

# The Poetry of Lü De'an 吕德安

Selections: 1982-1993

Lü De'an was born in 1960 in the city of Fuzhou, Fujian province. Lü, together with local friends, formed a poetry group in the early 1980s, The Friday Poetry Society (星期五诗社). Through this there poetry circulated to other parts of China and the poetry of Lü appeared in unofficial journals, such as Nanjing's *Them* in 1985. In 1990, Lü left Fuzhou for New York and Mankato, Minnesota, where his then wife was living. For the next few years, he spent half the year in New York and half in Mankato. Today he no longer goes to Minnesota, but divides his time between Fuzhou and New York.

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## A Night at Wojiao and a Woman [沃角的夜和女人]

Wojiao, the name of a fishing village  
land formed like the sole of a fisher's foot  
fan-like bathed in water  
when a black shirt stitched full of clouds and stars billows out of the sea  
Wojiao, this small night has fully fallen

People sleep early, let the salt sow its smell outside their windows  
since nightfall on the nearby sea surface fishing lights  
mark the nets in the sea, they've been waiting a thousand years  
but the vast night, the interminable wailing of the children  
make this place seem devoid of adult supervision

People are sound asleep, the children cry no more  
Wojiao's small night cries no more  
amidst this bliss everything is smiling the frothy smile of waves  
this is the most amazing time, Wojiao  
no more a voice gently nudging the man beside her  
"Time to put out to sea"

## Father and I [父亲和我]

Father and I  
we walk shoulder to shoulder  
The autumn rain lets up a little'  
it's as if years have passed  
since the latest rainfall

We walk in the respite  
between rains  
shoulders clearly touching  
but not a word to say

We've just come out of the house  
so there's nothing to say  
a product of a long  
life together  
the sound of dripping like a thin branch breaking

Father's hair is all white already  
like a plum blossom in winter  
but he looks like a spirit  
One can't help but respect it

Still these familiar streets  
and familiar people raise hands in greeting  
with inexpressible kindly feelings father and I  
walk calmly on

## A Gift of Poetry [献诗]

In the field someone is loading grass  
a small horse-cart's gold glitter  
deserted all around  
only he roams and sings

The loader of grass seems to really know  
how to enjoy this stretch of green grass  
he piles it high  
from a distance it looks like a house

An earlier morning breeze blows  
a few stars still flash in the western sky  
before long the grass will be carted away  
to fill the troughs of wintering livestock

Before him is an even bigger stretch of grass  
waiting for his next visit  
waiting for him to remember  
to bend down to its green embrace

## A Tune for Guitar [吉他曲]

That was long ago  
you can't say when  
or where  
it was long ago

It was long ago  
you can't remember  
the exact time and place  
that was long ago

It was long ago  
you can't say from where  
the wind and dates arranged by letter began  
that was long ago

Just like a beautiful reason  
no one can explain  
let joy accompany you  
let pain stay at your side

You mustn't say  
lips are made of clay  
or of words  
when you want to speak

You mustn't say fingers  
when you meet  
and the wind gently blows  
you mustn't say it's cold  
Perhaps things are just this way  
but you mustn't say  
only when a fond memory suddenly rises  
then dwell on it please

## A Severed Branch [断木]

This branch parts company with its tree  
abruptly falling on the roof tiles  
it spills a torrent of green leaves  
a muffled gloomy sound

As it dropped dangerously  
like a long sigh  
the old decaying roof  
clattered for it like a set of gums

I remember I was in my apartment at the time  
frightened, as if somebody had kicked open the door  
alone with the silence I guarded; I felt  
a shower of sand transform it

Neighbor after neighbor comes out to see  
to argue and carry on  
A snowfall last winter  
called forth this curiosity too

But I don't want to go out to talk  
because it's not so beautiful as the snow's premature death  
I only want to wait for it to be silent again  
wait for my room to resume its original state

So let it perch perilously above  
let it dry up in the memory of men  
when I happily get back to work again  
I hear the tree incessantly singing in the wind

**Withered Flowers [枯萎的花朵]**

-- for Xin"

I store the flowers in my room  
they look like so many small clenched fists  
as I bustle about  
they pull on my jacket.  
These friendless precious flowers of mine.

I part them one by one  
like combing hairs.  
I want to carefully distinguish  
their petals which have been moistened by the wind.  
These precious lonely flowers of mine.

They wither  
heads droop, so disheartened  
the faint sheen of their stems  
still endures the sky  
complains of the sorrow of soil.

These precious lonely flowers of mine –  
once accompanied me through life  
I put them in a window  
and they were stored hearts full of sunlight  
until that heart went under  
until the drying up of a sea  
exposed its stones and mud.

They must wither  
must die, already they feel no pain  
they look so peaceful  
their heads are so heavy in my hands  
only in death do they demonstrate this kind of weight  
when I store them in my room  
when we tardily, painfully part.  
These precious lonely flowers of mine.

**King of the Crickets [蟋蟀之王] September 1987**

On lonely star-filled summer nights  
if someone hears a cricket  
that's my name when I'm sleeping  
if someone runs across a great river  
to retrieve years and months already passed  
that's the green-clad cricket king

Dusk leaps into my eyes  
this's also the sound that with the joy of sleep  
at the return to the heart of the cricket, makes people remember spring days  
set off against a silence seemingly possessing  
a crown of innumerable stars  
because I'm the green-clad cricket king

After deep deliberation, today  
the stars in the sky release their rays of light for me  
a never ending clean bright light  
just like a river that only the heart can touch  
flowing through antiquity's sacred home  
because I'm the green-clad cricket king

A once overturned kingdom  
tastes the fresh breath of freedom  
the initial instant of shock is like a lover  
like the blind self-indulgent release of all contents of every pore  
and every subtle experience approaches the realm of perfection  
because I'm the green-clad cricket king

Who can stop my sound from existing in shadows  
who can stick a hand into the ashes of my thoughts and  
see my hands barely occupying a stretch of nothing  
disappointed at my actual non-existence  
and that everlasting tree-shade merely signifies defeat or disappearance  
because I'm the green-clad cricket king

Poems of Death [死亡之诗] (selections from a cycle of 12 poems) December 1987

#1

Passing through loneliness takes the form of passing through loneliness  
late autumn's smell issues out of speechless parched mud  
the quiet of nightfall like a backwater, transcendent  
dropping sealed suggestions or the joy of sucking

Sharing everything with the dark yet ripe with possibility  
I hear a ladder grow out of the garden  
taller than a tree, more long-lasting than a lifetime  
therefore I probably have some choice or don't know what to do

On account of time. I'll outlast myself  
like clay pottery, bright and clean like the flesh of amethyst  
and at the fingertips of inspiration is moonlight  
carrying the silence and mildness of November

I see my crops stretch out of sight, at least  
I can still stay for a while and not depart  
watching the night, the soon to be harvested face  
watching the dawn over there, millions of ears gathered into a cathedral

#### #4

For this reason, death doesn't use time but uses death  
in proving itself -- what you see and hear  
is merely death, not a beginning or an end  
nor a burden put down by someone after passing through things

Death transmitted simultaneously to all ears  
by a dead man -- death doesn't even need news  
only death to arrive at your dinner table, to arrive  
on the dice you energetically throw in the moonlight

You feel the weight of a stone  
you're a stone -- this is death  
not needing time but death itself  
to verify the charm of a person's disappearance

It'll be as if you stood up to introduce yourself and suddenly  
not know who you are -- this is death  
while you still find it hard to believe  
you've already become a person beyond your own startled incredulity

#7

A white room. Father, please tell me  
when you begin to sleep what do you hear  
I stand guard over your body for a long time, driving off the dark  
listening to the deep silence over the entire region that you are

Please tell me, father, during this latter half of my life  
how far must my tongue travel to meet up with you  
perhaps a future wind will make us forget  
but you feel all alone among the falling leaves over there

Tell me, the birthplace of your spreading white hair  
there the gravediggers are digging, overjoyed  
but how does death hold a drifting cloud in check  
and make it vanish quietly on the mountain's back

I feel so close to your heart, so suddenly  
and so you stop the noise of your leaves  
did you see me when I rushed in  
only putting aside my age, a son outside of reality

O, father, please bring me back a little sound, tell me  
what is it you hear when sleep begins  
also your shadow, that rejected old-age of yours  
the shadow of an echo that can never be exceeded again

## #8

But father, this is the time you would take your siesta  
close the door tightly -- this was so important  
keep quiet -- today its importance is in crying  
like a butterfly aggrieved by its lost shadow

Who comes looking for you now, which  
unavoidable moment is looking for you  
in the empty space left behind by you, that after-noon  
door is so like your final missing cough

You definitely have a crowded place to go to again  
it became a final pleasure as you approached old age  
so many dead acquaintances roam there  
carrying similar bird cages in their hands

However, somebody's blocked out before snoring sounds  
on the highway trucks shake the window glass down  
Father, what kind of life is this, I hear death  
still in the city's noise everywhere imitating your sleep

## #10

The cold remaining on my fingers, makes me probe your skin again  
just as substantially as china and its daily uses  
when the sunlight and its movement turns all that was  
to water, and will soon depart

Your sleep is so light, as if it's vanishing at all times  
boats moored there transport no more  
it seems there are more people wanting to cross there, their  
shoes abandoned on the bank once shouted loudly

You don't need health anymore, you've shaken off this dirty word  
you've broken away from the world sealed in a gauze mask behind you  
you've cast off moonlight, this antique insane asylum  
in its empty space overgrown with vines a mysterious window was once lit

Since you persist like this in your internal darkness  
forming an almost impossible reality, I'm not sad  
only let me at least listen closely to you for a time, I'm so close to you  
and stroke your icy cold china

## #11

Things have' become so certain -- you  
won't come back. The house is empty  
uncertainty is certain -- you're moving  
a branch still not entirely dead

There is certainly a part of you accepting this, aimed  
at a book and reading slowly, biting into a word  
firmly gripping its meaning between your teeth, making it continue  
until it ends in your final mouthful of phlegm

Right between your pupil and your eyelid  
the night's habitual movements are sliding down, being enlarged  
already blocking the stimulants in front  
and wincing away from an ineffable required meeting

And so, it's better to say that in your heart you understand  
your innocent expression only carries a little timidity  
your innocent face has finally experienced death  
this once in a lifetime death

**The Fox within the Fox [狐狸中的狐狸] September 1988**

You'll probably come to me here  
you don't know whether I'm here or not  
as usual, you're prepared to wait  
the interior of your actions seem to have  
long possessed a conventional thoroughfare

I'm accustomed to hiding on the other road too  
by your side, behind silent flowers  
today, it's so easy to feel myself  
no longer yours, merely a runaway fox  
within your fox

My eyes really see you  
when my surroundings can only be proven hypothetically  
they have already swept past the door  
and again I'm so easily overjoyed  
at my physical reappearance

**My Hand [我的手]** March 1989

I don't know why, but suddenly I'm thinking of my hand  
as before I'd inexplicably remembered  
the smoke of the chimney on the roof (it's like an illusion)  
if it happens once it'll happen again

Now I'm thinking of my hand  
feel that it's being is so unperturbed  
here it sits, in its depths  
and is so easily moved

On the surface of its weight it appears terribly important  
it is its own reason for being  
it turns slowly into an appropriate position  
and still stays in touch with all changes

It's plainly connected to many fragile matters  
when we're all tired of one kind of exchange and make the distant party wait  
with a shock it always finds the common points between us  
and in damaged places makes us whole again

## The Way It Is [事实的经过]

Maybe a darkness always wavers over the day.  
Maybe a reconstituted rain is about to fall again.  
Maybe there's only one road home for us all.  
Most likely this is how all facts play out.

Here, perhaps, we deviated from the facts long ago –  
In the night our real house is damp  
but tomorrow I'll approach it with another kind of dampness  
carrying unprecedented feelings of loss.

Perhaps, in reality I can't possibly spell out a boundary.  
Loving you but repelling myself a thousand miles away.  
Each minute imagined to be more complicated than the first.  
When I try to open the door, my aim is to close it.

What else can I tell you. Maybe maybe  
when I write poetry because of multiple expressions  
one word cripples the foot of another, and finally  
can't help but come back on crutches --  
totally without meaning  
Come and explain this for me

**Frozen Doors [冻门]** March 1, 1991 / March 17, 1992

In the town, a long abandoned adobe house  
my impression is that it's no more than shoulder high, seven eight rooms  
all open to the sky, just the place  
for truant children, they run here  
moving stones in and one by one throwing them out  
whoever's hit, whoever has bad luck, is you now  
slipping in alone, everyone searches room by room  
unfound, they simply explore them with stones thrown  
into every corner, or pray for rain  
let it drive the rabbit from its burrow, in a moment it'll be in your grasp  
but it's your father who comes, and you who flee  
father's power is silence. Strange to say  
he only stops briefly, and you immediately reveal yourself

Winter: snow falls everywhere, boundless,  
the doors freeze; only shutting up half-rooms  
later they vanish, shoulder-high, all buried in snow  
try to differentiate, here and there unrecognizable  
maybe this is nature's wind and snow  
imitating a child's game, when the children sleep  
the house becomes a tomb, what we think  
are rooms, now are only a stretch of nothing  
everywhere difference no longer exits, and you must let go  
already you've grown up. This is what your father says  
sitting at the dinner table. Near and far allover town  
people offer advice. But I'm not that child  
long ago in my dreams the doors broke open on their own

**Two Different Colored Lumps of Clay [两块颜色不同的泥土] 1992 (selections)**

**#1**

Two different colored lumps of clay to be made into pottery –  
what to do? One red one black both cracked  
on the surface two colors unfamiliar with each other  
yet between them exists an expectation  
as real as my pulse, but not entirely  
that sort of reality. For me, they only  
produce illusions on my hands, seeking common ground  
dreaming of becoming one. And this is precisely love's start  
in this regard, there're more than a thousand happy feelings in my heart  
my silence is an ample silence, beside me still  
a cup a table, plain and pure --  
Hoo, god only knows the sort of tendency this is  
an adhesive quality a dampness a weight  
to be used to bring about an outward form, or  
because of their inherent magic, again, in some way  
we'll lose our way in a congenital illusion

### #3

This happened yesterday, given me by my pottery-master himself  
I have words of appreciation to carefully relate:  
In days to come a lump of red a lump of black will rise into the sky  
I know what's hidden behind labor  
but I'd rather make this sort of analogy with clay:  
They are white days and black nights, dreams and wakefulness  
a bestowal of form, the clay in the clay  
more long-lasting than the fact of birth. And so  
there my line of vision can temporarily disappear  
my hand also finds memories because of this, although  
distance still exists, and it still brings much blindness  
And so, my hand will leave me to be itself  
unearthing life's meaning with its accustomed persistence and depth  
until, they're like hands that exist entirely independently  
mastering shape, and laying aside all interpretations

## #8

Maybe the whole problem is in the clay itself  
they're just as real as my pulse  
they temporarily leave me but don't entirely go  
I rest in the area they leave for me  
here I still have many things that always  
maintain a similar area from sleep, by way of my hand they'll also  
begin from a nearly non-existent starting point, and in the same way  
our love will make our fantasies of stars concrete  
we're still choosing to be near, including what we've said  
the words we've used (Hey, a word is a direction)  
and we've said, two different colored lumps of clay  
one red one black will rise into the sky in days to come  
Hey, god only knows the kind of tendency this is  
Hey, a word is a direction, a pair of hands  
it is an island returning to its origins (still with its blind nature intact)  
and each direction will converge and become, becoming  
the forever attentively listening manner when we face that sky

**The Thaw [解冻]** January 28, 1993

A stone is seen to remain on the mountain  
it won't roll down; this is a lie  
Spring, I saw it start to really move  
And two summers ago on a higher mountain top  
I was on guard against its slightest movement  
Shadow on the ground, its suspicious strut  
Not like in dreams, in dreams it holds me down  
or drives me to tumble into a vacant unpeopled world  
And now there are packs of lizards everywhere  
running away, as if with the stone's every move  
there's a voiceless incantation  
commanding you to vanish out of the world, carrying  
your body's spots of light and traces of snow  
And once the stone calls out, the plants rustle  
its long foretold lunatic quality  
and its stoney age and stubbornness  
will immediately appear, and begin to leap up again  
Now you can say no more: go on  
stay there. You should dodge out of its way  
You'll see, an entirely insensate stone  
sometimes there sometimes not, broken in two in the middle of things  
Finally a hungry thirsty tribe of them  
gathers with a thud on the mountain's foot  
in a stream. This is the life of a stone  
when they roll on the mountain, I see them  
one drops straight down, into terraced fields  
one on the steps of the mountain path  
one that's shattered itself, in the deep dark grass  
rises up, smooth and round, in the midst  
of soft sighs, a lithe blue shadow  
dampens grass-tops like drops of fresh blood  
I believe spring, with its dizzy love, will stand watch  
over it, sunlight as its birthplace will provide warmth  
the stars will guide, tell it of wind and rain  
of roof tops, those that in our dreams  
has eyes painted on them  
and those truths we do not know  
And it's precisely these, only then can we know the mountain slope  
is thawing, and miss calamity

**The Joy of a Mountain Range [群山的欢乐] March 1993**

This endless mountain range has our music  
a beautiful motionless tree  
a burning fallen angel  
its wings will melt, drip on  
the pile of stones. Because of this  
we can hear peaks surging in the night, pitch black  
and falling into their original positions during the day, heads bowed to their fate  
We can also hear stones on mountaintops duplicate  
emit starlight. And these past millennia  
the huge boulder pressed under the roots of the mountains  
in the dark, like an overturned altar  
a fitting quantity of water is poured across its surface .....  
fulfilling time. But in not so long a time  
these things will all dissolve into nothing  
the music we seek so laboriously will disappear  
once again we'll lie together  
accept the caresses of dreams  
she cares for our bodies  
wants to guide us back to the cradle  
she even has prayers appropriate to stones  
that tumble down mountains, making them return to mountains once more  
and renew their stoniness, Hey! stones  
we've heard: lay them one on top of the other right here .....  
the you and I of this springtime

## Mankato [曼惜陀]

(Selections from a cycle of 30 poems) November 1992 - March 1993  
Mankato, Wisconsin

### #1

Mankato, a lot of snow fell one day, the town snow  
like a church in the small place, rang the evening bell of the holiday

It's already piled up to the second step. But no one no one  
stood to say this is unseasonal

"Suppose it's winter now, a thick coat of snow  
have to shovel it off as usual, pile it to both sides"

But nobody's listening, only old Mr. Sun  
talking to himself as he pushes the plates away .....

There's always someone else who'll do it ..... no one really cares  
this old line, is it a refusal or a declaration

It's just that Mr. Sun's swollen red eyes see a pair  
of angels wrestling in the snow

Wings undamaged, and a sudden breeze  
wakes him, in the warm seclusion of dreamland

#2

Everyday, there're always those who wake up earlier than expected  
becoming the people we meet when we go out

There're always people starting the day earlier, but  
before long, they go to sleep again

Everyday, when Mr. Sun's swept the snow by the door  
the day seems to return to yesterday

Yo, I'm saying that I can't understand it  
when Mr. Sun was alive, how did he

live. By the trellis in the back of the garden  
miraculously he caught up with my father

Shouting that he wants to go away and raise bees away off somewhere, already  
he has a partner, doesn't wait for my father to say nay

He's already out over the waves, casting his nets  
in the moonlight, like an amnesiac

Someone who likes to make jokes, he springs out  
of his own story, walks in from this house of eternity

### #3

When Mr. Sun moved the boat out from the shadow of trees  
there was a fair size dent in the snow

Now, we turn over his body  
hoping there's a letter underneath. Nothing

Perhaps the letter's already melted, taking advantage  
of this blundering snow. The words blur

Possibly there were never words. Mr. Sun,  
naturally, had no control over this brand of beauty. He couldn't have done himself in

At this first snowfall, when Mr. Sun pushed the boat  
into the water he was shocked for he seemed to hear

a virgin sigh, as if from all his vast  
emptiness and grievance in the house

A sea child when he came ashore  
he was destined to be carried away forever

by the sound of a refusal to go home

#### #4

In the latter part of November  
what can we do .....

We're in our quilted cavern  
showing off its flaming red

The endless painfully brief American night  
in a place called Mankato

In a room, Mr. Sun couldn't get used to  
the solitude here, when the light

scattered over the snow like salt, Mr. Sun  
screamed in his room

Like a wind-chime ringing by the door  
he rattled his stubborn guardian of sleep

Sensing the amnesiac in our dreams  
while we sleep, the boat

needs someone to help bailout water and snow  
in that spot not far off-shore

## #10

Once, and only once, I sat down  
to write a poem, and Mr. Sun came in

"How do you write poetry," he asked "Is it the same as fishing"  
if only it were, I thought

One day, I walked to his boat, after all  
he'd agreed a little more experience would do me good

Out at sea, a squid was dying in the water  
sparkling and crystal-clear, like the air

also, just like the small floating  
country church, heavy-hearted and silent

I asked Mr. Sun to stop hauling in the net, but when I looked back  
I only saw a black mist spreading in the water, a patch of panic

The inkfish had fled, like a Judas  
poetry's the same, poetry betrays you

Takes advantage of the mud at the bottom of the soul

## #11

On some days, Mr. Sun's house  
rises imperceptibly up a floor

"Where'd you learn this" I cross over  
and smoothly toss him up a brick

A bricklayer bending down to cloud's edge  
on top of a pyramid of a house

When he set the horizontal beams, I took a day off  
and helped him hold a thick rope

I imagined how crucifixes were propped up in their time  
a god's palace is erected like this too

"All that's left to do is the roof" I say:  
"Do you want me again tomorrow"

An amnesiac, a joker  
now he's left us behind

And this stretch of void and hopeless space

## #12

The dance of the snowflakes will soon end  
the final gesture of a mute season

Its place will be taken by the speech of another  
mute. The first nearly negligible rainfall

creates a dim sight:  
on my desk, a stone

It's disappearance sudden and graceful  
by the sea, the water washes out Mr. Sun's eyes

Scarcely there this spring rainfall  
today, as we stand by our door

I'm astonished by my premonitions .....  
but now Mr. Sun comprehends none of this

Neither did he leave behind in the snow that letter  
under his heavy body, on the table

## #14

Today's a holiday for our stone mason neighbor  
in the silence an everlasting transaction is underway

At the door, a bashful cow stands firm  
letting a bull, led in out of a strange land, get her scent

I ask the two owners: Why do this  
their answer's unanimous: a cracking of whips

As with two familiar rooves  
coitus beneath a flash of lightening

Once twice, separated by  
a silence like rolling thunder .....

Because of this Mr. Sun's face once drowned in tears  
when the bull stood off, brim full of fears

Left behind the illusory cow  
forgot its daily labors

The face of the stonemason that remained unmoved  
put on a brief smile, just like

A toad in a May vegetable plot

## #19

In the same way, suppose that one morning we  
could descend to the bottom of the sea, like stealing into a church

But we don't want the proselytizing air, we  
breathe freely, surrounded by the light of star-fish dormant for a thousand years

As discoverers we will come upon Mr. Sun once more  
a recomposed soul, he almost doesn't recognize us

He says there's another world over our heads  
and we've never lived there

His words froth. But we try to understand him  
at least we ascend together, until we arrive in a new day

In an astronomical sense, there the stars are stars  
coarse and real, similar to a star: the wolf of heaven

Grey as a wolf it can only wash over a face with its ashen light  
and those mysterious blacked-out words, Mr. Sun can read them

## #20

Think about it, how that day we  
pushed through a wall of people to identify Mr. Sun .....

This person who once told us to wait  
this person who journeyed over the surface of the sea day and night

But never knew the nature of water, his posture  
has been put right, shifted off the rotted plank

To a table top, by way of a conclusion  
Oh, yesterday god made a Mr. Sun

Today he bends another down to our knees  
and towards these plain ordinary affairs of the world

Having the ear of a conch now, Mr. Sun is even smiling  
like a boy in his boyhood

He is even whole to the touch, the skin  
of the sea leaving behind a film of salt

## #23

Still the small town, transformed from a village  
earlier, it was probably only a gesture

Mr. Sun had liked living here. And those stones  
ten thousand years ago they'd changed from flowers, or at least before we ever

opened our mouths to speak. Like an old wall calendar  
the sea is still above the table, keeping track of holidays

And looking from the roof, just now my mother is coming down from the mountaintop shrine  
leaving Mr. Sun's wife alone there

And my father brings along a beekeeper relation  
essentially a man who is a Mr. Sun

But whose face is that of an entirely unknown drifter  
father speaks to him ..... and then

Everything is wordless. Rain is still rain  
the definite being of the rain generates March

And March is my birth-month

## #24

What is void of any sense and fading out  
is the black cloud over the small town

It doesn't even have a shape, it's incomparably oppressive  
passing its days without speaking .....

But it owns everything, owns the same hours  
as us. Today, when father

on the roof sweeps out the chimney, and gets sooty all over  
I understand his love for the world

But someone is playing a joke on him, they hide the ladder  
the arrangement is that he go on to sweep leaves out of the joints between tiles

Then they'll let him down. At that very moment I was in the street  
roving round, I saw him in the distance tired and dirty

Stuck in a stretch of shimmering scenery, ape-like,  
alarmed arms splayed out helplessly

#27

Summer, we sit on the concrete steps of the pier  
body curled a boy jumps, hands gripping kneecaps

Just as we've seen in our mother's womb  
when he fell into the water, up splashed a world of water flowers

My old father has already swum out. He's dodged the first danger  
with his just learned stroke, clumsily

He still can't raise a hand out of the water. He treads it furiously  
only able to just stay buoyant

Watching his lower jaw clench, I tense up  
normally he stands alone where ever he has enough room to do so

With a long wide towel rubbing his back, neck and armpit hair  
and his skin that's blue under water

Now he's stabilized, because I'm beside him,  
I say: The summer solstice is here, we've lots of time

He swims farther off ..... but nothing, not a thing changes  
still clumsy and heavy, until the day he dies

Until I take his hand  
placing it within the weight of a hand

## #28

Think of the benefits our breaking open  
of this pond will bring in future days

Father and Mr. Sun, in the backyard  
a pool of standing water provided them with rich fancies

Later the spillage of rainwater made them whole .....  
remember them digging it out, moving the dirt elsewhere

Leaving the water behind, and why not  
we've got lots of land, besides

Winters are longer than summers here .....  
remember the snow, ice forming, when we woke up

On the pond under the setting sun, groups of children  
sliding towards the boundless inertia of night, returning

All are adults, behind them more children  
more light, and father and Mr. Sun

continued to dig in just this sort of light  
not straightening up to take a breather until they have struck roots of trees and bones .....

The world doesn't change that much.

## #29

Right now, bare-foot I step into this broad  
mud hole, the sea's already retreated to its most distant point

Right now I stand on a height once submerged under the sea  
I'm a person waiting to be surveyed

I also think this a temporary evacuation of the sea  
and it's mocking my view from the vantage point of distance

I think of those mountaintop shrines  
like perception, tangled in mist

A gaze into the distance. I think the world needs this  
I hide my shoes in a secret place on shore

But miraculously children get hold of them  
..... like the poor broken boat, like Mr. Sun

Left behind, when the children steal them  
soon discarded in another place

And this abandonment is perfectly proper

### #30

Traces of honey bee hibernation and  
the tiger stripes of bees

Forests, hands, islands and  
all seldom seen things

I must take that day  
as a permanent farewell

Tonight, like pushing aside a book I must  
gently close it as if it were the eyes

of god, remove it from reality  
like our bee-keeper relative's hands

This pair of dun hands sublime  
once conquered fear. These hands

are today encircling swarms of bees. Traces of honeybee  
hibernation and the tiger stripes of bees