

Lan Lan

Translated by Judith Roche and Huang Canran

Untitled

I don't love coat: I love body
Or, if the cotton shoulder pad is soul,
I love that.
A calm at the heart of my desire,
I want both light and flame.
My love is humble and proud,
But here I am, wordless
Enmeshed in your clothes
 And body.

In My Village

In my village time goes fast.
One flock of birds has just flown away
When another arrives.
The wind whispers to my scarf:
Summer is coming.
Summer is coming.
Midday, two quails chase each other
into a thicket of weeds.
I watch mother-of-wheat grass
bolting wild already in May.
If anyone else stops to see what I see
I will accept that as a way of loving me,
in my village
where candlelight shows the way
for night song that wafts through the window.
You can go there,
for the scent of roses in the twilight,
for the river that flows endlessly in moonlight.

*Note: Shortawn foxtail is the English/American common name of *Alopecurus aequalis*, the "mother-of-wheat grass" referred to in the poem. I kept the literal translation of the Chinese common name because it is more beautiful. – J.R.*

Reality

No day, no night.
No good or evil.
People are suffering.
That's all.
No absolute word.
Ashes of thin papers are scattered by wind.
People are suffering.
Nothing more.
In the field that never lies fallow,
A woman with a basket
Is sowing seeds, speechless.

Nothingness

Nothingness, the great song of Being.
Ten thousand things arise from it to sing joyously—
how splendid the slow rising sun!
Children can stretch out their hands and touch apples,
full and round and red, hanging on dark-green trees.
And love is lips longing for lips,
a burning spark lighting the darkness.
Old people, grey-haired, living a childhood
beside a paradise built of toy bricks.
True, everything will return to Nothingness
But the beautiful dream of Being is equally long and lasting.

Abandoned Child

An abandoned child is so full of pain.
Whatever abandoned him lives so long
by making use of his life.
In his body it leaves a migraine, a gastric ulcer,
a stone of time and despair.
An abandoned child holds so many scars,
but those sharp knives and rough files have softened,
losing their posterity.
Snowy nights he holds it all tightly in his arms,

repeating the only dear name silently,
As if in the thin line between his lips there throbs
an electrocardiogram of the fate of humanity,
which is beginning to zigzag.

Shock

You are asleep,
Dreaming of running.
Stars are in the sky and the sea tide is rising.
There is only this one thing—
You are dreaming of running.
Perhaps this is true,
as I watch your quivering eyelashes.
Your hand tells me I am becoming
Woman.
 Not flower
Not anonymous poem.
—Is this also true?
You are helping a woman give birth to herself,
who didn't know until now
that she hadn't yet been born.
She has been waiting a long time
for this moment.

Memory of Dusk

At that moment I am happy.
I embody dusk and what it has held
at that moment when your embrace
 is closer than God.
We don't have the right to love?
but love allows itself.
The sun sinks in the west, stars are brightening,
young women are on their way home from work.
The moment holds its breath and becomes your fingertips.
 — and love allows itself.

How Long You Haven't Seen the Night Sky

Star. One. Another
It waits for your eyes every night.
A while ago you wrote in lamplight:
The sky is full of stars...
You blush. You were lying.
This one waits for you in the night wind,
Singing its bright star song.