BRIEF ENCOUNTERS

Belong to the Past in a Loud Future Tense

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Olive Zhong

An Ambivalent Surrender

Her eye has a bone in it.

Her words are quieter than the timid scent

Of the silence of shade-in-shade.

No place to rest weariness

And paradox. the aftertaste of

An inside sting: thickening   repeating

Despair has a thousand fangs yet a single soft tongue

Whispering: continue   continue

Squirming in the swamp of the ever present tense.

Pain circles   afresh.

An overhead beam, a rope and a noose

Are too meek to hold the weight of her ordeal:

Told   untold

Her autobiography continues

With herself being absent.

Landscape

The night woke up cold in

    a gauzy dress.

Through the maze of spider webs

    all the children

gaze at the square moon

    turning into the scent of buttercups.

Night, stretched far and deep,

    lies on the river.

And the shyness of a frog

     flows and flicks.

Discrete, Deep and Dark in the Past

        Memory ruptures

        to a continuous separation

        in an aged story:

… Another thorn in parents' talks

… a moment of sporadic rosy nostalgia

incognito as a dream-like name.

          Childhood, the word,

          fluid and solid,

          has a dim wound in it.

Fat rain cannot swallow

the serrated voices in which

another glass is shattered.

          Tired feet again step into their quarrels,

          open and wild as weather. Turbulent air

          unobtrusive as the change of days.

The alphabets themselves, after sunset,

thread dazzling, intimate

poems.

        So much

        depends on

        belongs to

Solid Memory, Volatile City

fireflies glittering with fragments

through the scrim of memory

loose   fraying   lingering

the perimeter of desolation

skyline and childhood is now

open   volatile   scenic

on the edge, calla lilies find the bone

of an echo from the pristine and returning

waiting and mirage

in an old wheelbarrow's shadow

a black bird pecks the remote hums.

resolute   reverberative

time is dressed up

with labyrinth and diplopic shelves.

a snapshot of scent of forget-me-not

An Incomplete Life in a Complete Autumn: Aunty Lian

Sweet corn stalks, patient and lonely as a rock cairn,

Glance towards the sore direction:

Lian's motionless body dangled, weightless

From a sycamore, like a kite caught on a power line.

She lay as snipped orchid petals in the coffin.

The fresh bruises made by her husband were piercingly vivid.

Her mother made the chafing longing

Magnanimously accurate and delicate

A phial of weep was injected into the

The ear of nights. She was still awake when the second moon

Came out in the morning. The mutating pain undulated

Through her body clock and sight.

Yet time was gracefully scabbing.

Salubrious nostalgia, like non sequiturs, trickled in.

There was a lotus in Lian's name. The onomatopoeia

Of its blossoms was rising and echoing.