

## The Sleeping Cat

Under the midday sunlight,  
every pore in its body  
relaxes, turning soft.  
The fur on its belly  
wallows like waves.  
I've never seen a human  
sleep so sweetly.  
Even a three-year-old would clench  
its fists in the dreams.  
But a cat wouldn't.  
Now, it's even more tender, relaxed.  
Its forelegs curl  
like human hands.  
Its hind legs, straightened,  
look much longer than its forelegs.  
If it suddenly wakes up,  
will it walk upright hereafter?  
The sleeping cat turns into a  
nervous,  
anxious,  
uneasy human being.

## In You I Search

*for my son*

Anytime I turn around and see you,  
I can't help  
but gaze  
as if watching  
something mysterious, nevertheless amiable,  
and search for my own signs  
on every leaf growing out of your eyes.  
Those *me*'s not easy to discover  
are brightened up by you  
one after another  
like slowly emerging stars.  
In you  
I find a pile of *me*'s.  
That makes me sometimes glad,  
sometimes shy,  
sometimes self-reproaching.  
The part of you that belongs neither to me  
nor to your mother  
excites and confuses me  
like a new invention by heaven  
or a small secret  
between you and the universe.  
Under the sun  
you look unreasonably fresh.

## Her Moonlight

I'm totally uncertain about fathering a daughter  
or watching her grow up.  
I don't know what kind of process that would be,  
as the moonlight streams through the window bars at night,  
and spreads on the floor of the living room.  
I'm steeped in her clear brightness.  
She arrives as if just to let me know  
there's such a watery light in the world  
that shines on me  
but doesn't belong to me.  
Sometimes I'd look with wonder at my two-year-old daughter.  
Each day I'm more attracted than the day before.  
I hold her tender flesh,  
kissing her almond face.  
Such a moment  
always makes me feel,  
between her and me,  
there's a distance more mystical than God,  
more transparent than air.  
This is a warm abyss  
like the one between the sun and the moon,  
between the moon and me.  
I carefully try to perceive  
yet it's impossible to grasp  
the bright moon  
in her soul.  
She grows up fast, like the moon walking in the sky.  
Her face changes every day  
with a glow that goes beyond my palms,  
covering the entire sky.  
She'll vanquish me like vanquishing the night.

## Harassment

She said,  
*Give me a hug.*  
I hugged her.  
She said,  
*Hold me tight.*  
I held her tight.  
She said,  
*You hold me so tight.*  
*You're harassing me.*  
I released her.  
She said,  
*I'm kidding.*  
*Hold me.*  
I held her again.  
She said,  
*Kiss me.*  
I didn't kiss her.  
She said,  
*Close your eyes.*  
*Let me kiss you.*  
She kissed me  
on my lips  
before I closed my eyes.  
She said,  
*You harassed me again.*  
Then she shook off my embrace  
running away in a fit of giggles.

## Self-Portrait

Round and bald  
is my excellent head  
with a greenish shine.  
A cone-shaped ridge lies in the middle  
like a sterile rocky mountain  
rising from the barren wasteland.  
That hideous face of mine  
as described in the rumors  
is largely due to this part.  
Bypassing my vast forehead  
(my wife said  
my forehead covers too much ground  
or, in typographic terms,  
there's too much blank space),  
you will see  
what Yi Sha called  
"two gamecock's brows."  
They make my face  
take the shape of a gamecock.  
Have they also  
endowed me with a gamecock's fate?  
Ten years ago,  
people said I had "a monkey's mouth and cheeks."  
Now  
I have become "a large head and big ears."  
A fleshy, greasy nose tip  
has totally smashed my youthful dream  
of possessing a handsome look.

## **Before St. Francis Xavier Chapel**

I like those small chapels,  
solemn but homely.  
In Coloane Village, Macau,  
the slim wooden door  
of St. Francis Xavier Chapel  
cuts the yellow wall  
into two  
butterfly wings,  
warm and bright,  
inducing me to enter.  
The banner above the door  
bears two lines  
from the New Testament.  
“I am the way and the truth and the life.”  
After a minute’s thought,  
I speak silently in my heart  
“Sorry, these words—  
I cannot agree.”

## **On Eternity**

The train is running forward.  
Now time is running forward too.  
Is the running perpendicular  
or parallel to ours?  
How do they intersect?  
Is there a policeman to issue a stop order?

Does time run faster or slower than us?  
Would there be a crash  
if it collides with us?  
Who measures the speed of the running time?  
Who is holding up a stopwatch  
high above the sky?

Now the rivers are running.  
Birds are running too.  
No one has a finish line.  
When we try to stop,  
time, in high spirit,  
calls us to hurry up.

Look where they are running to.  
Jesus has run back to the manger.  
The earthworms back to the soil.  
The butterflies back to Chuang-Tzu.  
Even the bull Lao-Tzu rode  
has run back to Henan province.

## **We Push**

The circulating red flag sticks to the upper right corner of the blackboard.  
Big red flowers are attached to the teacher's head.  
Good pupils hold golden trumpets in their hands.  
Proud girls push out their undeveloped chests.

But we squat in line at the latrines behind the school.  
With grass blades in mouth, we look to the blue sky.  
We push. We push.

The spring riverbank belongs to the lads reaping grass for pigs.  
The benches in the park belong to the couples in love.  
The skyscrapers are the world of the successful people.  
Beside the warm fireplace there is no place for a tramp.

But we keep silent at the pit latrines,  
holding tight our bags, looking at our corduroy trouser cuffs.  
We push. We push.

There are as many children flying kites on the square  
as the wives and mothers unfaithful to their men at night.  
There are as many men throwing up bile in the bars  
as the girls covering half of their breasts with silk nightgowns.

But we sit on the narrow toilets,  
gazing at the sallow-faced men in the mirrors.  
We push. We push.

It's always so: those who appear on the street corner  
are either mad- or policemen.  
Always so: even the nightclub strippers would think  
there is a golden road to heaven.

Always so: people wish good men a peaceful life.  
Always so: once the weather gets clear,  
we broaden our mouths to smile.

But in such weather we'll dash onto  
the university platform with our poetry, reading together—  
We push! We push!

## Those Girls I Know

Working.

Working.

Working.

Why haven't I found a boyfriend?

Working.

I can't find a boyfriend.

Working.

I can't find a boyfriend.

Working.

Are all men blind nowadays?

Working.

Working.

Are all the good men dead?

Working.

Working.

Alas, go marry a tolerable one.

Working.

Working.

Working.

He earns so little,  
even less than me.

Working.

Working.

Working.

Just divorce him  
and look for someone better.

Working.

Working.

What if I can't find a better one?

Working.

Nowadays men all prefer young women.

Working.

I don't want a divorce.

I don't want a divorce.

Working.

Should I get a divorce?

Should I get a divorce?

Working.

He's so despicable.

A bastard!

Working.

Divorce.  
Working.  
Working.  
Working.

## Shaoxing Road at Dusk

At this moment there should be doves flying by but there aren't.  
At this moment there should be tanks rolling by but there aren't.  
At this moment, Shaoxing Road is shrouded in small-mesh wired netting.  
I'm not referring to horror  
but the quiet.  
At this moment, Shaoxing Road seems  
like a solidified cast iron block.

And I'm reading poetry in the café.

At this moment, on Shaoxing Road, there are children,  
in groups, walking home from school.  
They are just outside the window.  
I need only reach out my hand  
to touch those fuzzy cheeks,  
bright yellow  
as if covered with a thin layer of wax.

They are far from growing  
into men or women while I'm  
reading poetry in the café.

*He poured the coffee  
Into the cup  
He put the milk  
Into the cup of coffee  
He put the sugar  
Into the coffee with milk  
With a small spoon  
He churned*

These lines by Jacques Prévert  
are exactly what I'm  
doing at this moment.

And outside the window, children walk by like soldiers.