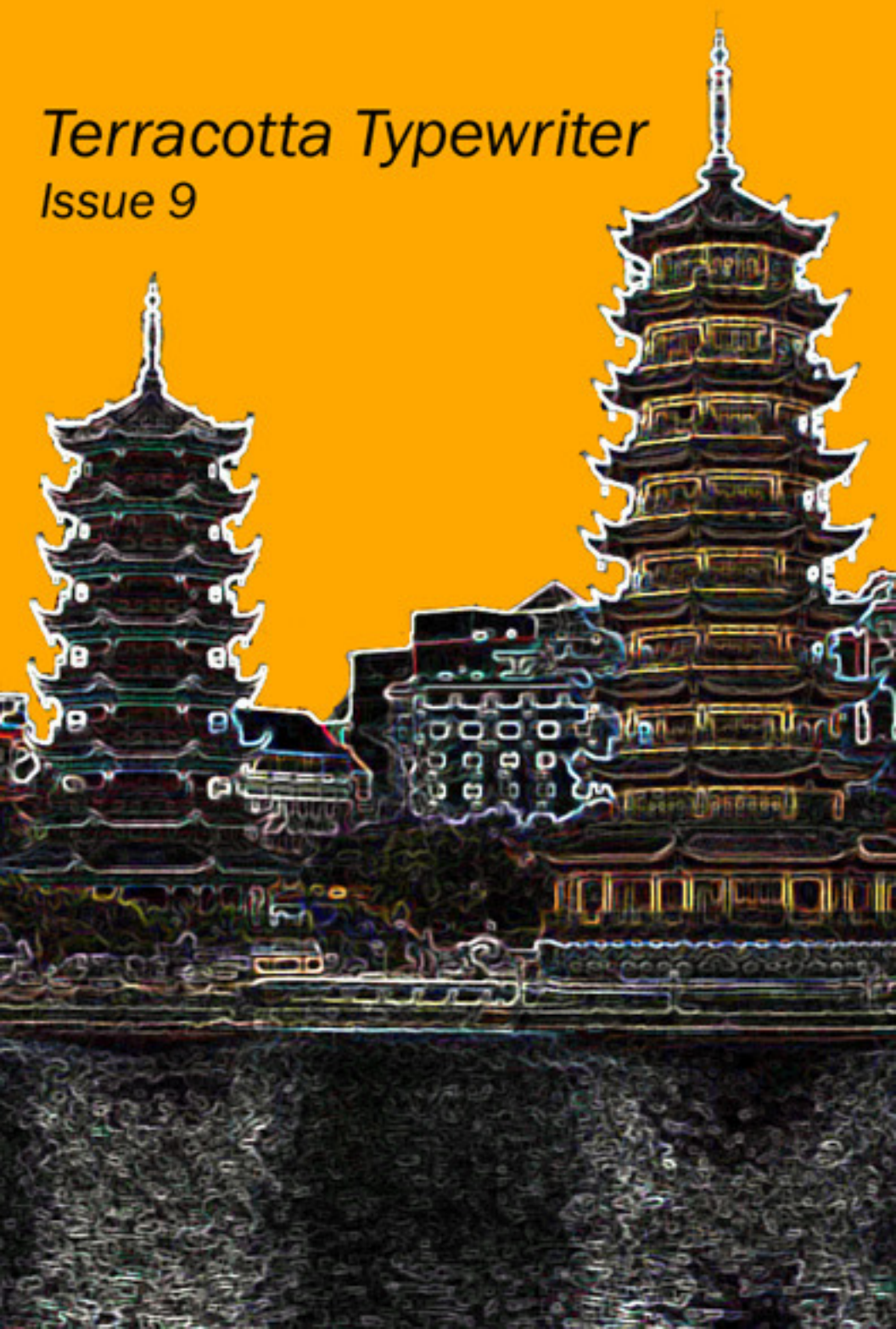


*Terracotta Typewriter*  
*Issue 9*



Unsolicited manuscripts are welcomed throughout the year.

Terracotta Typewriter seeks submissions of literary works with a connection to China. The definition of “connection to China” can be stretched as much as an author sees fit. For example, expatriate writers living in China or who have lived in China, Chinese writers writing in English, translators of Chinese writing, works that are set in China, manuscripts covered in Chinese food (General Tso’s chicken doesn’t count), or anything else a creative mind can imagine as a connection to China.

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# **Terracotta Typewriter**

**A Cultural Revolution  
of Literature**



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## From the Editor

Dear Readers and Writers,

This has not been an easy year for Terracotta Typewriter. This ninth issue is long overdue, and I am thankful that our readers and contributors have been patient. I have been trying to switch formats for this journal, but it hasn't worked out as hoped. I still plan on reformatting past and future issues using new software as well as Issuu.com.

If any readers or contributors would like to help maintain Terracotta Typewriter for the future, I would greatly appreciate it. As a one-man operation, it is difficult to continue publishing the journal and update the Website.

Thank you for your continued support.

*Matthew Lubin*  
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## Ghosts

"I was married once," David said. "Guys here, they've been married three, four times. Just once for me."

He stopped eating, lit a cigarette. He shook another free from his pack, handed it to Jarrett and lit it for him.

"Yeah," David said with some smoke. "I was married once."

They'd given their final exams yesterday and caught the first bus out of Wuhan. They were in Jingdezhen, a city famous for china, in Jiangxi province. They planned to spend a week seeing Jiangxi before heading south.

The restaurant they were in was a seafood restaurant with aquariums out front full of tortoises, crabs, fish and eels. Jarrett had at first joked that you could just point at what you wanted. Looking at the flayed fish before him, he wondered if that wasn't too far from the truth.

"I met her in Beijing," David said. There was a glass ash-tray by Jarrett. David reached ahead and pulled it until it was about halfway between them. He flicked his ashes free. "I met her my first day there. My company transferred me there and first day, I run into her. Amazing, where your life takes you."

Jarrett pointed his chopsticks at the fish head, with its eyes intact. "Just so you know: I'm not going to wrestle you for that. You can have it."

"It's for the guest of honor. That's you, son."

"I've been here two years. I'm hardly a guest anymore."

David's eyes flashed. He took a long drag, then said, "We were in Beijing for about six years. Her parents spoke no

English, but they took good care of me. And they loved our children."

"How many children did you have?"

"Two. One, now."

"I'm so -- "

David was waving him away. "No, no. Just stop that. Shit happens, and that happened. I guess you could say it's just what happens."

"Still -- "

"And it's appreciated." David finished his beer, popped another. Jarrett was just getting done with his first.

"You know," David said, "when I retired I got my TEFL certificate. I didn't think of any other place but Beijing. First place I went was her parents. They were in their eighties then, and her brother was taking care of them. I brought them gifts...I was worried it might offend them. You know, it might be tacky." He licked his lips. "Although they did not say anything, I knew they'd rather have her sitting in front of them than me. Can't blame them."

He took a long drink.

"I guess I thought that by going back to Beijing, I could somehow re-walk those paths I'd walked when I was young. What I didn't know is that I was chasing a ghost who is much younger, and much faster than me. When you walk around the city, just about everything reminds you of back then, especially what's changed. You wonder where the time has gone, and you realize it snuck out when you were busy looking the other day. You can't get it back. Best you can do, I think, is to just pay more attention."

He killed this bottle, popped another. Jarrett was on his second.

"So how long did you stay in Beijing the second time?"

"Little over a year. Then one day, I decided to come to Wuhan." He laughed hollowly. "You were an accountant?"

"I was an intern. So I got the accountant his coffee."

"You ever intend to become one?"

"Well...I have thought about taking the CPA exam."

"It's hard."

"That's what I've heard."

They drank. They drank the crate empty and David ordered another.

"Have you been to Wuhan before?" Jarrett asked.

"No," David said. "The good thing about Wuhan was, it's that I thought there were no ghosts here, and one day, I saw them.

"They were walking down the street, holding hands, a young foreign man and a young Chinese woman. I see them from time to time. I'll stop, watching, trying to figure out where they're going. I don't know where, but I think wherever it is, it's a place they want to go to. They know who I am and I can sort of remember the young man. I know if I go to where they're going, then I'll remember everything. But I don't. Instead, I turn and head to my apartment with a beer."

David looked away, drank. "So, ghosts? Don't ever kid yourself. There are ghosts no matter where you go."



Xi Chuan  
(Translated by Lucas Klein)

## Experience

The train rumbles over the railroad bridge  
I walk beneath. I feel its structure tremble.

Because this is the countryside, and midnight,  
I think, nobody but me  
could be planning to pass beneath this bridge.

## 体 验

火车轰隆隆地从铁路桥上开过来  
我走到桥下。我感到桥身在战栗。

因为这里是郊区，并且是在子夜  
我想除了我，不会再有什么人  
打算从这桥下穿过

1985

## Written at Thirty

in my first decade  
the moon revealed its silent craters  
while under that moon, in the town I lived in  
a clatter of exorcismal gongs and shouts in the street  
my limping uncle swore in the courtyard  
careless I met with a white rooster's kiss  
and a girl pulled down her pants in front of me  
I ran into a suicide's shade on the stairs  
and was instructed: do not be scared  
my father lifted me over his head  
hail bounced in exhaustion on the road to the commune  
I entered an immaculate school and studied revolution

in my second decade  
with working crickets of all countries I grew up  
together we scorned difficulty, together fell in love with  
    violence and moonlight  
a tiger appeared at my door  
I smelled the scent of flesh  
I bunny-hopped to a stranger's doorway  
and saw a man and woman preparing their festive attire  
I stole, and others stole too  
I set fire to sparrows, and others did too  
such is life, but I had an outstanding gift  
for painting ideals of mountain landscapes  
without too many sins requiring forgiveness

some doors shut, some doors were yet to open

my third decade was for travel and study  
it made sense to torment myself  
I sang for the brow and knees of love  
but saw no faerie queens descend on the streets  
friends came, wild and vivacious, then vanished  
leaving me a shirt and glasses but no way to wear them  
the spearhead of judgment called forth catastrophe  
as riots of flesh that called forth rainstorms  
I shouldered an umbrella and climbed up a hill  
a bird searching for someone greeting thunder and lightning  
making circles in the rain

how can you doubt both yourself and the world at once?  
you can't stop the rain, can't get a bird to land in your hand  
thought's like a knife, a flick of the blade  
drenches my spirit in sweat  
I drive out thirty contentious philosophers  
and say to the shadow who guards me, *I'm sorry*  
salty sweat, salty tears, what else is flesh supposed to taste  
like?  
night is like a display of identical rooms  
I walk through, pacing  
back and forth as if it were all one room. Morning to night  
my worries for the future prove I'm ill at ease—  
the earth is in motion but I have yet to sense it—

## 写在三十岁

在我第一个十年

月亮向我显现了它寂静的环形山  
而月亮之下，我居住的小城  
驱魔的锣鼓喧响，大街上叫声一片  
我瘸脚的舅舅在院子里骂人  
我一不小心领教了白公鸡的接吻  
一个小女孩在我面前脱下裤子  
我爬楼梯时撞见自杀者的阴魂  
我被告知别害怕  
我被父亲高举过头顶  
冰雹在通往公社的路上跳得精疲力竭  
我走进纯洁的学校学习革命

在我第二个十年

全世界的蟋蟀和我一起成长  
一起蔑视困难，一起爱上暴力和月光  
一只老虎出现在我的门口  
我闻到了肉味  
我像一只兔子跳到别人的门口  
看到男人和女人在准备节日的盛装  
我偷盗，别人也偷盗  
我烧死麻雀，别人也烧死麻雀  
生活如此，而我有突出的才华  
我描画理想的山水风光  
我没有太多的罪行要求世人原谅

一些门关闭了，另一些门尚未打开  
第三个十年适于出游和读书  
我折磨起自己来理所当然  
我歌唱爱情的眉宇和膝盖  
却从未在大街上看到天女下凡  
朋友们来了，生机勃勃，随即杳无踪影  
留下我无法穿戴的衬衫和眼镜  
批判的锋芒招来了灾难  
像肉体中的暴乱招来了大雨  
我扛着一把雨伞登上小丘  
一只小鸟为寻找一个人而迎着雷鸣电闪  
在雨中飞旋

怎么能既怀疑自己又怀疑世界？  
你无法叫大雨停住，叫飞鸟落在手上  
思想像一把刀，仅仅一闪  
便使我的灵魂大汗淋漓  
我赶走三十个高谈阔论的哲学家  
对守护我的影子说：对不起  
咸的汗，咸的泪，肉体还能是什么味道？  
黑夜像一连串陈设相同的房间  
我穿行其中，却好像在一个房间里  
来回踱步。从早到晚  
关心未来说明我心中不快——  
大地运行只是我向无觉察——

1993

## Midnight Sonata

Good thing I can feel, good thing I can listen in  
a midnight sonata revives a certain spirit  
a man in the shadows walks up to me  
a man without a body cannot be kept away  
but he is proficient at polishing lamps and appliances  
which makes me look at my dirtied hands, embarrassed

the ice of sleep cracks and creaks  
for an instant a gleam of azaleas covers the land  
a man walks up to me, but it's too late to hide  
like it's too late to hide from my youth  
in the midnight sonata, I lick  
chapped lips and wake to the ineluctability of life

but a midnight sonata is a  
happiness I cannot grasp, why is it  
everything I grasp at always deteriorates?  
those uproarious dances are still fresh in my mind  
but tonight's midnight sonata plays for no one  
it is a mystery, aggrieved, talking to itself

the wind ceases outside the window, an eagle must  
be flying by the snow-covered mountain, a peacock must  
be instigated by illusions, fanning its tail under the stars  
while I stand like a sunflower in the center of midnight  
wondering who'll take leave with my cumbersome life  
a man walks up to me, it seems like we've met

face to face, we size each other up  
far away I hear clapping  
a midnight sonata returns to silence  
yes, that's right: a man walks up to me  
hesitates, and then bites his tongue  
stepping back into the boundless shadows from which he  
emerged

## 午夜的钢琴曲

幸好我能感觉，幸好我能倾听  
一支午夜的钢琴曲复活一种精神  
一个人在阴影中朝我走近  
一个没有身子的人不可能被阻挡  
但他有本领擦亮灯盏和器具  
令我羞愧地看到我双手污黑

睡眠之冰发出咔咔的断裂声  
有一瞬间灼灼的杜鹃花开遍大地  
一个人走近我，我来不及回避  
就像我来不及回避我的青春  
在午夜的钢琴曲中，我舔着  
干裂的嘴唇，醒悟到生命的必然性

但一支午夜的钢琴曲犹如我  
抓不住的幸福，为什么如此之久  
我抓住什么，什么就变质？  
我记忆犹新那许多喧闹的歌舞场景  
而今夜的钢琴曲不为任何人伴奏  
它神秘，忧伤，自言自语

窗外的大风息止了，必有一只鹰  
飞近积雪的山峰，必有一只孔雀  
受到梦幻的鼓动，在星光下开屏  
而我像一株向日葵站在午夜的中央  
自问谁将取走我笨重的生命

一个人走近我，我们似曾相识

我们脸对着脸，相互辨认

我听见有人在远方鼓掌

一支午夜的钢琴曲归于寂静

对了，是这样：一个人走近我

犹豫了片刻，随即欲言又止地

退回到他所从属的无边的阴影

1994

## Slender Blossom

**I**t was in the moon of Harvest Wheat that Pan Ande brought a fox spirit into his household. The young scholar did not know that Slender Blossom was more or less than human. As he crossed the bridge to the regional market he saw merely a slim girl standing silent beside a boorish farmer.

The marketplace teemed with people, with noise, color, scent. Vendors shouted the quality of their wares; shoppers bartered; poultry scolded. The girl was an oasis of quiet amidst the chaos of commerce. Her stillness was a focal point amid the mercenary bustle. Her slender figure contrasted jarringly with the coarseness of the man beside her. Pan Ande saw that her eyes were fixed with determined composure upon the stone colonnade that supported the bridge, while the eyes of the peasant greedily scanned every passer for signs of interest.

The moon of Harvest Wheat was an inauspicious time for marriage. The scything and gathering of wheat was a time for judgment and executions, a time for state and patriarch to discipline and consolidate the family and not add to it. Pan Ande noted the girl's uncommon beauty with a pang like a knife blade under his rib. No young merchant or cleric would purchase the girl as a first wife. If she were lucky, some man too wealthy and too narcissistic to heed the ritual ordering of the seasons would buy her for a concubine. If she were not lucky, a brothel dealer would bid. Pan Ande felt the bile rise in his throat. The marketplace seemed to contract about him as his steps faltered and he turned back to the

girl and her guard.

The scholar bargained quickly with the old peasant. The man said little but stared at him with rheumy eyes, mumbling as if counting already a string of coins. The peasant was greedy but untutored, or he underestimated the beauty of the girl whose future he bartered, for he quickly took the proffered sum and backed bowing into the crowd. Pan Ande was left alone with the pale girl in the circle of her silence.

With great effort the young *jinshi* turned his eyes to the girl's face. She raised her gaze to his and for a brief moment glances locked. Pan Ande saw that her eyes harbored an otherworldly gleam of gold. His voice was raw as silk as he asked, "My courtyards are not far from here, but I have an errand in the town. Can you walk some small distance?" Her glance flickered back to his as she nodded her answer. The cimmerian depths contained wariness as well as shadow.

Once within the courtyards of his own household Pan Ande found Slender Blossom quarters with the youngest of the maids. He relegated the stern, still girl to the servants' realm and forbade his thoughts to linger upon the remembered gleam of golden eyes.

Slender Blossom had been a member of the household but a few days when First Wife came to petition for her removal. First Wife was the daughter of a politician who had helped Pan Ande to obtain his *jinshi* degree with introductions at court and gifts of money. As a protégé Pan Ande had distinguished himself and his benefactor by earning many honors. He felt only abhorrence for the intrigues and politics of Chang'an, but he must nonetheless soon be offered a place at court. The approbation of his sponsor had culminated with the gift of the man's daughter in marriage. Pan Ande

felt nothing for First Wife but responsibility and a whisper of regret, but the kinship with her family was invaluable.

When First Wife came to ask that Slender Blossom be sold, Pan Ande was with his father in the library. The old man had withdrawn from the daily affairs of the household, but he liked to hear news of the marketplace and the harvest and he dearly liked the company of his son. First Wife came supported by her maid to bow before them.

"What is the meaning of this, my dear?" asked the old man with a hint of reproof in his voice. First Wife bristled. "The new serving-girl is insolent and impossible!" she cried. "I shall have no peace of mind while she glares at me with unnatural eyes. I beg she be sent from the household." "Insolence is a serious charge, my daughter," replied the old man mildly. "To turn a dependent from the house at the onset of winter is a grave measure indeed." He then turned to Pan Ande. "Call the girl. I would hear her speak."

Slender Blossom was summoned to the library. Pan Ande sat silent with his eyes fixed upon his wife. He was certain his father could hear the blood thrumming in his ears. The pale blind eyes were turned upon him with a keen look but the old man said nothing, and when Slender Blossom came he turned them on her instead.

Slender Blossom knelt gracefully, disregarding First Wife completely and glancing only once at Pan Ande. Her slim figure conveyed both obedience and pride. A smile played about the old patriarch's lips and the blind eyes gazed at her eagerly as he said, "My daughter, what have you to say for yourself?" Pan Ande started at the unmerited familiarity of his father's address. The girl's voice was low and dark, redolent of shadows in the forest or sunlight in a hidden glade.

Pan Ande realized that he had never before heard her speak.

"With what crime am I charged, my father?" "You are said to be insolent and ungrateful, my daughter." Her voice sank to a whisper. "Against such accusations I cannot defend myself. To those who inspire my loyalty must my actions speak more clearly than words." The old man smiled with a joy that lit his countenance. He said to First Wife, "My daughter, you have here a worthy servant. Let no discord mar the harmony of my household." Slender Blossom and First Wife bowed their obedience. Slender Blossom allowed First Wife to precede her through the door, and left the chamber without looking back.

First Wife concealed her enmity, expressing it only in sly pinches and jabs and by blaming every household crisis upon the servant girl. None of these attacks could ruffle the serenity of Slender Blossom, who claimed the right to wait upon the old patriarch simply by doing so with more grace than any other servant. She knew before ever he expressed his desire when the cold caused him pain, when he wanted something from the kitchen, or which scroll he wished his son to read.

When Slender Blossom appeared with a scroll from the library in her hand Pan Ande would retire to his father's chambers to read aloud. At the command of the old man she too would sit and listen, holding herself very still in a corner of the room as the young scholar's melodic voice related the words of Confucius or the Book of Songs. Buoyed by the classical texts that had shaped his life, Pan Ande could contrive to forget her presence, though any room in which she sat was graced by the scent of the restless wind on the high hills, the spice of bracken and forest glades and the whisper

of dark waters.

As winter thawed First Wife became ever more irritable. Slender Blossom ranged over the wild hills in the moonlight to collect the first pale shoots of spring. She entered and left the compound without troubling the guard at the gate. First Wife became pale and drawn as her belly began to swell. She was daily unwell and her face had a peaked, pinched look to it that boded ill for the child.

One day Slender Blossom came to stand before First Wife with eyes cast down demurely. "I have some skill with herbs, Honored Lady. I would offer a tonic that the baby may be strong." "Get away, slut! Do you think I need the quack remedies of a dirt farmer's daughter when I have the best doctors in the land to attend me? You are more like to poison me than wish me well!" Slender Blossom bowed with contrition and backed from the room. "I am sorry to have offended, Honored Lady." Her words were soft but her dark eyes flashed.

First Wife became ever more immobile as summer waxed until she must lean heavily on her maid to support her gravid form. The skin of her face took on the look of silk stretched too taut over a wooden frame. Slender Blossom slipped her herbs into the broths cook painstakingly prepared for the pregnant woman. Dan Dan knew her mistress was in desperate need of aid. The servant fed First Wife the elixirs Slender Blossom concocted of honey and almond milk, of pomegranate and rose petals, of herbs gathered at full moon and dewdrops at dawn, of moonlight and gnarled nameless roots and ravens' tears and gibbeted bones. First Wife was brittle as a reed, but the baby grew greedy and strong until the pregnant woman seemed a cipher bent under

the bulk of her unborn child.

In the fierce heat of Cicada Moon First Wife went into labor. The birth was difficult, and First Wife vigorously denied Slender Blossom access to her chambers. Pan Ande remained in his library to pace under the watchful eyes of his father. The birth was breech and Dan Dan could not turn the babe.

Over long hours of labor First Wife grew deathly weak. When her screams had dwindled to whispers and then to silence, Dan Dan ran to fetch Slender Blossom. First Wife lay pale and still upon the bed. Her loyal servant stood with her hands clenched one upon the other, the knuckles white and raw. "You have something of magic about you. Is there aught ye can do for my mistress or the child?" "Your mistress is beyond my aid." Dan Dan blanched. "And the child?", she whispered. "Bring me the knife cook uses for fruit."

Slender Blossom sent the other servants from the room and bid Dan Dan guard the doorway. No one questioned the young girl's right, and Dan Dan stood grim and pale to bar the door. Silence held the household until the thin squall of a newborn pierced the stillness. The servants gazed at one another in consternation but none dared to enter the chamber governed by Slender Blossom. In a few moments the girl emerged bearing a small bundle wrapped in cloths. She walked with deliberate steps into the library, placed the bundle in Pan Ande's arms and said, "Behold your son." Pan Ande felt himself falling into the golden gaze. As he tore his eyes from Slender Blossom and peered wonderingly at the child, the servants begin to wail.

The next day Pan Ande summoned the servant girl to his sanctuary in the library. "You saved the life of my son. How

can I repay you?" She bowed low. "Once your kindness saved me. The debt is now requited."

The child was a sturdy boy of two when a summer of relentless heat caused the young wheat to wither and shrivel to dust. Failing crops drove ragged bands of peasants to seek their fare in more parlous ways. Rumors of bandits and burning were whispered in the townships, and Pan Ande hired guards to watch the wall.

The moon hung crimson on the horizon the night bandits came over the courtyard wall. A group of ravenous men cut down the guards. The servants fled. The leader of the rabble laughed as he raised his torch to the delicate lintel of the door.

The blackguard paused when he saw the slender young girl still and silent on the threshold. He grinned as he reached to pull her from the safety of the doorway. Two swords flashed out and the torch shattered upon the stones of the yard. As his body sagged to the cobblestones, Slender Blossom leapt whirling into the center of the courtyard. Her swords shone silver as she spun, graceful as ribbons trailed by a court dancer.

When sound died into stillness the bandits were ragged bundles of raw flesh scattered on the stones. The servants wept softly. Pan Ande stood in the doorway and gazed across the courtyard where Slender Blossom waited.

He picked his way silently through the carnage until he stood like a supplicant before the slim young girl. "You have saved my home and my family. If there is aught whereby I can repay your courage, you have but to name it." Her silence stretched taut between them. "Give me this night." In the golden shadows of her eyes he saw a sadness and a long-

ing to equal his own. He heard his heart beat within the caverns of his ears, a deep booming like the drums that carry messages of war across the mountains. He took her hand in his with the hilt of a silver sword clasped between them, and led the young woman to his chambers.

Slender Blossom woke as the sun escaped the clasp of distant hills. She turned her head to look long at the man who slept with one arm flung across her waist. His face was peaceful, his sleep deep. He smelled of earth and harvest, of rain on the field and corn in the husk. The memory of him was imprinted in her flesh. She slipped from beneath his arm with no more stir than a cool wind as it slides down from mountain glades. She paused once in the doorway to gaze at the sleeping form with desolate eyes.

When Pan Ande woke to find his chambers empty he strode to the courtyard. The gate was open. Dust shimmered above the dry road with promise of a cruel day to come. No footprint was left in the dust of the road to betray the direction of her flight. The hills were wreathed in mist. He heard just once the woeful threnody of a fox.

Pan Ande continued to perform the tasks of a dutiful son and father, but the gestures held no joy. The young *jinshi* seemed empty as a husk, for the will to live had left him the day the fox spirit fled his household. His son came often to the courtyard at dawn to find his father standing before the locked gate, gazing at the far hills with grief writ reckless on his face. One day the boy rose to find the gate open. A single print marred the dust of the road.

Some say no good can ever come of a fox spirit that meddles in human affairs. Others are not so quick to condemn. A few whisper that if love can bind a fox for a time to human

form, then love may allow a human to live as foxes live, swift and wild as the wind in the glades of the high hills.



## The Opium Eater's Idyll

Beneath those rings of dragon smoke—  
a torpid charcoal sketch of God—  
I lay upon the busy sod  
where father Pangu once awoke.

The ants have eaten all my food,  
the bees despise my peaceful art,  
and men, beset by restless hearts,  
tell me that I do no good.

Only the caterpillar knows  
that she and I sleep side by side  
in cocoons that mortal men deride  
and dreams that they will never know.

Above those silver Shantung clouds  
where immortals pop their golden pills  
Yu Ch'iang, black-fingered still,  
plays upon his pipe aloud.

## A Monkey Looks At The Stars

*for Hugh Bohane*

Riding in a bus through Yunnan  
Chinese dinosaur fields up ahead  
Nothing surprises today in the villages;  
I'm dumbstruck by my own foolishness  
Fairly certain that I'll do most of it again.  
The tunnels take us through the mountains.

We are grown accustomed  
By the familiar, taking it all in  
According to old stories, old names;  
Although everything that rings a bell  
Is hardly a prescription, nothing I see  
Won't remind me of something else.

In Dali, the mountains are high  
And the Emperor is very far away.  
At The Bad Monkey bar, similarity  
Is easier than arguing, all our ancestors  
Understand their approximate descendants  
Will know a thing, a place, and a person.

A small dog is chained up in the corner  
When I ask her why, she says it's because  
She doesn't have a quiet heart, and smiles sadly.  
I want to tell her that "Past attraction, but  
Not past love, yet the stray dog has a soul"

I am falling up to the perfect sky, so I don't.

*Kunming-Shanghai 2011*

## Ode to My Wok

Incorporating the  
loneliness  
of Li Po-  
searching the  
moon's reflection  
for a kiss-  
the economy  
of Basho-  
uniting  
nature  
and  
philosophy  
in  
three  
lines.

The wanderings  
of Mahadeviyakka-  
mud her garments,  
an early incarnation  
of Kerouac,  
caked in  
the desert dust  
and  
hitching rides.

All spices I add to  
whatever I am  
cooking in my wok,

whatever is frying on  
the stove that  
is my neck.

## Poem from an Ant

How like an ant  
crawling up  
a tree I am;

sifting through these  
miles of papers,  
through boundless books.

Those odes of Keats and Neruda  
embracing nature- nearly  
forgetting humanity.

Sonnets of Petrarch  
and Shakespeare,  
Frost and cummings.

The haiku  
of Basho  
and Kerouac,

Li Po kissing the moon  
and drowning, drowning  
in pale lips parted too far.

Scribbling villanelles  
aside Thomas and Plath,  
Sestinas after Pound and Bishop.

My legs scatter  
up this great  
colossus,

bark growing  
wider with every step  
upward.

## Contributor Notes

**Andrea Bangert** is a research scientist at the University of California. As an undergraduate she studied Chinese language and history, and she has lived in China. She is particularly interested in Classical Chinese poetry as well as tales of the supernatural. *Slender Blossom* was inspired by 'ghost stories' including the Song dynasty Legend of the White Snake and the stories recorded by Pu Songling in *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*.

**R. Joseph Capet** is a poet, playwright, and essayist from the West Coast whose work has appeared in a variety of magazines on both sides of the Pacific, including "decomp," "Taj Mahal Review," and "The Eclectic Muse."

**Xi Chuan 西川** (penname of Liu Jun 刘军) was born in Jiangsu in 1963 but grew up in Beijing, where he still lives. One of contemporary China's most celebrated poets, having won the Lu Xun Prize for Literature (2001) and the Zhuang Zhongwen Prize (2003), he is also one of its most hyphenated *littérateurs*—teacher-essayist-translator-editor-poet—and has been described by American writer Eliot Weinberger as a "polymath, equally at home discussing the latest American poetry or Shang Dynasty numismatics." A graduate of the English dept. of Beijing University, where his thesis was on Ezra Pound's Chinese translations, he is currently employed at the Central Academy for Fine Arts in Beijing, where he was hired as an English instructor, then taught Western literature in Chinese translation, and now teaches pre-modern Chinese literature. He has taught at New York University

(2007) and University of Victoria (2009), and is currently translating the work of Gary Snyder into Chinese.

**William Wright Harris's** poetry has appeared in six countries in such literary journals as *The Cannon's Mouth*, *Ascent Aspirations*, and *Write On!!!* He is a student at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville, where he has been lucky enough to study poetry with such poets as Jesse Janeshek, Marilyn Kallet, Arthur Smith, and Marcel Brouwers.

**Lucas Klein**—a former radio DJ and union organizer—is a writer, translator, and editor of [CipherJournal.com](http://CipherJournal.com). His translations, essays, and poems have appeared at Two Lines, Jacket, and Drunken Boat, and he has regularly reviewed books for Rain Taxi and other venues. A graduate of Middlebury College (BA) and Yale University (PhD), he is Assistant Professor in the dept. of Chinese, Translation & Linguistics at City University of Hong Kong. *Endure*, a small collection of Bei Dao poems translated with Clayton Eshleman, is now out from Black Widow Press, and his translations of Xi Chuan are forthcoming from New Directions as *Notes on the Mosquito* (<http://xichuanpoetry.com>). He is also translating Tang dynasty poet Li Shangyin.

**Travis Lee** lived in Wuhan for two and a half years, where he taught English and studied Chinese. He currently lives in the States. Previous publications include: "The Journey through Nanking," in *Independent Ink Magazine*, issue 3.

**Rob Schackne** is an Australian writer currently working in China, watching it all get curiouser and curiouser – and some

days he thinks there's nothing easy about the Tao. In spite of that – or because of it – there's a slightly feverish literary blog he writes with Boris Knack called The Tao That Can Be Named... at [www.borisknack.blogspot.com](http://www.borisknack.blogspot.com) .

