easy mind
Your grave is the uterus of God

13.
Quietly folding the wind under its wings
A lazy beetle at the tip of a blade
Is seesawing with bright green

14.
Over the spot where the stove was moved away
My saucepan is still poised at a rolling boil

15.
Blank paper has thickness without limit
Start delving and there is no end to it

16.
Birds on a withered branch
Drift off like falling leaves

Bygone springtime is mounted on the wall
I am the paste, not yet dry

17.

In the courtroom of the senses people sentence the mirror
Forever to cast politeness in a flattering light

18.

Sunlight is dazzling
Winter fills the trees
December and January, hand in hand
In sweet infatuation
Are up North on a skiing trip

19.

Even though she is a peeled orange
She is still trying hard
To sew buttons on the peel

20.

A transplanted tree does musical notation with falling leaves
And in deep autumn stirs up a homeward wind
Though I am the only person in this house
I go back to my mind to sleep

21.

Not wearing a bra
Just as mountaintops are unclothed

22.

Carelessly you strike a match
And light up a treeful of blossoms
Then call me over to warm my nose

23.

That is a forest
Where furniture easily grows
In it lives my house

24.

As a world language for settling disputes
Bombs do not need translation
Though one may extend justice by stepping over borders
Returning home is the Peace Army's finest battle cry

25.

He's like a lock that has lost its key
He has locked himself up
And is holding out for a burglar's visit
Preferably female

27.

They went ahead and reeled in the whole lake
And to let a fish believe itself still free
They devour the sense of freedom from the fish's bones

28.

A peak only peaks at its rightful position
If hell were to stand on a mountaintop
It could not keep from plunging down

29.

Under the ancient wall
Descendents of the cricket king still guard the imperial palace

30.

Since they are birds
They will find a grove
Build themselves a nest
Call a place without hunters home

31.

Wind brings fish-songs to the city
I smell a salt tang from beyond the net

32.

The living glance sees you and me in its heart
Brilliant light that we gladly opened the door to
The candy of each other
Sweetness of being unwrapped

33.

I wonder when the saliva I quietly swallow
Will turn under pressure of your kisses
Into a geyser of petroleum

34.

The hunger that gnaws at the starved ones
Leaves them no strength for self-expression
And so upon the world's stage
Only the full-bellied ones
Can act out hunger after meals

35.

He hides in a corner
His breath aimed at the window
The fresh air closes in on his lungs like bullets

36.

All their lives people try to recover
The burst bubble of their childhood
And so all their lives they use soap

37.

From an unconventional refusal to wear a high hat
This unfamiliar ache has located itself in my shoulders

38.

History leaves dirty toothbrushes of tradition in great number
We have to use our teeth to brush them a little cleaner

39.

He does not agree
That savings are always defined by addition
In the past five years he saved up three chances for marriage
Now he can't withdraw a single one

41.

Humans heroically raise their swords and hack away
But then with perfect tenderness
Sew fallen leaves onto the tree in their house

42.

My body swims inside its clothes
Buttons are fastened all along the bank

43.

Precocious Spring in March has flashes of magic
You feel a big flame blaze in your chest
Gently the other shore kisses the prow of your boat

44.

Not only in the present era
Later freedoms will also be recorded in shoes of historical eras
That is to say
No matter how liberated the toes
They rely on the microphone of shoes to sing the road

45.

You are a flower I met on my way to the hive

After gathering my fill of nectar

46.

Often you suddenly discover
Your pair of scissors
Has been taken by your rose
To give to your rival in love

47.

Dreams can balance the whole night's darkness
Like a pinch of salt sprinkled in soup

48.

I used to argue with the home that was holding me back
Because Springtime beckoned to me into the wilderness
This year
I gave up this old preoccupation
Because Spring keeps provoking potted plants as always

49.

Crematory chimneys give life an elevation from which to vanish
But over them rests a great blue expanse

50.

In the 1970s
AIDS first climbed onto the world stage
Causing impotent America
To pull out of Vietnam's vagina

51.

Autumn wind takes autumn leaves to pay a call on winter
Wind returns alone and tells the tree
Fallen leaves have boarded the subway of Spring
And won't be back for several months

52.

One person is the millstone
To another's milling wheel
Unless some grain is thrown in
There's no point rolling their life together

53.

Reader, if you happen to be a doctor
How will you face a writer using onset of mania
To write the human body

54.

My body is also the orchestra of a garden
Insects in and out of mating time
Are parts within my musical instrument
And they can renew themselves

55.

With Chinese shoes not yet broken in, we stepped into Western New Year
Just the feeling in our feet occupied us for two months

56.

Forgive me
When I lift up my ideals
I trample the Earth a little lower

57.

Within the flower's chamber
I drink toasts with the honeybee
Afterwards
We vomit together in the honeycomb

58.

Night-time
I leap up like a volleyball player
To spike the lamp's light within bounds of hell
And win for heaven the dream of man's survival

59.

I've gotten to the age of wandering in literature
At any certain page I never remain too long
In every story I pass through as a minor character

60.

How can you bear two kinds of loneliness in one room?
Your poems can't bear "sleeping with one who dreams of another"
But the unbearable is what we have to bear
People who don't write poetry instruct us on how to write poems

61.

When humans change their residence to other planets
We hope to have a few neighbors to say goodbye to

62.

Life no longer has innocent pleasures
All roads are joining hands to girdle the earth
Beside the sorrowful city is a bridge of happiness
When you break down on the bridge

Highway patrol radios the city for a tow truck
Such thoughtful service!
Get back on the road

63.
Lifting the foot leaves a print like opening a dictionary
Shoes must find the annotations of feet

64.
I want to operate recklessly
I'm not a genius
I'm a Twentieth Century machine
And I like playing with electricity

65.
War reaches its steel hook
Into mankind's uterus
And people who were born already
Have to get aborted once again

66.
Like a tungsten filament ready to break within the bulb
There's no telling how much longer
My timorous love can stay lit up

67.
If you want to borrow more sorrow from humanity you have to stand in
line
But to whom have the world's saddest sorrows been lent to?
Only the evader of debt knows for sure

68.
A nocturne played on strands of white hair
Makes us feel
The composer was seeking inspiration on loosened strings

69.
On the shore I pluck spray from breaking waves
And roast a meal of ocean to tide my belly over

70.
Even if rust claims all metals outside of us
In this world
God will still create guns and cannons in our hearts

71.
Just before you declare love for the first time
Your whole mouth starts feeling sweaty

72.

The boats of each particular nation
Don't hesitate to cast their languages wide
After all, fish needs no translation
To understand any human net

73.

In the territory of wine I've applied for political asylum
I've also applied for status as a drunk
A heap of cups will be my witnesses
And a wine jug will be my lawyer
On the lawyer's table
Grapes from all over the world are piled as evidence

74.

After half a month of constant gloomy skies
When sunbeams come down again
The little dog yelps to see such strangers
Just as when I'd gotten used to all that loneliness
Your sudden pleas for love hit me like gunshots
They felt like bullets that didn't know the road
Having traffic accidents in my body

75.

Between eternity and death
The trophy I bagged was a single sentence:
I still don't want to die

76.

The barbershop chases after my head
Large trees hurry out of the way
Radiance, having descended
Is washed away slowly with soap

77.

In darkness my shadow found its bed to sleep on
I walk toward the darkness
Like a child entering nursery school

78.

Before my eyes dripping with quicksilver tears
The mirror shows glass grown puffy from crying

79.

I don't care if the chips are pretty or not
I care how high a pile they make on the gambling table

80.

Two pieces of cloth cut from a flag
Patch my shirt worn at the elbows
The breeze in my sleeves has a carefree-beggar feeling

81.
When the tiptoeing rooster stretches my neck
Into a clarinet sunbeam
You don't even have to blow
Already the flock of birds is a dance of notes in air

82.
Since you want to make a prolific author of me
Why make me cap my pen and write a life?

83.
Every time I move house
It is like leaving the womb

84.
Between God and a dictator mankind finds
One foothold nearby and one foothold far away
Between them is a cradle
In which the baby preaches devotion to crying

85.
Gasping fish are wriggling together in a pond
Which bears jewelry holders of water-lily green
Raindrops on them pretend to be pearls
Nearby frogs croak out an endless sales pitch

86.
Saltiness of sweat running down
Wrinkles cooked up by life like noodles on the forehead
Will be savored by no one

87.
Two unrhymed lines are finally set down
On paper that must be cut in half
You and a knife and I

88.
An undersea whirlpool is a bath house for fish
A soapy sponge turns in the vortex

89.

That's pretty impressive
The Earth lives under billions of feet
But never feels like a slave

90.
Those little eyes were too big
With eyes closed you darted stitchlike kisses
We were once a pair of love-to-love missiles
The song in our hearts got blasted all through our bodies

91.
The cry of a bird that is pinched by the neck
Can be a special-sounding song in the forest
Record it and you'll have a best-selling tape

92.
When inspiration in someone's gaze becomes divine
Only love can be its worshipper

93.
The sky on every side is soaring
I hold an eagle tight against my chest
In the eagle's claws is a fish
And the waves in the fish's belly
Engulf a seaside village in my house

94.
Sharp edges of ice are my feathers
As long as Spring doesn't come
I can fly with ease back to my grave

95.
Facing the evening sun
Regretting I can't embrace the world behind me

96.
Anyplace I go, I do the simplest manual work
Tearing apart bird cages
In front of any mirror I repeat the most primitive motions
Preening my feathers

97.
Once again you charge into Cupid's arena
Ready to give lost love a beating

98.

Each time the chill of winter gives me a beating
I take comfort from listening
To the far-off wail of Spring's ambulance, driving in this direction

99.
Our hope lies in one fact
When nearly everything is left behind
Through the curtains we discover
The sun's steering wheel is near the window sill

100.
Poems are a timely planting of the written word
In the body's compost places

101.
We have such love
In each other's gaze our very hearts' shadows
Are cast outside our bodies

102.
Bones get weary of this suit of fleshly clothes
Guts and organs in the pockets are an encumbrance

103.
Civilization lies in the unfathomed cave beneath the coat
Each person is a candle that has to be extinguished

104.
God stays in church, he doesn't flaunt his presence elsewhere
But the reason is not just to save transportation costs

105.
The true wealth of a poet
Is pain that can't be given away

106.
An airplane carrying light of truth fled toward the border
And plunged earthward to become Spring

107.
An event that makes the collective face turn red
Only happens in back alleys of a nation's consciousness

108.
If the soil temperature of the land I love would rise half a degree
Go ahead and bury me alive

109.
Cold

So cold that sound freezes in air
 I raise a torch
 And warm a passage of Tchaichovsky
 Perhaps because of over-eagerness
 From the fire-warmed music
 Four swans without feathers fall into my lap

110.

Many people say if your thoughts see through the world's dust
 You can travel without looking at the road
 But I still get tripped up by my shoes

111.

After scrubbing itself on a washboard of soil-strata
 Water re-emerges from an artesian well
 Earth is always answering the call to action for environmental cleanup

112.

A dried-up tree composes melodies in wood
 While fire sings the lyrics

113.

As for love
 All I have is an uphill road
 To which I've grown accustomed, and so
 When going downward I tend to be top-heavy

114.

Wild wind steers Spring rain headlong into parched earth
 A noiseless hit-and-run flings green-plant relief into the air

115.

Don't crack open that walnut
 Let inwardness be forever inward
 Don't split the maturity of joined halves
 The kernel sleeps in the coffin of its life
 Quiet but not dying

116.

No matter what sort of flower you put in
 Water is finally left to the vase
 As for the ultimate meaning of feelings
 A container is all I need

117.

In my hand you are like a flower
 With this flower I give myself to you

118.

The scope of human life is quite small
No farther than obstetric ward to crematorium

119.

His coffin was attractive and fine in workmanship
When buried it stirred up a wave of grief

120.

You and I
A pair of dice that turned up one and two
Which adds up to three

121.

Humanity is the aftermath of humanity

122.

I have the pleasure of getting my heart ripped out
But still having it inside me-at least so far

123.

Springwater washes itself
And sees the tissue of itself regather out of springwater

124.

He is rational to the extreme
And has put his weeping behind him
If only there were a place there for tears

125.

In literature, this place of low fertility,
Most pregnant women have their bellies stuffed with pillows

126.

You say these days of drowning in sunlight have gone on too long
You propose to live in the manner of underground water
But I know
Every second of every minute someone turns on a faucet

127.

After being wounded many times
It occurs to him that he's no hero
Hence, fantasizing a distant future,
On the strength of bunions excavated from his feet
He squeezes into a museum

128.

Perhaps being away so long from the floor of my home

Is what makes me feel my feet
So even now no home stands on this floor

129.
Beloved,
Don't let someone else's frosting
Lay across your cake

130.
Leaves are musical notation for birds
Just now one of them sang a wrong note
Because two beetles were lying on one leaf

131.
My rain-splashed shoes are now drenched in sunlight
The road has nothing ahead but victory
I don't want to take the choicest bites too soon
So along the road I dally with the road
Maybe I'll poke along for another ten years

132.
Rows of curses on both sides of the street
Are like the trees that greenify our city

133.
The audience is holding rice bowls up to their mouths
Competing promises try to sound like menus
Whether or not they have ingredients

134.
Use a backhoe on the horizon to dig the sun up early

135.
The little dog runs happily into the garden
And waters the butterflies' rendezvous spot

136.
We cannot measure how far the sun is
From the earth's surface within our brain

137.
You ask about pets?
In the Twenty-Second Century
I'm going to keep a cageful of fighter planes

138.

A world map is a pattern sheet for sewing clothes
In order for mankind to wear them
We have to sew the pieces together

139.
If I could love everyone as I love my wife
I'd be a theoretical adulterer

140.
Our reach will forever exceed our grasp
Words are not written beyond paper

141.
My blood cries to your blood
Let's not circulate in a battlefield

142.
The piano has an eternal theme
Discussing the relationship of white and black

142
In this world
There are many who tarnish the happiness
That others cannot win until tomorrow

143.
When teeth and fingernails can be produced
By the foundry that casts parts for machines
Then moths in perfect formation
Will fly through wires toward an electric bulb

144.
I keep on writing to solidify the meaning of my desk
To toughen the sinews of words
And guarantee that brute desire will keep staining white paper

145.
I bought toothpaste containing diplomatic phrases
And a toothbrush that trains the hand in subtle manipulations
Three days later
I caught an infection of the heart

146.
Deep in my heart
I put my feet in God's shoes
And discovered they were lined with grass

147.
Between her neck and her waist

My glances got wound into two balls of yarn

148.

The basin is aimed at the leaky roof
A unwashed face is turned all night toward the sky
A bird in the cage in the corner
Replaces fallen feathers and combs them again
My heartbeat drips like a water clock
I sit in a lazy pose and perfect my insomnia

149.

All of my poems
Derive from the one that killed itself
Before it was completed

150.

Another weak point of humankind
Is failure to overcome its strong points

151.

Look at the teeth lined up in your mouth
Each of them an individual
They make up a collective
You are the one who feels their strength

152.

A poet is skilled at reading the daily news as poetry
But ashamed to read poetry as the daily news

153.

Pain is mankind's eternal fuel
And when petroleum dries up
Pain as energy source will keep our lives burning

154.

Suppose gloomy weather is when the sun in a tub of dark clouds
Is taking a bath
In that case
Living things get many chances to grow
From the sun's bad habit of slopping out water

155.

When facing the world
Your only right is to press the shutter
But you don't have to plant your feet before an ugly scene

156.

Silence is solid

157.

There are always writers who defy physical laws
Moving their lamps close to the bedstead of the sun

158.

Humanity is capable of touching itself deeply
Humanity cannot do any worse than humanity
Humanity is just a tool for manufacturing science
Humanity can't help making sounds
As it walks on past humanity

159.

This thing called life
From beginning to end of the ride
Is only the worm of history
Rapidly crawling past you

160.

Their feeling are sharp-edged
There is no sheath to contain them
This urge to wear underwear over street clothes
Takes a generation's self-respect beyond human self-respect

161.

Abundantly the world goes by
Up to now the rolls of film behind his eyes
Are still unexposed

162.

Poems on paper keep peering
At what the naked person is wearing inside

163.

Artists often lean their bodies
Over the edge of two extremes
From their mouths come finely crafted shouts for help

164.

Breaking up is a misery replete with vitamins

165.

If born in a nation that has two suns
You must first make sure which shadow to use

166.

I like freedom
But I feel that a cage is too bulky to wear

167.

The high heels that clicked in synch with his heartbeat
Have dwindled outside his window
He loosens his grip on two dinner rolls

168.

Think how many couples every night
Cross the boundaries of clothes and flesh
The world's territorial problems are nothing to this

169.

You jumped out of your pants
And into the grave
Your wish to rape death was not yet forty
I feel you could have waited a few years

170.

Before it closes the zipper of its purse
Life always pulls out a few worn-out stories

171.

She often opens the drawer
And checks whether her thinking has a change of underwear

172.

I have always believed that fire lives in wood
And it will only open the door to fire's knock

173.

By making a poker-face as hard as iron, he earned a huge fortune
Now his iron face has golden plating

174.

Maybe when aliens see snapshots of human beings
They will think these are actual creatures, run through an extruder

175.

Young people know the face is the "little black book" of youth
With their own hands they squeeze the addresses of unwanted pimples

176.

If many joys are crowded in one place
A careless move will bump against other joys

So it is each New Years Eve
 Humanity dances the globe a little flatter

177.

His anonymity
 Will be unearthed after hundreds of years as a relic
 Only then will he make a little news
 And so
 He waits beneath the road we often walk on

178.

A swan rests like a record needle on the lake's rippling surface
 I hear the steady measures of this music

179.

Barrenness in its fanatic way also shoots forth
 Flowers of incomparable beauty

180.

In this world
 Only birds' nests in scenic photographs are left with a sense of
 security
 I go farther and hide within unexposed film

181.

The dirt on his body has been transmitted to every province
 Causing a quick rise in the price of patriotic cologne
 It was not easy for him to become a housefly
 First he had to sacrifice his country as tainted meat

182.

We send down deep roots and work to charge our leaves with electricity
 We also turn on light bulbs of fruit on every limb
 Because of this
 Please bury us in the circuitry of earth

{Note: The Chinese word for "leaves" sounds like

"pages."}

183.

Whichever instruments you and I travel on
 We always arrive on each other's sheet music

184.

The opposition of nationality to rationality
 Is the prolonged struggle of ignorance among human beings
 Both sides have their own gods
 And in the confrontation of god with god
 Humans can only serve as weapons

185.

Though love is a stale topic
Still it has to be written
The consummate stage of staleness
Is a good time to run away
Which becomes the newest kind of elopement

186.

Dear one
Let us open a can of poetry
On the long road of life, a bit of fine food is important
Especially today as the 21st Century begins
Everyone says people of the Far East will live a new life now
This calls for something special, like birthday needles
Let's cook up some musical tapes!

187.

Dear wind
The blue sky vaulting above my hilltop
Stretches farther than eye can see
No going home sleepily for me
To fold up that blanket of clouds

188.

Music stirs the dancing crowd
Like a spoon stirring sugar in coffee
To take care of my inner dance floor
I gulp the spoon straight down

189.

You have to grow into a weapon
To lie in the grass and not be bitten by bugs

190.

On vacation away from the city
A rhino ducked into the Africa of my heart
But rifles of conventionality reminded me
How keenly they smell the value of aphrodisiac horns

191.

There are always a few poets who bid up the price
Of stock in the Twentieth Century Chinese language
With increased investments of loneliness and testosterone
I even hear them cheering for "Un-re- Qui-ted love."
Do you think the this "Henri" fellow will be Chairman in the 90s?

192.

Among many dependencies

In the end none are left to depend on
 Except the idea of depending on no one

193.

The sense of being betrayed
 Proves that what you feel good about giving
 Hasn't struck a responsive chord
 So find a different instrument to perform on!

194.

Why do I sing a perfect song into fragments?
 Because struggling life needs symmetry
 And why do I insist on this symmetry?
 Between myself and my fate there must be equality

195.

When the switch is turned off, even more darkness shines from the
 lampshade
 All the shadows from an earlier time now stand erect
 His thinking offers the world new bounty of meaning

196.

Your breath is within caressable bounds
 A shared undulation swells beneath our boat

197.

After two hours at the word processor
 Writing with hardly a pause for breath
 A key is pressed in error
 Obliterating the words in an instant
 Like ejaculation without feeling a climax

198.

For half a lifetime I've been hustling for action in my inner mind
 I still have not hustled up a girl

199.

Within the mind are plenty of bars that have no drinking limit
 When your head starts spinning, you want to crawl outside to vomit
 But the mind has clear regulations about dumping refuse:
 No persons containing liquor may be taken off the premises

200.

The present gets hauled in bit by bit
 The Twenty First Century must think I'm a prize catch
 I don't care what value others assign
 But it makes me as happy as can be

You and I get to die in the same net

201.

Flashes of brilliance may not need a passport
But like the awn-spurs of wheat, they need fertile ground

202.

I have backbone enough to take no notice of skin color
I'm not going home to let a dull surname squeeze me for bloodline
bribes
Besides, anything smaller than the Earth doesn't count as home
Which is why
I don't need the cash value of living at home

203.

This era chooses me as a relic for the future
But first on the whole sheet of stamps
I have to become
The only misprinted one

204.

I am thrown like a quilt on the bed
Wine is underneath it sleeping

205.

Birds have not passed on their egg-hatching technology to airplanes
Because airplanes still need humans to feed them

206.

The foot that lets fly with a downwind punt
Sends a smile on its way with a favorable wind
Since you kicked me away the weather has been so fine
I can't begin to feel hatred

207.

Like a light bulb in a socket that has a loose connection
Getting tightened and loosened again and again
While standing alone at the meeting place you let yourself feel
A mindless sense of abandonment

208.

Every morning I discover in my shoes
The footprint made by beautiful dreams that came to collect rent

209.

Combing with vigorous strokes
Until she has combed each hair into a thought

210.

Those who invent and study toothbrushes
Have no more teeth than anyone else

211.

How could I be content to keep on sleeping and never awake?
As always have to get up and check if I've had
A nocturnal emission toward this world

212.

What is a sure way to keep a rein on wine?
To pull the glass past my lips and quickly away?
When bottle and poem-filled head both show their empty bottoms
Harvest has once more overcome my rambunctious field of crops

213.

For two hours an anti-social wind was hitting me head on
Blowing my brilliant flashes toward a private corner of the night
But it did not happen in time
The card under my waistband showing a reproductive scene
Was forced back onto the table of the crowd

214.

He went through a second birth
And called the woman farthest from him Mother
Now he rests on a wooden post that fell near the door
Like a cicada holding its mouth against a rafter from long ago

215.

A true poet goes to various tanks of society
And when he catches words in his net
Releases them like fish to a river

216.

Looking skyward you let out a sigh
I hope the kind-hearted storm cloud
Can translate your breath into snow
Winter needs advertisements that drift down everywhere
To promote its far-reaching power of language

217.

To obey reality is more exhausting than to create reality

218.

After eating the meal
He carefully puts fishbones in the aquarium
And claims the gleam in his eyes

Can see the unharmed souls of fish

219.

No matter how rough the road
A person in bed can press out all the ups and downs
Using the iron of sleep

220.

Over the holidays
May I be led like a balloon in your hand
A balloon filled with hope blown in by your mouth

221.

Conscience is a murderer
That buries violent tendencies right here in my body
Which by now is bristling with gravestones
Occasionally I think it might be tomb-sweeping time
But sad to say, the thought merely occurs to me

222.

In a drawer within my body
A gun was set off by a careless rat
But only the cockroach stealing a look at my papers get blown away

223.

Winter beats the bushes for lingering protein
Giving us a Spring-like interest in nutrition

224.

The broken bridge in the scenic painting on the wall
Proves that history since then had to swim across the water

225.

Today is not a good time to have sex
Because tomorrow Spring and I
Will sleep together in the bed of the North

226.

Life in the end is a piece of carved wood
That once was grown by green leaves

227.

If I were a rat
I would undermine the world's walls
And sing how underground life goes in all directions

228.

Suddenly a nation's birds

Turn into yellow ribbons
 And are tied around its trees
 Whether the mission is invasion or aid
 Going home is the peace army's clearest battle cry

229.

Every day I want to catch a springtime by its tether
 And ride on it to every scenic spot in my body
 Every day I wake up very early
 To pull my bed away from the sidetrack of dreams

230.

In the future
 They will demand to be dug up and buried all over again
 Because the measurements of the coffin are not right
 Their claim will be based on the validity of human rights
 Eventually they will see to it
 That anything worn on the body has to be the right size

231.

Whether in victory or defeat
 The color of blood is always red
 Something has to be sliced away in any case
 Blood can win peace, but it is not peace

232.

Your father's sperm is so very idealistic, so well-brought-up
 Its swimming becomes the sorrow and romance of your poetic thought
 The ovaries** of Twentieth Century commerce are very far away
 But you ride poems toward a further place to get yourself conceived
 {"Ovaries of commerce" sounds like "trend of commerce" in
 Chinese.}

233.

Insomnia is a kind of labor
 I must earn enough to support the night with it

234.

Fanatic believers, even in silence
 Often shoot out a tooth or two

235.

Though our breakup made me swallow fifty sleeping pills
 She gives me fifty-one reasons to have insomnia

236.

I have discovered that held-back tears
 Gleam in the heart like foxfire

Letting me see who weeps in my heart
Letting me get half a meter away from myself

237.

In the magnetic field of envy, iron filings cannot help themselves
One person's affections cannot temper iron into plastic
Do you pepper other people's bread with your own mold spots?
I urge the crowd of hunger-striking compadres to taste cosmic fireworks

238.

She has given up makeup
To work her enticement from within
Her tricks of capture are crueller than a hunter's
She makes the hopeless, trapped one listen to songs of victory

239.

The autumn wind is wonderful
If you own a sun that plays on a swing through the trees

240.

Cotton casts a shadow that has more warmth than cotton
Giving warmth a definition that penetrates the body

241.

Since you have already crossed the river
Why tire yourself out
By turning to dismantle the bridge?
This variety of human exertion
Makes my physique feel bored

242.

Someday I will be able
To fold my legs up and put them away like trousers
So I don't want the sun
To step on my shadow and not let go

243.

Each time I turn my head
I stretch my collar out of shape
Because my home and I ran away from home together

244.

When selling shoes we don't set the price
According to how far they can walk
Just as we don't think a woman is more feminine
For having ten children

245.

Thick fog muffles my window in early morning
Not to conceal the starlet I slept with
As she slips away into the sky
But to let her feel she is in the Heavens already

246.

The carrying pole on the fathers' shoulder
Sags with all the hours before nightfall
From him I have bought more yesterdays
Than I can use in ten years

247.

Mother
In order to give birth to my spirit
Let your large grave be pregnant with my small grave

248.

Whenever you get on the bus, it's O.K.
Anyway I have bought two tickets for life's journey
In case you don't show up until the last stop
This ticket includes the next lifetime

249.

The paring knife
Can go ahead and rest now
Adam and Eve have already chomped the apple, peel and all
But they are underage, and so
They chew breath mints before they go home

251.

Suddenly we see each other
Already we are on the same road

252.

Dinosaurs were a tribe that committed mass suicide
They left empty the whole dictionary of space
For mankind to expound the meaning of existence

253.

Parents want to nurture every brick in the house
Into a memorial plaque

254.

Dear one
I have begun to revolve
Like a fan enticed by summer days
Since you want to see a fan sweat

255.

You are required to live with abundant commodities
The metropolis does not permit emptiness

256.

Due to regret
That man and the sun cannot change places
I owe my birth

257.

Many great artists who get along without women are thought to be
homosexual
I envy their creative success at a distance from women

258.

When you discover that eternity is only a concept
Only then does the desk in front of you have length

259.

Love between man and women
Is the classic example of fighting fire with fire

260.

Dear one
My kisses have nested on your face
Yesterday I did not come back because
Tonight I will return to the nest two times

261.

The silent one digests his own words in his belly
When he runs into an exclamation point
He takes a swig of wine

262.

Intellect gets a charge out of tinkering with secret plots
Giving certain people the courage to commit crimes

263.

The only vistas left for me are places I want to return to
On the back of the world map is a whole sheet of blankness
Where I dreamed God painted his dwelling place
But before I woke up he erased it
That's pretty stingy of you, God

264.

The supermarket where the blood of material objects circulates
Is a hospital for thought

265.

Don't feel bad Eve
About what happened with the apple
The apple was bitten by Spring while still inside the branch
But for beauty's sake it refused to grow a bite-mark on its skin

266.

Your words are like bullets inside of bullets
I have to lay down twice
To feel how sexy their meaning is

267.

Lowly things are too far from you
Your song does not carry there
You agonize in greatness
Plucking your silence upon the string of a nation

268.

My gaze gets tied in a knot
On his daughter's body
Then turns to him
His shirt button is undone

269.

In the newspaper the power of words makes me collide with the whole
world

270.

Fists grow up in stormy weather
To open their petals in peace

271.

Many times you and I caught the tether of Spring
And went riding to look at scenery all over our bodies

272.

The glue within sunlight
Seals Spring against my chest
It is a letter everyone can receive
And my heart is the stamp, lent by the sun

273.

Bird reporters in the grove
Forgot to input their dispatches into a wavelength
Luckily they remembered to write news on the ground with birdshit
Letting the grass puzzle out a passage of green nutrition

274.

Language has space to be infected with viruses of any intellectual kind

275.

The bones of two arms
The obstacles of flesh and sleeves
Are not among the things we get beyond
So humanity gets to be embraced

276.

The sun emits its own light
Why should I require the moon's companionship
To think fondly of my hometown

277.

Green spans of time grow from the Earth
Spring gets right up close to them, walking out its days
I am behind Winter
Keeping a steady pace, matching my steps to April's

278.

When the wine bottle holds out its neck to sing like a bird
My cup at least will at fall into a willow tree
That sways its scintillations to a here-and-now breeze

279.

Ah!
My woodpecker has caught up to me
While my coffin is still above ground
To eat the bugs that have sunk in like nails
Come out, you adorable beauties
Are you still after romantic news?

280.

Salt leaps up with the crashing wave
Sweat on the scrotum works hard for swimming sperm
On a deck that measures 98.6 degrees
Progeny are the last will and testament

281.

Many women remove themselves from their bodies
Disdainfully watching the men who attempt
To write intimacy into their "corpses"**)

**) (The word 'corpses' sounds like 'verses' in Chinese.)

282.

The people who walk past the edge of my bowl
But do not salivate
Can get their fill by looking from afar

These walking towers
Have also learned to go fishing by antenna

283.

"Who winds the Earth's mainspring?" I wonder each day
As I turn the doorknob

284.

When a single brick is pulled away
The surrounding ones remain
Through the brick-shaped space
The world, at mankind's back
Joins the thrill of peeking into a bathroom

285.

Hearing the cough of bread that has grown moldy
Wheatlings slow down the pace of their growing

286.

While rain is falling
He takes it on himself to hold an umbrella for the sun
In clear weather he devotes himself
To wearing a hat of idleness

287.

The Earth meshes into the gears of sunlight
Moonlight meshes with the Earth
Technology of human breath meshes with air
Such unstoppable mechanical principles
Make life grow old

288.

Flight that cuts keenly through the air
Does its cutting day by day
Slices out a distant view
The Buddha and Jesus reluctantly concede
This is the accomplishment of birds

289.

Hundreds of horses wait in the locomotive
Using their strength to hold down a nation with rails
The pride of the government makes me buy a ticket

290.

Dreams unspool my bedsheet from a cotton field
My bed is a raised planting bed
The sensation of being pressed against a bed by sunlight

Is one humans don't get used to, unless they are ill

291.

With maximum lust for melody
The poet goes to bed with a minimum of words

292.

Surrounded by members of the green leaf party
Flowers are elected to the highest positions
Spring sunlight casts a shrewd vote
For the riotous land

293.

Just as a moonbeam steps into the well
She raises up the bucket in her heart
Aiming itself at thirst contrived by love
Water loosens a moonlit cascade

294.

A tennis ball in the nest keeps the mother duck expectant

295.

Spread open a map where ocean waves are stored
Abstract experience surges over concrete words
The world sits facing them
In a chair that distrusts its own shoulders

296.

The two strings of business and love
Are set to the singing of others
With the Earth as a concert hall, no sense being picky

297.

Cannonballs have shaken the conscience of many writers
They still pull book after book from their bandages
Some books are on I.V.s, dripped through advertisements

298.

Assembling a world takes many roles
The beautician, turning from wounds of a nation's people
Coaxes forth the jowls of publishing tycoons

299.

Pillowing his head on the news, he sleeps
Having read a pile of newspapers before bedtime
His body is feverish with deals made in nightmares
And he kicks off the pages that covered him

300.

Perfume from flowers kidnaps the world's nose
In an airplane that will never land

301.

Clouds float beneath the feet
Song is of even lighter substance

302.

Advertisements are weapons too
Soldiers watch as shelves full of voluptuous stock
Obliterate their enemies peacefully

303.

A bleary day, and nearsighted on top of it
Farsightedness doesn't get reproduced
He loves women like he loves his creations
By peeling away, they nurture fruits of effort

304.

For five years in a row, the days have not been free of tears
Eyes have not been free of dampness
Give your body to the mattress of a valley
In the sixth year the springtimes are still bouncy

305.

Preserve the animals!
Preserve the stock market's herd of industrial horses
That often dash riders to the ground

306.

Fog so thick it builds a wall around lamplight
A good time to mix love-cement at your window

307.

From the corolla of a sunflower dig out seeds of light
After growing to full height may they illumine the sun

308.

Before a 90s backdrop, thinking back on dinosaurs
Hoping to embrace them into a brand new enemy

309.

The mistiness of a whole poetry book
Disappears in the writer's name
The writer disappears in the crowds of people
And the determined readers

Having gotten a prescription for a critic's glasses
Puzzle out line after line of their own vision

310.

The nation is outside
The tribe is outside; the city is outside
Sun and lamp are outside
On the inside only myself
Going inward only myself

311.

Book after book soars by up above
The sky that has leafed through countless wings
After reading the joy of a nest
Hatches pure blue expanses in people's eyes

312.

No matter what kind of explosive you are
Language can serve as the fuse

313.

Mountains and rivers also hit emotional lows
Submitting earthquake and volcano manuscripts to anywhere
And even versifying us into corpses
For which they may wipe a few crazy storms from their eyes
Just as I, by using a few extra exclamation marks
Make friends fall out of love with my poems for years at a time

314.

Two names that once were used to sharpen each others teeth
Are finally driven by hunger into the same kitchen
After this twist of fate, the question is who will wash dishes?

315.

The years are like a soap opera, washing away the intensity of love
But how can I bear to drain the intoxication in the bath water?

316.

While I lie beneath my cover in an alien land
Honey bees get insomnia from the native- language embroidery

317.

Since reality sold me out to poetry, it has become superfluous

318.

What a hard time people have

Besides nurturing a child, they try to nurture ideals
But what works for a child doesn't work with ideals
In the 20th Century, the more you nurture ideals, the smaller they grow

319.

The snowstorm must forever delve at the cracks of a warm door
Because mankind will never give the key to winter

320.

With utmost musicality of lust
The poet goes to bed with the fewest possible words

321.

I open the door to my home
Poetry greets me in my inner heart
Poetry in its rightful place
Is not displaced by any deconstruction

322.

His hands were blackened from groping in darkness
Since then the color black has not left his pen

323.

The poet's profession is life
Life is always part-time

324.

After all these years of being written down,
Words are not going to become paper
After all these incarnations, inspiration won't be reborn anywhere
But in the body of a romantic
And wouldn't you know it
Wine cannot become a bottle cork

325.

Literature outside of literature
Famous brand names have no content
The cover of advertising is the whole plot

326.

Watching sweat lick the salt of its livelihood
Adds to my isolated labor as a creative person

327.

A poet constantly seeks out ailments in the body of society
To prove he is a doctor put out of work by the cosmetic industry

328.

In units of length fit for myself and philosophy
I could back up ten more steps at least
But life only has five steps

329.

Members of the audience are holding rice bowls up to their lips
Whether you have something of substance or not
Your campaign promises have to sound like a menu

330.

It has nothing to do with spiritual faith
For the sake of temporary aims
Many people use incense smoke to kidnap the Buddha

331.

In crowd environments, people temper each other into steel
But too much steel causes steel prices to fall

332.

Time and again God is raped by the language of cults
But that's all right
At least once a month, poets receive new eggs of inspiration

333.

Many people crowd along the mass-production line of life
Because repetition is the nest of the weak

334.

The sun was postmarked overhead
And is being stuffed into the mailbox of the west
But mankind still cannot read the meaning of this love letter to the world

335.

Since the Cultural Revolution
There are still mouths that haven't brushed their teeth

336.

A wristwatch is the cruelest device for torturing time

337.

The whole world strikes a harmonica-playing pose
As it consumes the American music within a hamburger

338.

In this stage in life's road, we must accept the road's limitations
What we can do is change shoes often

339.

When born in a country that has two suns
The first thing is to make sure which shadow you'll use

340.

It is more trying to obey reality than to create reality

341.

Any kind of society can be the workout room for my inspiration
Until I buff myself into an exercise machine

342.

Driving along with festive Latin music playing on the radio
Makes me feel that a group of Mexicans are washing my car

343.

People marvel at songs the bird takes into its cage
They do not notice its song lacks the melody of flight

344.

No matter how young you are
In your mind you have to care for the old man named "thought"

345.

Heaven as edifice
Heaven as something wearable
Heaven as a message to be sent
Heaven might resemble a monument, an outfit or a letter
But evidence there is none

346.

There is a question I've thought about for years
When I close the window, the wind stands still in my room
Is wind that stands still called wind
Now at last I realize that this is the wind's question to mankind
If I stand still am I still myself?

347.

The place you want to be is called the weekend
The place you don't want to be is a nine-to-five job
Modern people use vehicles to shuttle between
Where they want to be and where they don't want to be

348.

Many people hide beneath free-flowing language
Like a gob of phlegm caught in the throat

349.

Whatever the distance whatever the height
He who flies should first make sure
Whether or not he has wings inside that can fly toward himself

350.

Introspection is a sign that the person is going to his own inner
restroom

351.

Owing to what someone told me
I use jealousy to reminisce about you
Standing on a footbridge erected by a tattletale
I keep adding poison to my own water

352.

In the forest of New York, I chase a beast called loneliness
I don't believe that being lonely makes this beast any less warm

353.

To live like a stone, many conditions must be met
Besides texture, color, temperature, and shape
You have to know more of the earth's historical secrets
Than mankind does, yet not speak of them

354.

Mankind is mankind's pandemic illness, no need for a doctor
Eternity is the other shore of eternity, no need for a bridge

355.

Winnings gained by good-heartedness
Continue to serve as my daily necessities
And in all the lungs and kidneys
And other essential parts
God's industry still operates

356.

My pillow is suspended over a bedless height
Riding a dream-nest above a chopped-down tree

357.

In this universe
Only the little brain of planet earth still worries itself
Large brains don't bother using thought to show they exist
And so
In the mode of thought we can't find aliens who don't use thought

358.

Some people's hearts are so dark

They can't sleep unless
They turn their neighbors' lights out

359.

It's not that the pond is too small
It's the overlarge net of politics
That makes me swim back into my bodily size

360.

Short or tall, we compare our endowments with our own kind
In this way we continue to make the world small

361.

We often sense the heart chasing out from its atrium
For years it runs in the direction of loss, never tiring

362.

Each time the road in a novel
Flashes the image of a country girl
I always feel myself shoulder a hoe

363.

Can a deal be made, Once and for all
To sell the infinite blue of the sky?
The pigment merchant has never dared to consider
The ultimate meaning of wealth

364.

Please tie the shoelaces of the world securely
Loosen the throat of your footsteps and sing your way down the road

365.

Dreams are the only forest that mankind cannot clearcut

366.

In the bed of my coffin my insomnia will continue

367.

People who once reaped a good harvest
Now sit brooding on a heap of straw
Hoping it will sprout wings

368.

With my face toward the sunset I feel regret
I cannot open my bosom to the world

369.

A poem peeks from its sheet of paper
At what the naked person is wearing inside

370.

I count myself lucky
Literary writing and athletics are both
Exertions of mind and body
But there is no drug screening for the former

371.

At a road-crossing with no future, I count the words in my bag
Are there enough to make a poem that can capture desolation?

372.

Across paper made of water
Scales of inspiration
Write undulating flashes of a fish's body

373.

Other genres can move out from my body like furniture
Only poetry is one with the room

374.

My imagination is drawn to the thought of "each other"
Two bottles that drink from each other
Can never be drunk dry

375.

Again I forget the lines I have not written
Because I haven't gotten over being the poet I was

376.

Regulated verse belongs to the literary footbinding period

377.

Although he is still single
He has done a good job as a gardener
Every "she" he has been with
Has bloomed into someone else's rose

378.

A poem is like a bright-colored butterfly
I chase after it
And whether I catch it or not
At least I follow it to springtime's garden

379.

Each time I reach for my medical almanac I am reminded
Since your stories performed their surgery on me
I've never been off the I. V. of written words

380.

How many words does it take to impregnate a poem?
Professional childbirth is a drag, just like nine-to-five
Tragedies of stillbirth have made me a graveyard
But years ago I took up the hobby of grave robbing

381.

Culture is a kind of plant absorbing nature's nutrients
At the root are clean simple poems
Would chemical fertilizer work
The forest's answer is always No!

382.

A poet needs to have the knack
To kick a dewdrop from a blade of grass
Like a soccer ball onto the tip of his pen

383.

The drinker within poetry will someday drain
The last drop of alcohol from my body

384.

People like to use a hero's image
To prop up their homeland
This is like filling a swimming pool
With water that fish have swum through
To make people's swimming nice and smooth

385.

It won't dull your sickle to wait a few years, he says
Saying this he curves his arm around my shoulders
I pillow my head on his blade

386.

Some people's hearts are so dark
They can't sleep unless they turn their neighbor's light out

387.

Would you believe that space aliens have five sexes?
It takes five of them to fall in love
Five to have a child together
Damn! An alien's love life sure is tough

388.

It's the current style of married life
Two sunflowers with lowered heads
Each nibbling on their own seeds

389.
You mobilize every drop of sweat from your feet
Soaking into my road like a spring shower

390.
Clean land is dozens of kilometers away from us
On top of that, the mode of transportation we have invented
Cannot drive us there

391.
History thinks in terms of locomotives
It seems to have no use for any passenger car

392.
Garbage creeps to toward the city's outskirts
With big gulps it pushes back the edge of grass
The lyric, pastoral poems of my time
Cannot help filling up with howls

393.
Not just China and America
The distance between countries is only
From one glass to another
And this distance can disappear in the sound
Of glasses touching

394.
I don't want to ride a sickbed into the 21st Century
But the 21st Century is riding into my body on a sickbed of its own

395.
With all the dark clouds of the world as my witness
I was born to hold my own umbrell

396.
The whip of helplessness often lashes a person to success
Out of the loneliness of separation, he makes a child of his calling,
The child he never had

397.
The road is rough as it is
Let's not have a fight between feet and shoes

398.

When unemployment reduces life to ashes
At last the spirit finds employment
399.

Children are growing teeth
So they can grit their teeth and face life
Gritting teeth is healthier than brushing them

400.

Suicide is the only door
That gets locked from the other side
Using the human body as a key

401.

My nearsightedness must wear tears to see life clearly

402.

If it can't be rewritten it's not history
What can be rewritten
Has probably been rewritten many times

403.

Another name for pollution is lack of personality
People who lack personality cause pollution

404.

Compared to Western medicine
Chinese herbs taste bitter
Which proves that Chinese people have
A healthier understanding of bitterness

405.

On the busy streets I use my car to go strolling
Right foot--accelerate; left foot-brake

406.

I asked you to help me with a project
But you have been so slow
Even the tears I shed over this
Trickle down with unusual slowness

407.

If I dig a tunnel in time where I can think fondly of you
Would you put a mousetrap at the end?

408.

Old age saves a lot of effort
Saliva drools just as fluidly as language

409.

In this world filled with degraded encounters
You stay clean-cut by learning to live without encounters

410.

In babies the mainspring of time is fully wound
We are miserable, having no way to rewind it

411.

Life lines up at the furnace grate
Waiting to buy its own ashes

412.

I come in the guise of a woodpecker
To suck out worms that look like coffin nails
Come out, my beautiful one
What more romantic news do you need?

413.

In a wintry field she is a flower inside a tree-limb
She waits in vain for an elevator to the branch-tip
And presses her body into the wood
Wood in this season has a hidden fragrance
Perfect for making my furniture

414.

She has left me and gone to a deeper place in my heart
So deep a place even I have not gone there

415.

May you taste the joy of water from two glasses
That pour into one glass and overflow together

416.

Suddenly I see you
Already we are on the same road

417.

Go ahead and intermarry
Now that appliances have no national boundary
Why should the sexes have one?
Wherever you go, electricity proliferates in the human plug and socket

418.

Your smile turns up its wings
My face would make a good nesting place

419.

We are a bolt of cloth that was woven along the road

And in the fabric of our marriage
The distance grows less between cotton field and clothes

420.

We are fond of each other but do not monopolize
We are a scenic destination for each other
It's alright to go there a few times a month
Not going for a few years is alright too

421.

Where do tears come from
If not from love that is put through the wringer

422.

We can only meet
We cannot choose the way we meet

423.

With gasping breaths I lean against the book cover of marriage
Your urgent love skimmed through me and quickly
Turned me into memoirs

424.

For many men a love affair is just a game of
Changing bodily size

425.

God issued me a man's passport
Which means a woman is needed
To approve my entry and exit visas

426.

She and I are a poem that must be read
Using each others' bodies

427.

A hole was blasted in the sky with fireworks
And down fell many stories of big drinkers
Causing a drop in our reading ability

428.

If you put aside endless discussion about what and whom it's for
Sweat always gives an unerring direction to labor

429.

After plunging into themselves
Many people find they cannot swim

430.

When crossing a riverbed in weather insufficiently cold
Thin ice cannot keep its collectivity intact
Ladies and gentlemen
Look out for yourselves

431.

Comrades
When sharing a bed with capitalism
Do not forget your condoms

432.

Pain has its origin in the individual
Collective pain is a field of acquired knowledge

433.

In the dynastic succession of necessities for daily life
Common folk always vote to be common

434.

How many strong ones have bashed themselves senseless
Against the prison wall of huddled weaklings
Then awoken to become one of the bricks

435.

How he wished to be a god
But in the end, only half a step from divinity
He got paralyzed into a stub of burnt incense

436.

Many people say an outlook that sees through the world's red dust
Will allow you to walk down the road with eyes closed
But I still get tripped up by my shoes

437.

Love that has not provided a temporary residence for tears
Will never get a visa to drift away from the body

438.

Not even a bachelor escapes the fate of being hunted
Love is the summation of all the world's traps

439.

To save yourself requires no license
The question is, what to do once you are saved?

440.

Business dealings between capitalism and socialism
Prove that both sides, for the sake of monetary offspring,
Can overcome the repulsion of sleeping together

441.

When you discover that eternity is only an idea
The desk in front of you will finally have length

442.

A cage with a bird hopping inside
Hangs in the forest
A tribe with a man hopping inside
Hangs in the state
The cosmos with an earth hopping inside
Hangs in the boundless unknown

443.

Modern beasts also wear shoes
Which makes hunting more and more difficult

444.

On history's staircase we slipped on a gob of capitalist phlegm
Slogans of world harmony got gulped back into our lungs

445.

There are situations in life that require you to slow down
For instance, when the road is going slower than you are

446.

All missed appointments that belong to the past are on time

447.

When money raises its wall in the face of life
You have to pocket a few bricks in order to dig through

448.

Her glances are sprinkled all over my brand-name overcoat
Even after I hang it up, they stay with it on the coat rack

449.

Don't think money does everything
To get the full use out of life, you must put your body into it

450.

There are new scientific inventions every day

But the most popular mode of transportation is still shoes

451.

One feature of city life: you see more advertisements than familiar faces

452.

Pick up the receiver of literary ideals
For money's sake the whole world's line is busy

453.

When silverware and chopsticks meet on the same table
Japanese people are first to prove
Who is better at using the other side's resources

454.

Mankind constantly adds to the number of material nouns
So verbs are getting overtaxed
After the daily rush to wait upon human consumption
Verbs don't have strength wait upon spiritual nouns

455.

If you manage to sell out everything
Instead of the name on your tombstone
You can carve a sum of money

456.

Diseases of modern communication are getting more frequent
One is often on the telephone line to oneself

457.

Confronted with the mania of material want
Only self-restraint can stop a body from occupying several beds
But self-restraint keeps withdrawing
Leaving personality in the hands of name-brand clothes

458.

To most people, the peak of success is finding a job to resign yourself to
You count out days like dollar bills
Then count out the bills you earn in return

459.

Any one person in this world is superfluous
But according to the laws of economics
Only surplus money can be invested

460.

My footprints melt together with the snow
They enter roots of a tree, then climb to its flowers
A bee lands on one of my footprints
And translates the road I traveled into honey

461.

Autumn is the season for paying salaries
Fallen leaves are wages of the soil

462.

The sunflower gathers a thousand wishes into one circle

463.

When a whole treeful of leaves makes way for new growth
The spirit of sacrifice lying all over the ground
Makes the vault of sky higher

464.

A nest is life that birds impose upon a tree

465.

A head-on wind is combing my hair
For beauty's sake
I do not look back

466.

White clouds like bandages stripped from my body
Float blessedly into the distance

467.

Many people, after the lock of life closes upon them
Are presented with the key of ideals----a key bigger than the lock
itself

468.

Campaign expenses of democracy are getting higher
The outstretched hand of a politician
Cannot make a fist unless it is full of bills

469.

A native language must release the nation full of people imprisoned by
its weight
Before it becomes a language that can understand humanity

470.

If not for ostentatious emperors
How many tourist spots would there be in China?

471.

He suffered a lot of injustice
Even now if he sits in the past for half an hour
He catches cold and runs a fever

472.

Looking for the perforated ulcer of corruption
The pain-racked government attempts to make thirteen stitches
Before its last supper

473.

A great robber lives to steal other people's hearts
He won't give up until he is president

474.

Having an affair with a country is too much trouble
Just the finger of a country is as thick as a province
Who can afford an engagement ring like that?

475.

Underground literature comes from roots adrift within the soil

476.

Inter-party conflict must elevate the reason for a gang fight
To national or racial status
Because that is where convalescents get the best treatment

477.

After an exchange of halitosis
Diplomats confirm their countries' love for each other
Hypocrisy is the eighth wonder of the world

478.

In the opposition between East and West
Human rights are the newest weapon
As the fight rages, people dive into trenches on the playing field of
the market

479.

It's good to come home
You can put on the slippers of weariness and tread them underfoot

480.

Lovely germs spread across your face
Waiting to multiply into a smile

Ah, my daughter
Such eternal germs
Guarantee that my son-in-law will be a outstanding patient

481.
The cruelty of a festival
Emotions often flare without our knowing why

482.
Dear child
All the trouble your father encountered
Before you were born
Has been waiting for your infant sobs

483.
Babies are no more idle than adults
Their work is to grow
The aim of their work is far away
As far away as death

484.
Can you hear my footsteps coming toward you from this card?
Guess if I'm wearing shoes or slippers
Or not wearing anything?

485.
Some people stay carefree, whatever the state of their wallet
A mere glass of water, savored slowly,
For them is the 100-proof beverage of life

486.
How to live more naturally?
I think of the earth's distance from the sun
If it had been 100,000 kilometers more or less, homo sapiens wouldn't
exist
So being random is the natural way to live

487.
The safest way to walk is pressed against a wall
Until you become part of the wall
But the difficulty of choosing still exists
Either the inside wall or the outside wall?

488.
Modern people greatly admire the bloodline of Coca Cola

Many even hope their children will be born in cans
To slake their thirst for illustrious offspring

489.

With each sigh the book of sighs gets thicker
Many people are reading "repetition"

490.

Plunging into the ocean of applause, she glided through the waves for
over ten years
Though the water is now dry
She makes the moves of a swimmer while walking s to the vegetable
market

491.

Silence has too many implications
So for simplicity's sake, we speak

492.

In most works of literary criticism
I read one of two different styles
The critic has either caught the country's best or worst cold

493.

An elegy of blood issues forth from heart muscle
The human body is the most enduring church

494.

To spit up a flower instead of phlegm
Takes smoke from a certain number of cigarettes
To start the throat thinking

495.

I was close to saying something, but it escaped me
I wish I knew how far the thing I forgot is
That way I'd know whether to walk or drive there

496.

To bite into the cake of the future
Use tomorrow's toothbrush to understand the inner strength of teeth
And make sure your incisors maintain 20/20 vision

497.

Mankind is planet earth's prime commodity
Unfortunately, the chances for export are exceedingly small

498.

As soon as we are born, we face a language

That has been around for quite a while
 And likes to use our thoughts for playthings
 If we don't think, language will have nothing to play with
 So we must think until language can play so well
 That it will turn old playthings into new ones

499.

Because there are no roots under your feet
 Let your wardrobe pass for flower petals
 My countrymen who go overseas!

500.

Plants all go from flower to fruit
 Only humans can stop at the flower

501.

Please be cautious
 If any of you, with your 21st Century flesh,
 Wish to cling to and nurse a 5000-year-old skeleton
 Avoid too much strenuous exercise

502.

Now that life has planted sunlight in my body
 On the tips of these rays, I want to form gloomy fruits
 I refuse to repeat sunlight on top of sunlight

503.

He brings out everything to receive me
 As if his refrigerator had broken down
 Or maybe I am his refrigerator
 And he thinks he is storing edibles for the future

504.

The patient's pet-loving complex is beyond treatment
 He has the capacity to accept the running dogs of all dictators

505.

As a robber he is a big talker
 He claims he will steal the stars from a five-star hotel
 And leave only the night sky behind

506.

After the flesh takes a dinner tray to the brain
 It pulls the ladder away, so thought cannot climb down

507.

Every day, plant seeds of antagonism for exercise
 A sure way to keep off excess weight

508.

Envy the rat pack's ability to think with their tails
The television grew an antenna

509.

Propagandists for birth control
Have come up with the final slogan
The sun itself is an only child

510.

So much filth is on the road of life
And I must take my shadow along with me
So I ask you, sunlight
Don't squeeze my shadow under your foot

511.

People who drink jasmine tea
Fail to notice how even jasmine flowers swirling in their brew
Wait expectantly for scuba-diving honeybees

512.

Imagine what it's like to be an unfertilized egg
Like being a person but not alive

513.

It could only have happened at a moment of great surprise
I raised my head so suddenly I broke a housefly's wing

514.

On the back side of the world map is a blank space
This is the inheritance that God left to artists

515.

Lying on a tatami, I slept with a bevy of South

516.

Seize this time while history repairs its cages
To be as free as a bird

517.

A person who commits suicide has gone to another world
If he then commits suicide a second time, he can come back again
Until now, we haven't seen anyone come back

Which proves that problems in the other world can be solved without suicide

518.

Each raindrop comes down with a posture all its own
I can't keep track how many styles of falling people have

519.

Silence is also a way to protect the environment
Swallowed saliva helps the circulation of salt

520.

The wall of Western languages
Stands on all sides of my writings
At best, my writings can be translated into bricks

521.

A scenic trip within the human body was interrupted
Because a car outside the body was not on time
But missing dinner
Lets a landscape of hunger form inside the body

522.

To rescue someone is a course in the banquet of life
There are many kinds of food he has not tasted
The dish he has become still waits for a rescuer's chopsticks

523.

Chewing courage to pieces in the mouth is also a dietary habit

524.

A fan who was crazy about soccer
Dreamed that his wife gave birth
To a soccer ball who called him Daddy

525.

Vegetarianism means forcing your meat-body not to eat meat

526.

The humor of an obscene remark
Implies that a blackbird's flight pollutes the sky

527.

Why does he lay such heavy sighs upon ordinary things?
Even his shit objects to a narrow toilet pipe

528.

After human beings made sweet things

To be their standard of happiness
The ocean was wept by salt

529.
Tedium of language leads the way to all kinds of tedium
Life refuels it continually

530.
When love no longer penetrates to the bone
The meat of your body starts eating meat for meat's sake

531.
You and I have feelings for each other
Like an egg white and an egg yolk
The problem is
Where is the shell?

532.
Truth is the adjective for truth
As for the noun, the search must continue

533.
Only war, by continuing the slaughter of people by people
Maintains the church's function of praying for peace

534.
Just because you spring someone out of jail
That doesn't mean you can release the prisoners
Imprisoned by a nation inside their mother tongue

535.
Remember my appetite
In this era when money seems omnipotent
There is still a loving tongue
That has never tasted poverty

536.
Only sorrow brings you back to yourself
Which proves that happiness must turn a corner in our hearts

537.
When the noun that I am becomes a verb
The ravishing encounter between you and me
Forces adjectives to get involved
As the verb I am makes love to its noun

538.

Happiness, like candy, is helpless
It has no choice but to be sweet

539.

The mother tongue is an organ of the body
More than that, it is spokesman for all other organs

540.

Dreams have finally infected his daylight hours
They have caused a pillow to grow from his shoulders
With the help of this pillow he muses in the office
His American dream uses office hours instead of sleep

541.

A song about chrysanthemums
Does not prove you understand the footsteps
Of autumn's advent into our lives
Knowing how to cook bamboo shoots
Does not prove you will rise in life
With proportion like the joints of a bamboo plant

542.

Something unprecedented happened to war
A convoy of trucks broke down within its body
The breath of war has conked out
But a squad of terrorists has bundles of explosives
Which they strap onto their bodies like extra lungs

543.

There are all kinds of realities
Racial, sexual, familial, national, global
Even lies aren't as deceitful as the truth of reality

544.

Medicine is a philosophy of the body
Doctors learn to think in terms of the body
So the patient's body can recover painless thinking

545.

A casino lets itself be played with like a whore
And with similar readiness dissipates a gambler's desire

546.

I constantly need to remodel my inner prison
Because politics and government have set up offices there

547.

I direct the blueprint of cancer to remodel my body's tomorrow

While the 21st century uses rust to remodel outdated machines

548.

You have entered into my bones
Like solidified fire at the center of a reinforcing rod

549.

As the colony fades away, the colonization of language has just begun

550.

Since you like my poems
Don't bypass them to talk business with me
Poems should get the commission they have earned

551.

Everyone has secrets other people don't want to share
So that part is what truly belongs to you

552.

If you and your ideals go on the road together
Many places you pass will be called Weariness

553.

How fine it would be to land on sunlit branches
But the sadness of being perchless lands upon me in flight

554.

Morality is a collective composed of assembled mirrors
With its power, humans force themselves to put on makeup

555.

Two names that once were used to sharpen
each others teeth
Are finally driven by hunger into the same kitchen
After this twist of fate, the question is who will
wash dishes?

556.

The years are like a soap opera, washing away the
intensity of love
But how can I bear to drain the intoxication in
the bath water?

557.

While I lie beneath my cover in an alien land
Honey bees get insomnia from the native- language
embroidery

558.

Since reality sold me out to poetry, it has become
superfluous

559.

What a hard time people have
Besides nurturing a child, they try to nurture ideals
But what works for a child doesn't work with ideals
In the 20th Century, the more you nurture ideals,
the smaller they grow

560.

The snowstorm must forever delve at the cracks of
a warm door
Because mankind will never give the key to winter

561.

With utmost musicality of lust
The poet goes to bed with the fewest possible
words

562.

I open the door to my home
Poetry greets me in my inner heart
Poetry in its rightful place
Is not displaced by any deconstruction

563.

His hands were blackened from groping in darkness
Since then the color black has not left his pen

564.

The poet's profession is life
Life is always part-time

565.

After all these years of being written down,
Words are not going to become paper
After all these incarnations, inspiration won't be
reborn anywhere
But in the body of a romantic
And wouldn't you know it
Wine cannot become a bottle cork

566.

Literature outside of literature
Famous brand names have no content
The cover of advertising is the whole plot

567.

Watching sweat lick the salt of its livelihood
Adds to my isolated labor as a creative person

568.

A poet constantly seeks out ailments in the body
of society
To prove he is a doctor put out of work by the
cosmetic industry

569.

In units of length fit for myself and philosophy
I could back up ten more steps at least
But life only has five steps

570.

Members of the audience are holding rice bowls up
To their lips
Whether you have something of substance or not
Your campaign promises have to sound like a menu

571.

It has nothing to do with spiritual faith
For the sake of temporary aims
Many people use incense smoke to kidnap the Buddha

572.

In crowded environments, people temper each other
into steel
But too much steel causes steel prices to fall

573.

Time and again God is raped by the language of
cults
But that's all right
At least once a month, poets receive new eggs of
inspiration

574.

Many people crowd along the mass-production line
of life
Because repetition is the nest of the weak

575.

The sun was postmarked overhead
And is being stuffed into the mailbox of the west
But mankind still cannot read the meaning of this

love letter to the world

576.

Since the Cultural Revolution

There are still mouths that haven't brushed their
teeth

577.

A wristwatch is the cruelest device for torturing
time

578.

The whole world strikes a harmonica-playing pose
As it consumes the American music within a
hamburger

579.

In this stage in life's road, we must accept the
road's limitations
What we can do is change shoes often

580.

When born in a country that has two suns
The first thing is to make sure which shadow
you'll use

581.

It is more trying to obey reality than to create
reality

582.

Any kind of society can be the workout room for my
inspiration
Until I buff myself into an exercise machine

583.

Driving along with festive Latin music playing on
the radio
Makes me feel that a group of Mexicans are washing
my car

584.

People marvel at songs the bird takes into its
cage
They do not notice its song lacks the melody of
flight

585.

No matter how young you are
 In your mind you have to care for the old man
 Named "thought"

586.

Heaven as edifice
 Heaven as something wearable
 Heaven as a message to be sent
 Heaven might resemble a monument, an outfit or a letter
 But evidence there is none

**

Give It Back to Me

Please give me back the door without a lock
 even without a room still I want it back please!
 Please give me back the rooster that awakens me
 in the morning
 even if you have finished eating it still I want the
 bones back please!
 Please give me back the shepherd's song
 from the side of the hill
 even if it is on tape still I want it
 back please!
 Please give me back a relationship to my
 brothers and sisters
 even if it lasts no more than a year, still I want it
 back please!
 Please give me back the space of love
 even if you've worn it out, still I want it
 back please!
 Please give me back the whole of the globe
 even divided into thousands of nations
 hundreds of thousands of villages
 still I want it back please!

Translated by John Chow

ETERNAL LOVE SONG---VENUS DE MILO

She was pushed down into the water
 Pressed upon the aged water plants
 The fish swam about baffled, just like punctuation marks
 She and her story
 Were scooped up after silently sleeping for centuries

Today
 I have sat for hours reflecting by the dining table
 A small appetite groans inside a large plate
 I clearly recall here
 I once forcefully pushed off her embrace
 She left her broken arms around my neck
 There is still no way to put them back

Translated by Glenn Steinem

*

Warm Inspiration

In my body there are kefuls of Chinese beer sloshing
 Words like pretty goldfish stir up ripples of affection
 For the moment I can't bear to cast a poet's net
 And so
 I knock back a few before the fishing starts
 By the time the doctor uses an X-ray to tell me
 The goldfish in my body
 Have paired off into romantic lines
 It's all I can do to lift my eyelids,
 and imagine the doctor's mask is tomorrow's net
 Because I am drunk on the operating table

Dear doctor

Please remove the beer from my body
 Export it to everywhere in the world
 Or simply pack me up in a crate and ship me off
 However
 Dear doctor
 What I send back will not be foreign exchange, it will be poems
 It will be infinitely appreciating stocks of feeling in
 poems
 The future value of bonds from the Love Reserve Bank
 Ah
 Dear doctor
 How many poets are on your operating table
 How many poems is your salary each month?

Translated by Denis Mair

*

THOSE GODDAMN SPACEMEN

The ones who plant snow on the clouds
 And sift it down to protect the winter wheat
 Are spacemen
 Before the snow sifts down
 It is already covered with their footprints
 This exciting discovery
 Is passed down only in our dreams
 It's terrible how our earth
 Is often regarded as an anthill
 As the spacemen travel by it in dreams

The real reason they plant snow in the clouds
 Is to fatten the eaters of winter wheat on earth---that's us
 And then harvest our spirits after death
 That must be their medicinal tonic
 And so
 Being a nutrient for them
 It is not important if we know it or not

Just like the winter wheat toward us
 Gosh
 Those goddamn spacemen are just too much!

*

EXTRA-MUNDANE

Set the folds of my dress swinging
 Swing off the print and the color
 Swing it into a plain piece of cloth
 Swing the cloth into cotton
 And return the cloth to you
 My beloved land

Set my head swinging
 Swing off cancerous philosophy
 Swing out a big empty space
 Swing it above the clouds
 Return the clouds to you
 My beloved sky

Translation. Denis Mair

*

A DOG POEM FOR TOMORROW

Tomorrow
 A dog that only goes wild after death
 Clamps the world in its jaws and won't let go
 Poems of tomorrow have no answer either
 Clamping their own crimes in their jaws

Tomorrow
 Those dogs who lived long enough in the city
 Taking along apartment buildings softened by furniture
 Will charge into the pregnancy of an orchard

And clamp jaws on an unborn infant's original face

Tomorrow

Dog teeth will have become piano keys

Only bone-crunching music will rate popularity in this world

Tomorrow

Suffering will still be re-published sheet music

So machines in printing plants will still be best at singing

Ah, tomorrow

The home-guarding talents of tomorrow's dogs will be snipped out at the hospital

A homeless world with dogs vacationing everywhere

Puffs of clouds like dogs will often float by in the sky

Some airplane flying artists

Will paint young women clouds in the sky

Tomorrow's dogs tracking June mornings and December afternoons

Will still expose their bored tongues

But swallow even dirtier things to cut down reproduction

Tomorrow's dogs make a science of freakishly prolonged life

Tomorrow's doghouses can be hung any old place like a shirt

But tomorrow's dogskins will be shed by dogs

Tomorrow a dog of an orbital satellite

Having shaken off its tail wagged to cinders

Will go off into space to be human

Ah, tomorrow

I too will have such a tomorrow

So take advantage of today

Before the sky, as wide as the solar system, is chained

like a dog

Holding my shadow in my mouth

From where sunlight is

From out of lamplight

And even from enchanting moonlight

I have come out

I have come out forever.

Translation Denis Mair

*

Central Park Suite

Along with her baby carriage, a mother pushes spring
into Central Park.

I regret the aging of my windpipe
When, as if laughing, the baby starts crying for me.

Apparently fish would rather sample the baits of men
Than to rest still under layers of ice.
When boats sweep their oars like wings
Stirring up waves of spring in an expanse of water,
Then I count myself a principal character.

A camera takes a picture of another, as a signal of
spring.
It is mesmerizing, this season when cameras bloom
like flowers.
Yet behind the eyes of unlucky friends
No film is placed as yet.

The trees open all their palms of green.
The superimposed sun, more professional than a
palm-reader, says to the leaves:
“In spring, birds no longer stay in their nests;
With them, you are going to fly off the branches.”

The dog walkers, as happy as if walking spring,
With their dogs are looking down life's tracks of
history.
I am walking myself.
This friendship between the two selves reminds me
Of what long ago happened between sun and earth,
What happened between Adam and Eve.
Now
That Earth is preoccupied with reproducing,
Too narrow I find my bed in the city.
So I lay my pillow on the park's meadow.
The transient feeling of abandon
Like poplar floss tries hard to leap
Into the dirty water beyond the park.
Oh! When spring possesses us,
When we do not possess spring,

Spring is a tyrant!

By my sighs, I am translating the breaths of those
before me.

On the soil where flowers bloom in memoria
With words of stone I am translating the existence of
those before me.

In this central park of the world there must be a
cemetery.

At least,
With the bells of April, I am translating the soul of a
crushed squirrel.

The civilization of the Twentieth Century has its pants
pulled down by AIDS.

This all evolves out of
The collision we have, as soon as we step out, with
the embrace of spring.

That naked feeling extends from the pelvis to the
larynx.

Drowsily we say to spring: "Spring has come!"
Even as we speak,
Our minds are filled with inspiration colored green
In which fluttering birds, like flying punctuation,
Imbue the same words with meanings of different
shades.

When we comprehend
We go into narrow alleys of spring
Where happen too many stories of collision.
Spring is sprinkling various germs on the street
numbers of love.

Oh! Hospitals!
Please give the Twentieth Century a few more
sterilizing kisses.

Footsteps of lizards are waking up boulders.
Clouds display the softness of spring.
Squirrels extend the ground to the tips of tree branches.
Earth takes off its coat of autumnal leaves.

After the debate between sun and the north wind,
 The warm breath that lingers in the air
 And
 The cold face of a park attendant
 Are chasing me from what was claimed to be
 protected turf.
 But
 He lets stay on the grass flocks of flirting birds.

Spring.
 Carrying out the order of the sun
 Spring lets glimpse the dream
 That can make mothers of all girls.
 Spring.
 Spring is prepared to occupy all the basements
 Of the city and the world.
 Among them,
 Those in our bodies.
 Oh! Spring!
 Spring says sunshine must support
 The interiors of this earth,
 The interiors of men
 And the perimeter of bee-hives.
 Spring.
 Spring cannot be fathomed.
 In spring, Earth
 Brilliantly illuminates the sun and the universe.

Translated by John Chow

*

EPIC

When we wash we aren't washed clean
 (Holy water or no holy water)
 Who cares about pollution?
 Today's weather is not bad

The season knows how to dress itself up
Naturally it is skilled at disrobing!
New streets promenade past old buildings
Their mouths full of lovers' meetings
Chewing gum is popular in both East and West
(leave out the time for kissing)

I see another kind of human
Only for a morsel of food do their mouths open wide
Yet many children are told that truth keeps silent
They grew up with checkered backgrounds of all kinds
But the glory of one certain nation is fleeting
(leave out several pages on invasion)

Laziness can kill
A potted plant left unwatered
Topped in a position that wants to be remembered
It is because the world is too large
That ignorant restlessness
Seeks everywhere the position of that indoor flower
(leave out those years studying at school)

Mama
Papa
Goodbye!
(leave out a few exchanges by letter and phone)

However
Being a parent is harder than being a poet
These love poems
No longer seem about love with a certain person
(leave out a weekend of reading)

In those large cities
Birds crowd on the streets and preen themselves,
but the mirror has gone away
The mirror is more confident of its own appearance!
(leave out reflection of its own rights in business!)

We have worries wrapped in candy wrappers

But a decayed tooth crammed into a toothpaste tube
 Is surely no definition of hygiene
 From cotton wool we draw our own warmth
 Winter is as cold as five hundred years ago
 But the experience of first love
 Certainly hasn't helped us find an ideal job
 And so
 We can say to any lover
 The light of truth has to be more important than you
 Unless I go blind
 (leave out all the nights when the lights were off)

In our dreams we read our no-longer-sleepless
 appearances
 A row of bullet holes that stared disdainfully at war
 Are now wearing glasses
 Oh this world!
 The framework of peace shrinks to the space of a
 house
 Before it can scratch the itch at the spine
 I am now organizing a picnic
 And will share rights to the ground with pigeons
 (leave out intervals of belching to get a breath of freedom)

Our obedience is to models of bent rules
 Under the bridge table, feet covered in socks and
 shoes
 Are perspiring in secrecy
 Unlike the rules of a casino
 The high stakes of human life, not using money,
 have no limit
 (leave out a few lost lifetimes)

Loneliness suddenly becomes rare in the news
 Not even on New Years Eve is it announced
 A hole was blasted in the sky with fireworks
 And down fell many stories of hard drinkers
 Causing a drop in our reading ability!
 (leave out the floodmark of brain sap in the cranium)

Due to being loaded with many modern wares
 Sinking ideals try to go on a diet
 But the warehousemen are finally on strike
 Nobody knows the best landfill for the world's
 garbage
 Yet I always get misty-eyed at holiday hype
 And raise a toast to sleep and dreams
 as they part company!
 (leave out a few ways of thinking about nationality)

As I stumble in the stream of marathon runners
 And am swept along in the crowd
 At last I find my broken leg can run
 Oh life!
 In such peculiar ways you make the destination recede
 Like a flag flapping in the far distance
 Though the flag waver is not in sight
 (leave out the chance for the flag waver to be an unsung hero)
 (leave out the effects of colonization on the world)

A river bursts its dikes
 Because happiness on the other bank is getting farther
 away
 Though I
 In all of this am not just a fair-weather sailor
 No matter whether I am here or not, the oars
 Will row the garden into your eyes
 The world has the duty to treat the planet as a park
 Where all the gods in the universe must buy tickets to
 enter
 (leave out yesterday's weather report
 clear turning cloudy
 temperature not to exceed zero
 humidity 99.9 percent, preventing
 winds of less than one knot from arising)

translated by Leonard Schwartz & Li Mingxia

*

POETIC LIFE

On a far mountain a herd of deer leaps into farther
mountains
Lines of poems leap into even deeper meaning
My vision roams in a field far from my face
Within eyeglass frames, lines of poems go before the
herd of deer

Hoof-prints stray everywhere
On white paper you don't find "No Hunting" signs

Each word has a right to preen in the mirror of
business
Brands of perfume smell better than perfume
Where the flap of a wound is often opened, buttons
have been sewn

Poems like herds of deer have their highway-crossing
thoughts interrupted by honking horns
But I rely on the experience of ink heredity
To seek out the obstetric ward of books
While deer that compile forests leave skins
on barbed-wire fences
Unrevised life gets farther from published clothing

Once again I take measurements of my genitals
From here to publishers' row is still three beds away
And so
A deer in rut is blocked from view by cool distant
mountains
Before the telescope is focused, I catch sight of poetic
life

translated by Denis Mair

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PILE DRIVER

All the slander
 The jealousy
 All varieties of praise or contempt
 All the things that people do to each other
 Are setting a pile driver in motion
 Pounding piles for the edifice of happiness
 Yesterday I was pounded into bedrock
 Another ten feet or so
 More weight-bearing strength got driven into me
 So the house that will rise on this foundation
 Can be a few more stories high
 I've thought of a use for the extra floors I build
 They can be a museum for pile-driver heads
 The biggest of them will be sculpted out of language
 Because it has strength
 No mechanical device can ever match

translation by Denis Mair

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UNTITLED

Coca Cola and I had our picture taken recently
 But friends don't see much compatibility
 They say he's old, dark, and crazy materialistically

Though we all know he has sold well for a century
 Friends say that for the sake of heredity
 I should not rate a spouse economically
 With body and soul I brew up affection repeatedly
 Till I start measuring advantages erratically
 Till my youthful advantage starts deserting me
 Till the chill of a lonely world settles inwardly
 Till my repentant cries echo piercingly
 Till like an ice-cube, I float in cola bobbingly
 Now consuming is all, ideals don't appeal to me

*

ADDICTED TO EACH OTHER

A

If only love could be refined into a drug
 To get people hooked on each other
 And give them even greater contempt for hatred

I often remind myself when going out in the
 morning
 To cancel out all the dreams
 That can cancel each other out
 To save me from spinning circles in this world

I have been looking for the route
 That goes by way of myself to reach others
 Just as I've maintained all these years
 I may take off umpteen times
 Only to land on mankind's runway

B

Nobody can take away my freedom to fly toward you
 Though I can only fly by inventing

A posture that disdains tradition
But I have set forth on the path
That goes by way of you to reach myself

So now that I've run into you
I won't go away to catch rays in some darker place
I have no doubts we two are getting addicted
Maybe the Lord's prescription came a few seasons
late
But for us this is only the onset

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NEW YORK

If you haven't been to New York you haven't been to
America,
But Americans keep up their guard about New York.

Being in New York is equal to lengthening your
lifespan.
The experience you get in a year takes ten years in
other places.
He who combines the experience of all human races
Is a person named New York.

In New York you make a sobering discovery:
Your own callousness can twist you into a spring
Many of the world's most famous springs
Were sprung from the pressures of New York.

Each moment the journalistic rhythm of stock market
and crime
Flashing lights of Broadway and screaming sirens,

Impromptu performances on street corners
Of this huge musical installation called New York
Makes the flesh dance under your skin in spite of
yourself.

And the cabbies of New York
Are ready to take new trends through all red lights of
tradition,
But when they do, don't forget the tip.

Students in this social university of New York all
know
Plenty of teachers here are versed in the lore of crime,
And many who mingle among the students
Will become new faculty members overnight.

All the while,
Loopholes are bulls-eyes to prove a lawyer's
marksmanship.
And would you believe,
The honeybees of New York have their ways
Of extracting nectar from plastic flowers.

New York is nicknamed the "Big Apple,"
But this apple is not just passed from Adam to Eve.
Eve has also passed it to Eve,
And Adam to another Adam.
The right to munch stirs up a heat without offspring.

New York at nightfall,
Before swallowing the last rays of hectic day,
Is frantic to twist the buttons of lamplight.
Unabashed desires always put on lipstick
Just like all the advertisements.
Prostitutes are one of New York's illegal drugs,
And often the prescription that life writes
Is "one whore, to be taken at midnight."

The hum of commerce is New York's prize intoxicant.
Roll up your sleeve and get a fix of prosperity.

Murder is a pretty big thrill,
But New York doesn't bat an eye.

New York, New York
This place where freedom is woven into wings
And winners hire people to fly for them.
The cars of so many lifestyles cruise down N.Y.'s
avenues,
No matter what make or model you invent,
Now matter how great the historical span of your tires,
New York's merchants have set up a gas station on your future road.

New York, New York
New York filters the world's blood through its heart;
It filters blood to make Coca Cola, then sends it flowing to everywhere in the world.

Translated by Denis Mair

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MEMORIAL

On the 11th of September, 2001
On the television screen I saw a video excerpt
Of people jumping off the World Trade Center
In the following days this scene
Kept appearing in my mind's eye
It kept appearing
And I kept hoping that below them was water
Was a swimming pool
For doing high dives
A few times
I even felt splashes of water
Not long ago
Water actually splashed through the air
And even got my shirt wet
Because I suddenly realized

This was a way through my inner heart
To let them go to Heaven

9.11.2002

Memorial

On the 11th of September, 2001
On the television screen I saw images
Of people jumping off the World Trade Towers
In the following days this scene
Kept appearing
And I kept hoping that below them was water
Was a swimming pool
Set up for dives
A few times
I even felt splashes of water

Not long ago
Water actually splashed through the air
And even got my shirt wet
Because I suddenly realized
This was a way through my inner heart
To let them go to Heaven

translated from the Chinese by Dennis Mair

Yan Li**Blood Behavior**

Bamboo Li was labeled as a landlord at the end of 1966. When the rebel faction ransacked the house of a local landowner named Noble Fang, they found evidence that Bamboo Li's grandfather had sold a large property to the Fang family forty years ago, before the Li family turned poor. That is to say, before selling that piece of land, Bamboo Li's family had been landowners of a sort. The failure to discover this in the Fifties must have been an oversight, or perhaps there was a hidden reason. So investigating this hidden reason became a full-time job for several young men in the rebel faction. They locked Bamboo Li up in the local primary school, where no classes were being held. Bamboo Li knew that his family had been well-off forty years ago, but this did not justify making him a target of denunciation. So he defended himself firmly, maintaining that his family was now dirt-poor. How could something insubstantial like "class background" prove that he was an oppressor? Whether or not he could accept this reality, half a year of captivity took away his courage to defend himself. As an "exposed landlord," there were struggle sessions and labor reform in store for him. For the next five years he and his family suffered grueling treatment in the town. In 1972 Bamboo Li's distant cousin became a township cadre, and due to this connection he was finally classified as a reformed landlord; he became an ordinary citizen of the town. But the strain had traumatized him. He felt his landlord background made him vulnerable, and he could be denounced at any time. He still carried the pressure of his family background with him; he felt that landlord blood ran in his veins. This corresponded with two statements the rebel leader had drilled into him during his captivity in the school building: "You will never get rid of your grandfather's landlord blood." "We rebels will always possess the blood of lower peasants; we are completely different from people like you."

Precisely because of Bamboo Li's mental problems, his son Forward Li seized on a chance to become a barefoot doctor. With behind-the-scenes help from the same distant relative, his son took classes for two years in the city. Forward Li was an only son, and his two sisters married men in other towns, so he took responsibility for his father. Forward

Li's wife kept Bamboo Lee well-fed and clothed. Bamboo Lee's mental condition was tolerable most of the time, but at times it would flare up, and he would disappear from home for days. Sometimes his family had to look for him in the mountains and bring him back. After Forward Li became a barefoot doctor, he gave his father considerable help. Besides, demand for his medical skills helped the family's relations with the townspeople. As overall conditions improved, Bamboo Li's mental state changed for the better. On top of this a grandson was born, giving him someone to talk to. Although the grandson could not keep up a conversation, at least Bamboo Li could speak what was on his mind, and this was an outlet he needed.

In 1986 Bamboo Li's grandson Victor Li finished junior high, and was admitted to a high school in the neighboring city. Of course this was because Victor Li's father was by now assistant director of the town's only hospital. Forward Li hoped to send his son to study abroad someday, so he made sure the boy got into a good school. Bamboo Li could not accept the boy going away to school, and he had a few outbursts. Forward Li's tried to console him, but it did little good: Bamboo Li hardly touched his food for two weeks after the boy's departure. Finally, Forward Li persuaded the old man by mentioning his detention as a landlord. Forward Li said the boy could only break loose from his landlord ties by going abroad, and going abroad required study at a good school. But their town's high school had a poor lineup of teachers. This time Forward Li's urgings had the desired effect, which showed how traumatized Bamboo Li still was by his "landlord" label.

From then on, each time the boy came home on vacation, Forward Li would hear Bamboo Lee instructing the boy that study overseas would free him from any taint of landlord ties. Of course, everyone knew this was a sign of Bamboo Li's illness. Though it was pathological, it showed how badly the rebel faction had mistreated him years ago. His face grew livid whenever he spoke of being locked up for six months in the school building, and years of labor reform after that. Such agitation was bad for his health, and each time Forward Li noticed it, he would interrupt his father and change the subject. Forward Li understood his father's illness perfectly.

In 1992 Victor Li tested into a university in Shanghai. In his second year of college, his grandfather fell ill with blood poisoning--a disease treatable only by frequent blood replacements. Luckily, Forward Li was hospital director by now, so the treatment did not ruin them financially. As Bamboo Li lay on his sickbed, he told Forward Li this was finally a chance to purge his landlord blood and replace it with peasant blood. "Make sure you find peasant blood to replace it; don't overlook this." Forward Li came to supervise each blood replacement, not because the other doctors might make a mistake, but for fear his father would remind them to use peasant blood. Such a thing would not be seemly. So Forward Li was at his father's side during each blood replacement, saying "Don't worry, father, this is peasant's blood."

Soon Victor Li came home for summer vacation. Bamboo Li lay on his sickbed and revealed his reason for happiness to the boy: Finally all the landlord blood in his veins would be replaced. He also said that if he had known about blood replacements earlier, he would have gotten it done in 1966 and saved himself a great deal of suffering. He suggested that if Victor's application for foreign study did not work out, it would be best to have his blood replaced. Victor knew that his grandfather was raving, but he answered that the times were different now: if he could get a blood replacement he would get capitalist blood instead of peasant blood. The idea of getting capitalist blood brought a shout to Bamboo Li's lips: "Oh no! That won't do! You'll be making trouble for yourself. Don't do it. It has to be peasant blood!" Victor Li could only calm him by saying, "You're right, you're right. I

will insist on peasant blood.” When his grandson said this, Bamboo Li drew an easy breath. He went on to say, “I only need two more treatments for the replacement to be complete. Up to now I’ve had eighteen treatments, and your dad says it takes twenty times to replace all of my landlord blood.” Victor Li went along with him and tried to say things that would not agitate him. He and his father both knew that treatment was normally abandoned in such a cases, if this were not the director’s father. Even so, the outlook was not positive: Forward Li quietly told Victor that the old man had two more weeks to live.

As it turned out, Bamboo Li’s 75-year life ended five days later. Just before his death, as Forward Li performed the twentieth treatment, he contentedly told his son: “You ought to consider getting your blood replaced too. You are the director here: getting a blood replacement should be easy. But of course you have to avoid publicity. If everyone got blood replacements, there would be no differences of degree, and everybody could become a hospital director. So don’t give blood replacements to too many people. To keep your position secure, you shouldn’t give replacements to other people. I don’t have any regrets. I just hope little Victor has no trouble going abroad. Give him a replacement of peasant blood before he goes abroad: that way nothing can go wrong.” Forward Li could only nod in reply. His father was a sick man, a sick man on the point of leaving this world. Forward Li wept, remembering the years of humiliation he and his father had suffered under the Red Guards. His father’s sickness was an after-effect of that humiliation.

Victor Li was with his mother the last time he saw his grandfather alive, just before the twentieth transfusion. Bamboo Li took held his grandson’s hand and said, “Everyone has to die. If a wish can come true before death, then things don’t seem so unjust. My sufferings left a mark on me that can’t be erased. But now that I think of it, they helped me understand the importance of blood replacements. I feel good about going to the other world now, because I’ll go with the identity of a peasant. Of course I won’t act like the peasants who persecuted me years ago. I won’t persecute rich peasants and landlords. I am not interested in that. I think that bloodlines are important, but having a good bloodline doesn’t mean a person should persecute others. With a good bloodline, a person should do something good. You just wait to hear from me: when I get to the other world I’m going to do good things. In this world my bloodline kept me from doing good things, because they wouldn’t allow us. Only people of good background got the chance to be officials and do good things.” He looked Victor in the eye and said, “Your mother did some admirable things. She was born a peasant, but she was treated as a landlord along with our family. She did not resent us, and even helped us out of tight spots with her peasant background. I’ve told you all about that. Whatever happens, be good to your father and mother. If you have a chance to go abroad, take them to another country someday. I’ve heard that everything is fine overseas. But no matter what, I hope you all have peasant blood when you come to join me in the other world. Little Victor, once you get a blood replacement, your children will have a peasant background too. That will never change.” With these words he fainted away. The last time he awoke was for his twentieth transfusion.

Victor Li had been close to his grandfather, and he went through a moody period after returning to school. He knew there was no basis to the idea of blood replacements, but his grandfather had died in contentment because of the procedure. Victor did not remember any sufferings from the Cultural Revolution, because he was born in 1974. But his grandfather’s sickness gave him a taste of the terror of those times. He experienced the Cultural Revolution through his grandfather’s lingering illness. This was what made him different from other students. Sometimes he felt hollow inside, and he felt his grandfather’s

fate casting a shadow over him. At such times he lapsed into utter silence, and buried himself in his studies. In this state he plunged into his homework with great concentration. As time went by, when doing difficult homework, he would remember his grandfather without intending to, and then go back to his studious mode.

Victor graduated with honors in 1996, and received a passing TOEFL score. He was debating whether to enter an M.A. program in China or try for a scholarship abroad when a relative of a hospital patient offered to help Victor go overseas. The relative, who had just come from America, did this in gratitude to Victor's father. Before Victor went abroad, Forward Li said to him, "You should count yourself lucky not to have been thrown off course by the Cultural Revolution. People five or ten years older than you missed chances because of the Cultural Revolution. Do the best you can at your studies. Someday your mother and I would like to go overseas for a look. After you get a degree find a job overseas, and then find a wife. I am sure you will be happy. We'll be fine here, so don't worry. Computers are the wave of the future now, so if you keep working hard, there will be economic benefits for you. China will have places where you can use your ability too. The future should be pretty good to you, wherever you decide to make a career." Victor's mother added, "It's best to find a Chinese wife. I hear that foreign women are too fancy-free. They are not so stable." Forward Li cut in and said, "You don't have a girlfriend yet, do you. How about finding one before you leave. That would put our minds at ease." To this Victor said, "What's the point of finding one for a short time? Wouldn't that be more trouble than it's worth? It would be foolish to tie myself down when I'm about to leave." What he said made sense, so his parents did not bring up the subject again.

New York first appeared before Victor's eyes at nighttime, through the window of an airplane. The lights looked magnificent, but told himself he must be ready for tough times. He knew a somber life was about to begin for him, from all the things he had learned about New York while still in China. But he knew that the rules here were fairly straightforward. As long as one chose a sought-after field at a fairly famous university, one could find decent-paying work. After that, one went about "enjoying" a peaceful life day after day. Of course, this scenario did not include matters of the heart, for these could not be predicted. No matter how rich a person was, there were no guarantees against emotional suffering. Thinking of this, he laughed aloud. Still, without question money was the crucial thing. First, he wanted to get on his feet financially.

His life at school soon began. English did not give him any trouble. He felt he had a talent for language, and he could accomplish anything if he made an effort. Actually, things did not go as smoothly as he expected, because he got caught up in a relationship. The object of his affections was an American-born Chinese. Differences of culture and experience showed up from their first contact. This was his first love, but life had been smooth at college in China; now he was getting his first taste of frustration. Although this did not involve his coursework, it happened at school. The first time he made love with Jenny, he could tell she was an old hand at this. Both of them were 23 years old, but she taught him to make love. He was not her first lover, but this did not disappoint him. Instead, he rejoiced to himself, because he supposed that there would be no regrets later if he broke up with her. But when Jenny showed less concern about this than himself, he felt frustrated. Jenny went on dates with an American classmate, maintaining that "more than one flower blooms during youth." She meant she wanted to be involved with more than one man at a time; several flowers could bloom at once. No matter how modern Victor Li was, no matter how much he had learned about America, he could not accept this. So he began to take a stand. First he demanded several times that she save her affections for him

alone. Of course she did not take this seriously. Then he stopped going to see her, and he would not accept her invitations. Two months later she came to his room; he claimed he had an errand to do and quickly walked out. Jenny yelled at him from behind, "If you have any balls, let me see you get an American girl."

Sure enough, Victor found a pretty American classmate and took her to a party where Jenny happened to be. Looking pleased with himself, he chatted and guffawed with the new girl Nancy. Naturally Jenny knew what game he was playing. She walked up to him, put her hand on his shoulder, and said, "I agree to your demands." He gave her a blank look, not expecting this move, but he quickly realized she was getting revenge on him. This was a spur-of-the-moment thing, not something she really meant. So he lightly removed her hand from his shoulder and said, "I don't know what you're talking about, but I'd like to introduce you to my girlfriend Nancy." Jenny looked at Nancy's extended hand, saying: "I thought I was the only woman you could find. At last here is someone who will get me free of you! So let me show my gratitude." With this she gave Nancy a nod and walked away. Victor knew that he had won this round, and the satisfaction prompted him to take a few extra drinks. As a result, upon leaving the party he fell drunkenly onto a strip of grass. Nancy was a timid girl, and did not know how to handle someone keeled over beside the road. Deciding to leave him there to regain his senses, she went home and went to bed. After all, she had not known him long, and there had not been time for them to be involved sexually.

When he sobered up and went home, he found Jenny sitting on the steps at his dormitory. It was already past two o'clock; he felt a familiar stirring at the sight of her. "It looks like you used up all your energy on Nancy," she said. "Did you imagine me while you were making out with her? If you did, I forgive you." This time he did not refuse her entry. He went to the bathroom, and found she had poured him a glass of soda when he came out. As he gulped it down in silence, a strange thought came to him: What kind of blood ran in her veins? Could an American have peasant blood? Or was hers the blood of a purebred filly? No mistake, she exerted a powerful attraction. Regrettably, he had not been involved with other women, so there were no grounds for comparison.

They made ravishing love. He had never done it so well, he felt, and attributed it to the unusual passion she had shown. Afterwards she asked, "You stayed out pretty late with that American girl. Don't tell me you didn't do anything?" He said, "Do you think I could do it more than once?" She said, "Men have a physical limitation. You can't always do it when you want to. It looks like you couldn't get your hands on her." He said, "so you were my outlet of release, is that it?" She laughed and said, "Let's not talk in circles. We two care about each other. I can't say what it is about you that attracts me. Anyway, from now on I won't let another man ruin the feelings between us." He let out a belly laugh, then suddenly stopped and said, "When my grandpa was sick he had no idea of blood types, so he wanted a transfusion of peasant blood." Jenny could not make out his meaning and asked him to say that again. But instead he went on to a new thought and asked, "If you could get a blood replacement, what kind of blood would you want?" Without a pause she said she wanted the blood of Madonna, the pop star. She asked him what sort he would like. He said, "I want to have gasoline instead of blood." She asked, "What did you just say about your grandpa?" "Oh, it's nothing," he said. "It's just that my grandpa wanted to be someone without any wealth." She shook her head at the thought that anyone in this world would wish poverty on himself. He said, "You people in America don't know how the power of idealism, when it is twisted, can give human nature a pretext for doing many evil things. A poor person is someone with the freedom not to worry about what he might lose. Such freedom feels

contempt for all property, and this leads it to destroy property. It boils down to the natural joy of one animal in combat with another. This is something that existing civilization doesn't dare imagine." To her this was as clear as mud, but she knew it had to do with previous events in China. She was Chinese by blood, but her mother tongue was English. Her language and personal history were Western. The background she expressed in her speech was Western.

Victor Li's financial situation was no different from most Chinese students studying in America. He worked part-time in at a dry cleaners under an American boss. At the same time, he helped a professor of Chinese Studies do some translation into English. As for Jenny, she was attending school on loans, which she would pay back slowly after graduation. She earned spending money by working weekends in a department store.

Victor met an American named David who played the stock market, and under his influence bought some low-demand stocks, hoping to make a killing. Regrettably, within a few months he took a loss. Victor realized he must plunge into the market if he wanted to get a feel for its pulse. A classmate's father agreed to teach him, so Victor worked without pay for his mentor two afternoons a week. He wanted to learn the ropes, so he could open his own brokerage office and speculate with other people's money.

One day Jenny came by with some marijuana; they settled back and had a long talk as they smoked. This was the first time he smoked it, and Jenny watched his reaction closely. He ended up having long, sad recollections of his childhood. "You don't understand the first thing about China," he said. "Anyway you can't be considered a Chinese. Your native language is English, which makes you an Anglo, but you can't be considered an American either. Why is that? Because you have a Chinese environment at home. You're just a second generation immigrant: you're still on the way to becoming American. When I was small my grandpa said I had a landlord background. I was only five then. I said a landlord is someone who owns land. My grandpa said no, and do you know why? Because they were checking into people who had owned land in the past. It could have been 50 or 100 years ago, but such people were called landlords. Even if you didn't own land, you were accountable for the lives of your ancestors. I did not understand such things then. All I knew was that Grandpa wouldn't let me hit back when I got into scrapes with the neighbor kids. Our family had a landlord background, and the neighbors were peasants all the way back. People with peasant backgrounds were allowed to hit people with landlord backgrounds, which made me think peasants must be relatives of the emperor. On the other hand, they didn't look very special. One time the pent-up anger was too much for me. When the neighbor boy kept throwing garbage near our doorway, I gave him a beating. He was a few months older, but shorter than I was. After beating him up I felt pleased with myself, because he hadn't dared to make a noise. But, unbelievably, he held it back until his father came home from work. That is to say, four hours after I beat him up, he suddenly burst out crying in front of his father. My grandpa was called over to hear of my terrible crime. The plain truth was, the neighbor kids thought they could get away with throwing garbage at our doorway, because of our landlord background. But that was already 1979. My stupid grandpa turned around and gave me a beating. Of course I gritted my teeth and didn't make a sound. The more I refused to cry, the harder my grandpa beat me. As he walloped me he said, 'Listen, little fellow, go ahead and cry out loud. Just let the neighbors hear that I'm punishing you, alright?' But I wouldn't make a peep, and that touched off Grandpa's temper. He picked up a hardcover book of Chairman Mao's quotations and pounded it on my hand that was gripping the leg of the desk. I did not loosen my grip, and

he slammed it down again. My whole body shuddered, and I broke out in a sweat. My hand pressed itself against my chest. Still I would not cry. I fled out the door, feeling a sense of victory, because the neighbors didn't hear my grandpa punishing me! I ran to the house my friendly uncle, wanting to hide there for a while. That was when I noticed my hand was swelling, and my uncle knew grandpa had been beating me. He took me to the hospital; my father examined my hand and found a bone fracture. I had my hand wrapped in a cast, like a casualty of war. I could tell from my father's manner that he supported me. He felt it was wrong for the neighbor kids to throw garbage at our door. But he said to me, 'I am on your side, but you must not cry. Your grandpa's nerves are under a strain. Don't make him feel guilty. Most of all, don't call attention to your injury.' When Father and I got home, grandpa was still angry. I raised my plaster cast twice, and tears blurred my vision, but remembering my father's warning, I forced myself not to cry. Grandpa asked what had happened to my hand. Father said, 'You hit him a bit too hard, but it's no big thing. A child's bones grow quickly, so we'll remove that cast in a week.' I felt triumphant to see Grandpa's astonished look, because he knew he had done wrong. But the way he admitted guilt was excessive: he took my hand and knelt down in front of me. Mother had to pull him to his feet. At this point I was just like the neighbor kid: I couldn't hold back the sobs any longer."

Jenny held Victor close to her, because this story coupled with the marijuana had cast a pall over them. Jenny said, "I don't know what truly happened in China, but from what I've heard, China and Russia were pushed over the brink by ideals that turned sour. But whatever happened, it seems to be over now." Victor drowsily pillowed his head on her chest and entered a half-awake state.

Smoking marijuana was something they often did together. One time they got into a discussion about the meaning of attending college. Jenny said it was a rule of the game in modern society: everyone has to learn a skill and use it to earn a living. Ultimately one exchanges skill, time, and physical effort for money. And then one uses money to buy commodities that have a price attached. "Is there anything that doesn't have a price?" she wondered. "I don't. There is no price attached to me," Victor burst out with his answer. "You're on your way to getting a price attached to you," she said. "As soon as you get a degree in America, you'll find a job that pays a salary. That salary is your price." "Well what about creative works and inventions?" asked Victor. "Those things always have a price put on them when they are completed," she said. To this Victor replied, "Suppose a college graduate gets a job that pays \$50,000 and he works at it for forty years. If his income jumps to \$60,000 the last twenty years, he will make a total of \$2,200,000. But people who deal in real estate or stocks make this much in two or three years. This is too big a difference." She said, "Only a tiny number of people can be that lucky." Victor said, "Well, since the purpose of going to college is to get a job, why don't we start a company for ourselves? Starting from now, there is no need to go to college." Jenny said, "If your own company goes out of business, you're left with nothing. That is the difference between being the boss and having a boss. Those big companies have built up plenty of capital, so they can weather a recession. Little companies are different: if a breeze of recession comes along, it might blow them over. A large company gives better job security in the long run." He said, "The way you put it, the world is always going to be under control of large corporations." "That's usually how things are: it's the way of the world," she said. "I don't want to go to college. I'm starting my own company tomorrow," he said. "It sounds exciting," said Jenny, "but where will you find money to start a company?" He said, "I don't need much money, because I'll pool investments. I'll use other people's money to play the market. I've learned a few ins and

outs. I'm serious. Since all roads point toward money, I don't think one method is more valid than another. I don't see any problem with quitting college." She said, "But you are in this country under a student visa. You don't have a work permit." He said, "What's so difficult about that? The company where I'm learning securities can get me an employment visa, or we two can file for a marriage certificate." She asked, "Do you really want to drop out?" He said, "I've been thinking about it for a long time. So what's it going to be? Will we file for a marriage certificate, or should I have the company file for my employment visa?" She said, "I'll have to think about it."

Failure. Within half a year Victor Li failed. After quitting school he worked hard and pooled some investment money. But the tricky currents of the market and the jumpiness of his investors defeated him. He hung on for a while, until he knew no upturn was in store for him. The only choice was to try a different line of work. He told Jenny what he had learned the past half year, and that prompted him to tell another story that happened in China. In 1992 there was a classmate of his named Lu, whose family had been capitalists before 1949. In 1992 the government returned all the family's confiscated wealth. Suddenly, Lu became a rich man. Many people envied him, but his family had suffered several attacks in the Cultural Revolution for its capitalist background. Three people in his family had died. Two of them committed suicide after being tortured, and one was beaten to death by Red Guards. This was the price they paid. Yet when those deaths happened, the family had no property, and there was no way of knowing the government would return their property in 1992. Past wealth was the only reason for those deaths. That was why his family felt that wealth was both a good thing and a terrible thing. From another angle, one could say that wealth always takes a toll. Jenny said, "That was in China, and it happened during an abnormal period. Now we are in America. What are you getting at?" "I'm not getting at anything," he said. "It's just that my idea of wealth is related somehow to my grandpa's landlord background. My grandpa's grandpa became poor after he sold his land. That's going a long way back, but my grandpa's class background was still landlord. Strangely enough, in 1980 my grandpa was reclassified as having a rich peasant background. It's because you can't change all at once from landlord to peasant. You have to be a rich peasant first. Rich peasants are somewhat better off than peasants. Actually, before 1949 my grandpa's circumstances were no different from a peasant's. So what I'm trying to say is, the most reliable way to stir up struggles between people is to use differences in wealth. You can even do it by pointing to a concept like class background. I have heard that some big corporations in America are not run very well, but based on their reputation they get infusions of capital that keep them alive. This sort of corporation has a 'background' as a large corporation, not as a small company. We're talking about the 'largeness' of a landlord and the 'smallness' of a peasant."

"Don't talk in circles," said Jenny. "What are you going to do from here on out?"

"Haven't I already begun?" said Victor. "I'm involved in a trading company that will do business with China. I am handling liaisons with businesses in China. I have found a college classmate whose business in China is doing well. I think the prospects are good."

"What is it you like about me?" Jenny had asked this question several times, but he had not given a definite answer. This time he was ready to answer carefully. He put his thoughts in order and said, "First I'll say that in America, no, in New York there are all these Chinese people. To me their features indicate a tie of blood or family. There is no question that the rules of the game among Americans include elements of their own culture, so there is a gulf. When I face an American girl, I'm facing a world of differences, from appearance

to habits. But put me face to face with someone from China, and there are scars that affect the way I see her. I'll think how it's impossible for her to get what she wants from me. Perhaps because we are both from China, we bring the same things, and we offer no solution to each other's problems. New York is like a farmers' market. We have brought the same goods, expecting to exchange them for U.S. dollars. There is no exchange to be made between us. Maybe I'm putting this too bluntly, but that's the only way to make it clear. I end up thinking a Chinese born in America is suitable for me. Appearance-wise, there is a sense of blood ties. Inwardly, there are none of those scars from having lived in China. Although you can't write Chinese well, you can speak it. English is your first language, and Chinese is your second. For me it's the other way around. This shows that our relationship is complementary in some ways. Also, you taught me to make love, and you've taught me a lot about English. For my part, I've taught you some things about the Chinese language. Of course, I find your good looks irresistible as well." Jenny nodded her head in satisfaction.

"Really, I don't like doing this kind of logical analysis," he said. "It sounds like a business deal. It lacks romance. Didn't it sound to you like I was reporting on company performance at a stockholders' meeting?"

"I understand you better from hearing your report," she said. "You have a talent for putting things in perspective. I've seen you do it in other areas, but now I am sure of it. Do you want to know what I like about you?"

"You like my bold ambition," he said.

"No, I like you because all the suffering in China did not make you feel inferior about who you are. I have seen many people from China who feel inferior about being Chinese. Some tell me they hardly associate with Chinese here, because Chinese people are unworthy. Some of these people consciously avoid speaking Chinese. They think that if nothing but English comes from their lips, they are released from their Chinese background. And some use almost any occasion to show disdain for Chinese people. They are simply too shallow for words. But you are different. You have shed that baggage, and that makes a non-Chinese Chinese person like me feel fairly treated."

"Is there anything else?" he asked.

"Of course," she said. "You have a style that makes American girls friendly toward you. I must say, normally they wouldn't consider a Chinese man, but they like you. This makes me jealous. Another thing, you never have me invest money in your business ventures. You say it's because I would lose faith in you if you lose the money. But I think you have other considerations. You don't want to play upon my feelings just to get this little bit of money. You're someone who thinks things through. Since you have been with me, you have considered your steps with two people's future in mind. Am I right?"

He nodded quietly and said, "If the company doesn't vouch for me to get a visa, would you marry me so I can get the papers to do business?"

"I think I would," she said. "Really, it wouldn't be any different from the way we're living now." Another year passed quickly. There was no upturn in Victor's business. He was cheated by his classmate back in China. Victor shipped a large batch of goods, but his classmate in China never made good on the unpaid half of the money. Victor found the phone was disconnected at his classmate's company in China. He said to Jenny, "That guy doesn't have much ambition. For \$100,000 he closed down his company. If he had waited half a year, I would have tied more money up in this, and he could have made off with it. I had to scrape together \$100,000 to make good on the unpaid half. Now I'm starting from zero again." "It's not that simple," said Jenny. "This has put a bad mark on your record at

that American company. Word will spread in your sector of business. Your reputation will suffer. And another thing, you put too high a value on honor. Business should not be lubricated by personal feelings: it's all about rules and contracts. Those things have to be made clear before a transaction. Anyway, you're not professional enough. Maybe it's because of your Chinese background. You've got to change your ways."

Yet he failed at the next project he tried.

Marijuana was not the solution. Though Jenny smoked it with him, she reminded him he had to pull himself together. He took another drag, held in the smoke with tightly closed lips, and let out a long breath from his belly. He said, "My grandpa got his blood replaced with peasant blood. I wonder if that has jinxed me." She said, "Your grandpa didn't really have all his blood replaced. That was just a wishful way of speaking." He said, "Grandpa wanted my blood to be replaced too. If I do get it replaced, I will insist on blood from a millionaire." She said, "You are a warm-hearted person. You can do something besides business." "But I quit school to do business," he said. "How can I stop now?" She said, "Well it won't do any good to replace your blood with alcohol. A person's behavior is determined by blood **and** personality." He stood up and poured whisky for himself and her. He rolled another fat joint, then sat silently, sipping and smoking. Jenny realized she was also depressed over his business failures of the past two years. But she could not help him because she was still a year from graduation. So she traded nonsensical remarks with him. She told him she was born in America because her father, while studying in England, had dreamt his future wife would be an American Chinese. The wife had appeared in the dream, saying that her blood background was made up of cheese and potatoes. Also, she confided that her fondest wish was to sleep with her arms around the Empire State Building. Victor interrupted, "That's a sexual delusion. She was hoping she could get pregnant with a skyscraper, so she could give birth and solve her housing problems in New York." He poured their glasses full again, then leaned against the wall unsteadily and said, "I've got to solve my blood replacement problem. My grandpa's subconscious wish must have been a command from higher realms. My grandpa said he'd wait for us in the other world, but we must get our blood replaced before we go, or else we'll be mistreated." She said, "Don't you think this marijuana is stronger than before?" "I don't feel anything," he said. "I just feel that I'm connected with information from a distant source. Most of all, I can have a conversation with my grandpa's inner mind. I always thought he was a crazy person, so I didn't pay heed to what he did or said. But now I am having a realization: there was really something there. In Chinese we have the phrase 'hard-won foolishness,' and maybe that's the condition we're talking about." She said, "Connecting with information like that won't help your business. You should access information selectively. Maybe those wealthy businessmen have some kind of paranormal power. But I don't seem to have it. When we smoke marijuana, you get into the mood better than I do." He said, "Not necessarily. Maybe the realizations that slip by now will appear in your mind two or three days later. I really feel good now. I can feel my grandpa breathing. I sense the meaning behind what he said when he covered me at night: 'A warm body keeps the nightmares away.' I can feel his wish that I get a replacement of peasant blood. But times are different now. I want a replacement with millionaire's blood, or a genius' blood, not peasant blood." She said, "Where are you going to find a millionaire's blood? When I was little I dreamed of living on Long Island, in a place with a storybook atmosphere. It was in a house standing by itself, with woods around it. Especially around Christmastime, that atmosphere stayed around me like a cloud." He said, "That was a dream of growing up, not about getting rich." She said, "With those possessions, doesn't that prove I would already be rich?" He said, "We want

the ability to get rich, because we want to enjoy the experience of getting rich!” She said, “Look at Bill Gates. Within a few years his company became the largest software company in the world. That didn’t happen through blind luck.” He said, “Well, Coca Cola used a one-page formula to become the largest company in the world. Almost everyone drinks Coca Cola. Everyone’s blood has Coca Cola in it. That’s it! To succeed as a businessman, Coca Cola has to flow in your veins like blood. Hardly any company can compare with Coca Cola! That’s right! My grandpa would approve of replacing my blood with Coca Cola, don’t you think?” No answer came from Jenny, and he knew she had fallen asleep. He talked to himself excitedly: “Coca Cola, I’ve finally found you. Once you are flowing in my veins, I’ll be able to do any kind of business. No more honor and ties of feeling. From now on I’ll have smooth sailing in my business.” He reeled to the refrigerator, opened it, and found a one-liter bottle of Coke. He let out a burst of loud laughter, but Jenny did not awake. He placed the Coke bottle against his chest and sat on the sofa, wondering how to get the Coke flowing through his veins. He remembered his father using needles for blood transfusions. But this was Coke; it should be poured in a glass. Then how could he get it into his veins. He laughed, because he heard his grandpa whisper in his ear, “Go ahead and use a needle.” He knew the pharmacy next door sold disposable needles. He ran out and bought two of them, one to draw blood and one to inject Coca Cola. He hesitated as he picked up the needle, then inserted it without feeling any pain. He happily realized that his grandpa was guiding his hand. He drew out three syringes full of blood, then smoothly injected three syringes of Coca Cola. He said to himself, “That will be enough for today. I want Jenny to be a part of this memorable moment.” He tried to rouse Jenny, who opened one eye halfway and said, “My head is dizzy. Let me sleep a little more.” He lay her back down and told himself not to be impatient. Doing the replacement over a week’s time would be fast enough. His grandpa’s blood replacement had taken twenty transfusions.

He was roused by Jenny, who yelled that there was something black in the sink. “That’s my blood,” he said. Blood turns black when it’s cold.” She said, “Why is your blood here?” He said, “Didn’t we talk about replacing my blood with Coca Cola? This way I’ll will be undefeated in the business world.” She screamed, “Did you really inject Coke into your veins?” He said, “Would I lie to you about this?” He rolled up his sleeve to show the needle marks. She was at a loss for words, because there was nothing unusual in his appearance, and he was in good spirits. But still she had to ask: “How much cola did you inject?” He said, “Three syringes full. If I inject several syringes a day, I estimate that two weeks will be enough. Then you’ll see how I ride the winds in the world of business. Your dream about Long Island won’t be any trouble.”

That evening, he said to her: “You don’t have to study. Spend the next two weeks with me; watch me until my blood is replaced.” He was cleaning the syringes as he spoke. She said, “Go buy a couple of new ones.” He said, “No need. If I wash them they’ll be fine. Besides, we don’t have very much money.” She said, “I’m really afraid. This is like being in a dream.” He said, “You are not in a dream, you are on the threshold of a new era. Don’t you realize, my grandpa has entered my soul to give me help. Don’t you worry. My grandpa did not enjoy blessings in his lifetime, and neither did my father. Now it’s my chance. Chinese people say ‘Blessings from past lifetimes come around in this one.’” As he did the injection, Jenny closed her eyes. He shouted, “I’m telling you, keep your eyes open!” She opened her eyes, and was convinced of the facts in front of her: she saw the blood drawn out, and then watched as the cola went into the vein.

When two weeks had passed Jenny said, “How do you intend to get your business started?” He said, “First I need some capital.” An impact had been made on her soul by

two weeks of watching him replace his blood. By now she was convinced Victor Li would succeed. Several days ago she had withdrawn her money from the bank—all \$1325 of it. Now she pushed the money into his hands. “I’m going to start with stocks,” he said. He picked up the phone and called the friends who had played the market with him earlier. “Would you tell me which two stocks on the Hong Kong market have the highest rate of fluctuation?” “Tell me which American stocks are going on the market today.” “What stocks from Chongqing City are ready to go on the market?” “I’ll call back soon about this.” When he phoned again, it was to invest all his money in B-stocks offered by Chongqing City Telephone Company. He told Jenny, “We won’t know what happens for a month or two. Now let’s go sell my old car. We can use the money to decorate the coffee shop your uncle opened downtown. That will be our investment.

Jenny’s uncle had no confidence in his coffee shop, so it had been limping along half-alive for ten years. He uncle was moved when they went to him with \$2500 they got from selling the car. He said, “Are you really willing to make this coffee shop a going concern?” Victor said, “Of course. I know you named this place after your late wife. We want to make it work, so we feel it needs refurbishing. We are ready to buy materials, and we’ll do the remodeling ourselves. I will probably take a week or two. Our condition is that we get 20% of the profit.” Jenny’s uncle laughed, “If it makes a profit, I can give you 50%. For the past five years I’ve kept this place open, but the money is not worth it. I do it as a memorial to my deceased wife. I made a vow to keep this place running until I die. If you are willing to take over, I’m willing to come two days a week. You take care of it the rest of the time. As long as you don’t ask me for money, you can keep all you earn.” This was like manna from heaven to Jenny and Victor; they were overjoyed. “Alright,” they said. “We’ll start the remodeling tomorrow.”

They were struck by a realization: this chance had been there for the taking. Why hadn’t they thought of it? Why did they think of it after Victor did his “blood replacement.” It could only be explained by the effect of the cola. Jenny said to him, “I’m really afraid you’ll grow apart from your loved ones. You can grow apart from other people, but what is between us should not be just for profit, like cola.” Victor said, “Don’t worry about that. I thought about the possibility of such a side effect, so before the transfusions I drew up a plan for distribution of all assets. Half of them will be yours. There is a clause saying the document cannot be revised without your signature. You can ask Jimmy the lawyer about this. But so far, I feel plenty of confidence about us. It seems the cola’s effects are only in the business domain. I hope it will stay this way.”

The coffee shop was remodelled to look like a cafeteria in an American prison movies. Of course this idea grew out of Victor’s cola blood. And he thought of an advertising slogan: “If you’ve been in jail, relive old times; if you haven’t, get a taste of it.” He used large pots and ladles to serve simple food. Of course this was a publicity coup in the restaurant trade, especially for tourists. A week after the re-opening, they had to reserve tables, and before long they were booked solid for two months.

Within half a year, Chongqing Telephone stocks soared to thirty times their original price. The coffee shop absorbed the furniture store next door; it became one of the largest coffee shops in New York, with business of \$10,000 per day. Features and reports on it appeared in various newspapers and magazines; television stations did special segments on it. Ex-convicts were eager to bring their friends and reminisce about life on the inside. The ex-cons made suggestions that helped the coffee shop have a more authentic feel. People from various walks of life regarded the place highly, and restaurants in other cities asked to open under their name. Victor and Jenny made several million dollars on franchises, and

this was just the beginning, for soon a percentage of earnings would start rolling in. They signed contracts for use of their name in 60 cities: almost every state in America had one of their franchises. Small wonder that a *New York Times* reporter wrote in his article: "...It has the energetic hum of a fast food restaurant, but with much higher style and quality. It can be called a significant feature of *fin de siecle* American culture."

At this point someone came to them with a plan to write their success story. They refused, for a simple reason: they feared it would stir up a global craze for Coca Cola blood replacements. Jenny felt they should authorize the biography, but keep the blood replacements secret. But Victor disagreed, feeling it would offend his grandpa who had given them inspiration. Victor's grandpa had never concealed his wish for a blood replacement, so Victor should not conceal it. Right now it was best not to say anything.

One day Victor was invited to a ribbon-cutting at a new cultural center. Of course, the aim was to get a donation from him. With a flourish of his pen he wrote a check for \$50,000. Afterwards there was a program of literary entertainment. One poet read a piece that touched him deeply: it was a poem called "New York," and it included these two lines: "New York washes blood at the heart of the world, / Blood washed into Coca Cola flows around the globe." He imprinted these lines in his memory, and kept the poet's name in mind. He went home and recited the lines to Jenny, who thought he had composed them. When told they were someone else's, she said, "It seems that other people are coming to the same realization. This world needs something cold and neutral to keep functioning." He said, "I didn't write that \$50,000 check on an impulse today. I feel there are strange people in those cultural groups. Those people are not committed to money, but they are committed to uncovering themselves and others. There is no need for their views, except in the other world. Take that poet for example: he seemed pretty confident in himself, but he pointed out the power of money in this world. Since he knows that power, why does he go on writing poetry? It would be more sensible to go make money. Is he trying to criticize this phenomenon of money? Could this world ever get rid of the function of money? Money is the best standard for the circulation of value. I can't think of anything to take money's place for measuring value of labor. I want to print these two lines on our restaurant's flier. What do you think?" Jenny thought it over and said, "Maybe it's not a good idea, because it sounds like you're doing publicity for Coca Cola. Besides, what does it have to do with your restaurant?" Victor said, "The connection is simple: it's my personal wish. It has to do with the cola in my veins. Besides, the uncanny way I met him proves that somehow he is like me." She said, "You can use the lines he wrote, but first you need his permission." Victor said, "Of course. I'll have my secretary get in touch with him."

The poet's name was Will Chinn. At the moment he walked into Victor's office, Victor had a notion of playing a game with him. Victor said to him, "I'm thinking of printing your lines about washing blood on some advertisements, but I don't know how much to pay you." Will Chinn shrugged and said, "See how it goes. This has never happened to me; I don't know how it's done." Victor put on a straight face and said, "I can give you fifty dollars." With no change of expression Will Chinn said, "Alright. Anyway, poems are written to be read. It doesn't matter if you keep the \$50, because I never expected to make money off poems." Victor asked curiously: "How do you support yourself?" The poet said, "I work at a copy shop and write poetry in my spare time. I only do the job so I can keep writing. If I had money I would write poetry full time. I've been writing for over ten years." Victor asked, "Have you published a book of your poems?" The poet said, "I've put out two books." "Can you make money selling poetry books?" The poet replied, "Like I say, it's impossible to make money writing poetry. I do it to express my

view of the world and society.” “Well, can you explain what you meant by saying New York washes blood at the heart of the world?” With a gleam of excitement in his eyes, the poet said, “Business is not about feelings, it’s about products. Products are objects that have no feeling. If they do have feeling in them, it’s imputed to them by people. For instance, you might have feelings for a floor lamp at home, because you’ve had it for years and gotten used to it. A new one would be hard to get used to. In our world, more and more behavior revolves around business, and this affects how much behavior revolves around feelings. Blood produces feelings, but if we can replace it with Coca Cola, people would make less trouble for themselves.” The word *replace* gave Victor a jolt, and he said to himself, ‘So this poet thought of the same thing.’ He said to Will Chinn: “Well, tell me if it’s possible to replace blood with Coca Cola.” The poet laughed, “Do you think its doable?” Victor said, “I think it’s worth trying.” Still laughing, Will Chinn said, “You could be a poet!” Victor said, “I am a poet, a poet of action.” Changing the subject, he said, “You said I can use your lines without paying you money. Will you sign a contract to that effect?” Will Chinn shrugged and said “O.K.,” as he took a pen from his pocket. Victor went to the next room and told his secretary to draw up a contract. Coming back he said, “It’s unlike me not to pay. Tell you what, you can have ten percent of my company’s profits next month, just for a month, however much that is. My secretary will notify you to come and pick up a check. Besides that, I’m willing to be your friend. Every Friday evening I’ll be eating at my restaurant off Broadway. You can come any time to have a meal and chat with me.” The poet said, “If you don’t turn a profit next month, but lose money instead, do I have to pay ten percent of your loss?” Victor laughed out loud and said, “Don’t you know how good my business has been lately? Haven’t you seen the write-ups in the papers?” The poet shook his head and said, “I really didn’t know.” Victor sighed, “You really are a poet. Poetry lets people hold onto non-mainstream things. That’s why a poet can’t get popular.” Will Chinn said, “Aren’t you going to publicize two of my lines? I’m afraid they will affect your business.” Victor said, “I am a businessman, I don’t go in for losing propositions. Who says I can’t use a poem to help my business? The poet said, “Poetry is a hard thing for business to take advantage of. For the most part, art and literature are being used by business. I don’t think that is a bad thing. But businessmen are stymied when it comes to poetry, and so are the poets themselves. It isn’t that poets don’t like money, but for some reason, you can’t sell poems for money. Even so, many people insist that human beings can’t do without the poetic spirit. Look at the Nobel prizes for literature: over half of them have gone to poets.” Victor said, “I’m going to try. At least these two lines are going to be tied up with my business.” The secretary came in and gave him the contract. He read it, signed the duplicate, then handed them to the poet. The poet signed them without even looking at them. Victor gave one copy to Will Chinn, kept one for himself, then gave him a parting handshake.

Victor narrated this encounter to Jenny, who listened absorbedly. She said, “Poets are an obsessive breed. They treat writing poetry like raising a child. Any money they earn goes to ‘raising’ this child.” Victor said, “From what I can tell, poetry is a kind of literary religion. Otherwise, why would the Nobel Prize be given to something people don’t care about?” Jenny said, “Right, I wonder about that too. Is it a religion?” Vincent said, “Will Chinn was able to conceive of replacing blood with cola; this proves that something called to him from an unseen realm, just like my grandpa called to me. Do I qualify as a businessman? I simply used a method others don’t know about to unlock my mind. That lets me discover business openings. I’m not under emotional influence from my blood. I’m an innovator, not a businessman.” Jenny laughed, “You’re neither a businessman nor an

innovator. You're a poet!" He said, "But I can't write poetry." She said, "You can write it through your actions. The act of replacing your blood was like Will Chinn writing those lines of poetry. Your actions are poetry." He said, "That may be so, but poems don't earn money." She said, "But didn't you let Will Chinn earn at least \$80,000 from two lines of poetry? Last month our profits were close to \$800,000, but next month they will be more, maybe even \$1,000,000, because we'll have three new franchises. More royalties will be credited to us. Will Chinn may get \$100,000." He said, "So Will Chinn is going to become a full-time poet. He told me if he had money, he wouldn't do anything else: he would write poetry full time. I'll be glad to have a friend like him." She said, "You should make friends with him. Who else could imagine replacing blood with cola? You two must have a blood tie." He said, "If so, I think I should ask him to write our biography. He would make it come alive, because he conceives of things the way I do. What do you think?" She said, "It's worth considering. But after it's published, all kinds of people will try replacing their blood. The world will be a mess." He said, "What has already happened is bound to be exposed sometime. The question is, how soon? I have an urge to see how people react: it will be something to watch for sure. I can already imagine the media frenzy this will whip up." She said, "You'd better think it over awhile. You don't have to decide right away."

Two weeks later Victor decided to meet with Will Chinn. He asked the poet, "Are you interested in writing my biography?" Will Chinn said, "Not very much, because there are plenty of writers who specialize in biography. Why come to me?" Victor said, "You're right, there are professional writers, but I'm not sure they could do it well. There is a crucial reason. If I tell you something amazing, will you agree to write it?" The poet said, "That depends on how amazing it is. Does this world still have something to get amazed about?" Victor said, "Usually there wouldn't be anything to get amazed about. Everything that could happen has happened. But what happened to me is different. It is something that has never happened before, I can guarantee that." The poet said, "Well then, let me hear it." Victor said, "Sorry for beating around the bush. You see, I really want you to write it, and I believe only you can do this subject justice. Alright, I'll tell you. I am the first person ever to replace his blood with Coca Cola. I have Coca Cola flowing in my veins!" The poet shook his head dubiously. Victor led Will Chinn into a secret room. Before the poet's eyes, Victor drew from his arm a syringe-full of fluid, not exactly the color of blood, and injected the same amount of cola. Victor explained, "I still draw out a few hundred c.c. of blood every week and shoot in cola..." The poet broke in amazedly, "Are you saying you got the inspiration to do this from my poem?" Victor said, "I did this a long time before I heard your poem. But you are the first person who thought of this besides me. Now you know why I decided to have you write my story. Do you feel like writing it now?" The poet nodded and said, "Are you telling me that after the cola-change, everything you wished for in business came true?" Victor triumphantly said, "Within a short time I have made ten million dollars, and before long I'll have a hundred million."

Will Chinn spent two weeks writing a 200,000-word biography. After Victor and Jenny read it, they corrected only a few small errors, then had it published. It created a huge stir, but many reviewers were sceptical. Most upset of all were research directors from two medical schools and a social critic, who filed a joint suit against Victor Li and Will Chinn, claiming their sensationalism would cause young people who lacked independent judgement to replace their own blood, which would lead to deaths. Victor and Will Chinn defended themselves in a television interview: "We don't claim that everyone can replace their blood. Perhaps only a small proportion of people are physically capable of this. At least it was proved in Victor Li's case. It was not

rejected. At this point he is still replacing a few hundred c.c. per week. If necessary, he can do this openly, to be witnessed by the public. In addition, we'd like to read this paragraph from the book:

Victor Li's grandfather believed that blood type should not be a criterion in blood replacements. In 1992 he had to receive massive transfusions due to blood poisoning. During a long course of treatments and blood replacements, his consciousness was able to change the landlord blood in his veins into peasant blood. This was because he had faith in the power of consciousness to do so. This power, clearly, was then transmitted to his grandson Victor Li. Of course, it is possible that he helped his grandson from the other world, to further Victor's wish for an effective blood replacement.

"We are speaking of something that has already happened. Of course, research needs to be done on this, but Victor should not be confined in a hospital without his own approval. Otherwise, this would be a violation of human rights." Here Vincent Li interjected that he would not give approval, and that he intended to enjoy his own life.

At this point Victor Li was willing to do a blood replacement in front of television cameras. But this did not come about, due to fear of a copycat effect. Within a week after the book was published, dozens of people had to be rushed to the hospital after trying to replace their own blood. The court had no choice but to have a hospital analyze the composition of Victor Li's blood. A government investigation team determined that all findings should be kept out of the media. The book was to be suppressed for the time being, and sales would be stopped. Victor Li, Jenny, and Will Chinn were taken by the investigators to a secret clinic, where everyone awaited the results of the blood analysis with grave faces. Only Jenny and Victor chatted casually about company matters. Finally the lab technician handed the test results to the head investigator, shaking his head and saying: "The composition includes a significant amount of Coca Cola."

The government investigation made ruled as follows on the test results: An agreement would be drawn up with Victor Li and others privy to this case, to observe strict secrecy for five years. This would give the government time to do medical research on the Victor Li Anomaly. After five years, the agreement could be extended for a number of years. Meanwhile, the book could be promoted and sold only as science fiction.

But Victor Li hired a lawyer to defend himself. This agreement would make him look like a charlatan; it would do irreparable damage to his reputation. Newspapers and television had done major reports on this incident: suppressing it was not going to be all that easy. So how to handle this thorn in the government's side? Officials on the case racked their brains for a solution, but could not think of an ideal proposal. Finally, only one plan seemed feasible: the federal officials went to talk with Will Chinn alone.

The officials said, "There is no other way--you must take the outcome upon yourself. Here is what we will say: After writing those two lines of poetry, you had delusive hopes that they would turn into reality. You found Victor Li, a man who enjoyed sudden success in business, and used him to prove your delusions could come true. You played upon Victor's wish to stand out from the crowd and wrote a biography about him; you also persuaded him to accept the story you concocted, because this would make his biography different from any previous success story."

Will Chinn asked, "What will happen if I agree?" The official said, "You will give interviews to reporters, in which you will admit to this 'fact.' We can assure you that if

anyone presses charges against you, we will allow you to plead insanity and avoid any criminal penalties. As for your finances, a company will buy all the rights to your book.” Will Chinn said, “If it’s done that way, my reputation will be damaged.” The official said, “So what are you asking for?” Will Chinn said, “I want the government to lease a huge billboard on Times Square, and display my two lines about washing blood. I want the lease to last for a year.” The official said, “That won’t do. You don’t have that much money. It would cause speculation and complicate matters further.” The poet said, “If Victor Li comes up with the money, will the government interfere?” The official said, “Give us two more days: we’ll discuss this further then.”

Will Chinn told everything to Victor Li, who said, “It looks like there’s no other way. Since the government has stuck its hand into this, and is even considering our position, there’s nothing else we can do. What’s more, this whole incident has been uncanny. Common sense says the public will probably not believe us. Obviously, most people will be on the government’s side. As for the billboard rental, I can certainly pay it, but I don’t think the government will agree to it. So what can we do to keep from getting a raw deal?” The poet said, “The fact is the book influenced some teenagers to try replacing their blood, and they were taken to emergency rooms. I am responsible for that. So I might as well give in. As the saying goes, a poet is society’s conscience. On the other hand, what happened to you is true. Between telling the truth and saving people, my conscience tells me to save people. What is true will still be true after ten years.”

The government official said, “The billboard is unfeasible, because your lines of poetry may lead to a lawsuit by Coca Cola. They would think you are slandering their product with the words ‘New York washes blood at the heart of the world; Blood washed into Coca Cola flows around the globe.’ There is no telling who would win, but it would cause unnecessary trouble and financial burdens. Is there anything else you have in mind?” The poet was already fed up: “Just let me keep writing poetry. I don’t have anything else in mind.” The officials shook his hand delightedly, for they considered that this wrapped up the case.

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Translated by Dennis Mair