Medicine

Winter in its depths here in Pine
River but it doesn’t stop
me from seeing your eyes in that instant
when they were turned
towards me from a crowd
of gossipers.
Later, over dinner
I heard your story of how
you travelled all the way
from Honduras to Hong Kong
after a domestic fight
and I read your poem
after you went to the loo
in which you talk about many pills.
I lost my head.
I had no comprehension
but I praised.
I must have appeared stupid
in your ‘beautiful’ eyes
and my stupidity
led to loss.
It was not till long afterwards
that I realized
I could have saved you
if I had met you earlier
than the poem.

Ouyang Yu

'Medicine'. Ouyang Yu.
Transnational Literature Vol. 7 no. 1, November 2014.
A Nation

Of exclusion
Of isolation (I-solation)
Of rejection
Of alienation
Of dumping the waves on their own heads
Of seeking asylum elsewhere, e.g. where no families break up
Of offering asylum inside its own body to its own body parts
Of self-hallucination
Of policing so much that heaven’s gates are constantly under lock and key
Of irrevolution
Of irresponsiblesolution
Of no
Of no sharers
Of nay sayers
Of yes slayers
Of dreaming for its own sake
Of white on white
Of calculated cons
Of a scheme designed to last longer than long itself
Of hate boats
Of hate eyes
Of hate ears
Of love that contains a hole in it
Of hope that does the same

A nation
Of no asylum to others but its own people

Asylum sought
Asylum given
Asylum, the size of a continent, lived and being lived

Ouyang Yu
‘this is a pretty unhappy country’

this is a pretty unhappy country
the busy become busier
the poor, poorer
and fatter
and quieter

looking from a distance
especially from a high rise in the city
it is a pretty
country

on closer inspection
there is shit
in everyone’s smile
and eyes
even the beer
can’t wash it clean

there’s money for sure
and the mortgage
that keeps the poor poorer
and more invisible
and the rich
are dying an early death
of having too much money

and this we had called
a paradise
before we came
this shit
this shithouse
this shithole that looks so pretty
for the less merrys

Ouyang Yu
Snapshots of an awarding ceremony: slightly out of sequence

a.
i said didn’t see any writers he said you wouldn’t perhaps because they were hiding themselves at home writing I said well if they were not shortlisted they wouldn’t turn up he said that’s right

b.
i saw a man in his seventies getting his poetry prize a white man i saw a man in his late fifties getting his fiction prize a white man I saw a lot of white skinned white haired men and women around me peppered by brown people and yellow people who were the only ones sitting the weak ones

c.
a man read or rather recited from a play and ended his performance with a loud FUCK that caused everyone to applaud and shout and shriek with laughter in the presence of premier and arts minister a female the white woman behind me didn’t seem to be very pleased but she didn’t say anything

d.
a woman an old one asked are you vietnamese i said guess again she said you look like a vietnamese that i once taught in adult migrant education centre i said guess again i mean give it another go she said ah well i can’t i said china chinese you know she said oh does that make any difference i said

e.
she asked when i got home why you came back so early is that because no-one paid any attention to you again i said no she said yes it must be like last time or every time but i said no i had fun thinking of my weariness my urge to say fuck my instinct about people i dislike my reluctance to go and congratulate anyone who’s won a prize even the one i’ve judged to be the winner my wonderment why big names keep winning prizes why they make themselves so lonely and why so few people go to them to say nice things why they pat each other on their backs to congratulate themselves why people feel so important after they win but not before what makes a human being a full human being not a less or more one as i trudged towards my car somewhere near a city public bath-house

Ouyang Yu