

## Beijing (5 poems)

### Prologue: “Two thousand sixty miles”

Two thousand sixty miles            from Beijing  
my flight departs from Bangkok    any minute  
my parents will await me            with Baoqing  
Xiaodong’s condo apartment        we’ll be in it  
the story can’t proceed                till you begin it  
but once it starts who knows what it may bring?  
the wheel of fortune turns          it’s time to spin it  
two thousand sixty miles            from Beijing

### 1. Two Scenes

#### (i) Cablecar

You can ride the Xiang Shan cablecar for half an hour  
it will lift you to the highest peak above the world  
it’s a rather famous tourist spot where looking out  
the domain of human purposes seems lost in mist  
coming back you’ll sit beside a lake where fountains spout  
and the willow trees & cypresses look soft & sweet  
you might wonder what to make of all your aims & dreams  
when in afternoon a little rain is coming on

#### (ii) Viewing Paintings

The world is recreated by the brush of ink  
the ground whereon it moves is liquid emptiness  
I am therefore I paint (I paint therefore I think)  
long flows the line spanning the height of happiness

### 2. The Silk Road

Midsummer sounds of locusts through the window  
late morning                            haze of summer fills the sky  
here in Beijing                        stand many a pine & willow  
there in the distance                how goes your July?  
we chat on phone & g-talk            fairly often  
it’s gradually I glimpse                your point of view  
outside dogs bark cars honk        if feelings soften  
I’ll send what bird                    to tell my tale to you?

### 3. Imaginary Colloquy

“I’m not the fruit vague passers blithely gather”  
“mine’s not the sough of some indifferent wind”  
I didn’t hear this conversation rather  
it welled up in a dreamy night my friend

“where do you journey along the empty highway?”  
“ten thousand miles afar though I’ll be back”  
“many a shoe departs treading this byway  
I’ve yet to see return one gone rucksack”

“mine’s not the fugitive tale & I would send thee  
fond news upon the breezes laughing kindly”  
“I’ll listen for a spell if you would lend me  
your handkerchief if tears be apt to find me”

### 4. In the Countryside

My friends are looking at real estate  
in the countryside to Beijing’s north  
you can lease a big 20-year plot of land  
for something like 90 bucks a month  
& build your home there! unconcerned  
with acquisition’s imperatives  
you’d camp in style no tent but a house  
sporting all the modern conveniences

One spot is situate next to a lake  
where sunset hues on the water shine  
you find fields of corn all kelly green  
you see stands of poplar all thin & fine  
after ambling earthen paths beside  
this possible future dwelling-plot  
we repair to a country inn & dine  
on birds-of-the-wild & cornbread hot

Talk turns to next year’s summer games  
that keep Beijing in a tizzy of late  
the painter Lin-Hai describes what music  
he’d like to hear the pageant play  
its tones should be deep as night informed  
by cadences of the brooding earth  
like sounds of Tibetan Lamas’ drones  
but a friend opines it won’t come forth

*For Lin Xiaodong & Wang Baoqing*