

The Poetry of Wang Yin 王寅

Selections: 1982-1994

Wang Yin was born in 1962 in Shanghai. Wang was an active contributor to unofficial poetry journals in Shanghai during the 1980s (such as *On the Sea* 海上, *Continent* 大陆, and *Tendency* 倾向), and was also an early member of and contributor to the Nanjing-based *Them* 他们 journal. He also contributed to the Sichuan journals *Han Poetry* 汉诗, *Image Puzzle* 象罔, *The Nineties* 九十年代, and the 1992-1993 issues of *Not-Not* 非非. Despite his high reputation in unofficial circles, Wang did not have an officially published poetry collection until January 2005. He is still writing poetry today, and is married to Lu Yimin.

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Remembering a Czech Film Unable to Recall its Name [想起一部捷克电影想不起片名]

November 1982

A wet cobblestone street
a wet Prague
on a corner in a park a girl kisses you
you do not even blink
later confronting the muzzles of guns it was like this too
The party's praetorian guards wearing raincoats inside out
like bright leather overcoats
three-wheel motorcycles drive past
When you and friends fell the rain was still falling
I saw one raindrop and then another
on a power line pursuing
finally falling on the cobblestone road
I think of you
lips move
nobody sees

We Are Such a Success [我们如此成功] 1983

We are such a success
dropping from high dive towers
the inside lining of nylon parachutes a stretch of black
We are such a success
passing through sundeck railings passing over bird nests
onto the mountain opposite
nor do bullets shrink back open bottles of alcohol too
We are such a success
so successfully stand on this bleak lunar surface
The poet Gary Snyder
sits at the end of that mountain path
colorless dim we can't clearly see whether he
still has sideburns
he takes off his shoes dumps out some dust
the sand blows away with the wind
a crow a head of black hair blown by the wind
We are such a success so successfully
we feel people have been beasts since birth

A Recitation [朗诵] 1983

I am not a person who can recite poems
and make everybody cry
but I can use my words
to move the blue walls surrounding me
when I walk out on stage, the audience is
black birds, wings cushioned on
open red-cover notebooks and handkerchiefs
This I see every morning Every morning I see this
Thank you all
Thank you everybody the winter still loves a poet

Robert Cape [罗伯特 卡巴]

(1913-1954, LIFE photo-journalist) 1984

A battlefield photojournalist says to me
rain's stopped
Really, we came out of the restaurant on the corner
and the rain stopped
there was only wind

But on the Mekong delta it rained all the time
three weeks later he died there
died in the black rainy season
On his face there was never a scar
none
Finally when he fell under a banana tree
also none
His left hand gracefully clutching a camera as if
holding his own right hand
softly a dark green leaf
flashes on black leather boots a black jacket

When he and I came out of the restaurant
after the rain in the sky
there was a dark brown spot
like a button on Cape's jacket
but neither of us said a thing

Africa [非洲]

Night on the brink of the seashore
a palm tree
suddenly dreams itself
changed into
a man holding a knife
a campfire
a lion

In the morning waking he saw
a lion
a pile of ashes
one dead

Walt Whitman [华尔特 惠特曼]

He is now in my front yard chopping firewood
He should make sound
like sunlight that way
I have to squint to see him
He should make sound
not obscurely chew a leaf of tobacco
also not a butterfly
seasoning soup or a plate
falling under an oak in Louisiana
He should make sound
chopping firewood is best
stand in my front yard chopping wood ding-ding dang-dang
like sunlight that way
pure and proud
We all squint to see him

A Night in Conversation with the Poet Bly [与诗人勃莱一夕谈]

In the night's light grass is very deep
for a long time no human trace
for a long time I never thought of you
your isolated chin twinkles
like that red star in the sky

Besides the night I must also silently sit in the deep grass
intertwine my fingers
so as to forget the approach of dawn
to forget I have parted from books for many years

A white horse gallops head-on at me, a white butterfly
tramples over insect sounds firefly light

Outside My Room It Seems to Rain Everyday [好像每天室外在下雨] 1985

Everyday outside my room it seems to rain, studying
burying my head in books
never again can I be conquered by whoever

Books have already become books, I have already died too
long months and years, all have gone a little gray
they all are a little sad

Like the bristle of a dark-color bird arranged neat and tidy
everyday outside my room it seems to rain, deep in thought
now what do they duck their heads to do

If You Can Write Poetry, That's Not Bad [能写出诗就不错] 1985

If you can write poetry, that's not bad
who cares what's good what's right
five months not combing my hair
there are always a few weeds
consider yourself lucky if your incisors have not fallen out

Nor am I a painting
night and day day and night picked at by people
living is enough
living one doesn't have to be like Robbie Burns
I do not feel a thing when I plow over a chrysanthemum

A Person [一个人]

A person at leisure is like morning rain in front of the gate
smell the light green wooden partition
wave your hand, pat the low wall
this is all of responsibility

The right knee has an injury
then you should give up
skiing on slopes

This world is an affair outside the window
eyesight only reaches to fingertips

Climbing a mountain is even more of a high hope
lifting a bed up onto a stage is already enough

A person cuts with both hands, seems to hear a sobbing sound
sink into a deep sea
fish scales shimmer
only their own kind can see

A Walnut Poem [核桃之诗] 1985

Following an abandoned rail-line you can walk alone for a long time
trees and water flow grow and do not stare at the sky

At the end of a tunnel there is a hard fruit
me, and you
cannot enter

Of course this cannot be a walnut
smashing a walnut
is like reading a good poem
the crisp clean sound of the hard shell shattering
the sound of a river flowing

Blood illuminates sunlight
What has he smashed

A Flowering Walking Stick [开花的手杖] May 1986

You read to me a poem written by
a man to his wife, and I listen
so entranced
this makes it clear that the war is already over
and not that there is something now starting anew

The wind is already weak, birds pull in their wings
I still attentively listen
hearing something still blackening
still navigating under the moon
sailing under green grass
fresh air like a glass of ice water

Beneath the north's horizon, snowmen
like a constellation
flash

Important Matters [重要的事情] July 6, 1986

Important matters always start from the left
a hand of folded paper
has always cherished a great ambition
to write a book on a bed sheet
the other hand holds an Adam's apple of folded paper
without any expression
a satisfying work
poured into boiling coffee

Following this path too many become people
too many grow into birds and hurt feelings
the shadow under the stairs is always somewhat longer than summer
the dance arrayed beside this is a light color
the courtyard is first class too

Fallen trees lying east to west
steadily open the only body they have

The Red Hotel [红色旅馆] 1986

Following my death, after
I am dead, I saw them on my bookshelves
casually looking
leafing through my collection of books

You see, just as they flick their cigarette ash
they spit out one or two funny lines
tug at the turned-up collars of windbreakers

You see I wait in a little black box
a black book of poetry
a black planet
cold and outlandish

You see, they so naturally
beat this black color with pistols

The first few seconds are silent
you see the wind opens the door to the room
you see all their white eyes .sticking close the green wall collapse
you see their blood stained on shoes
then on the floor stepped on

Melancholy [忧郁] 1986

Unease is the form of the saddle
behind there are no waves
when we are too rushed
when fingers bend
normally
already we are not jockeys

The black night is like rain
but we are not soaked
the day is kinder to you and me
on a summer table you sink deep into sleep
I put a glass of water by your side
you will trek along a river
you will calm the water as it was before

And I in another room
fill each cup with water
like plucking fruit after transparent fruit
all afternoon doing only this
the river water waits for us
waits for green water
waits for a big whale to spout flowery vines
the water will wait for us

We will dry out before the water does

A Story of the Eastern District [东区故事] 1986

The weekend you and me in a cafe, you and me
reside high above the big trees in the heart of the street
the black rooves of Shanghai like your hair
soft and within reach

Already I don't have to tell you the way here
already no need to pray
you are beside me
we are above the tall trees in the heart of the street

Night like a stepladder passes overhead
descends
does not want the day, so seize it

Continue [继续] 1986

A canal behind
the pasture shrinks
some more trees
the sea
closer
poems already seldom cold
death, should be happier should have more
trifles, such as
a brief sleep at noon in the wind
like a sail hanging aslant
as I in your dream
hang overhead upside-down, clothed and asleep
out of your dresser mirror
appears
my hope for a hundred years
like blue sea anemone
occupied by handkerchiefs, books, a table
and waves around a wood

A Man Drops Out of Midair [一个人从半空中落下] 1986

A man drops out of midair
what will he see

Fragments of hawks
rivers blackened by the sun
blue volcanic chains of mountains
burning automobiles
a white flight of stairs like the flashing ridges of rooves
a square in the end he will die in the square there
on the square from a distance watching him
a large flock of gray and white pigeons
it could also be children
before this they too were watching this way

A man drops out of midair
a stone falls down

You Told Me the Image of the Dead [你告诉了我死者的形象]

You told me the image of the dead
your eyes
still twinkle with the light of a summer morning
I gaze at you, wring my hands
what else can I say
everybody has their own moment of sorrow
we went to the graveyard five kilometers away
no one said a thing
what is worth celebrating is not our living
but that between the cracks of our fingers
only a week of winter remains
Winter is also a season, a night
all of us wearing black cotton-lined coats
around a stove

A Minor Injury [一点小伤]

The injury did not occur then but later the entire time after
While answering question after question
following behind person after person going up and down the stairs
tearing away the bandages layer upon layer
this is a minor hurt a minor injury under the winnowing of a black ceiling fan
a little red violet blue injury
a minor hurt the pain came later
a little hurt lying on the bed knees not able to bend dreams of tulips in a meadow also brown
butterflies after a breeze they also are lonely also read poems after the breeze
those that enjoy sleep all sleep
a bit of a minor injury a minor hurt sleep and not death
suffering an injury is also a kind of life
spending the afternoon lying down is really not so bad at that

To A Local Poet [致一位本地诗人]

On a train to the island you are on, I come to see you
in this land of sunlight
you still stay in the depths of your board shack
under the table your legs tightly crossed
your expression grave
fingers slender and dry

In the dark
your eyes naked, no shadows
and your vacant four walls
after the rain black-green tree leaves flash cold light

I find I have already been hung up high
suspended between you and the land
to walk on your board shack
is bound to be like walking on thin ice
during a moment without people, dawn or dusk
your hair like waves blown out by the wind
crosses a shore of shingle
steady, spry, you
like an open book
fly away

The Intruder [闯入者]

The intruder is always to one side
stretching in under the door like the carpet next door
crawling toward the four walls
like a door opening inward

A fan leisurely fluttering
the flames of a summer day
someone else's hair
handwriting on paper
needles in a box
a fifth chair in front of the dinner table
a severed hand
can not find the rest of itself
the unseeable face of the intruder
like the abstruse innards of a clock

Simultaneous with stillness
there is an even quieter sound
moving nearer

I always stare with expectation
at the clean inner wall of a cup

at any time the strings of the instrument are drawn

The Kafka Hospital [卡夫卡病院]

String, souls and black magic are packed in their case histories
a case history has a special postal route
bone ash climbs out from large chimney-stacks
the bird that climbs out has red tail markings
one hundred thousand slaughter houses wail like a song
as a song's melody in a long corridor gathers and reverberates
then squeezes out a skylight and grows into a wind
roaming over the wilderness
the pupils of eyes split generations of beetles and flies
horseflies keep close watch on the sun
gears protrude from the sun too
with each turn
there is a shoal of fresh red dreams
running over beards of wheat
with each punch the rubber walls grow half a foot
the shadow bounces up onto the ceiling
facing a crack in the wall somebody takes off his pants
beyond the wall the wall says come in, anyway it's all the same
without sickness patients groan are released sick
from a sewer line the case histories
turn toward another ward

Kafka's Way [卡夫卡的方式]

The cornering vehicle tilts to one side
you take a strong grip of the armrest you alone feel a burst of outward force
this is why why only you grasp the armrest
why only you feel the centrifugal force
one day the mirror also tilts to one side; happily the whole house
revolves, then it is Kafka and you
why this is only you know

A door at the base of the lane temple is half open
another door is half open too
this is also why this is as somebody told you
what is Kafka in hunter's garb Kafka in the sound of a bell
sand Kafka black Kafka peanut Kafka
why they want to tell you this and not something else
why this is this only you know

From underwater you see a person is not a tree
but the bark peels off and this is you
what does this show, you shiver when it is not cold, split
like a burst of red rain anxious rain
Kafka's rain
why is it again you and Kafka Kafka and you
why this is this only you know

If you live very happily then live
if living you might become stupid very content with your lot not daring to mount an overpass
then this is why Kafka is dead and you still live
Kafka lives then you die
dead and still baring teeth when you smile
and this is why you and Kafka Kafka and you
why this is only you yourself know

The Gardener [园丁]

This garden is full of secrecy

The shrubs and I go forward side by side
intricate seven-toed flowers bloom across my shoulders
birds fly to a height I can not fly to
pine branches angle crosswise
winter days spew a thin blue

The sound of my son
like a little old man
older than me
in the air more rapidly vanishes
than my look

A shriveled orange with no ears
like a dinosaur egg that just crawled up on the riverbank
more oranges
faces askew
like an anonymous master who abandons this and goes

The bird has already flown to the height beyond my reach
I stand on the ground
like a dry well
in invisible places spring trees
quietly grow

Witnesses [目击者]

Step on your shadow
chew your exposed wrists
hot air is exhaled on your neck
the broken base of a bottle cuts your heel
scissors clip your last button

The witness
tugging a fishing rod, strikes the surface of the water
the witness
facing the street in a round-backed chair sips tea
reads a paper, rubs sugar between his fingers
the witness
on a sundeck releases pigeons
gathers the click of an instant

When the pedestrian fell
when the tall building caught fire
just as panic-stricken you remove your glasses
immediately there will be someone to put them on for you

If you also forget yourself
ubiquitous witnesses
will piece you together again in your entirety
more beautiful than at first

Martians [火星入]

They give me cubes of orange ice
a flying ship of the same color
together with me they drink the tea on the table
share cookies in a box
they pick up my books
as if lifting a corner of the air
teach me to walk on flames on water

Just them, these sole three friends of mine
friends flying wild as leaves
like music spread over china
and following the night
beyond a round mirror quietly fade away

Starlight on Teeth [齿上的星光]

A dizzy body
startled awake in exile
starlight on teeth
dispels the raging inferno that has long waited

A spring of incomparable beauty
still in refuge in music
this forever recurring fancy
this young poem's
entire secret and hesitation

Comes from the dead
comes from earrings of snow
and invincible darkness

Analogous [类似]

A local disease, discarded drizzle
a distant fiery scene florid shadows
the head pillowed on hands has no sound or odor

Enforced loneliness, doubled peace
your sole joy differs from
the whole of freedom

The dismal years fall to pieces
fragile strength still is courage
sacrifice caused grief to lose its showiness

Sunlight comes from a tree leaf long asleep
now my eyes are adapting to the light

Saying Too Much is a Menace [说多了就是威胁]

Saying too much is a menace, friend
but do not forget to smile
do not forget the problem is always with the wheels
don't forget the nearly inescapable distress of fellow-travellers
do not let damaged friendship
be hidden that way like a water-stain on a table

Say it, keep an irreplaceable envy
use this hand to conquer
another similarly fierce hand

A penny thrown into the air must have a front and a back
dear friend, saying too much is a menace
speaking correctly, that is death

Get Close [靠近]

Finally I can recall my country
the Yellow River in July
the essence destroyed

In order to remember autumn, we must
once again pass through summer
unpredictable hot days
the season we start to die

We must hand over our wings to the driver of an army pack train
give seed to the world
like rainwater migrate that way
like crickets wail that way
like a key that way
full of desolate implicit meaning

Finally I can recollect my nation
my deerskin gloves. and
a white storm
already without a shadow or trace

A Summer Day Together with Ghosts [和幽灵在一起的夏日]

A summer day together with ghosts
the sunlight bathes sad colors
an inscribed bicycle
goes with a town raised long ago by ancestors

An extreme excess of heroes
tolerance almost destroyed
everyday affairs too painful to endure
ceremonies numbed and inhuman

Major rivers and secondary seas
blend nearly like a dream
too many gods
have already transformed the season into a lie

At dawn an unbridled water lily blossoms
wood pulp soft like a butterfly's wing
ghosts together with a summer day
a wildly beating heart full of worry

Autumn[秋天] Oct. 23, 1991

Sunlight appears in days that are not holidays
the sunlight comes from the direction people have left
gloomy dispirited flies
in similarly exhausted fields
moving with slow small steps

Feeble things, second-rate items for everyday use
wanton extravagance, artful words and reputable appearances
wigs spinning like pinwheels
hot blood surging forward under scalps
winged snowflakes are about to arrive

The first that may enter the tomb
are always budding seeds of chestnut hue
in front of an abstemious door
they halt
and tidy their clothes and hats

A Divine Gift [神賜] Feb. 1, 1992

How will you thank the sunset and genius
how will you treat these political roses
these springs with absolutely no definite views

How will you hear the rebellion of the hour hand
how deal with the fire in paper
the tempestuous river under the city

A vision in a sleeve
passed over reasonable and credible boundaries
the look of a patient and the wild laughter of flags
similar like this
an undertaking as false as this
a concealing as quick as this

Distressed skull bones, the heart of summer day
the fragrance of sorrow, also
the sound of children crying over by the milky way

However can you reply

A Horse Trough at Dawn [黎明的马槽] April 9, 1992

A trough at dawn
like a horse's back
covered by coarse kernels of grain
rubs my neck

I lean on the shore of the eastern sea
put on and take off my gloves
lungs full of the smell of rusting iron
dismal and shameful too

Thunder and lightning flash by, a swallow
black wings disappear at the slightest relaxation
the sea also is only
a simple mysterious dead-end alley

The head pressed into a notch in the trough
like a star come back to life
slowly opens its eyes, gasping blood and water
purifies the life that daily thins ghosts

People Far From The Beach [远离海滩的人们]

Gust after gust of glistening air
blows coal dust toward the surface of the sea
the remains of a boat buried by sandy soil
limbs that cannot be restored
millions of workdays forgotten
on the ocean unwatched
the grief of heroes forever shines

Because [因为]

The nose of language extends toward the sea
the secret finally bares its teeth
a dawn of dissipation on paper
the very image of yet another teaching in an ancient text
a horse with a broken foreleg
on the deck can only
sit and watch the ship's rudder split open a school of fish

Like clay, god represents
the commonest virtue, and sailors
are comatose grains, a life
dismal and brief
a soft fragmented skull mixes with fresh blood

An ancient fly treads the waves
its odor pungent, resolute
its wings dominate to the left and the right of
terror, chance and
a section of a bridge in the soul

A Hot Winter [炎热的冬天]

Why does my era want to oppose me
why twist and break my neck
why does the season I've sung of
want to exterminate me too
why does a dissident smell suffuse the square
natural hostility, inauspicious silence
hypocritical glory, false undertaking
a plot I am entirely unaware of
mixed with a soup spoon

Why has fate placed me in the heart of conflict
why does it want to control my timid soul
exempting me from sobbing
and make me like an ordinary reader
in a library on a shiny table surface frittering away time
why make my heart
become the place that beats slowest on earth

This is why
god is still so kind to me
giving me time to finish reading this all
in this hot winter making me
take the time lost again and again by delay
and pour it all out

Song of Idiocy [白痴之歌]

My name is not important
what is important is that seawater has already gone red
ice cubes are already used up
revolution finally is affirmed
exile has a prototype again

My name is not important
what is important-is the excellent southland
well-defined hues
round-the-clock weak points
quiet without a sound

My name is not important
what is important is that I must choose
a sound inside an echo
what is important is that my eyes are already well-prepared
and my blood is too

The Affairs of Life [生活之事]

Let the living accurately put food in their mouths
let the dead be wrapped in the sole scarf

Let the eye of a needle afraid to seek
pleasure and happiness shrink even smaller
let the tearful part of the years gradually subside
let pain, this trembling flower petal
cover the bright and beautiful world

Like a repentant criminal
a red pencil
sticks into the soft soil of May

Contemporary Poetry or September [当代诗歌或九月]

Hysterical intellect, painful modesty
the number of poems, the archetype of revolution
follow the western path of the setting sun, a long walk
take this unique panacea
until the autumn wind scatters
a season of bumper crops will bring us
up to be meek children

In the depths of the sunlight
misery also blanches

Fearful Esteem [恐惧的尊敬]

A fractured revolution, the power of dogma
has already thrown me into a series of moving prisons
this blow, without a sound
like black head ornaments, like the crest of waves
like the arms of rain
spans the white window lattice

The black night shocks me
daylight makes me tremble
death must be accepted or rejected
ruin is now persuading
the china cup soon to be sold
amid the turbulent flow of fingers

Soaring poems
fly over a tiny winter
in the depths of sunlight
the bones of a bird are of value beyond compare

FROM: **My Friends in Denmark** [我在丹麦的朋友们], a series of nine poems.

#7: The Rossetti Bookstore [罗塞蒂书店]

This is your life

Green tea black coffee
red lips white fingers
colorful lattice windows chinese clay figurines
even more it is English and Spanish conversation
like using two books to converse

This is your life

Shades half raised with the wind, mazes come into being
pale sunflowers
tall green-leaved trees with worried expressions
aside from the sound of them
nobody else will come

This is your life

Books slice bread hair is carved into stela
gentle love
a dead predecessor
an idle paper knife in the shape of a fish
quite like a bird without wings

This is your life

A lock is put on time you pace within
one hand clamped in a closed book
the other hand kept back
in a dream in the dark
strokes a tearless cheek

This is your life

In the weak sound of reading
you always hear your own body
walk up wooden stairs pass over an incessant series of rooftops
vanish inside
a rough net

This is your life

Love [爱情]

A violin in water
a butterfly in water
a finger in water
erratic fluctuations

For a Time an Illusion [一度是幻想]

For a time it was an illusion
for a time a passion

Sometimes it is dimmer than being by the sea
sometimes wearier than today
sometimes subtler than the wind
sometimes flowing farther than my train of thought
sometimes icier than flames
sometimes lengthier than a life
sometimes even brighter and more beautiful than May
sometimes even higher than the sound of a fiddle over a rooftop
sometimes even harder to grasp than tears

The Slope Beyond the Slope [傾斜而上的土坡]

The slope beyond the slope
trees tilting
grow in the same direction

The boat we took
prow wrapped in iron skin
painted a cold color
moored on shore

A solitary light, rain, a blue bug
a cushioned chair
a fractured arm and a shattered heart

All this, also us
and characters in books
all frighteningly alike

More frightening is our story
already shot into a film
no longer between the kind and the good

The mysteries of the universe are all in a walnut
and we can only be outside
a spiral staircase takes us back again to origins

Shadows Start to Tilt in the Afternoon [阴影在午后开始倾斜]

After noon shadows start to tilt
the street warm and wet
sunlight makes fresh flowers
bloom all over the building on the right

A water bottle, the water in the bottle
the room so soft
the air clean
the contours of things clear-cut and prominent

The skin of crickets falls off
pieces of ice melt in the wind
supple thorns
like water slapping faces and hands

Your gentle back
at a corner of a bench
now silent soundless
as if a horse galloped by

Time is behind you
revolving like a sphere
under your skin
there will be mornings, small birds, fruit

I think of you again
because I lose you again
I cannot stop
there is no way to stop

In a mirror of memories I am forever passing through
a pretty sunset
a beautiful evening
watching our raised heads

A feeling an atmosphere
a magnet at the heart of the river
passed through ten thousand points of starlight
there you and I will ascend