

The Poetry of Lü De'an 吕德安

Selections: 1982-1993

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

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

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

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

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

Father and I [父亲和我]

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

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

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

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

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

A Gift of Poetry [献诗]

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

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

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

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

A Tune for Guitar [吉他曲]

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

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

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

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

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

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

A Severed Branch [断木]

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

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

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

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

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

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

Withered Flowers [枯萎的花朵]

-- for Xin"

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

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

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

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

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

King of the Crickets [蟋蟀之王] September 1987

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

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

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

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

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

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

#1

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

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

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

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

#4

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

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

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

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

#7

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

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

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

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

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

#8

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

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

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

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

#10

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

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

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

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

#11

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

My Hand [我的手] March 1989

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

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

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

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

The Way It Is [事实的经过]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#1

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

#3

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

#8

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

The Thaw [解冻] January 28, 1993

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

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

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

Mankato [曼惜陀]

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

#1

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#2

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#3

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

by the sound of a refusal to go home

#4

In the latter part of November
what can we do

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

The endless painfully brief American night
in a place called Mankato

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

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

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

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

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

#10

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Takes advantage of the mud at the bottom of the soul

#11

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

And this stretch of void and hopeless space

#12

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

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

creates a dim sight:
on my desk, a stone

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

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

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

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

#14

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

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

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

As with two familiar rooves
coitus beneath a flash of lightening

Once twice, separated by
a silence like rolling thunder

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

Left behind the illusory cow
forgot its daily labors

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

A toad in a May vegetable plot

#19

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#20

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#23

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

And March is my birth-month

#24

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#27

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#28

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The world doesn't change that much.

#29

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

And this abandonment is perfectly proper

#30

Traces of honey bee hibernation and
the tiger stripes of bees

Forests, hands, islands and
all seldom seen things

I must take that day
as a permanent farewell

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

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

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

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