Meng Lang

IN OUR BODIES

History travels through our bodies, 
That is our life.

Life travels through our bodies, 
That is our glory.

Glory travels through our bodies, 
That is our blood.

Blood travels through our bodies, 
That is our road.

The road travels through our bodies, 
That journey ends in our bodies.

In our bodies
Just, their pure white bones (unyielding),
Just, their wide open eyes (hope).

Liu Nianchun

TREE-RINGS

What times are these, today 
That overlap times past 
So that one can’t distinguish 
Like rings on an old pagoda tree 
The past written, the present laid bare 
But no road 
To the future

Where evil comes from 
No one knows 
Like yellow earth, layer compacting layer 
Like years shrouded in cobwebs and dust 
Numb, or devoid of feeling

孟浪

我们身体里的

历史在我们的身体里旅行， 
那就是我们的生命。

生命在我们的身体里旅行， 
那就是我们的光荣。

光荣在我们的身体里旅行， 
那就是我们的鲜血。

鲜血在我们的身体里旅行， 
那就是我们的道路。

道路在我们的身体里旅行， 
旅行就在我们的身体里结束。

在我们身体里的 
只是，他们洁白的骨头（不屈）， 
只是，他们圆睁的眼睛（希冀）。

刘念春

年轮

今天，是什么年代 
却和以往年代重合 
以致分不清 
老槐树似的年轮 
书写过去，坦呈现在 
却没有一条路 
通向未来

邪恶从那条路走来 
没有人知道 
象黄土地一层压着一层 
象蛛网尘封的年代 
是麻木还是冷酷
Like breakers crashing in river, lake or sea
Like sun and moonlight crushing yesterday into today
Yellow leaves swaying in the breeze
Finally someone knows
The road circles and begins again
Indifferent, no attempt to hide it

Seek light in the midst of evil
Pray for hope in the face of indifference
Finally the day comes
When you reap hopelessness on that muddy road

Samsara is open and completely bare
5,000 years of hurrying back and forth
80,000 li of birth and rebirth
Chasing history
Tracking the present
Avenging the future

Samsara hurries
Along the road
But it is hard to recognize an instance of deception in the present
Today, history is forgotten
Because of deception the forgotten is beyond the bright blue sky

Today one wants to tell again
Of the evil that lurks beneath willow branches in the spring breeze
Not knowing when it acquired that patina of sanctity
Yet not allowed to speak of it freely
What times are these

Translated by J. Latourelle

About the poets

Meng Lang was working at Shenzhen University in 1989 as the editor for the university press. He served time in prison following June Fourth for his participation in the editing of underground publications. He is a poet and an author in the United States and is co-founder of the Independent Chinese PEN Center.

Liu Nianchun is a dissident writer from Beijing. He was a major participant in the Democracy Wall movement in 1979 and an editor of the underground publication Today. Beginning in 1981, Liu served three years in prison for transferring manuscripts written by his imprisoned brother. In 1989, he participated in the Tiananmen Democracy Movement. He currently resides in the United States.

Notes
1. Buddhist cycle of death and rebirth.
2. A Chinese unit of measurement, equal to approximately 0.5 kilometers.