

Second Life

By Yan Li

My middle school classmate Li
Born in 1954 in Beijing
Wrote some underground poems
Executed by shooting during the 1983 Strike Hard Campaign
For the immoral crime of bed hopping

Twenty-four years later
I was startled one day in 2007
Because he suddenly reawoke
He said China seems to have moved its home
This type of moving has once again put in play
The strength of unity among the world's oppressed people
He said another Great Cultural Revolution was definitely
Extending across borders to other nations
Taking over their splendid worlds

I said China actually has not moved anywhere
It's just that commercialism overturned the planned economy
What you now see is still yesterday's model
To be able to continue this life is really too great
Since you gained back 24 years
You can display your capabilities on a grand scale

He said don't worry about commercialism
I want to understand this tag of immorality
How long do I have to wear it?
And with regard to displaying my capabilities
Who knows if writing poems today still creates tremors?
However, the greatest
The absolute most urgent matter is to help me find out
Have the relevant authorities approved my reawakening?

Translated by Glen Steiman

第二次生命

严力

我初中的同校生李向东
1954年出生于北京
写过一些地下诗歌
1983年以流氓罪死于严打的判决

二十四年后
2007年的某一天我被吓了一跳
因为他突然醒了过来
他说中国好像搬了一次家
这样的搬家必然再次动用了
全世界受压迫人民团结起来的力量
他说肯定又有过一场延伸到境外的
文化大革命
因而占领了他们的花花世界

我说其实没挪过地方
而是市场化压倒了计划经济
你现在看上去还是当年的模样
能这样接着生活真是太妙了
因为你整整存下了二十四年的时间
你可以大张旗鼓地施展才能了

他说先别管什么是市场化
我想知道流氓的这个成分
我还要背上多久?
至于施展才能
不知道如今写诗是否还会有什么后遗症?
不过,最最
最最紧迫的还是先帮我打听一下
有关方面对我的醒来有没有批准的文件?