

The Poetry of Zhou Lunyou 周伦佑

Selections: 1981-1993

Zhou Lunyou was born in 1952 in Xichang, Sichuan province. Zhou began to secretly write poetry in the early 1970s, and had his first Misty-style poems officially published in 1981. By 1984, however, he had lost interest in the official scene and was concentrating on the modernization of poetics and technique, which led him into Sichuan's unofficial poetry scene. After taking an editorial role in the publication of *Modernists Federation* 现代诗内部交流资料 in early 1985 and contributing to other journals that year, Zhou set about establishing his own poetry journal in the spring of 1986: *Not-Not* 非非. Between 1986-1989, he edited four editions of the journal and two of the *Not-Not Critiques* 非非评论 paper. Yet, in August 1989, Zhou was arrested for "inciting counter-revolution" and after spending a few months in prison in Xichang was shifted to a labor camp in the mountains of western Sichuan until his release in September 1991. While incarcerated, he continued to write poetry (in 6 below) and in 1992 oversaw the re-issue of *Not-Not*. A second combined #6-7 edition appeared in 1993, but further editions were delayed until 2000, and are now published in Hongkong, while Zhou splits his time between Xichang and Chengdu. In 1994, a publishing house in Dunhuang, Gansu province, hired Zhou to edit a series of books of post-modernist literature, which included a collection of Not-Not-ism poetry and theory. In 1999, Zhou was able to have a volume of his theoretical writings officially published in China and a collection of his poetry published in Taiwan. Below, <Red Writing> is a lengthy example of Zhou's post-prison theoretical writing.

- 1) **The Solitary Pine** [孤松]
- 2) **Spring Festival** [春节]
- 3) **The Black Statue** [黑色的雕像]
- 4) **The White Wolf** [白狼]
- 5) **Free Squares** [自由方块]
- 6) **20 Poems On The Knife's Edge** [刀锋二十首]¹
 - I. **The Great Bird Of The Imagination** [想象大鸟]
 - II. **The Meaning Of A Fruit Pit** [果核的含义]
 - III. **Transformation Of Syntax Completed On The Knife's Edge** [在刀锋上完成的句法转换]
 - IV. **The Everlasting Wound** [永远的伤口]
 - V. **The Subject's Loss** [主体的损失]
 - VI. **The Image Of The Tolerant** [忍者意象]
 - VII. **A Situation Composed of Stones** [石头构图的境况]
 - VIII. **The High-stepping Crane And Midget Horse Of The Painter** [画家的高蹈之鹤与矮种马]

¹ The order and composition of this and the following series of poems is altered in later publications in Taiwan and on the Internet. Two poems have different titles, one poem is missing (<Round Table>), poems are shifted from one series to the other, and seven poems written between 1990-1994 are added.

- IX. **Chairman Mao Says** [毛主席说]
 - X. **From The Concrete To The Abstract Bird** [从具体到抽象的鸟]
 - XI. **Watching A Candle Ignite** [看一支蜡烛点燃]
 - XII. **In A Mood To Detest Iron** [厌铁的心情]
 - XIII. **A Sword's Inscription** [剑器铭]
 - XIV. **Thinking Of Ourselves In The Fire Of A Neighboring House** [邻宅之火中想起我们自己]
 - XV. **Simulating The Language Of The Mute** [模拟哑语]
 - XVI. **Night Of The Cat King** [猫王之夜]
 - XVII. **The Hungry Years** [饥饿之年]
 - XVIII. **The Way Of The Hand** [手的方式]
 - XIX. **Fire-bath Sensations** [火浴的感觉]
 - XX. **Third Generation Poets** [第三代诗人]
- 7) **The Rhetoric Of Violence** [暴力的修辞]
- I. **Immortality** [不朽]
 - II. **Dye-Works Co. & The White Sunflower** [染料公司与白向日葵]
 - III. **The Stone In The Mirror** [镜中的石头]
 - IV. **Painting Fish Like The Eight Great Masters** [仿八大山人画鱼]
 - V. **Thirteen Lines Of Symmetry** [对称十三行]
 - VI. **The Scholar's Hand** [读书人的手]
 - VII. **Forced Heroism** [被迫的英雄]
 - VIII. **Autobiography, Page 39** [自传第 39 页]
 - IX. **Berlin Wall Postscript** [柏林墙倒塌后记]
 - X. **The Dimension Of Silence** [沉默之维]
 - XI. **Round Table** [圆桌主题]
 - XII. **Talking About Revolution** [谈谈革命]
- 8) **Red Writing** [红色写作]: **The 1992 Arts Charter or The Principles of Not-Leisurely Poetry**

The Solitary Pine [孤松] 1981

A historian
Strolls alone on the high plateau
Time has played a joke on him
He has lost the way home
He stands on a precipice
 staring off into the distance
The stars take the place of his stern gaze
All that remains is a clear head
He continues in his undertaking
Writing his life into chronicles
The rings of the wheel of time
Are a history that will never decay

The White Wolf [白狼]

The white wolf is dancing the foxtrot Drawn-out howls
on the ridge of the roof I am never able to dodge
its long long tail Waving a riddle as if it's
reminding me of something hinting at something
Not one stalk of grass is growing on the bald
pastureland for the flock of sheep I can't keep my
hair Yet it still stares at me that way Stares

Have you passed this sort of night Shaking the
snowflakes the frostwork or a moonlight-like
white coming in from your earliest consciousness
Think about it Not yesterday Not last year Earlier
and still earlier imagine this sort of a night In a
place you love where you're a child

It's a house Really dark Distantly I see that white wolf
take a bite of me through the ceiling Kept at a
distance by a thick wall it wounds me Each written
character comes to bite me Every single sentence
comes to bite me and leaves teeth marks behind

Once more you try to remember what you saw that
night Snow-white walls float up into the air
Four chalk-white walls drift up Your cradle
is like a boat Imagine that you are an infant
suckling at your mother's breast What did you
see at the moment you opened your eyes Now
you push open that door You walk in

Lamplight knocks me over The zebra-striped roof
sways An impression A beautiful shape The
white wolf has come up from the sea up onto the
shore The whole world starts to rock becoming
a pliable body Isn't the cradle being pushed by
that pair of hands Mommy isn't by my side

Now please use your own hands and gently peel off the
sea's skin The animal beneath won't bite That
two-headed beast will definitely not bite you
This evening mother has been gobbled up by it
Now please try to push the two heads apart with
your hands Don't say whose face you see

The white wolf fox-trotting on the ridge of the roof is far
off The long tail has broken off in the wind inch
by inch becoming hummingbirds flying up and
down An ancient pagoda is planted at the center
of a lake inundated by blue light Who will garner

those ripe wind-chimes Those sweet tinklings
are about to sprout and leave that swamp are
going to bud and push up out of that bog

FREE SQUARES² [自由方块] Selections (December 15-22, 1986)

You use a suspicious language.
You set a trap for us.
You yourself first fall into it.
- from 1986 Diary

**(You meditate on the step of the stair for three days.
Circle the dome once. You can't find a door in or out. You sit down again.)**

Motive I Position Plan [动机一 姿势计划]

The pose should be paid attention to. As a traditional beauty pays attention to the look of her face. For example, don't bare her teeth when laughing. For instance, not being allowed to cast sidelong glances. Pierre Cardin chooses you as a model. You redesign yourself according to modern standards. Sit and wait like a clock. At the stroke of midnight go to the passenger boat. You're not on the boat. In the Temple of Precious Light count the countless arhats.³ Sit on the south side. Sit facing the wall. All these are ways in which the wise ones would sit. You're not a sage. You don't think the supreme lord is about to come down among us. You can sit more casually. Pick a rush hassock at random. or imagine an ancient hermit. or imitate a monkey. Since ancient times the wise and virtuous have been so alone. Sitting is the root of realizing the way. If you can't sit, you have neither skill nor learning. Confucius sat and had three thousand disciples. Zenon sits and discovers that arrows in flight are motionless. Achilles is never able to catch the tortoise. And you see Yang Zhu⁴ seated like a flower. swaying when there is no wind. He attracts three or five butterflies. Men like girls whose tails wag. Sleep like a bow. A heavy snow replete with bows and knives. Choosing a style for sleeping is extremely necessary. It's best not to kill during the daytime. I've heard that it was the ugly and inappropriate sleeping form of a palace maiden which led Sakyamuni to spurn the world and become a monk. From that time on he was most particular about the technique of sleeping. You prefer to sleep on your side. You want to change the way you sleep. You try turning over. Then feeling in that foot like it's both there and not there. A kind of airplane. A jet. That dives in that gliding-on-water way. An off-screen Tai-Chi punch. You feel that kind of position is very elegant. Death is a matter for tomorrow. Continue to study it. But today persevere in your morning calisthenics. With regard to whether there is a life after this one. From Sun Yatsen to Jesus no one has spoken clearly on the subject. Furthermore a Swiss scientist has research showing that god was an extraterrestrial. You have even less of a desire to head for those heavens. Submission you can accept. There's no tail to be stood up in the air. But the back must be straight. A man's tears aren't easily shed. Maintaining a balance is of extreme importance. Stand like a pine tree. Under the pine tree ask a child. He will say the master has gone to gather herbs. The child under the pine answers once more. I do not know which pine the master is under. what's important is to stand modestly and

² 'Squares' refers to the space which a Chinese character occupies.

³ A Buddhist monk who has severed all ties with the world.

⁴ (Circa 400 B.C.E.) Philosopher who taught that all individual persons and things are inviolable --- denounced as extremist and harmful to society by Confucianists.

courteously. It's best not to speak. Han Yu admired the posture of Jia Dao⁵ as he stood to knock or push at a door. He took him in as a follower. You know there are more positions on the other side.

--The posture of Tao Yuanming's⁶ throughout his untroubled gazing at mountains in the south

--The posture of Wang Wei's,⁷ loosening his belt while the wind blew through the pines

--The posture of Su Dongpo's⁸ as the great river flowed east

--Li Qingzhao's⁹ posture for people slenderer than day-lilies

There are many other postures besides people's. The cloud's. The moon's. Birds'. The rainbow's.

You call up the zebra and the swan. Add all that to them.

Design a new style. Many people will come to imitate you.

**(You meditate on the stair-step for six days. Circle the dome twice.
You can't find a door in or out. You sit down again.)**

Motive II Exercise In Person [动机二]

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**(You meditate on the stair-step for nine days. Circle the dome three times.
You can't find a door in or out. You sit down all over again.)**

Motive III Rubic's Cube [动机三]

.....

**(You meditate on the step of the stair for twelve days. Circle the dome four times.
You can't find a door in or out. You sit down once again.)**

Motive IV A Bed For Two [动机四]

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(You meditate on the stair-step for fifteen days. Circle the dome five times.

⁵ Famous Tang dynasty poets; Han Yu 韩愈 (768-824 C.E.); Jia Dao 贾岛 (779-843 C.E.).

⁶ 陶渊明 Famous poet, 365-427 C.E..

⁷ 王维 Famous Tang dynasty poet, 701-761 C.E.

⁸ 苏东坡 Famous Song dynasty poet, 1037-1101 C.E.

⁹ 李清照 Famous Song dynasty poetess, 1084-1151 C.E.

You can't find a door in or out. You sit down again.)

Motive V The Salt Of Refusal [动机五 拒绝之盐]

When necessary learn how to shake your head or wave your hand
If both your head and your hand are not free
You must learn silence

For this you practice fasting

Reject water for you will never again swim Never again cast nets in rivers, lakes and seas
Reject fire for you will never again refine stones Never again copy all forms of lamps
Reject rain for you will never again preach Never again beat on broken clay jars
Reject wind for you will never again raise a flag Never again command fleets on distant voyages

You make refusing a game
without an opponent
Your chessmen are still being whittled down in number
The salt of refusal is tasteless
From tastelessness you approach the way to cook

Reject the sages and the virtuous for you will never again study this or that step by hurried step
Reject standards for you can't distinguish between good and evil Forget your height and weight
Reject relatives and those of no blood relation to you for the crudeness or fineness of unknown
roots

Reject hatred for you take down bow-and-arrow Hang a gorgeous lion skin in the room
Reject the path for you will never trek forth again Never again undertake useless quests
Reject ardor for you will never bathe again Never again be visibly moved by beauty and sex

You use refusal to ward off attacks by the great and the famous
Mao Zedong Thought is ever-victorious
You are unable to hold your own
You can only lower your head and admit your crimes

Refuse to open your mouth So as to avoid falling into the trap of attitude You will never debate
again

Refuse language for you have lost the conception of it can only be silent or howl

Refuse illusion for you will never again hope for such highs or lows

Reject questions about livelihood for you don't study ways to keep healthy Never again gather
herbs and make immortality pills

Refuse meditation continual struggle From beginning to end unable to hack out a bloodied path

Refuse to break out of your own entrapment for you're ashamed to face the people on the eastern

bank¹⁰ Not as good as keeping the next assault in reserve and songs of defiance and death

Refusing is an art. The attacking army is at the walls
You're still enjoying your siesta
Shuffle the chessmen idly
At the Pavilion of Uninterrupted Leisure listen to the water and fish

Refuse long journeys

You will never again explore the wonders Visit sights or muse over antiquity or intentionally
sigh the regretful sigh of aimless drifting

Refuse to scale the heights

You will never again arrange jasmine and cornel Never again cry to the blue sky
while in your cups nor tug at Chen Zi'ang's¹¹ jacket front
not knowing whether to laugh or cry

Refuse to go into seclusion

Early in the morning you will sell the dusk of rockery hills Remove the banzai plants
Leave nothing as far as the eye can see Nary a bamboo shoot
for thirty miles around

Refuse to remember

For your personality mixes with thick and thin masks of form and illusion The contours are
gradually lost You don't remember details

You remember the teachings of Zhou Lunyou.

People can be against you. You can be hated by them. But you must not be scorned.

You especially must not be mocked by people.

Mockery makes fasting futile.

The salt of refusal makes you look haggard. You gradually enter a state of forgetting all insults
and praise

According to ancient texts if you persevere it will make you ignorant and desireless -- finally
reaching the point of no shame. Then you will be saved.

You agree to try again.

**(You meditate on the stair-step for eighteen days. Circle the dome eight times.
You can't find a door in or out. You sit down once more.)**

Motive VI West Of Tahiti [动机六 塔希提以西]

When you think of that island you can not sit still.

The enormous breasts of the women carrying plates of fruit
overwhelm you. What frightens also entices. It was because of
this grandfather crossed the sea. West of Tahiti. Naked
women's skin stirs you so that you can not open your eyes. Fresh juicy

¹⁰ Reference to Xiang Yu 项羽, tragic general annihilated by Liu Bang 刘邦 who later went on to found the Han dynasty (206 B.C.E. - 220 C.E.).

¹¹陈子昂 Famous Tang dynasty poet, 661-702 C.E..

fruit. Large pits, rich and resilient. Grandfather must have eaten many of these pits. And from then on thought no more of home. The sea then was not as blue as it is now. The sky very high. A thin layer annealed on the window. Like a piece of transparent glass. Unchanged for decades.

You want to cross the sea. For the sake of tropical pits and the fruit. You're a sex maniac too. When small you enjoyed colored toys. As a grown up you like women and books. Following grandfather. Somebody already gone ahead of you. He was a rascal who called himself an artist. After begging a pound of bread from grandfather. They became friends. He painted island girls. Also seduced island girls. There's more. Later there will be one called Picasso. Who becomes famous because of the rape of an Avignon girl. That year. All the females on the island jumped into the sea. Beneath the fierce sunlight. The men started to love themselves. The men began to make homosexual love. The men started to love sea turtles. The men started to love vegetables. In the midst of general love, honor and contempt. He finished the last painting. Set his own straw hut on fire.....

For the sake that self-immolated artist. You want to cross the sea.

.....

For your grandfather's collection of books. You want to cross the sea.

About his death. To this day, opinion is widely divided. Some say he died from the poisoned arrow of a rival in love. Some say he died from excessive dissipation. Anyway. He died most shamefully. I remember grandfather saying. After that artist died. One painting stayed on the wall. Even flames weren't able to make off with it. You must go. Standing by the ruins of your fingers. You think of Paris. Think of the fashionable lines of young French women. A match stick brings down the golden plates of fruit and mangos. Only the pits are alive. You close the art book. You want to go nowhere. You say.

-- You didn't come from anywhere. (Where did we come from?)
-- You aren't anything. (Who are we?)
-- You aren't going anywhere. (Where are we going?)

I eat therefore I am.

And that's all there is to it.

**(You meditate on a step of the stair. Make a circuit of the dome.
There's no door in or out. You sit down and don't ever want to get up again)**

20 Poems On The Knife's Edge [刀锋二十首]

The Great Bird Of The Imagination [想象大鸟]

(December 17, 1989; in prison in Xichang, Sichuan Prov.)

The bird is a thing able to fly
It's not an oriole or bluebird. It's the great bird
Feathers as heavy as mount Tai¹²
Clearly pressing in on the imagination
I made this up
Wings of another kind
Water and sky of another kind

The great bird was thought up like this
A very gentle action that causes one's heart to pound
The great bird is deep-rooted, it makes me think of the lotus
Think of an older kind of quicksilver
An sheerer existence beyond the mass of earthly phenomena
Three-hundred years have passed, still the great bird doesn't fly or call out

Sometimes the great bird is a bird, sometimes a fish
Sometimes it's like Zhuangzi's butterfly¹³ and recluse
And sometimes it isn't anything
I only know that the great bird consumes flames
So it's very beautiful, very bright
Actually the alleged flames are also imagined
The great bird has no wings, there's not a shadow of a bird about it at all
A bird is a metaphor. The great bird is a big metaphor
Whether it flies or not it occupies the sky just the same

From a bird to the great bird there's a kind of transition
From one language to another there's only a sound
The great bird blots out the sky and covers the earth, but can't be grasped
The sudden appearance of brilliance empties consciousness
With a finger to strike the sky, a very blue tranquility
Let a musical key from out of nowhere to be covered by falling dragon flies
Deeply and directly enter or withdraw
The further one departs from the core the closer one gets to the great bird

To imagine the great bird is to breathe the great bird
What causes objects to grow huge and far away; sometimes only a smell
Life is brimming with and fortified by crystal

¹² A mountain of great legendary and religious importance in China.

¹³ Ancient philosopher's anecdote about whether a recluse dreams a butterfly or if it dreams him.

Impelling time and bronze to run in opposite directions
The great bird is massive like a pearl gestating between the sea and the sky
We are contained within
Become the bright nucleus
Faced with the flesh the eager heart is driven into action

Now the great bird is already beyond my imagination
I can't touch it and don't know the direction it travels in
But I've definitely been hit, the significance of that kind of mopping-up operation
Causes me unforgettable pain, and to ponder whether
The great bird is soaring or motionless in another sky
That is a sky closely linked with us
We only have to think of it occasionally
And a certain feeling makes us vast without limits

When the day arrives on which the great bird suddenly comes flying towards us
The eyes of us all will be blinded

The Meaning Of A Fruit Pit [果核的含义] (May 10, 1990; Mount E prison camp, Sichuan)

Language separates out the meat from the fruit
The fruit pits that remain become the firm, tensile portion
Several grindings of the flowers
Renders the fruit pits smaller. But even harder
A fruit pit in a fire keeps its original shape

A fruit pit implies nothing
Occasionally it's a facial exercise
A certain event just being experienced
Sometimes it doesn't even entail movement
A child is contained in a fruit pit
But never grows up. Freckles that flew over the face
Are covered in a wink by fall of autumn branches from the tree

(To speak of a fruit pit is to speak of a boy
Or a girl. Not related to this world
Open mouthed. But with no sound whatsoever)

Fruit pits sometimes burst open
Some leaves grow out
They generate more heads and fruit
Or a city
One person climbs to the position of king, many scatter
Or exactly the opposite

One fruit pit fills the season to bursting with confidence

Transformation Of Syntax Completed On The Knife's Edge [在刀锋上完成的句法转换]
(January 6, 1991; Mount E Prison Camp)

In your imaginings your skin is cut by a sharp blade
Blood everywhere. very thick blood
Causing your breath to smell strongly of fish
Coldly ponder the wounding process
A finger wiped and wiped again on the knife's edge
There isn't courage to let you go a little deeper

Now is still not the time to speak of death
Death is very simple, living requires more food
Air and water, a woman's sexual parts
Feelings of carnal desire aggravate you to greater foolishness
Living right is yet another matter
Mortgage your life, let violence loose its patience

Let the knife sink in a bit deeper. From watching others bleed
To bleeding yourself, experience the transformation process first hand
The hand that strikes violently is certainly not as relaxed as the hurt hand
Open your skin along a sharp thought
Watch the knife's edge carve in, from the flesh a spot of blood seeps out
And sets off a host of impressions

This is your first drop of blood
Abiding by the principles of syntactical transformation
No longer has an audience.
Use subjective flesh to resist steel, or be overthrown by it
A stretch of sky pressing in upon your head
The wound's extensive pain vanishes
After you the world remains completely cold

The edge of the knife bleeds. Across from the left to the right hand
You learned from experience that you attempted slaughter while sacrificing yourself
The death of imagination fills your two eyes with ideas of death

The Everlasting Wound [永远的伤口] (Sept. 8, 1990; Mount E Prison Camp)

This moment of disaster can't be forgotten
Prolonged pain makes me uneasy in my seat
I passed through the motionless wrecks of birds in the water
Beginning from the tip of the tongue right down to the finger nails I turn green
Below the darkest color is another kind of beauty
Another species of steely silence
Sharp beyond compare

The everlasting wound is a
Deep and vast drop of blood. Aimlessly
The names of the dead line up quietly around the wound
The wound's infection causes more people to burn with dread
The effect of a tiger is a riot of color
This is the root of your lack of appetite. Alone we weep
Into the wind. Or close our eyes and sit still

(Use iron. Use the most brutal way to reduce inflammation
It never heals, a fever on clear days
Even more unendurable pain on dark days)

Actually I have no idea where the wound is
What kind of knife stuck in which strip of the sky
I only feel pain
The sleepless hand reaches out from inside my body
Makes me live traumatically
Blissfully experience agony
Carve a work of art that will never fade into my bones

The everlasting wound is a degree of depth
Our bodies are sunk into it and we can't pull ourselves out
Passing through the wound, pain becomes a kind of substance
Pressing heavily on the four limbs
In a dream cruel cracks appear on a porcelain vase
There are no more vessels left intact As a still-life
Unfolding gracefully under the sunlight
A lotus flower stained red with the blood of an infant

In the wound, our whole body festers
Or gives off flashes of light, the results are all the same

The wound is forever a fresh color
The unavoidable steel causes me an irreducible grief

The world lines up around the wound written into the characters of different languages
Exalting us or throwing us down, this is of no importance
In the wound, in a drop of blood
We cherish a crippled mentality
Keep it up in daily crystal exercises

In the wound, in a drop of blood
We keep up our daily crystal¹⁴ exercises

¹⁴ Crystal is symbolic of the process of poetry writing in the poetry of Odysseus Elitis.

The Subject's Loss [主体的损失] (Jan. 15, 1991; Mount E Prison Camp)

Use a mirror as a metaphor
The subject is a thing untouchable in a mirror
An unresolved thought
Embodying a lot of content, but difficult to grasp
From start to finish contained and not revealed in the mirror
It lets intimate desires keep their freshness

A mirror is a kind of authentic fabrication
The imaginary oriole is more profound in a metaphor
Expecting a sort of miracle opened by the shouts of wild fantasy
To manifest itself, and then you walk into a landscape
Surrounded by music you listen to another strain
Unable to clearly describe the lotus flower behind your lips

We can only be outside the mirror: illuminated by light
Or forever deceived, this isn't the mirror's fault

Facing the mirror is a form of confrontation
Is to lay aside life and confront death
On an abstruse plane the soul looks after itself
One side quiet the other guarded by shields
Or escapes. Let thought slowly crystallize
Watch the flesh rot, with an incomparably steadfast expression

The depth of a mirror is beyond conjecture
Enter a mirror and immediately become part of darkness
The entire life of a poet is spent struggling in a mirror
Mulling over the subtly changing colors of the sky
Seeking the profundity of diamonds
Dreaming of qualities in immortal bronze

(The mirror suddenly catches fire, unexpected flames
Have singed the hair of a generation
The world shatters, having looked into the mirror)

The initial image also disintegrates
one drop of blood casts the mirror itself into doubt
Turn the mirror around
There are no more objects on the reverse side
Separated from metaphors the mirror's merely a piece of glass
But also not less than glass

The glass falls to the ground and is shattered by sunlight
You sustain a serious lifelong loss

The Image Of The Tolerant [忍者意象] (January 26, 1991; Mount E Prison Camp)

Eat Eastern philosophy and attain the Tao of Laozi and the Yellow Emperor
The chrysanthemum of antiquity enters deep into your bone marrow
Subdue the hard with the soft endure all humiliations
But don't believe they humiliate accept his every blow
But don't feel their weight let him laugh
Exist outside your body as a butterfly
You feel the holiness of this wrong decisions are in the hands of others
You can only give in the words are in other people's mouths
Speechlessly you listen attentively allow the attacks to expand
They touch on the soul again a face hangs
Peacefully your thoughts turn to the unfathomable
The image of the tolerant is a tortoise
It draws its head back into its belly allows people to trample it underfoot
You find pleasure in this ponder the suffering of mankind
One hundred times yield a hundred times admit your guilt
One hundred times crawl under the crotch of others
Swallow your last tooth into your stomach
Water is hurt by the stone water surrounds the stone
The beauty of forbearance issues forth brilliance from the inner depths
At crucial moments think of Han Xin¹⁵
And your conscience is set at ease the word tolerate is a knife in the heart
The heart drips blood and still you talk and joke gleefully

O, the mighty Tolerant!

¹⁵ A famous general who helped Liu Bang, the founding emperor of the Han Dynasty, conquer China. As a child he was often insulted and tormented by others: i.e., he was forced to crawl through the legs of others. Died 196 B.C.E.

A Situation Composed of Stones [石头构图的境况] (October 3, 1990;
Mount E Prison Camp)

This is a situation I have never before entered deeply into
It takes violent hold of you. Atop a colossal stone
Rocks containing iron pile up coldly
And form into columns and walls
You have been put between stones
The north, or the south. You sit facing a wall
Dully dreading the blue which seeps out of the silence

This isn't some kind of game of the imagination
At the cost of your life you are on the scene
For all of three years, you must accept these stones
Become one component in this arrangement
Only through murder can you experience that intensity
Forcing itself in on all sides
Compelling you to become small, smaller
Until you skip into a stone and become a form of a thing

Break open a stone and there's still a stone
From wall to wall. From the soul out to the eyes

You have to love these stones, stone people
And stony things, love and be intimate with them
Nod a greeting, sometimes the bumps will leave your head bleeding
Heavier stones on top, occupy commanding positions
You can't look up at them but can sense them at all times
Always so indubitable and brutal
They can smash your body to pieces at any time

The circumstances of the arrangement of stones are like this
Like the dangers to a person entering deeply into a tiger
Pulling teeth in the tigers' mouth then suddenly a tooth aches
Maybe one day you'll obtain a whole tiger skin
Thereby proving your courage and riches
But right now the tiger is biting you, eating you
This non-substitutable plight has damaged you all over

To penetrate a tiger and not be eaten by it
To penetrate a stone and not become a stone
To pass through burning brambles and still be your old self
Requires perseverance. You must hold fast to yourself
Just as the crystal holds fast to the transparency of the sky
The iron stones continue to pile up around you
In the arrangement of stones you light a candle

Illuminating each of your wounds more brightly

The High-stepping Crane And Midget Horse Of The Painter [画家的高蹈之鹤与矮种马]
(November 12, 1990; Mount E Prison Camp)

This is my experimental work. An extraordinary composition
The appearance of an animate or inanimate object on the same piece of metal
A crane is harder to hold than a horse
The undersized and striped type
Within the confines of a fixed circle let it
Take pocket-sized walks. Now draw a patch of lawn
White palings indicate the line of demarcation
Within the confines it fully
Enjoys the sunshine. This is the appearance of things
In the seeable depths, in the very bright shadows
I saw a crane (in a spot a little higher
Than the horse's) circling the glass in a high-stepping dance
Surrounding it is the untitled sky
(A red cock's comb is redder than the first drop of blood from a virgin)
From a viewable object to unseeable radiance
The very variable wings are quickly arranged
Change at its most advanced stage tends toward pure indifference
 The horse is eating grass just now
I make it lift its head and take a midget's look up at
The crane in the unseeable depths. The horse can not see it
But it has heard the crane's cry distinctly. The far distant crane
Was once deep inside the horse
This is what I want it to know and strive to remember
(Only the horse once had a high-stepping time
Its hooves stamped back and forth across the sky)
Now the horse seems to have sensed something, it pricks up its ears
And neighs shrilly the once (And so the horse looks a little larger)
But the crane is still in the unseeable depths (I intend
To not let it land) let the crane hang in midair
In accord with my intent
Waiting until the tiny horse walks out from behind its white palings
The crane in the depths will fly brightly by itself out from inside the copper

Chairman Mao Says [毛主席说]

--patterned after "The Country's in Chaos", a verbal drinking game popular in China
(September 20, 1990; Mount E Prison Camp)

Chairman Mao says alcohol's a medicinal potion
Down it and there'll be no loose talk Chairman Mao says again
Revolution is based on self-awareness strip off your own pants and clothes
Chairman Mao also says reform through labour is the same as a day's work
Being killed is the same as sleep Mao continues to say
Masturbation does no harm to society
Is a popular sport beneficial to the health of body and mind
Suited for all round development.....
Elderly honorable Chairman Mao is tired of speaking
He says finally: People of the entire nation --- Shut up!

From The Concrete To The Abstract Bird [从具体到抽象的鸟] (December 1, 1989; in
Xichang city Prison)

Seldom do birds fly by windows here
But the feeling of feathers comes across my face often
This is the concrete bird
Below the high wall, within range of fire
At all times prepared to drop at the sound of a shot

Actually our so-called bird
Is only a kind of posture
From the written word becoming a flying bird
From a bird changing to the written word
Moving to-and-fro between a book and the sky
Occasionally feathers flutter down
The bird becomes a concrete thing

Birds in a book and birds in the sky
Cry out together, fly in the azure sky
The birds grow larger increase in number
Gradually I am unable to hold them
Bird-catching eyes and nets suddenly open
Hairy hands stained with bird sound

From bow and arrow to canister shot is a sort of progress
From wing to wing is a graceful perseverance
Dead birds hide inside books and become written words
Even more birds fly in the sky
Glass that passes beyond time and space
Birds still flying

The bird is a word, but also not a word
Between books and the sky the bird is a sort of hinge
An imaginary shape. After breaking away from substance
We are birds ourselves
The final image emerging in a dream
When birds are injured, fresh blood flows from our eyes
When birds are silent, stones spread through our hearts

In prison I write this poem
With iron upon my body. My face feels
The softness of feathers. I know
Only a concrete bird can be caught and killed
But a pure bird can't be
Because that is merely a kind of abstract flight

Not a bird flying, the sky
The abstract bird is beyond all range of fire
The abstract bird can not be shot dead

After the crack of the gun
The bird still flies

Watching A Candle Ignite [看一支蜡烛点燃] (April 12, 1990; in Xichang Prison)

Nothing is crueler than this
To watch a candle ignite, and then die out
This small course of events shakes a person up
Several fingers part in the candlelight, lift them up
Make an elegant design, deeper grained than a woodcut
I didn't see how the candle was lit
Only remember one sentence, one gesture
The candle flame leaps from this eye to that
More hands are lifted up in the candlelight
At the light's core is the blood and fat of youth
Beams of light in all directions
The entire sky is filled with the face of a dove
Nothing is crueler than this
Watching helplessly the candle about to die, powerless
Shadows concentrated in the candlelight gather around
I can't see clearly their faces and teeth
A thin sound of thunder treading over yellow skin
I never saw how the candle flame died
Only felt the graceful breaking of those arms
The exquisite fracturing of more arms
 Wax tears cover the stair
Death creates the coldest landscapes out of summer
After a brilliant twinkle the candle has become ash
Objects shot through by candlelight staunchly darken

To watch a candle ignite, and afterwards die out
Undergoing the greatest cruelty in the world of men
In darkness, I can only, silently, send up this smoke

In A Mood To Detest Iron [厌铁的心情] (October 19, 1990; Mount E prison camp)

Always afraid to return to that night
That moment of flames. In their midst
Let the rush of hot blood ignite your whole body once more
The power of words stirs the lives of the humble
In flames, the square became suddenly very small
By immense passion raised up
And then from a very high place dropped down
The radiant shards turn the eyewitnesses into the blind

There can only be silence
There can only be distant, quiet self-reproach and the flood of tears
The weight of tractor treads crossing over the top of your head
Is beyond experiencing. Who can say
Whether the sound of smashing bones pleases the ear
Crueler iron and steel
Also rolled across your mother's breasts
The abundance of mother's milk dyes the sky an agonizing white

(I'm unwilling to go through that feeling again
Out of death, let each person together with me
Gather up their own face. Agony's rebirth)

Henceforth, that night saturated with iron and steel
Becomes my dementia
In the mood to despise iron I can not speak of fire
Only think of gathering a few stems from tangerines and the like
In a time of no heroes and butterflies
I boil water and talk of cowards. I remember
Then in a certain school in the suburbs
Bells tolling all day, striking the monks all day

We live like this. Just like this
Persistently don't think
Persistently act as if nothing has happened
But irresistibly, in the depths the wound is becoming inflamed
Abruptly breaking off the sound of our laughter
Like this our grief turns us into despicable creatures

Like the water, be like this, without fish
That sky without birds
A structure without meaning. Striking and not striking
All are bells. Sounding and not sounding, all are monks

Vision sheared off by the glass the airplane is vomited gently upward
Just like an unsuccessful abortion
After you've been scooped out
Your whole body is dug down to dullness

Before that night I lived as lightly as a goose feather
After that night I awoke with a heart of dying embers

A Sword's Inscription [剑器铭] (January 7, 1990; in Xichang Prison)

The sword. A sharp implement
The ancients had no choice but to cast it
Sages had no choice but to use it
Occasional use is fine
But it can't be used often
Because the sword is not omnipotent
When a head decidedly drops to the ground
The hand holding the sword
 Has already struck
Into a thing more relentless than iron

**Thinking Of Ourselves In The Fire Of A Neighboring House [邻宅之火中想起我们自
己]** (September 15, 1991; at home in Xichang)

A fire breaks out in the neighboring house, very peaceful flames
Stab painfully at my eyes. Old people and water alarmed in their sleep
Distance doesn't exist, on both sides of the wall
Bread is sliced equally, becoming an authentic fabrication
The reason for fire is beyond bread, beyond
Housing and inflation. A pure aesthetic issue
Unfolding universally, acquires a higher form
A distant fire in the senses burns close by

THAT IS OUR FIRE AND THEIR FORTRESS

Burning mightily under the close attention of a multitude of eyes
No audience is indifferent. Each person
Is in the fire, each person in a different state of mind
No longer is this the kind of fire lit in the name of revolution
By a pyromaniac, scorching one from top to bottom
This is the fire of mankind. From arm to arm
From mouth to mouth, infection by skin contact
The forbidden vocabulary of the bloodsuckers appears repeatedly
The largest end-of-century landscape with the power of a thunderbolt

THAT IS OUR FIRE BURNING THEIR FORTRESS

A structure of seventy years. With tangible and intangible
Stones, bayonets, lies and dogma
A painstakingly constructed fortress, crumbling in the fire
This is the last opportunity. Watch the blood of others flow
And yourself moved emotionally, then tears flow, after which feelings flow
Afterwards in sorrowful symphonies silently mourn for three minutes
This is still not enough. Toleration of atrocities is a people's disgrace
We have been shameless for too long, the hair of several generations
Is falling out while waiting, not only lacking iron
But needing a bath of flame. Edifices here and there
Are all the same structure, we can only wreck them from bottom to top
Such a large fire! Tongues and hands burn together
Run in a breath, whether near or far from water its of no use
The fire has reached the roof, the fire burns their eyebrows
In the distance the tallest bell tower topples down with a roar

THAT IS OUR FIRE WHICH DESTROYED THEIR FORTRESS

The immortal founding enterprise in an instant no more
Their catastrophe is our holiday. Express ourselves
With alcohol and expressions of the eyes. Dipped in the blood of the dead paint a bird
Wings which blot out the sky fly toward the blaze
Our high tides or lows, our once extinguished enthusiasm
Hasn't yet cooled to ash. The fire's burning in the distance
The fire is idealized on our bodies. Old people and water

Firmly entrenched in the fortress. The toys of the leader are racing
A ringlike fortress coldly surrounds us
To know iron and steel is brutal, and
To handle one's own life cautiously, this is not cowardly
Follow Zhuangzi and be carefree, be the so-called spark
Burning internally, this is precisely our true situation
Stay low, until the critical moment, and then tell all

Simulating The Language Of The Mute [模拟哑语] (November 11, 1991; in Xichang)

Speak like this: mouth hung open
But unable to utter a sound. Even with the mouth not open
Make your mouth withdraw into your body, eternally sealed
Language becomes the reason for health
Thinking is obstinate in broad daylight
The elegant comportment of silence. To speak or not to speak
Is only a question of attitude

Standing poses its own gesture: stand in the corner facing both walls
Eliminate the sitting lotus. Its very cold in the mountains
Extend your two hands and you'll always touch something
Again a wall. Again it's electrified barbed wire
Each day the stone in the water is growing up
Dreams are moving toward the depths of the day. You are outside the glass
See the changes in your own facial expression are devoid of content

Speak like this: mouth hung open
But unable to utter a sound, better not to open it
An overflowing mouth answers for an eventful summer
A cold and sad beauty keeps the heat in your body
Face the wall and think. As a serial-numbered animal
Acting according to regulations lead your life, eat and drink
Gradually get used to the condition of a deaf-mute

The essential of exercising mute language is not speaking
But getting ready to speak, it must be you who speaks out
The iron-black nature of this century
The sensation of metal is retained and flows in your blood
It reminds you frequently and painfully
The essential of mute language exercises is in speaking
So as to avoid losing the ability to express through disuse

Speak like this, without any object
Speak purposelessly. Copy a mute's
Expressions and actions: exaggerations and details
Combining characteristics, affect being the subject of the verb. Affect
A predicate state. Make sentences according to mood
Speak without the need of lamplight
Simpler even than moving a chair

Its saves energy too. Take away the hand on the glass
Open your eyes, already you're a great master of pantomime

Speechless existence is a state

The trick to it lies between speaking and not speaking

A little audience involvement, embodies a thousand possibilities

A sort of explanation: If one day your tongue is cut out

You may use the language of the mute as your second means of articulation

Night Of The Cat King [猫王之夜] (December 22, 1991; in Xichang)

Night of sliding glass
I saw a cat at the corner of metaphysics
Lift a vigilant tail straight up ready to act at anytime
At this moment all clocks suddenly stop
This is a black cat
Representing total darkness deeper than the most secret impulses
I can't distinguish objective from subjective mutually the cat and the night make up the
backdrop
Sometimes its one face sometimes its two completely different faces
Each animal species lies hidden within definitions
Only the one-eyed cat king keeps watch the revolving green eye
Sends out a soul-stirring radiance from the pedestal of darkness
Unavoidably we are toppled over
Sometimes feeling fine sometimes totally losing confidence
With a motion not easily detected by us
It imitates the sound of passing water the sound of light the sound of a plant falling to the
earth and sprouting roots
The sound of unseeable objects in midair resisting each other the heart of metaphysics
Is a blank space the cat king occupies the best position
From a height risk-free controls everything with its gem
Its sharp claws catch our skulls and our names its mighty leap
Takes our appetite away hard to settle down
When frightened we sense its magnificence even more insignificant ourselves
When fear scatters the crowd off in all directions
The business of the cat king has climbed to its zenith
Our senses have all been sucked out
Our bodies sprout pine needles bird feathers and wild animal fur
I know the relationship between this cat and me
A contract signed by others repaid by me an arbitrary debt
The fish bone stuck in my throat has two sharp ends I spit blood and live
From the blue of the tiger interpret the origin of things
Until a piano opens up the skylight and is speaking bright words
Then I roll in from the metaphysical depths to my own body
That cat alone remains in back of the glass night
Each night I am kept incontinent by his deep-set gem

The Hungry Years [饥饿之年]¹⁶ (March 12, 1992; in Xichang)

Very few people know how you live
Those days of anti-materialism have passed lightly by
A peculiar sensation in the stomach
Runs throughout the writing of this poem tighten the trouser belt
Appease your hunger with the bread of women and imagination
Fart like there's nobody around (there is food in poetry)
You possess the world's best cereals and wheat
A gourmet meal of the imagination still unfinished
But pushed aside for other reasons the search for reasons to console myself
A wry smile there are no endless feasts under heaven
When writing the climax I always get cold sweats
When out of bullets and food I silently recite the works of Mencius¹⁷
As if that gentleman were an empty-bellied me
Spitting acidic juices on one hand and on the other waiting for an important appointment to
 fall from heaven
Actually there isn't any extraordinary reason
Only the writing of a few poems editing a magazine
Called *Not-Not* published irregularly
Like this, art getting the better of the stomach makes hunger
A fashion laid out in a column
It makes more people imitate and go through it
The holiness and honour of going hungry for art
Anyway I'm still young while it is tempered with words
The stomach is damaged no pain
Just because of the delusion created by a slight case of dropsy
Everybody says you look strong and stout have a fairly rich life
Until American handcuffs imported together with freedom of thought
Are clapped on your hands then someone discovers
Among the many rich and poor mouths crying out in hunger
You are starved into becoming the most patriotic on the mountain
You gnaw on roots of plants drink the north-east wind
Come out with an altered physique more room in your stomach
You leaf through unfinished poems and your entire body goes cold
Since coming into the world you've used the energy of a lifetime to write one poem
And still you have not finished can't give up on it half way
Take poverty as a pure prerequisite
To be experienced (let others play about with Qigong¹⁸ and consumer goods)
You tighten your belt persevere to the end with art

¹⁶ Also published under the name of 胃痛时的纯艺术感觉 A Sensation of Art When My Stomach Hurts.

¹⁷ A Confucian sage-scholar, 372-289 B.C.E.

¹⁸ The harnessing of the life force which flows through the body, much like blood, for medical use or for show: e.g. walking on eggs, smashing large stones with limbs or head.

The wife serves extremely clean and tidy meals everyday
There are always problems that lie low in the sunlight
Causing you to dwindle away like an immortal Taoist you abhor eating meat and fat
The wife says I think you'd best become a Buddhist monk
You say your ties to the world are not broken yet wait till this poem's done
When your mind's at ease you'll become a Buddha on the spot

The Way Of The Hand [手的方式]¹⁹ (March 7, 1992; in Xichang)

No hand of mine
Forever unwilling to cut itself off from my body
Breath heavier than a shadow
Oppressing each body part
From mouth to lungs then to the four limbs
Allowing you no reckless movement
Your spirit ought to be still more sensitive
It wants to go get far, far away
To a place where their whips are not long enough to reach
Beyond the scope of games laid on by the hand
Limited to thought only excursions of imagination
Just doing this alone is also very dangerous
More real than a knife edge are the feelers in the hand
Sharper they stick into the heart of dreams
Know everything don't ever let a
Detail go and speed like hawks and falcons
From the sky keep watch over the movements of a rabbit
It lurks in every place you might possibly go
It lurks in plainclothes, collar turned up long ago
It took only the fall of that fatal blow
And everything was lost with you kicking up a stink for half a year
They give you an out or they carry it out over an extended sentence
Carry out a manhunt as long as your life against you
Since you're not to be killed immediately the hand is certainly showing no lenience
Out of each day's terror you learn by experience
The patience and cruelty of a cat toying with a mouse
The magnificent efficiency of machines a hand still colder than iron
A wall away it cooks raw rice to a tenderness it smears
Your name in black on a list
And draws a thick red line²⁰ through it these are no idle hopes of persecution
The barbed wire running in and out of life and the mobile walls
Force you to back into a book for self defense
To hold out for the last few isolated words and phrases
The light from the hand points at all things inclusively
If you come out of the water there is a mesh of the fish's internal net
If you escape out of the sky there's a deadly target range for flying birds
Open the classics and find oppressive chapters
Violence and persecution aimed at thought
During each day's meals the illusory shadow of the hand

¹⁹ Also published with the name of 与国手对弈的艰难过程 The Difficult Process of Playing Chess Against a National Champion.

²⁰ Used on public notices to indicate that the death sentence has already been carried out on a person.

Even begins to interfere with your stomach and intestines
Suppresses your appetite
The urge for sex rapidly sinks into paralysis
Premature hair loss and forced sleep nightly
Leave behind the mark of the hand a element in the callousness of metal
Like the beauty of an omnipresent tiger
The structured control of the crystal the theme's
Control of characters the poet's concrete form
Can't shake off the abstraction of control theory
The hand tosses and turns makes you laugh bitterly wildly
Taste all the sweet sour bitter spice of the human world
At the last not knowing whether to laugh or cry you finally understand
It turns out that a national chess champion is matched up against you
The imperiousness of the hand the rhetorical shape of violence
Unavoidable defeat as inevitable
Outcome better to live by the way of the hand
As a show of submission slice into the depths of time
Use silence as an indirect reply
Under the hand's pressure and influence
This poem can have two endings ----
First you think of living in seclusion study the examples of ancient poets
Behind a chrysanthemum (no mountains for the hermit
All mountains have been nationalized)
You have to stay in your original place not thinking
Change from a mute into an idiot
Sit forgetting under
An unmindful tree without beginning without end (Ending #1)
Or peel off your tense skin throw yourself
Toward the light from behind armour plate
Catch hold of the hand with no body temperature
Let your blood flow smear it all over the palms
In the final testimony of this century force it
To leave behind a bloody print (Ending #2)
There are always painful privacies in the game of compulsion
You must act as if nothing has happened
On an irregular chessboard
Continue your match against the shapeless hand

Fire-Bath Sensations [火浴的感觉] (March 23, 1992; in Xichang)

No more a bird. Get rid of that element in the metaphor
In man's name step directly into the center of the flames
A naked body. At the non-mythical level of meaning
Taste the flames. Savor a pure-gold enthusiasm
Enveloped by a greater enthusiasm, or the fire-extinguishing
Baptisms and devotions. The subject and the non-subject
Are separated only by a wall, the distance of a footstep. He
And I, two absolutely different kinds of flame
On the tongue of a flame experience your own flesh
Much more realistic than watching others set fire to their fingers
The smell of burnt skin, the smell of well-done meat
The greatest significance of excessive agony, is not to know pain
Inside a very small flame, the faces distorted by a great distress
Mutual barbarity, mutual blood-letting, mutual betrayal
Reciprocal snowstorms. In the heart of the flames
It's so cold you give off smoke. The fire's penetrations change endlessly
A resolute siege and slaughter. Thought
Is unadulterated darkness. The white of a pure blue flame
The red of a flag. The transparency of bloodless killing
You read the biographies of great personages a hundred times and still can't attain the sublime
Can't find any sense of the phoenix
Or even its feathers. What's harder than iron is fire
The perfect opportunity for self-refinement. The crucial moment
Blood pressure rises high. Consciousness at arm's length
The teeth of fire nibble your hair white
Like the ashes of finest charcoal one by one. Radiance
Consumed by silver. In the flames life tends toward purity
A resolution that overpowers all other thought. Neither restless nor hot
Inside the fire you shake off the fire, return to the core life-force
The initial position. Tempered into steel, or
Tempered into essence. Water evaporating in high temperatures
None of these portray your condition at this moment
Better to return to your original idea. Shake off the ashes
From the flames not a phoenix
But a crow is reborn, a gleam of complete black

Third Generation Poets²¹ [第三代诗人] (February 28, 1991;
in a blizzard at Mount E Prison Camp)

A mob of refined thugs under the dictatorship of words
Isolated for too long in this year finally raises the flag of revolt
They held an antipathetic position toward the faces of gentle sincere poets
Pee on them Causing neatly ordered China
To sink into prolonged chaos these are the third generation poets
A generation that blows its own trumpet declares itself a revolution
A from-bottom-to-top insurrection within the limits of language
Smashes the old world to pieces fabricates lots of rare nouns and verbs
Blackens or gilds its own face and no one applauds ever
The third generation's perception of itself is grand they think their golden light is great
All around the country for a long time they write first rate poems read second rate books
Indulge in third rate women as bandits make a permanent name for themselves
They possess the insight to recognize heroes a word from Brother Yaobang²²
And third generation poets come up from the underground looking deathly pale
Sit in the central hall of the propaganda bureau and sing a folk song for the Party to hear
They spit out a gutful of acid and bitterness the gentleman died for. the sake of his intimates
Those who shouldn't die get out first the third generation poets were suicidally grieved
They swore to carry out the behest of Brother Yaobang unfettered to the end
In this way the third generation poets understood that inviting guests to a meal is not revolution
They learned to talk dirty be cynical to curse the mothers of others
Upper strata in China's sky switched back and forth third generation poets
Often caught cold or got sick they became hypersensitive and careful
Too many unmentionable taboos the only escape is poetry
The third generation poets changed into clean clothes on the ivory surface
Played games with no rules remote from the heart, the body and the blood
Or imitated the forms of the ancients wrote poetry by moonlight wrote poetry
With chrysanthemums wrote some very delicate words from red
To white enthusiasm gradually degenerates to the zero degree of language
The third generation poets lived very poorly eating the cooked food in the world of men
Speaking a common language sitting in teahouses sipping tea enjoying
The jasmine blend Marx said a non-worker didn't deserve to eat
Third generation poets rely on their old ladies for food but write only for mankind
So with an easy conscience they smash the iron rice bowl of marriage
The third generation poets have made many gorgeous mistakes
Pursuing Freud they go deep into the tips of women's tongues and vaginas
Expend too much semen in imagining these which results in a great deficiency of Yang²³

²¹ A group of younger poets who were extremely active in the poetry underground (1984-1989) throughout China, and who have introduced new form, content, style and poetics into Chinese poetry. The third generation of post-1949 poets.

²² Hu Yaobang 胡耀邦; General Secretary of the CCP until forced to resign in January, 1987. Died in April 1989, precipitating demonstrations which led to the Tian'anmen Massacre.

²³ The male, strong, bright, etc. side of the Yin-Yang theory of the universe popular in Far East Asia.

The third generation poets love parts of Mao Zedong a kind of peasant simplicity
 And impulse ambition for a dynastic change in poetry is unconscious
 It's merely the feeling that there's a fart to let fly and doing so it leaves the fragrant flowers and
 poisonous weeds to others
 Fettered by the roots of the imagination stick in the knife, shut off the water or
 Expose it even more crudely to prove the purity of their blood line
 The third generation reads Zhuangzi the Yijing²⁴ they tend toward mysticism
 Or forced mysticism make use of the eight diagrams and practice divination have one palm
 reading
 And learn a way to deceive others swindle friend and foe
 Afterwards enter into a state of Qigong²⁵ the location of the Dantian is of little importance
 The sitting posture is the key you have to create the appearance of understanding and
 regurgitating
 Deliver a few sentences of informed opinion on counterculture and then believe you've
 achieved The Way
 Of course alcohol must be drunk and even more must be eaten an entire generation
 Lives this way in a mix of truth and lies the sounds of praise and condemnation forever in their
 ears
 The facial expressions of the third generation poets do not change their hearts do not leap they
 still write first rate poetry
 Read second rate books smoke cheap cigarettes and indulge in third rate women
 After passing over a thousand mountains and ten thousand rivers the third generation poets
 Are forging out true achievements Then suddenly they're shot down by a birding gun
 And become wonderful fragments of a tragedy just as they successfully complete their
 magnanimous opus
 Bei Dao and Gu Cheng crossed the sea to join the ranks of the outsiders the third generation
 poets
 Remain in China and continue the war of resistance they learn silence
 Learn to run away from home are heroes and cowards at the same time
 They learn to sit in jail cells express themselves vehemently in prison refuse to admit guilt
 and repent
 They learn banishment learn to do hard labor their heads shaved bald
 They change their way of life under the hammer and sickle
 Zhou Lunyou served his sentence on the slopes of Mount E Liao Yiwu and Li Yawei
 Stood trial in Chongqing Shang Zhongmin wrote self-criticisms in Chengdu
 Yu Jian gave a name to a blackbird in Yunnan the third generation poets
 Scattered like monkeys when the tree fell
 in ten years time we'll judge the crimes
 and merits of these thousand autumns

²⁴ 易经 also known as The Book of Changes. A mystical text of uncertain origins. The eight diagrams and divination refers to the uses of knowledge held within this book.

²⁵ 气功 refers to the skill of mastering the life force (qi) flowing through one's body. The Dantian 丹田 is the navel area where this force is centered.

The Rhetoric Of Violence [暴力的修辞]

-- the second cycle of the Knife's Edge series

Immortality [不朽] (November 4, 1992)

He understood from the start
This was no ordinary stone
Bright smooth concealing a bewildering charm
An ardent lifelong love pours into this icy beauty
Already he can't remember from what day
And for what reason he came to love this stone
Perhaps his initial intent was to carve a work of art
A relationship with matter changing from antagonistic to intimate
In his experience
This was a novel event
Inclined to action the hands rose up and dropped down
Each time he underwent this kind of failure
He felt some loss of vitality
And the stone was still a stone no more
No less precisely in its original image
He thought this stone cannot be changed
Thinking this way he felt somewhat comforted
But he could not give it up the bright stone
Tempted him to add or take away a little something
Or else he would be drained by the stone's silence
And reduced to being a construct a sentence of suspended words
Ridiculed by later generations again he screws up courage
The moment it touches the stone the diamond's cutting edge is damaged
The hands refuse to budge
A taste of marble suddenly enters his life
Starting from his tongue the stone spreads to the four limbs
Only consciousness is awake striving to save
A hand from paralysis or a leg
The stone continues on down hands have lost feeling
Legs without feeling wide spreading whiteness
The stony feeling of the face thickens layer by layer
Consciousness completely lost
Already you can't tell him apart from the stone
Squeezed out from his ass after a drop of quicksilver
The last of his body temperature drops to zero
"Perhaps immortality is sculpted like this"
One last flash of an idea
Then the effort is abandoned
The statue of the artist
Is done

Dye-Works Co. & The White Sunflower [染料公司与白向日葵](December 30, 1992)

Those are non-manufactured things
Dyes of unspeakable colors mixed up
In a room piled full of scrap metal (an abandoned warehouse)
In the shady half-light of this sticky state of affairs
People of indifferent faces are washing lumps of coal
(But there's no water) some women are reeling silk
A little to the left on a cement floor
Many tightly-sealed cans irregularly arranged
An unfamiliar male face states coldly
"This is the dye-works company I invented"

I remember passing through several guarded entrances to get in
Naturally the examination of ID and similar procedures were unavoidable
A sunflower insignia was pinned to the chests of all the people there
Its overly large design made wearers appear somewhat ill at ease
But real sunflowers were growing in those cans
And they all bore white flowers
(I didn't know if they had only blossomed when I came in or were always blooming)
They were a rare white color
In the shady half-light of that oppressive atmosphere
They had the illuminating effect of a lamp

Logically speaking I should be able to see the sign at the entrance
The interior of the company is affiliated with a brewery
Now those people wearing insignia begin to mark time
The sunflowers emit an even stranger white water begins to gurgle
Mixing together with the scrap metal, this sticky situation
Thoroughly muddles my mind
I can't remember why it is I came here
I'm struggling to recall. The door behind closes softly
Another unfamiliar male face states coldly
"Those sunflowers are the trademark of this reputable company"

Open the Dictionary of Dream Interpretation to page 65 no dye-works entry
Under sunflower it says: A portent of danger

The Stone In The Mirror [镜中的石头] (December 24, 1992)

A mirror in any room
Held by a fictitious hand, represents the spirit's
Classical form. The bright mirror pane
Passes over some noble objects, then moves off
The theme of the stone is written out by hand
And becomes the most striking image. Compel the mirror
To retreat to its initial non-aesthetic state
A stone drowned by water, or a stone emerging after water subsides
Internal matter subverts a drop of quicksilver
As an accomplice the hand is investigated first
The stone is inscribed repeatedly; soon after, it grows roots
Surmounting two-dimensional limits, approaching the concrete
Make dignified faces withdraw from the mirror
In accordance with demands the background is reduced to a minimum
Stones disrupt order, then establish order
Far more than ideas, but all along beneath the mirror
A finite circle is suggested and enlarged
More stones grow in geometric progression
Swell the mirror full, or cause it to change shape
The stone written by the hand breaks away from the hand
Becomes the acquired part of the mirror, undeniable
Even more immovable. In the depths of quicksilver
All high-stepping is reduced to one fabrication
In the stone the mirror meets up with another hand
Externally representing the hardship and deprivation suffered by light
The stone penetrates deeply into glass, directly becoming
An alternative meaning of the mirror. A drop of quick silver
Quietly boils under sunlight. Excited or calm
The mirror cannot change the stone's intent
The stone shatters the mirror, providing an excellent reason
For me to abandon writing

Painting Fish Like The Eight Great Masters²⁶ [仿八大山人画鱼] (February 22, 1993)

This kind of fish has already been painted by man for hundreds of years
From the Ming and Qing dynasties on down, no new ideas have reached canvas
Only the brush strokes change, the search for a small variation among the pleasing options of
ink

Above all, this fish's eyes must be square

(The idea determined by the artist's hatred for the world and its ways)

A lattice work of the net is a projection of the fish's limited freedom

Some post-modernist additions must now be put in

Paint one eye only, or one black eye one white

With a little of the aloofness and indifference of the literary types from the renowned Wei-Jin
period²⁷

A very casual stroke and the fish mouth is open

It disgorges a string of bubbles, the fish's vitality on display

Of course it won't do not to have fins. You should also remember

This is a literati fish addicted somewhat to cleanliness

(Possessing certain features of ancient Eastern culture)

Therefore the water must be extremely limpid, seemingly invisible

Making it ever a fish out of water

Just like Zhuangzi's transcendental state

Now paint a few lotus leaves, a dragon fly, half a lotus flower

(Representing the artist's moral character which emerges unsullied from the mud)

At this point the fish swims happily among lotus leaves

To the left paint a craggy stone, use the appropriate 'light-ink stroke' method

You want to draw out the stone's dark green moistness, now add a few strokes of fragrant
thoroughwort

As to whether or not the plum blossoms outside the painting have bloomed or not, the fish
takes no notice

In this way an imitative fish is basically completed

(The inscription of a poem, the affixing of a seal remains to be done)

This was all very appropriately done by the ancients

Now I attempt to dissociate the fish from the ink and Xuan paper²⁸

And swallow a little salt and silt with plain ordinary water

Half a fish has emerged, the other half remains in the Song dynasty

The part in touch with reality immediately decomposes and stinks

The remaining half-fish still plays on the Xuan paper

Dividing the artist's heart and head harshly into two halves

The fish sees itself cut open in the middle by a hand

When I feel the pain, I have experienced the keenness of the same knife

²⁶ An apparent reference to eight highly regarded artists of the late Ming (1368-1644 C.E.) and early Qing (1644-1911 C.E.) dynasties.

²⁷ 265-557 C.E.: A period of disunion and warfare between the fall of the Han dynasty (220 C.E.) and the rise of the Tang dynasty (618 C.E.)

²⁸ The name of special paper used for Chinese painting and calligraphy.

Thirteen Lines Of Symmetry [对称十三行] (December 28, 1992)

The angler sits on his own on a round stone
A clear stream runs below, his eyes fill with the mist and sound of water

Fitted with a inlaid-silver saddle my horse
Crosses the plank bridge, off on his long journey to the under world

The angler casts his hook into the water
An unbaited hook, he only angles for fish doomed to be caught

My horse travels on ancient paths in autumn winds
to echoes of Shang and Zhou,²⁹ not the imperial city of my dreams

The angler hooks mountains and rivers, his aspirations lie beyond fish
Covered by cuts and bruises my horse still moves staunchly on

Angling, the man forgets the stream. He is transfused with the brilliance of the moon
My horse journeys into the setting sun joining the ageless herd

The horse travels on in the fullness of the moon. The angler is turned to stone

²⁹ Shang is the name of a semi-legendary kingdom which comprised China and existed from approximately 1600 B.C.E. until 1066 B.C.E. Zhou is a general reference to the Western Zhou (approximately 1066 - 771 B.C.E.) and Eastern Zhou (776 - 256 B.C.E.) periods of feudal kingdoms and warring states.

The Scholar's Hand [读书人的手] (November 12, 1992)

The scholar's hand, a hand which takes up pens and writes essays
Sometimes props up the head in a thinker's pose
As self-styled as the hand which rules the land and pacifies all under heaven
A hand without the strength to string up chicken. In the face of powerful authority
It persists in pacifism, earnestly practicing what it preaches
Conscientiously signing the arrest warrant C.O.D.
On one's own behalf holding the hands out for handcuffs to be slapped on
(The entire process is somewhat less than moving and tragic
Recalling a certain film you can't help laughing)
The following procedures are also carried out in this way
To receive a body search. You loosen your belt and shoelaces
Hold up your pants with your hand, loudly shout "Reporting in"
Day and night recite the ten prison regulations, lock each in your mind
Gradually grow accustomed to the toilet bucket, piss and shit on schedule
The hand of the scholar, the hand that fights only on paper
The intellectual didn't rebel but is found guilty of rebellion
Yet the hand is reluctant to write an appeal. Since it's incapable
Of chopping through nails and cutting through iron, there is only glad acceptance
With the effort necessary to empty-handedly wrest hold of a bare sword, control your
movements, control anger
Control every philosophical or literary mood, control all possibly
Injurious pride, character and self-respect
Focus the mind on the navel. Keep your last piece of foundation safe
In the depths beyond the reach of power, enter into deep thought
Restrain sexual urges, hunger and the desire for freedom
The trees holding out by the green hillside contain fire
The axe gleams. Placed in mortal danger but surviving
The scholar's hand, the hand which comments on poetry and literary work
Only waits to write fine essays which leave a reputation for eternity
The hand which will never stop unless its own words shock
The hand which yields to the good, the warm, the reverent and the frugal. Under the iron fist of
violence
Begins to change, from the bones to the heart
After this type of experience, change comes as no surprise
The hand reaches out, fingertips suffused with a blue sheen
And a pair of eagle's talons sprout from the face of the dove

Forced Heroism [被迫的英雄] (March 10, 1993)

Seldom have you thought of what great task you might undertake in this life
Being a hero is a very dangerous thing, blood might even flow
And you've always been cowardly, fearful of death, oversensitive to pain
Well aware that you don't have the stuff of heroes
So all you can do is write inconsequential words
That win you an undeserved reputation in literary circles

Sometimes you are forced to be a hero
It's not a matter of what you want, but what is wanted of you
A slip by God's pen is viewed as an immortal masterpiece
He knows this, and has to go along with it
When this type of situation is encountered explanations are superfluous
It's best to give in, make the sham more real

Your current circumstances are just like this
Plainly you're from the audience out front of the stage, yet they insist
You are an actor (explanations are not permitted)
Because of a little extra bravery, they also give you three years
In the interlocking cracks of the tiger's teeth they make you
Go through something that smacks of being violated

To seem more like a hero, you forcibly raise your spirits
Eat into and swallow hunger and humiliation
Bones are pushed to the forefront, get to take
The most impeccable attack. Memories tainted by blood
Make your wounds appear really moving
No one will say your suffering is unreal

You must suffer still. To look the more like a hero
Your hair has gone very gray over this past year

Autobiography, Page 39 [自传第 39 页] (March 20, 1993)

There will always be unimaginable things
Like being trampled to death in a nightmare by ants
Having the crown of your head smashed open by a leaf on a walk
Or to fall as a peace envoy
Under the guns of two opposing armies. All this seems
Absurd, but actual events
Show that the power of the absentee is stronger than man

You can't avoid the unavoidable. You are doomed
To sharpening the piercing pain of the knife
It has long been hanging icily, crosswise, in front of you, sublime
Or silly acts, eagerness which has destroyed
Many heroes, points its finger at your name next
Despite you hiding your identity, you are still picked

You can't say what kind of feeling this is
A trivial thrill that contains enormous amusement
Also the edginess and anxiety of a virgin on her first night
Anyway, no solemn, tragic feelings about why you give your life
You really feel like laughing, but amidst vague irrelevant generalities
You let fly a silent, self-mocking fart

Furthermore Mencius says he who courts disgrace is blessed by good luck
Before heaven will bestow great tasks upon you, you have to
Undergo a modicum of physical pain (including hunger)
Also there's Mao's saying that bad things become good
Thus your conscience is clear, and you tell yourself
Bending to the will of Heaven is never wrong

After great affliction just one year is left in the three year sentence
A miracle has yet to happen. But you've learned to pick tea
And understand silence is golden. You learn that your name is on a list
Of prisoners a foreign prime minister asks to be released, and Li Peng says
This person doesn't exist. Immediately afterwards you are set free
The day you leave prison, "Zhou Lunyou was here!"
You write on the cell wall to commemorate your stay

An incident. Not good, but really not so bad
Life turns to page 39. No tracks are left in the snow

Berlin Wall Postscript [柏林墙倒塌后记] (April 19, 1993)

A brick from the Berlin wall, left by the widely-travelled
Hand of a friend for me, set on my writing desk in the study
On the other side of the sea the friend's face smiles slightly
Everyday the brick confronts me with attitudes of the cold war
Often causing me to sense a certain danger in my calm

The Berlin wall has fallen. I should believe this
The memento on the desk is an excellent testimonial
That true collapse happens from inside the edifice
Later it cannot withstand even the gentle push of a child
The wall's coming down marks the end of an era

But the brick remains. Those bricks on which doves and olive branches
Are drawn turn into murals, those that become souvenirs are transported
All over the world by tourists, like this one on my desk
No one notices anymore that the blood of the dead
Is in the colors of these bricks; a dent where the thinker's skull was dashed

I read Orwell so as to forget this unpleasantness
The book becomes very heavy, each page piled full of stones
The book continues to get larger, it bears down maliciously upon me
Pinning me down within a word. At the same time weighing this brick again
In my hand life's alarm makes the nerves in the freed horse twitch

Peace has become a self-mockery of words
Synonymous with appeasement, acquiescence and the indulgence of atrocities
The wall is down, the brick won't be looked into again. I saw
Deformed hands indicate approval or opposition in the legislature
The Berlin Wall has fallen, but the bricks are blameless

Its easy to indict everything on the fallen wall
Exactly like squeezing it all into the one organization that can't appear in court
Is this really all? No bricks
So none of the wall's tyranny; just as if there was no wall no imprisoning
But they laid the Berlin wall with these bricks one by one

As long as bricks exist, it's possible it may be erected again anytime
Each frustrated brick cherishes the intention of the wall
They only need one great gaffer to rise up and call out
The bricks will muster together, an iron squad once more
A hundred times the ill-will, cut deeper than the wound yesterday

.....Clearly I have been ripped apart by a hand
Behind the high wall, mouth stopped by a brick
Wantonly humiliated. Under a fluorescent light I can't hear
My breath or the heartbeat on the right side of my body. From summer
Until winter of the second year, my heart hurt continually

The Berlin wall has fallen, but the bricks still exist
There are walls still which have not. Right now on the ruins of the wall
A last stand is made by some very square bricks
I can see the bricks' efforts, and have reached a conclusion
Once they have wrecked a wall, they should also demolish the bricks

The Dimension Of Silence [沉默之维] (April 30, 1993)

Cast off symbols of glory, let your name be withdrawn
From books, return to life's minimal state
Keep company with the silent roots of words. Persevere beneath the knife's blade
The final shred: Poetry which has survived
Calamity, the right to daydream
Just at this moment the zebra appears
The black and white animal of deep thought: very large, very bright and beautiful
On its back stands a crow
Always it mysteriously runs off before I get near
A dove-faced girl sets fire to herself within the bronze mirror
Becoming the secret anguish of your heart, kept at arms length
Shards of glass persevere in their necessary brilliance
Let my writing prove living is important
What is food? What is Sartre?
The attack of commodities is gentler than violence, more personal
Also more savage, giving impetus to a complete nervous breakdown
Turn off the lights outside the window, read thirst-quenching waters
The stripes of the zebra spread into my sleep
Making me unable to set my mind at ease, I practice meditation
Sit facing a wall, or walk on the wings of the crow
Prolonging my ignoble existence in the fashion which approaches death most closely
The piano's fingers consume too much moonlight
And develop shadows within light. That zebra
Is waiting for me in the pain of the wound, the crow on the zebra's back
Quietly burns on sunset's canvas
They are all fed on rarefied air, so they are very light
And run very quickly. Behind the mirror image
Is an empty, continuous, brighter silence
Death cannot see me, but I can see
Those hyenas prowling around the zebra
The crow's beak pierces the rotting meat of time
Opening the text up, my silence
Plunges straight in, grappling with the world
The white boned hatred of several generations
Flashes phosphorescently. The air begins to stiffen
I know I am already too close to it
Keep watch for a few steps more. Cross over the elephant's wide savannah
When the zebra appears, the crow's cry
Will blow down these living buildings

Round Table [圆桌主题] (May 3, 1993)

A table has four corners
When one corner is cut away, how many are left?
-- A child's intelligence test

That three corners remain is wrong. And when two corners are cut off
My answer is to grind the hypothetical knife even sharper
Now chop off another corner. Cut off four corners
Cause the fixed answer to be continually postponed
In adult games the problem of the table disappears
Continue cutting off ascending and descending numbers of corners
Afterwards put down the cherished knife; control motion with stillness
Watch how a square table becomes round

I must cut again. The table isn't round enough yet
A sharp implement put to non-violent ends
A hand that grows up on hate drunk on one drop of blood
Passing over the deep of a wound, blossoms of its own
A fruit-pit sprouts swiftly from the stone
From within it produces a change in the nature of the table
Time revolves and rotates, carrying the table along
A knife so prodigious as not to make the flesh bleed

To cut away off corners is to cut away direction
The place of honor, the difference between the government and the people; to cut off
opposition
Confrontation and enmity; permanent, unchanging unity
Stop the blood letting, set up the conditions for harmony
Have old foes shake hands wage peace, killers
Lay down their butcher knives, victims forget pain
The overbearing learn to compromise, share and yield
Gradually they are weaned to peaceful coexistence with unfamiliar thought
Of course this is merely my own private wish
To finish a round table requires the work of several generations
With the meticulousness of a worker in platinum cutting and repeatedly polishing a form
Like a quick thought caught by a poet
A miracle fashioned out of nothing. So a round table such as this
Is gently lifted up by a feather
The dark shadow of a dove puts out the flame of hate
In a revolution, soft as velvet, it is softly done

While writing this poem, my mind is at peace
Those things outside the window (slaughter, prison and war)
Are forgotten for a time. I'm only concerned with the satisfactory

Presentation of a theme, that more people know and understand
The necessity of a round table; matter of life and death. A table
Turns with difficulty, shifting off of the blueprint into the sunlight
The speakers sit equal around the round table
Discuss, cross swords, cut no one to the quick

Talking About Revolution [谈谈革命]

-- In imitation of a particular ideological discourse (April 14, 1993)

Inviting guests to dinner is not revolution.....

---- Mao Zedong

Chairman Mao said only the half of it about revolution
I'll supply the remaining half
First I want to say: This topic of revolution is very big
Very broad, we can't get a grasp of it
We can only see a color (which makes us remember
That the blood of revolutionary martyrs did not flow in vain)
Red is the representative color of revolution. Ergo the red flag
Is red, the red scarf is red, the revolutionary
Soldier's heart is red, the red sun is red
Looking at it in other ways, revolution is
The loudest volume, the most sublime thing
All commendatory terms plus the best adjectives
Throw in the adverbs too, the bright side and the brilliance of language
Revolution is really big (mighty upright far-reaching grand lofty
The Great Leap Forward big character posters mass criticism the Great Cultural Revolution)
When a word is preceded by revolution that word
Takes on a highfalutin sound, like "revolutionary action"
Looting becomes a righteous act
Also the "two hands of revolution":³⁰ Conspiracy becomes an overt act
Treachery becomes virtue, it triumphs over honesty and intelligence
Anything can be said in the name of revolution
And it becomes irrefutable truth, not open to doubt
Revolution + romanticism = revolutionary romanticism
Revolution + realism = revolutionary realism
Putting the two ism's together is the equivalent of revolution's gear
And screw, positive propaganda, the main melody
Primarily consecration, the three stresses, laughter is better than tears
Light vanquishes dark. These are all
Basic principles of revolution, inviolable
Born into New China, nurtured beneath the red flag
You and I grew up drinking the milk of revolution
Of course we know what revolution is. Revolution is
Instantly effective when using the class struggle, when the three great mountains³¹
Are toppled, we stamp another foot down on them
A million feet, teach them that they will never stand again

³⁰ "The two hands" refer to peaceful methods and violent methods, or covert and overt methods of carrying out revolution.

³¹ The three "mountains" were imperialism, feudalism and bureaucratic capitalism.

Revolution is a political campaign, incite masses to struggle against masses
 Fight yourself: Ruthlessly struggle against fleeting thoughts of the word "private"
 Revolution is revolt to its greatest degree (combat imperialism combat revisionism
 Combat leftism combat rightism combat liberalization combat peaceful evolution)
 Only revolution cannot be opposed (counter revolution carries a death penalty)
 This way of saying it is still too abstract, let me explain
 More concretely: Revolution is to examine ancestry back three generations
 There is theory of class status, but not theory of the unique importance of class origins³²
 Revolution is "the people" running the show (but not in a position to decide anything)
 One's entire life given over for the Party to arrange. Revolution is
 Land distributed to poor and lower-middle peasants³³ (and taken back again)
 Revolution is state monopoly over purchasing and marketing, food from the big pot
 Politics in command, all people soldiers. What's understood
 Must be carried out, and the incomprehensible must be carried out too
 Revolution is overt plotting, is to lure the snakes out of their nests
 Especially to attack snakes with eyeglasses (the more knowledgeable
 The more reactionary) Revolution is the East wind prevailing over the West Wind
 Its "asking for instructions in the morning", "reporting back in the evening", the fandango of
 loyalty³⁴
 Mao's quotations sung. Its Attention Long Live Chairman Mao To the right Dress
 Down with Liu Shaoqi³⁵ Look to the front Forever loyal to Chairman Mao
 To the left Turn Forever loyal to the revolutionary line of Chairman Mao Quick
 March Respectfully wish Chairman Mao the Great Leader a life of ten thousand years
 A LIFE OF TEN THOUSAND YEARS Respectfully wish Chairman Mao's close comrade
 In arms vice-Chairman Lin³⁶ Good Health Forever Healthy FOREVER HEALTHY
 Revolution is to stay close in step, it's to set a pole in the ground and see its shadow
 It's Chairman Mao's words, one sentence worth ten thousand
 Not only do cadres have to study the three essays,³⁷ soldiers must also study
 An all-conquering way of thinking, a line
 Forever correct. Chairman Mao waves and I advance

³² The theory of class status referred to one's profession or economic prior to joining the revolutionary ranks (as everyone had to after 1949). The latter theory of class origins was an off-shoot of the previous theory but implied that those of non-revolutionary background were not welcome in the revolutionary ranks. This theory was rejected by Mao.

³³ Terms resulting from the extension of Marxist class theory to peasants and farmers: A "poor peasant" was one who could not reach subsistence level regardless of whether he owned or rented land, and so had to sell some of his labor; a "lower-middle peasant" could usually sustain himself and his family, but often did so by also hiring out his labor.

³⁴ A stylized dance performed while singing quotations from Mao's writing which were set to music during the Cultural Revolution.

³⁵ Liu Shaoqi 刘少奇 was the president of China and second in power for much of the time between 1949-1966. During the Cultural Revolution he was criticized by Mao, after which he was arrested. He died in prison in 1969.

³⁶ Lin Biao 林彪: A successful general in the northeast during the civil war who rose in the ranks of the military until he was appointed Party vice-Chairman and declared to be second in command by Mao in 1969. He died in September 1971 in a plane crash in Mongolia as he was attempting to flee after a failed assassination attempt on Mao (according to the CCP version of events).

³⁷ Three articles written by Mao (including one commemorating the Canadian doctor, Norman Bethune) which were held up as models for the kind of spirit needed by Chinese citizens in building the New China.

Revolution is a vast world which tempers red hearts
It's to recall past suffering and to think of present happiness, to remember the diabolically evil,
old society
To adore New China even more. Its Lei Feng³⁸
Wang Jie, Yang Zirong, Ouyang Hai, Guo Jianguang
Just before dying the hero raises his arm in salute and shouts:
"Long Live Chairman Mao! The diary is under the pillow....."
Revolution is Xi'er not becoming Huang Shiren's concubine³⁹
The ignominiousness of Wang Debiao as a traitor.⁴⁰ Li Yuhe
Before departing drinking a bowl of wine to his mother, Thank you Ma!⁴¹
Heroes always fall beneath the same pine tree
Accompanied by The Internationale, there's no pain
The final victory must surely be ours
Revolution is not to allow monsters and demons to act and speak carelessly
Much less allow them to fart! Class warfare must be stressed day in day out
Month in month out year in year out (with regard to farting
Only later did we hear that it is beneficial to mind and body)
Now the wording is different: one center two points⁴²
Class struggle must still be stressed. Revolution is to
Emancipate thought, seek truth from facts, not to wrong good people
Initially it gave you hats to wear,⁴³ now it gives you redress
All is correct, all is revolutionary necessity
Correcting one's own mistakes is the equivalent of making no mistakes
Revolution is "dichotomy",⁴⁴ and the "seventy-thirty ratio"⁴⁵
Results are of paramount importance. Don't get cocky
(Being more correct than chairman Mao is in itself an error)
Revolution is the reimportation and sale of exports, defective goods
Sold to Chinese, don't worship foreign things
With foreigners you can transcend ideology

³⁸ 'Lei Feng 雷锋 and the others are the names of model workers, soldiers held up by the Party to be emulated by other Chinese citizens (the spirit of self-sacrifice for the Party, communism and others was/is particularly stressed). Lei Feng's diary was supposedly found upon his death and in it were recorded his good deeds, deeds which had never come to the attention of others prior to his death.

³⁹ From the revolutionary opera, "The White-Haired Girl" 白毛女. Huang Shiren was the evil landlord who coveted Xi'er, the white-haired girl.

⁴⁰ From the revolutionary opera, "Sha-jia-bang" 沙家浜.

⁴¹ From the revolutionary opera, "The Red Lantern" 红灯. (In the 1970s until the end of the Cultural Revolution, the above are three of the seven operas allowed to be performed on stage.)

⁴² Economic development of China as the central task, one point being to uphold the four basic principles (socialism, people's democratic dictatorship, the leadership of the CCP, and Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong thought); the other point being to persevere with Deng Xiaoping's "reform" and "opening" policies. (These were introduced into the constitution at the thirteenth congress of the CCP in 1987.)

⁴³ People were made to wear hats on which were written their crimes against the people during mass criticism rallies and demonstrations from 1949 until 1976.

⁴⁴ Mao's idea that there are two sides to everything (the right side and the wrong side, the positive and the negative side), everything or everyone is on one side or the other.

⁴⁵ A shorthand method coined by Mao and used when assessing individuals: i.e., one's record or past is seen to consist of 70 percent achievements and 30 per cent mistakes.

Not with nationals. or in other words
Peacefully coexist with imperialism, with the people
Under no circumstances be soft-hearted! This is called distinguishing between domestic and
foreign
Government policy and tactics are the life of the Party, now
There's no need to recite them, but they must continue to be carried out
The East Wind did not prevail over the West Wind, but
Certainly will never be overwhelmed by the West Wind. Future prospects
Are bright, the road is torturous
Revolution is like feeling for rocks with your feet while wading across a river, suddenly left⁴⁶
Suddenly right, it's difficult to avoid paying some tuition
It's all a matter of dressing warmly and eating one's fill. A comparatively well-off level of
living. Double it and double that again
Now we need to lengthen our strides a bit
Revolution is to get things moving, for a second time
Distribute land to the farmers (no change for fifty years)
Its all the people going into business. A stockholding system. A market economy
Revolution is changing from agricultural to non-agricultural producer, the "54321 Office"
(Five stresses four beauties three ardors two civilizations brought together as one)⁴⁷
Possessing Chinese characteristics. Casual pissing and shitting is not allowed
But of a billion people nine hundred million gamble. Saunas at public expense
Blind wandering of the unemployed. Syphilis. Sexual diseases spread widely
Is revolution surnamed "socialist" or "capitalist", it's hard to say
Don't argue anymore. Together all the people of the land look to money
Ultimately revolution is an issue about cats
I approve of this way of saying it: white cat black cat
If it catches mice it's a good cat.⁴⁸ Finally I want to say
Revolution is buying a cat over an open sack
Revolution is catching the mice

⁴⁶ A traditional folk saying used by Deng Xiaoping to describe how political and economic reform in China would proceed after his return to power in 1978.

⁴⁷ These are a series of slogans which have been in use since the Cultural Revolution with the aim to create the kind of citizens the Party requires. They stress absolute adoration of the Party, socialism and the nation, as well as moral standards to which all people are to strive for.

⁴⁸ A dictum uttered by Deng Xiaoping. Officially it is understood to mean that it is of no importance what methods (whether socialist or capitalist) are used to improve China's economy, all that matters is that the end result is achieved. Of course, Deng's saying is open to many other interpretations, ones seemingly better suited to a cat and mouse allusion.....

Red Writing 红色写作

The 1992 Arts Charter or The Principles of Not-Leisurely Poetry

Time cuts a hole in a fresh subject
The place where blood unceasingly flows is a new start
--- from <The Pose of Refusal> [拒绝的姿态]

A. White Writing And Leisureliness

#1

Chinese poetry has just passed through a period of White Writing. In unprecedented numbers and over a wide range of subjects, the feeble-minded have written many words that have been forgotten as soon as they were read: cowardly, pallid literary works of an indifferent nature, lacking in creativity and of pretentious surface refinement. Defeated and scattered in all directions from the center of being. A dispersal without a core. Drifting, rootless words crowding and jostling against each other. In the guises of idle talk, hermits, hippies, ruffians..... endlessly trivial, insipid and empty. Deliberately avoiding the masters and their works, in fear of or without the courage to pursue profundity and power. Passing white turnips off as ivory tusks to avoid real and fabricated dangers. To the weak rhythms of elevator music, a generation of poets forms into meandering rows and uses a limited vocabulary to imitate one another and themselves repeatedly and collectively. Persistent repetitiveness and inadequacy have made triviality and mediocrity the universal characteristics of an entire period of poetry.

#2

This is only an outward impression. In the midst of this cacophony we discover that the dominant tone is one of "leisureliness" (闲适) --- a tranquility with escapism as its rationale, a placid, uncomplaining "golden mean" (中庸) and "correctness" (雅正), meeting all the demands of Confucian teachings on poetry: think no evil, be benevolent and be sincere. A cultural traditions passed down through the ages have dulled the sensations in the blood of poets, and the "serene inaction" (清静无为) of Taoism has made the little consistency that had existed in the blood become even weaker. Be it the leisurely feeling brought about by the rays of the rising sun entering through a window, or an idle state of being among eastern hedges and southern mountains, white writing takes the most insignificant thing as a point of reference (corresponding to the innate nature of these poets): sweep some moonlight with bamboo, be spellbound by a little dust on the table top, reduce or expand an ink stain on the wall, and so on. Wholehearted insignificance. Quietly, superficially amusing oneself while writing a few inconsequential words, the leisurely poetry of the onlooker that has been deemed appropriate throughout ancient and modern times.

This great tendency contrasts with one incontestable fact: a multitude of poets of weak character are flaccidly articulating a white noise which has escapism as its principle aim, and a nearly girlish gentleness during an age chock full of violence and confrontation. This, then, is my first image of white writing.

#3

Of course, this is not representative of the situation of all contemporary poetry.

In the midst of universal weakness and deficiency, a minority of strong-willed poets are still opening up and cultivating art with the vigor of their lives and persevering as obvious exceptions to the general rule among contemporary poets (Bei Dao was the first exception, and with the passage of time his brilliance is even brighter); there is also a group of young poetry critics who in the face of the flood of white writing have tried to bring order out of chaos on the theoretical level, who persevere with uncompromising critical stances, and attempt through their theory to lead white writing in a more serious direction. All of these individuals have made great, dedicated efforts during this time. However, although this has been the case, universal inadequacy is still an incontrovertible fact.

The uncertainty of this generation, in addition to the weakening of inborn human dignity, is primarily the result of spiritual self-weakening. As the transmitters of the spirit of Eastern aesthetic consciousness, we instinctively tend towards leisurely and carefree moods. Faced with the violent structure of the world, we deliberately become orchids and chrysanthemums [symbolic of the life of the hermit in classical Chinese poetry] in pastoral settings: a graceful escapism. For this reason, nothing can be more natural than the production of escapist art.

#4

"Leisureliness" (闲适) is a typical Chinese mood. It makes me think of the literati of long ago sipping tea while admiring the beauty of the moon or of the natural scenery. Of course, the basis for all this was being well provided for by land rents and silver, and that indispensable decorative item: the fan. On the other hand, "leisurely comfort" was not only the life ideal of traditional Chinese literati, but it was also their artistic ideal. The spirit of the literati and officialdom consisted of both Confucianism and Taoism: the internalization of Taoist thought was embodied in a leisurely attitude towards life; its externalization was an indolent taste in art. Escape from society, escape from the great contradictions of reality, a calm mind and body and unruffled poetry all in harmony with nature. This fundamental tone became a great concealed, yet unbroken, strain throughout classical Chinese poetry, and easily overcame the weak-willed poets and readers of later ages.

#5

The literal sense of "leisurely" is "idle, easy and comfortable" (清闲安逸: Modern Chinese Dictionary, Commercial Press, 1979). By inference, it refers to "even-tempered and good-humored" or a mental state at harmony with nature: a life free of worries and desires, a serene state of mind; it is also related in meaning to "boring" (无聊), "indifferent" (淡然), "indolent" (懒散), and "to idle away one's time" (无所事事). In short, it is an axiomatic gentlemanly, worry-free cognizance of life (even though there may be some worries, they are no more than a few idle concerns of the sad, seasonal variety), possessing all the economic and cultural implications of the words "of leisure" (悠闲) as in the term "the class of leisure" (悠闲阶级). Even the words related to "leisure", such as "carefree", "at loose ends" (闲散), "refined" (闲雅), or "a leisurely and carefree mood" (闲情逸致), and so on, all lead one to think of "a man of leisure" (悠闲者)

and his bored state of mind as he idles his time away. When they write poetry or do something else, it is no more than a "playful way" (玩法) of killing time. No matter how hard they try to put up a serious front, the overtones of "play" (玩) are always present in their attitude toward life. Among the literati of recent times, Lin Yutang (1895-1976) was a typical representative of this philosophy of "playing with the world" (玩世 = cynicism) as conveyed by his 'leisurely' writing style.

New Chinese poetry [dating from 1919] tried to be different by being "anti-traditional," but in the end, it has returned to poetry's most traditional artistic sensibility. This is the greatest irony of modern Chinese poetry!

#6

What needs to be pointed out here is: as a poetic phenomenon in the aftermath of "misty poetry" [朦胧诗: or obscure poetry, 1976-1983], white writing achieved influence at the cost of a divorce from reality (to a greater extent, it is a conscious divorce from humanity). At the same time that critics correctly pointed this out, they also believed that this kind of separation was a contribution to the diversification of poetry. They were, thus, equally mistaken. Just like all poetry traditionalists throughout literary history, what white writing shows solicitude for is not the truly important structural transformation of poetic form, but the harmlessness of content! Sucking the incisive spirit of skepticism and critical consciousness out of "misty poetry", the grinding flat all cutting edges (especially as seen in the poetry of Bei Dao), resulting in a skillful, cloying branch of poetry and a leisurely mood of little consequence. Indeed, they have done no more than this to strengthen and advance modern poetic art, and what they have discarded are, in fact, the very qualities that bore the soul of modern Chinese poetry.

We are not left with a more graceful butterfly, but have changed from a butterfly into a specimen sample. This is my supplementary image of white writing.

#7

Let us now look at the situation outside of China.

Whether white writers say it or not, we all know the facts that they wish to hide: Not only are they bound to ancient roots, but they generally also have genes which have been transplanted crosswise --- these are the styles and literary forms of foreign authors which they have skinned alive and swallowed raw.

From classicism and the Imagists (including Hemingway's novels which were influenced by Imagist theory), they advocate simple, restrained, self-restricting literary forms, opposing metaphor and over-embellishment; with Camus, this form of writing had already reached a relatively high level of self-awareness, in its calm depictions, it developed a direct form of literary tension. There is nothing wrong with this. Its principle achievements constitute an important component of modern literature, making the world transparent and deeply penetrating. In Pound's Cantos, Hemingway's The Old Man and the Sea, Camus' The Outsider and many other classics of modern and contemporary literature, we discover a common quality that has made these works great and immortal. This consists of the style of each individual writer. But these styles are beyond literary form, they are spiritual things that can never be imitated or peeled away.

When white writers exert themselves to copy these writers' styles and forms, it is exactly this magnificent, inherent spiritual quality that is not (and never can be) imitated. As a result, their imitations are, ultimately, no more than superficial.

#8

However, imitated most by white writers is still Robbe-Grillet and other new French novelists (currently, this imitation has already "developed" from the new novel to the "new new novel" --- "the school of original appearances"). In order to not pass off fish eyes as pearls and to avoid creating unnecessary confusion and misunderstanding, let us listen to what the effigies of the originators whose faces have been obscured by the hands of those who run after them have to say for themselves:

--- The spirit of skepticism has already come into the world; we have already entered the age of skepticism (Sartre)

--- Reject all notions concerning the a priori order (Robbe-Grillet)

--- Make the indescribable reality become comprehensible, a reality more real than reality (Simon)

--- Literature changes the way we look at the world and changes our descriptions of the world, therefore it may be said that literature changes the world (Barthes)

Digging down beneath the surface, we are also unable to find a basis for escapism among these sources.

#9

As an experiment in modernist writing, writers of this tendency have never invoked escapism or withdrawal [from society], but, instead, an even more profound existence within and engagement with it. From the transformation of the united march of the arts into the unconventional, opinionated stances of individuals, from their words and deeds there is not one shred of evidence to suggest that their works contain escapist material. Indeed, just the opposite, after reading their works, we more thoroughly understand the perilous condition of mankind. Furthermore, we are led to a resolve to make an effort to change this state of affairs. As any writer knows, when using language to write, he has no way of placing himself outside of the actual world: be it due to accommodation or resistance, sometimes even silence is a posture. To some extent, it can even be said that all linguistic attitudes demonstrate certain positions. A real "second kind of language" separated from all contact with reality simply does not exist --- unless you throw away your pen and abandon writing entirely. Therefore, the only thing a serious writer can do is: hold fast to his artistic beliefs in his language and bear his responsibilities to freedom in his form. Writing has never been an art of bystanders. Nevertheless, the serious spirit of these works has been screened out by their imitators. They have obtained a feather, but have forgotten the sky. Not only can they not change into hawks, but also, because of this, they will never be able to step high.

#10

There are also the issues of "colloquialization" and the importance attached to "daily life experience."

After the 1960s, a new generation of American poets, following in the footsteps of William Carlos Williams, opposed Eliot's "impersonalization" and advocated the direct expression of individual life experience; they opposed Eliot's aristocratic language, and advocated the use of colloquial language. This has had a direct effect upon white writing. However, what gratified white writers most was the "rejection of profundity." Without expending great effort, this allowed them to dispel misgivings about "superficiality" and "banality" in their writing. Little did they imagine that they were defending something of which they had no understanding: a revolt against the modernist tradition. But in China, where a far from stringent modernism had not yet taken shape, much less been established, from where does a "modernist tradition" come? The story with regard to "profundity" is even more farfetched. Modern poetry, having only just slipped out from under the directives of political parties and groups, had not yet entirely won for itself even the minimum prerequisites of art: a non-ideological standpoint and a pure consciousness. Furthermore, from beginning to end, modern poetry has been in a state of crisis due to a lack of the basic conditions for its existence -- creative freedom and the freedom to publish. Where do they find a "profundity" to turn their backs upon!!! To put it bluntly, this is no more than a tactic of white writing: latching onto the slogan "reject profundity" makes their banality seem reasonable and necessary, and even allocates to white writing some modicum of the hallowed nature of art.

#11

Finally, there is the self-flaunting of the so-called "post-modern", a cheap trick like that of beating one's face till it swells up and passing oneself off as fat which, in the imaginations of white writers, then becomes an apparent fact. Yet another attempt to improve their prospects by way of an external phenomenon, it is still of no help in altering the indifferent nature of white writing.

Just as I have already said in the section above, as a recent artistic concept, the basic motive behind "the post-modern" derives from a departure from and a rebellion against the modernist tradition. While concentrating on experimentation in form, at the same time it cuts more sensitively into the heart of the individual's and mankind's existence: from its concern over the current state of mankind's existence, it produces its theme of social protest; out of the cruel, violent nature of this century and the continuing destruction, is produced its theme of hopelessness; the third theme related to life is reconciliation and the singing of praises. If it can be said that white writing has truly received something from "post-modern" art, then it is the same as all the other acts of imitation mentioned above: through constant circumspection, they carefully avoid the serious themes of "post-modern" poetry (social protest and hopelessness) and choose to acknowledge the theme best suited to their weak character -- reconciliation. This has only served to add a foreign tone of peace and elation to the skillful, cloying nature of leisurely writing. But it has not allowed white writing, even in an imitative sense, to become Chinese "post-modern" poetry.

#12

Aren't you weary of this yet? A weakened will, a loss of vitality, an obtuse feeling for language. There are so many playing together with the same ball; it drops down from the sky directly into

your hands, and then is passed on again. Duplicated language and actions. Writing has become the simplest of crafts --- a uniform imitative enterprise while in pursuit of the masters.

From the imitation of novels by novels, of poetry by poetry, the imitation goes on until it develops into poetry imitating novels and poetry imitating the news. Imitation has been universalized and has struck roots in the minds of the people! A gourd-ladle truer than a calabash. Reproductions more materialist than the writings of Robbe-Grillet:

Subject matter (objectification, writing about objects)

Technique (a purely objective description of superficial details)

Tone (placid narration)

Imitation to the point of similarity in the feeling of language between entire paragraphs, definitive application of words (no associative monads), a linear structure with the addition of a recurring, long two-line refrain, boring, insipid synonymous repetition, a false mysticism lacking all sense of mystery; the maximum use of black and white together with trivial linguistic detail, all things that can be arranged into lines and columns can become "poetry" and "poets"!

Just as the sense of humour of Chinese people is always slow by half a beat, the unmasking of the misdeeds of this type of writing also seems to be somewhat tardy, to the point of allowing this imitation bordering on plagiarism to swagger through the streets in the guise of the avant garde, destroying the reputation of modern poetry. It also must be pointed out that for a time now, some enthusiastic poetry critics have been unable to distinguish between original creation and imitation. Approving of clumsy imitations by looking upon them as new creations has led to an even greater flood of imitative writing.

The time to put an end to this activity is now!

#13

Enough said about white writing's pursuit of the masters through imitation. The objects, which they misread and use falsely in and of themselves, constitute the revolutionary achievements of literature. The serious thematic nature of their work, from literary style to form, tends toward a certain degree of difficulty: the experimental nature of writing and the creative nature of reading. And not the indifferent popular poetic style flaunted and, in fact, advocated by white writing. I point this out merely to show that: it is impossible to imitate truly great works of art; and, no matter how the imitators try to adorn themselves with the feathers of the phoenix, their original pedestrian natures still cause them to lack a certain self-confidence. The result: on one hand, the imitator is forever trying to throw his predecessors into the black void forever, thereby coming to enjoy sole patent on "origination"; but conscious imitation always unconsciously brings the object of imitation out from the darkened background and places it in the foreground. This unavoidable illumination finally exposes the imitator to the light of day and the hoax is suddenly laid bare.

#14

The fault lies not with the literary pioneers. The problem arose among Chinese poets.

Always impulsive, always indifferent, always leisurely, always eager for quick success. The disorderliness of an entire generation. Without the great wisdom of creation, only possessing the meager ability to imitate others; without the courage to destroy and to build, only possessing the inferior ability to pursue fame and fortune. The blood of a race poisoned by a rotten tree runs

deeper than memory; docile ants gnaw at the soul of a generation. During China's age-old decline, brittle shadows have piled up layer upon layer, forming an enormous enfeebling mechanism, dissolving the increasingly rare, creative passion. No matter whether it is out of the native soil or transplanted from foreign lands, any new and vigorous thing, including its initial impulse --- all that is uncouth and cannot be digested, and the spirit of skepticism have only to pass through the digestive tracts of Chinese poets and they will lose their original aspects and be transformed into a thing lacking initiative and overly cautious --- leisureliness erected upon a low, petty character defended by the "golden mean", a smooth evasiveness, and worldly wisdom combined together with caution in the extreme --- a self-manipulated delight!

#15

I have now sketched out the preliminary contours of the fundamental features of white writing. An art of evasion and reconciliation. All aspects of theory and practice reflect the fact that this ancient civilization of ours has lost its original creative power, all that remains is a little modesty and an effort to recall the past. As a reflection of the race's spiritual weakening, the weak character of poets constitutes its internal condition; escape is the most basic impulse. In form, it is expressed by imitation (method of writing) and leisure (aesthetic pursuit), the golden mean and a correctness that lacks vitality. In the burnishing and ripening of modern art, its experimental nature becomes inert, its incisiveness is neutered, all the cutting edges of avant-garde art are dulled, and it now reaches an accommodation with the violent structure of the world. This is what white writing has already done and is still in the process of doing: **An enterprise fully intended to enfeeble.**

B. The Purity Of Poetry: The Transformation From White To Red

#1

The purity of poetry is a matter that has never been clearly explained, it is an unsettled issue over which argument has dragged on for a long time and will continue to due to insufficient evidence in support of any position. Putting this exhausting argument to one side for the time being, we can see that several people are upholding one particular thing, or going through the motions of upholding something in a devout manner, as if holding up an enormous glass marble or a piece of crystal, one slip of their hands and it will fall to the ground and be shattered. Their overly serious expressions give rise to skepticism: what's so mysterious about what's up there? Or, that this exhortational posture is merely an expression of devotion. Thoughts like these, however, do not dispel the questions. The formerly raised hands are still raised as before, of their own volition even more hands gather around, and together they wait upon its fragile holiness. Even if we knew that the piece of crystal in the hands of artists was fabricated, it is undoubtedly still shining. Furthermore, it displays a certain quality and weight, causing one to feel it, associate with it mentally, give expression to it, and it then proceeds to become the artistic ideal in which poets can believe and rely upon.

It is said that when many people worship at the feet of a clay Bodhisattva, it quite naturally becomes effective. In this, there is a mystery that can only be sensed.

#2.

I have reservations about the kind of holiness that is waited upon.

Having experienced the process of moving from belief to skepticism, at one time I removed my pious hands and the mirror did not fall to pieces, I was suddenly convinced that above all these lofty salutations nothing is being held. The existence of true purity is an inexpressible non-existence. This thought penetrated deeply into my later writings. Taking into account the fact that modern Chinese art slipped out from under the dictates of parties and groups not so long ago, a tendency toward pure art may strengthen a solitary determination. Therefore, in <Anti-Values>, I still retained one final foundation for the purity of poetry. After three years of this accommodation (up to the time I write these words), it still effectively binds my limbs. Precisely out of my respect for and understanding of the desire for this type of purity among Chinese poets, I will continue to restrict my thoughts within the necessary limits, and under the premise of the affirmation of pure poetry, I will develop my exposition. Furthermore, as I clarify the misunderstandings of my predecessors, I will satisfactorily resolve this problem.

#3

First, three categories must be clearly differentiated: pure literature, pure art, and pure poetry.

Pure Literature: In the first sense, it is distinguished from history, philosophy, etc., among the humanities; in the second sense, in contrast with popular literature and literature for the masses, it is synonymous with "serious literature", meaning all serious writing of a non-commercial nature, including poetry, novels, plays, criticism, prose essays, etc.

Pure Art: The self-purifying ideals and the realization of the art of mankind, primarily painting and drawing, music, sculpture, and sometimes also including poetry. Artists holding this view generally are of the "art for art's sake" tendency.

Pure Poetry: As a unique form of linguistic art, poetry's pure ideals are both possible and impossible to realize. But it does no harm to try.

#4

Pure literature has been in existence since ancient times. One can say that it is an existence that has been achieved entirely. Although its initial widespread practice has been weakened by popular literature, to this day it still occupies the principal position in world literature. The situation of pure art is somewhat different. As the process of self-purification in art, it embodies a certain possibility, and in painting (by way of abstract painting), and in music (via music without melody) it has been partially realized. Pure poetry's circumstances are more distinctive. Its entire difficulty is hidden within its premise: a language that gathers into one unit the real, the unreal, limitation, and self-indulgence. Therefore, the attainment of purity in poetry can only be resolved by the use of language within language.

#5

On the level of attitude towards language, there are two linguistic points of view that need to be distinguished.

The traditional concept of language looks upon it as a tool through which thought or something else is expressed, this concept focused only on its obstructive and partial nature, and adopted a simple attitude of repudiation. Confucius (language is incapable of expressing all meaning), Laozi (the speaker is ignorant) and the central position of "logos" in the West since the time of Aristotle sustain this linguistic point of view.

The modern concept of language has disposed of the "functional theory" position. From the analogous nature of being it has penetrated deeply into language, it has come to understand that language is not a tool, but that language is man's mode of being --- that it is being itself. Through language, man brings existence to light; man can only exist within language.

--- Language is the home of being (Heidigger)

--- Language is a form of life (Wittgenstein)

--- We ourselves are language (Gadamer)

In this way, the full hidden nature of language is revealed: As the basic form of existence, on the one hand language defines the indefinite; on the other, it endows the definite indetermination. Therefore, it is obstructive, but it infers even more. All the darkness and light of being starts and ends with language. No matter whether it is repudiation of language or revolt against culture, the poet's struggle within language is merely a "magnificent, futile effort" which is incapable of changing mankind's predetermined (therefore everlasting) linguistic predicament by even one iota.

#6

As conjecture on being and as conjecture in and of itself, the ideal of purity in poetry is a battle between the obstructive and definite qualities of language within language, and an endeavor related to linguistic openness and linguistic possibility. Here we now enter into the realm of theories about original and non-original languages.

Original language is the root language, as a theory of poetic openness, it is the comprehension of and self-reflexive language of being, once spoken it illuminates, it is the first naming of objects in the primeval state. Its poetic expression always brings forth entirely new meanings. This constitutes the poetic realm of pure truth.

Non-original language is just the opposite: They are terms suspended in mid-air divorced from the root of being. As a phenomenon of words and phrases of tainted roots, they are not the expression of new meaning, but the repetition of old; understanding and expression of a repetitive nature: a darkness moving from obstruction to obstruction. All those institutionalized languages, ideological terminology, public opinion, conceptualized words, abstract preaching --- all elements of linguistic pathology are manifestations of it.

#7

As the clarifying intent of language, original language can only be understood and expressed through poetry. But non-original language, as an obstruction to being, is never inclined to remove its shadow. Furthermore, once all the entirely new meanings brought forth by original language have been defined and repeated by mediocrities (or by poets themselves), they will also become new obstructions. Therefore, the poet's tendency towards purity is manifested as:

subjugating non-original terms and the self within language. However, precisely because non-original truth is an inert quality inherent in language, no matter how the poet strives, non-original language unavoidably accompanies original language into poetry, becoming the impurities of a specific work of literature. For this reason, "pure poetry" refers to the elimination of these impurities and poetry from which these impurities have been eliminated.

This, then, is the fundamental relationship between "the purity of poetry" and language.

#8

Now we may seek out poetry's impure elements.

From an investigation of poetry's vertical links, the earliest impure element was the "narrative quality" (Homer's historical poems); afterwards there came "moral preaching" (Romantic poetry). Early in this century, aside from the pre-existing limitations, "sentiment," "reoccurrence," "logical transition," "defining components," and so on were added. Contemporary poetry looks upon "obscurity" and "abstraction" as the most impure elements, therefore contemporary poetry possesses universal characteristics of clarity and concreteness.

But, when all is said and done, poetry, after all, is not a nihilistic undertaking, when it points out those impure qualities that hinder its pure realization, it also hints at an ideal transparency. From the common pursuits and acknowledgements of poets, we can distinguish these qualities: "the sublime", "lyricism", "musicality", "expression", "impersonalization", "anti-lyricism", "abstract wisdom", "ambiguity", "suggestive imagery", "psychological detail", "the perceptual", "personalization", and so on.

#9

The problem still exists. Due to the divergence between the artistic concepts of different eras and the innate self-love of poets often carried out to the point of madness, people are always diametrically opposed to one another with regard to artistic concepts, one never willing to give way to the other. Poetry is no exception. Not only between different groups of poets, but even between poets sharing the same goal have different, individual beliefs regarding the nature of pure poetry. As a result, this has produced different standards for pure poetry and has made impossible the establishment of unified criterion for pure poetry. Taking "ambiguity" and "clarity" as examples: in the poetry of Eliot and Auden, "ambiguity" is taken as the key fundamental element of poetry, but "clarity" is an impure element which must be overcome; contemporary poetry ("the confessional school", "the Beat generation") opposes the standards of Eliot and Auden, looking upon "clarity" as crystal and denouncing "ambiguity" as poetic garbage. The contradictions between "personification" and "non-personification," "lyricism" and "anti-lyricism" are also of this nature.

All sorts of similar arguments do not allow us to make a final determination about "the pure nature of poetry." In the end, we can only give it up and suggest that "pure poetry" is a metaphysical ideal of poets, the cause that propels the poet to incline toward purity, and not an effect.

#10

The first mistake of white writing is to confuse "leisureliness" with "purity," believing that poetry is pure when all the incisiveness of suffering, profundity, despair, and being is averted. Its starting point is to make the serious and enriching nature of the relationship between poetry and living world mutually antagonistic, separate --- turning from society to nature, from conflict to harmony, from steel, movement, flames and the cruel teeth of matter to mountains and rivers, lotus flowers and white cranes (the feathered symbol of Taoism). In a word, turning from living in the world to standing outside of it, from serious thought and action turning to the leisureliness of inaction (无为的闲情). As if "poetic purity" only exists in a dialogue between the poet and autumn waters [a traditional metaphor for 'the limpid eyes of a woman'], equating "pure poetry" with "pastoral poetry" (田园诗) and "mountains-and-waters poetry" (山水诗), the recluse of antiquity becomes the purest of poets. For the moment, let's ignore how this view has no theoretical legs to stand on, but even with regard to poets such as Tao Yuanming (372-427), Wang Wei (701-761) and the abstruse poets of the Wei-Jin period (220-420), held up as exemplars by white writing, they are grossly mistaken.

#11

Eighty to ninety percent of the works of the Wei-Jin poets (including abstruse poetry and poetry about immortals) are works of consternation and indignation. Although Tao Yuanming may have been a pastoral poet, he most certainly was not a poet of idleness. In a volume of Tao's poetry (including the poet's unrhymed works, "Notes on the Peach Blossom Spring", "The Story of Master Wuliu", etc.) not one poem does not speak of his ideals. For the most part, the early works of Wang Wei recount his yearnings, and the mountains-and-rivers poetry of his later period often carry Zen (Chan) Buddhist connotations. There are still other examples: The exceedingly sentimental language of Li Shangyin's (813-858) untitled poems frequently place a certain faith in a political ideal; Representative of the greatest artistic success of Li Houzhu (or Li Yu, 937-978), writer of exquisite spiritual *ci* [ts'u: strictly regulated poetry written to music, often sung], is the gloomy poetry written after the empire had perished in which he concentrated the anguish of losing both home and country. The above examples are all poets of pure artistic tendencies. Qu Yuan (340-277 B.C.E.), Chen Zi'ang (661-702), Li Bai (701-762), Du Fu (712-770), Bai Juyi (772-846)as the troubled, righteous voices of hardship and suffering, they had even less to do with "leisureliness"!

Western theory of "pure poetry" does not contain leisureliness. In this regard, it is only necessary to make one additional point: Honored by critics with the titles "a poet's poet" and "a pure poet", both Valerie and Stevens were advocates of intelligence, the former approached purity through "abstract intelligence", the latter approached transparency by way of "profound truth". They were both poets of metaphysical philosophy.

#12

Is "purity" a neutral principle then?

Of course not. Since poetry is a poet's involvement in the world of being by way of language, it is necessarily articulated as a particular tendency. This is determined by the essential motivation of art.

Those tending toward the purity of intelligence, manifest an absorption with metaphysics; those with a tendency to subconscious illusions, express themselves through persistent,

prejudiced rantings and discontinuity; Futurism emphasizes power, speed, weight, and a metallic movement; the confessional school wallows in the confessions of private concerns, a kind of holy howl.

--- Baudelaire's "Flower of Evil" is not neutral;

--- Mallarme's "The Coincidence that can never be eliminated by the roll of the dice" is not neutral;

--- Rimbaud's "Season in Prison" is not neutral;

--- Breton's "White haired left-barrel rifle" is not neutral;

--- Eliot's "Wasteland" is not neutral;

--- Pound's "cantos" are not neutral;

--- Ginsberg's "The Howl" is not neutral.

Kafka is not neutral; Dostoyevski is not neutral; Joyce is not neutral; Faulkner is not neutral; Sartre is not neutral; Camus is not neutral; Hemingway and the French "new novel" are not neutral; black humour is not neutral; the "anti-utopian" trilogy is not neutral; the theatre of the absurd is not neutral. Magical realism came out of Latin America advocating the direct engagement of literature with reality, all the absurdity of the real world is magically exaggerated by it, an extreme too tangled to unravel which blurs reality and illusion --- this is the principle characteristic of Latin American magical writing founded by Borges (early on, Borges had been a convert to a school of literature appropriately called radicalism)!

#13

Writing is engagement.

And engagement implies inclination. No matter whether you are inclined toward a particular aesthetic position, an artistic style, or are only inclined towards art itself --- an inclination is unavoidable.

All serious poets should completely abandon "the golden mean", the "neutral" principle of writing, and ultimately make it clear that: purity is without a doubt not a neutral state of art, but an art form pushing toward an extreme cutting edge. On the same principle, the pure blue flame of a furnace changes iron into steel, and water heated above the boiling point becomes gas and forms ice when below the freezing point. "Iron" and "water" are states prior to purification, a kind of neutral inertia.

#14

Whenever one talks of purity, one necessarily touches upon "transparence." In modern poetics this term is raised up highest and at the same time is the most misunderstood, most terribly damaged term.

According to its chief meaning, "transparence" indicates the specific property of an object through which light can pass. There are no extended meanings and shifting explanations --- just like the term in itself: clear without obstruction, a depth, and range that takes in all things.

However, in the area of poetic theory, the situation has changed somewhat. There are two types of transparence here.

One refers to semantic transparence, occasional language, the functional efficacy and efficiency of language, direct linguistic meaning (including all indicated fixed qualities and the

distinct and unequivocal nature of expression). Scientific terminology conforms completely to all the conditions demanded by this kind of semantic transparency.

The second type is the transparency of linguistic situations, related to the poet's perception and free association, a non-obstructive quality attained within language. Just as Odysseus Elitis describes it: "Behind a certain concrete object and able to penetrate through another object, behind the penetrated object and then penetrating through another object Stretching on like this into infinite." A depth and scope that truly takes in all things!

What we advocate is precisely this latter kind of transparency.

#15

This effort towards purity penetrates deep into a poet's writing, but only when it meets with god given literary talent and intelligence is it able to produce satisfactory results. Since this is the case, it cannot emerge as different tensions because of a poet's language, psychological elements, the composition of his literary talent, aesthetic pursuits, or differences in diet and environment.

--- Valery penetrates deep into the ocean's sand, pursues the relationship between a drop of wine and the entire world, and the concealed composition of a pomegranate. Within metaphysical intelligence, he causes the depth of the sea to rise up to become the depth of the sky. A high-stepping transparency and an integrated whole. A tendency towards a blue purity.

--- Elitis drinks deeply of ancient Greece's sun, speaks with "light" and "clarity", in perceptual analogies he understands the crystal principle of the sun and mankind: The sublimation and deepening of reality, raised up to become the unity of "light" and "clarity". A golden purity.

--- Stevens lights a candle in mountain valleys at night, uses an unglazed earthen jar, a hemlock tree, an accordion and the cry of a peacock to build a permanent order of art to resist the black domination of the world's chaos. His purity is black.

--- Dylan Thomas returns to the depths of the womb, he experiences the moment when the sperm and the ovum enter one another, the touch of death, and the trembling of life. The thick, sticky liquid within the body of the mother. The constant temperature of flesh. A world still in its primeval state. A purity bordering on crimson.

There is still a higher principle of purity. It is the colour that I feel in my blood: Red. A new theory of purity.

#16

The transformation from white to red is not the result of any one poet's subjective efforts, but is a turn to the better by art itself.

A great fissure delineates a prominent battlefield. We are on the side of art, within the abyss we place ourselves inside a deeper wound, the sensitive core of profound being, touching the sore spot of the soul. Gushing hot blood dyes red the sense of taste. Chinese art has never been as close as this to the heart, the flesh and blood. This should be a matter for rejoicing.

Turning from white to red is to turn from books to reality, from escapism to involvement (engagement with life and the world), from the sky to the earth. It is to turn from imitation to creation, from water to blood, from reading works of the masters to reading one's own life. It is not the imitative transplantation of Western "modernism" and "postmodernism," it isn't the stealthy crossing over from art to art or the displacement of one art by another. It is not abstract intelligence. It is a reality little short of brutal, the deep penetration into all the dangerous

circumstances of the world of flesh. The intensity of metal. After casting off leisureliness and imitation, Chinese poets will write with their lives, a truly modern poetry of Chinese experience. **With the density of blood, learn first hand about the purity of poetry.** This, then, is the purity pursued by Red Writing --- **Red Purity.**

As a new principle of poetic purity, red purity does not seek to reduce but to expand the intentions of poetry, but to cause the subject matter of poetry to expand into life, into the flesh. To unit the texts of books with the texts of the flesh. Ultimately, liberating poetry from books and causing it to become a more widespread art form that dissolves reciprocally into life, an art form that can be seen, felt, and heard.

The time of Red Writing has begun.

C. The Facts About Red Writing

#1

Don't ask us where we came from, where we're going and who we are. The massive wandering whirlpool of the present tense has irresistibly swept into us and formed our indeflectable, concrete plight. The rhythms of our breathing, the need to dream and to speak, the basic rights of life; furthermore, the incontrovertible fact of spiritual oppression penetrates deep down into the dictatorial conduct of food and drink. More urgent than inherent qualities and the future. Return from the suspended staircase of metaphysics to the starting point of matter, the interior and the surface, the deepest penetration possible and as concrete as possible. Red Writing positions itself in life, being, and the present. It is not memory and illusions, it is to experience, to pass through, and to learn through one's experience. It is the flames of brambles burning at this very moment. It includes this one moment of birth and extermination, the unweakenable brutal breath. It is the greatest stress on perception and flesh. It thrusts a hand into the core of time, it experiences the crushing of bones, the rotting of muscle, the absolute temperatures of cold blood and hot blood. It is the deep distress and love accumulated at the century's end.

At present and in progress. The immediate form of possession and expression.

#2

From the very beginning, it should be made clear that what Red Writing opposes the escapist artistic activity of leisureliness. A false purity far removed from the heart and the flesh and blood. A retreat from the severity of reality, an expression of the weak character of a poet, no matter whether he escapes into Zhuangzi, the Yijing or into mountain forests and pastoral settings. Red Writing takes man's existence in reality as its focus, penetrates deeply into the bones and institutions, sets foot in the savagery of all time, embraces all the difficulty and intensity of the life of man. It is the courage of all magnificent refusals, great engagement with life, and majestic sacrifices. With the magnificent fearless spirit needed to enter deep into the tiger's mouth, write what others dare not write, write what others are not permitted to write. There are no subjects and dreams that cannot be written! The true situation that those people can only quietly hint at

with a whisper and a finger to their lips, should be spoken of loudly by poets. Red Writing will never avoid the all the severity and truth of reality: the bloody reek of the steel which rushes to caress our faces, the infections of wounds to the body and spirit, handcuffs, prisons, forced labour, hellish conditions personally experienced. Together with art amidst the violence of matter, being born and dying side by side, drowning or being saved together.

Life and art are one.

#3

We can also move back a step.

Writing in and of itself is an action. A deeper entry into society than sitting still and fasting. A depth that sinks from the glass sheet of leisureliness down into the blood, writing that doesn't shun metal and death, writing that is soundless and without a sense of taste. Within the hunger and jaundice of poverty, no matter if there are south-east or north-west winds, with the resoluteness of going to one's death, it penetrates deep into language, pushing forward from the center of consciousness. Strike words with words, use words to clash with words, break up words with words, and dissolve words with words. In the final grand spectacle of the twentieth century, we are both the actors and the audience, both the subjects and the objects, we personally experience all the cuts beyond the blades of knives, from rehearsal to performance to applause to the crying of tears and the spilling of blood --- we'll do it all seriously, conscientiously, scrupulous of each detail until we drop. Standing fast by our duty to art from beginning to end.

Preserve life for art.

There is still another circumstance. At a certain unavoidable, critical moment, a choice between art and life must be made. The golden oath of your devotion still rings in your ears. We move forward without the slightest hesitation. We can accept the fact of physical defeat, but art must speak and clarify. **Dedicate life to art.**

It is not a verbal dedication of oneself. From the start, Red Writing contained the intention to spill blood: sacrificing life in the attainment of art is **the supreme art of higher value than life itself!**

#4

While opposing imitation of form, at the same time Red Writing also opposes the horizontal transplantation of themes and images.

Red Writing believes: the dominant images of the life of a poet are related to the important events that occur during his lifetime. They are not philosophical reflections, not the replacement of one art by another, but the hand which has passed through the wounds of life and has been placed deep within the flames, repeatedly refined, purifying the facts of experience and the transcendence of experience into universal forms. And not the opposite, purposely seeking themes and imagery from the classics of western art. Precisely on this point, Chinese modern art has passed into the zone of greatest error.

Modern Western art is rooted in the existential predicament of the life of western man. Which are, primarily, the oppression of commercialization and a civilization of science and technology, as well as the misuse of freedom. At the same time as this highly developed material civilization benefited mankind, it also expropriated mankind, causing man to lose himself deep in a maze composed of commodities, desires, electronics and all manner of symbols from which he cannot

extricate himself. And for this reason, the themes of "alienation," "solitude," "despair" and "absurdity" appeared in modern art. A kind of loss of theme, a loss of innate qualities (At this point, resistance to the dictatorship over thought has come to nothing, it has become a vague, generalized volley of arrows into the air. After two hundred years of repeated sacrifice beginning in the middle ages until the French Revolution in 1779, the principles of the freedom of thought have already changed from articles in a constitution to principles that are common knowledge among all people and have become part of western spiritual tradition). The difficulties, which beset the body and mind of the poet and artist in the spiritual space of unrestrained freedom, are no longer political oppression, but culture and matter --- a non-violent form of oppression.

#5

Chinese artists are doomed to seek a livelihood and to write in another type of environment. Although the soft knife of the initial stage of commercialization has already dazzled some so that they mimic the absurd and vomit ever so slightly, however, the principle reality which we face is still the violent structure of the dictatorship over thought, steel and control in all places. No matter how one emphasizes the differences in cultural traditions and qualitative differences between the citizens of nations, it is impossible to wipe away the one huge difference. It is precisely this central fact that determined that the "modern" and the "modern response" pursued by Chinese poets be necessarily of a different nature. This is to say, the themes and primary images of Chinese modern poetry cannot be transplanted from western modern art. They must be experienced in the real, existing circumstances and physical experience of Chinese poets, in a profound yet simply explained form channeled through the vicissitudes of being. In accord with all the inherent conditions of truth. There is no need to draw on the experience of others. some misunderstood modernism or post-modernism. This kind of art, when manifesting the poet's state of being, will necessarily bring out all the hidden relationships of the structures of time (the age) and space (region, country) which constitute the poet's actual existence. To a certain extent, writing about them calls into question the dictatorship over thought and gives impetus to the early arrival of the day of final judgment.

There is need of a supplementary statement: My opposition to "horizontal transplantation" most certainly does not imply that I agree with the silly attacks of false realism upon "the modernists", nor does it mean that I am wallowing in the theoretical mire with the stale proposition that "the more something is national, the more universal it is." These are two stances of an entirely different nature to that of Red Writing.

#6

Red Writing values the strength of language, a metal quality that contends with the dictatorship over thought. It opposes feminine, soft, calm, evasive poetry, a language of the air or the void utterly lacking in substance. It possesses the rigidity of a rock, the richness of the soil, it takes in the four seasons but does not sprout flowers. It is the broad lines of a sculpture, it is an internal tension poised for action. It is the precipitousness of a downward slope, the unevenness chopped out by the heavens, the material image of a partiality for rigidity. A direct, deep penetrating touch to the quick. It contains the necessity for a particular incisiveness (Incisiveness does not necessarily lead to politics, but is related to certain dangerous circumstances of being); an ironical, blasphemous, contradictory, extreme form of terror; a critical state of life; the resistance

and despair of people in hopelessly absurd circumstances; a powerful skepticism permanently on guard against all sacred stipulations; a cold, harsh language which comes straight to the point. It casts aside petty, girlish, cosmetic airs and all feigned innocent, infantile, childish, doll-like attitudes. It is freely swinging one's limbs on a vast open plain, the utmost degree of power and willfulness, and a hard masculine bearing bursting with vitality. This is not the division of the sexes, but a stress on character.

#7

Red Writing advocates a serious attitude toward life: the unity of writing and the writer's conduct. It opposes unnatural character, the inflation of self, unprincipled flattery, obsolete modes of brotherhood; it opposes cliquism, self-centricity, utilitarianism; it opposes the literati disparaging each other; it opposes the false avant-garde passing off imitations as original creations --- all those false poets who use art as a stepping stone to a career in officialdom, all those trifling amateurs muddling about with art, all those brokers of poetry who regard art as a means to do business, all those moths to poetry who consume, sell and corrupt art, have no regard for good faith, morality, justice, self-respect and honour, and who reduce art to shamelessness and hooliganism. These are all held to be shameless and are resolutely spurned by Red Writing.

Here and now we make a clean break with corrupt art: all those who uphold the false values that are only acknowledged by the government, all those occasional dabblers in art, all the irresponsible words and deeds of these riffraff, have nothing at all to do with Red Writing. Each person will be responsible for the course of his own life.

#8

Rejection of the false system of values is a fundamental position of Red Writing. This is not because freedom and art are incompatible with false values, but also because false values as a form of the enslavement of thought force us into opposition and into battle against them. This is not blind impetuosity resulting from personal prejudices, but a value-based choice rooted in instinct and careful consideration --- it is artistic conduct that will never allow compromise half way to its goal.

Thus, Red Writing may be understood as a symbol composed of the spirit, a bayonet and a rose (corresponding with the sickle and axe, the cross and the star of David). The symbols of art, devotion, and life. Chopped down, it comes back to life; reduced one thousand times to rubble, it is still intact and undamaged. This is of tremendous significance: what art represents is obviously something even harder to destroy than flesh. An immortal throbbing which, having passed through the nets of the law, death and war, reappears within the same kind of spectacle, lets us breathe the blood and thoughts of both the living and the dead, the freshness of the vitality of art's great structural transformations, and causes us to live and write vigorously. Red Writing rejects all power and lies, the dual restraints upon flesh and the spirit; Red Writing rejects any form of dictatorship over thought. The highest honours and the profoundest misery cannot shake our confidence: our faith in art.

Red Writing is the illumination of language in the flash of the last glance of all those who have died for art since time immemorial.

#9

At the same time that Red Writing upholds the independent nature of art and a non-ideological standpoint, it is clearly aware that in and of itself a new style of writing is a revolutionary event: the negation of the old linguistic order and the establishment of a new one. Poets have always been of the world. The question now is not whether or not to enter into it, but how. On this point, the difference between Red Writing's concept of worldly engagement and the traditional one lies in that: the latter advocates engagement in terms of content, namely with the sacrifice of art as a precondition, to turn art into a mouthpiece for a political philosophy or a political concept (such as poets like Aragon and Mayakovski did); on the other hand, the principle stressed by Red Writing is engagement in terms of form, under the precondition of the purification of art, to awaken mankind's dreams of freedom through writing, by way of revolutionary renewal of form to allow people to hold a firm belief in and make full mental preparations for the necessity of a rejuvenation of life. This also conforms to art's inherent tendency toward structural transformation.

#10

Walk out of the wounds, set off from where the road breaks off. Red Writing is unobstructed, it is bright and spacious, and it is a vitality that shall never be exhausted. Stand bravely in the vanguard of conceptual transformation, push open the doors to all that is taboo. There is no sacred a priori order. Within our grasp are all those limits that can be reached perceptually and those that can't be, all those limits, which can be reached rationally, and all those that can't be. The brilliance and darkness of irrationality. Ranging from religion to art, from power and influence to culinary art, from loyalty to betrayal, from sex to suicide, death at the of another, murder, slaughter, hanging up a sheep's head when selling dog meat, selling human flesh, selling the flesh of young girls, selling the flesh of the spirit of Plato, oral sex, masturbation, pornography, lasciviousness, liberation from the confusion of repressed sexual desires, faith and insanity! All the psychological and physical details which language can touch upon, the wonderful process of destruction and rebirth, this all lies beneath the pen of Red Writing.

Nothing is forbidden to Red Writing.

#11

A major theoretical misunderstanding must be now clarified.

Antagonism between art and politics is a recent occurrence. It reflects an aversion to the false poetry which "closely follows the political situation" and charts government policy, it also reflects the vigilance of modern Chinese poetry's self-purification process. This is one aspect. During a certain period in the history of new Chinese literature, out of sincere faith some poets aligned themselves with politics, due to a qualitative change in class politics (a change from the pursuit of freedom to the suppression of freedom), not only was damage done to art, but the reputation of poets was undermined. Since that time, poets have kept politics at a respectful distance, afraid that they would be attacked and censured by others if art ever touched even lightly upon politics. Moreover, this sensitivity to "politics" is also reflected in a worldly, play-safe attitude of the people in a highly politicized society that, however, lacks freedom of speech. The psychology of an unbalanced society.

Therefore, what occurred was this: even when political "concern" fell upon poets and ridiculed the poet's aloof attitude with police batons and handcuffs, our poets still asserted that they had nothing to do with politics in order to prove their "innocence"! This has long been the case, and has proceeded to the next level where even "the age" (时代), "society", "human rights" and "freedom", themes that may easily be suspected of encroaching into the serious affairs of politics, have been removed from the scope of language by poets. Now they have concentrated upon a form of inconsequential, leisurely expression (a worldly-wise, play-safe form of writing). Ultimately, this situation has been brought about by a lack of ethics and courage among poets of weak character.

#12

As a self-manifest form of the spirit of mankind and as a manifestation of being, art is associated with the reality, ideals, and hopes of mankind. It can be beneath consciousness or above ideas, but it can never be beyond the deep-seated desires of man. Just as Octavio Paz says: "Poetry is not only the illustration of all that man thinks, feels and does, but is the definition of man established by man himself." No matter whether it is lyrical, an expression of beauty, the exposure of truth, reality or the exploration of new expressive forms, the limited choices open to art make it impossible, from beginning to end, for art to rid itself of the shadow of man. Art cannot be divorced from man and the realization of this brings an interesting phenomenon to my attention: not being free, mankind tends toward freedom, and art itself is also not free. This makes the following proposition tenable: Writing is an awareness of not being free.

Accordingly, behind art, politics, and religion, I have discovered a deeply concealed mutual impulse: To surpass limitations and to incline towards freedom. This is also the original cause of all of mankind's spiritual aspirations. Differences exist only in that: politics pursue social freedoms, religions pursue freedom for the soul, and art pursues freedom of thought (including imagination and expression). of these three, art and religion are more closely related in character (both are spiritual, internal, and prophetic in nature), the difference between the two lies in that religion is manifested as an escape from reality, an emphasis on the world to come; art, however, engages reality and places emphasis on life in this world.

#13

And so we come to understand: art for art's sake, or art with itself as the object, actually is man taking himself as the goal --- taking his spiritual freedom as the goal. In this sense, saying that "beauty is the symbol of freedom" is inferior to the more direct declaration that "beauty is freedom"! Writing is, then, the poet's awareness of not being free and the struggle towards freedom by means of this consciousness. Here, the reason why "freedom" in the political sense is not unrelated to the artist lies in the "basic human rights" for which it strives that contain the true realization of the creative freedom and the freedom to publish of such crucial importance to artists. These are also the minimum requirements for the existence and flowering of art. Therefore, it is not only of prime importance to the mass of men, but also to the artist (but it is not of ultimate importance, and this is the difference between artists and ordinary people). If we must equate freedom with politics, then pursuit of freedom is to engage in politics, in which case each genuine artist is political --- no matter how you try to explain yourself, you cannot divorce yourself from politics. Let's be frankly political! Derrida advocates the elimination the separation

of philosophy and literature and uniting the two under the name of "writing." This is still not enough, he should also add politics, religion, Qigong, rock and roll, and the babblings of the insane! Away with all man-made boundaries, bring everything in under the name of "freedom" -- - let all aspects of the spirit of mankind form a pure whole once again, let's not consume ourselves anymore in mutual antagonism and division.

#14

Red Writing holds in esteem those books written with blood.

Not spilt blood, but the heart's blood, the blood of the spirit, hot blood, that absolute sincerity spoken of in the saying "No difficulty is insurmountable if one sets one's mind on it", the core inheritance of the spirit of mankind. With all your life's strength, with all the blood, that fills your breast, write a book, write a poem, write one line, one word. This is the kind of attitude towards writing that we revere. From art to religion to philosophy to politics, all those great writers who with their spirit and flesh constitute the obverse or reverse sides of us, are the forerunners of Red Writing.

At this point, we want to offer our greatest respect to those fellow poets and writers in Eastern Europe and Russia who share with us the same values and beliefs (Solzhenitsyn, the Mandelstams, Brodski, Havel, Kundera, Milosz, etc.). From behind the Iron Curtain, they spoke out unyieldingly and this led to the sudden demise of the everlasting mythology of the sacred order. Despite long periods of political oppression, imprisonment, exile, and hard labour, they still held fast to mankind's universal values and ideals, and never wavered or ceased to write (Today we are reconsidering our situation and writing at the same point from where they set out). With rare courage and an indomitable spirit, they saved themselves and went out from hell into a pure world. We still remain in a shadowed corner of the world, each day we must differentiate our shadows from the surrounding darkness. But at the same time, I believe: Fate is impartial. What they have experienced, we will experience. And, furthermore, are experiencing. Starting from this very moment. Their today is our tomorrow!

#15

Red Writing is wide open, it is not limited to poetry only, but also includes novels, criticism, philosophy --- all forms of written language! It is not only a method of writing, it is also an artistic standpoint that emerges through writing. Red Writing speaks to all true, honest, brave souls and all those vigorous souls filled by the great dream of creation. We are not isolated. I am writing these plain words here, while on the other side of time which the point of my pen passes through to, you have already heard and felt them; even if it be a blind man, his hands or another sensitive part of him has come in contact with the powerful strokes of my pen, and he has read out my scorching hot thoughts. Actually, my intention is a very simple one: to invigorate the pure fountainhead of your innermost being --- a consciousness of the blood ties between the individual and the fate of all mankind; the vigorous enthusiasm created by true freedom; the satisfying actualization of a full and complete life:

A new century will soon be rung in. We stand on this side and look toward it. A great battle is taking place within us. The entire meaning of Red Writing is to join in and fight it out to the end -- to penetrate into all that is sacred or blasphemous in the arts, and to mount the final assault upon all the forbidden regions and ramparts of language. one day seventy-three years ago,

Lenin's guard said to his woman: "We'll have bread, we'll have food, we'll have everything."
Today, seventy-three years later, after having become sculpted reliefs of history, the Vladimir Ilyich's have been reduced to rubble. Now I will tell you that, aside from food, other things that have not been realized will be:

--- There will be art

--- There will be freedom

--- There will be everything

What but man's freedom does art hope to realize? All things are temporary, only this eternal undertaking will not change. Red Writing believes this and, furthermore, reaffirms: art that is rooted in life is immortal. Having experienced calamity, young Chinese poets are testifying with their golden voices that during mankind's final efforts to free itself, the people of china will not give themselves up for lost!

(March 14, 1992, Xichang, Sichuan province)