




## Memory

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### LIU NIANCHUN

When white butts left footprints on the azure shores  
When freedom and the wind walked together  
We chose the dark of night  
There was a song popular in the dark night  
"I found a coin beside the road  
and gave it to that uncle policeman"  
Like a dream, an illusion  
Collectively lost in  
Mao's power-stuffed brain

No blue skies  
No open land  
In Cell 24 of the Beijing Detention Center  
There was a man, then,  
Who scrawled his name,  
Rusty nail gripped in trembling fingers,  
On the weathered wall of the death row cell

The death row yard was a desolate place  
Time seemed to have stopped there  
But for one big vigorous tree  
Where magpies multiplied  
How many springs have gone and autumns come  
Under the searching gaze of their progeny  
All this has disappeared

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

Yet his name<sup>1</sup>  
His "On Family Background"  
And that stagnant time  
Are, generation upon generation,  
Etched in the people's memory

#### About the poet

**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.

# 记忆

## 刘念春

当白云在蓝色沙滩上留下一串脚印  
当自由与风作伴而行  
我们选择黑夜  
黑夜里流行一首歌  
“我在马路边捡到一分钱  
交给警察叔叔”  
如梦如幻  
集体迷失在  
毛泽东充满权力的大脑里

没有蓝天  
没有大地  
在北京市看守所二十四筒里  
此时，有一个人  
颤抖的手指捏紧生锈的铁钉  
在死筒监号斑驳的墙壁上  
歪歪斜斜刻下自己的名字

死筒院落冷冷清清  
时间也似乎停止  
一棵生机勃勃的大树  
大树上喜鹊繁衍子孙  
多少次春去秋来  
喜鹊后代寻觅的目光里  
这一切已经消失

然而，他的名字  
和他写的《出身论》  
与那停止不前的时间  
已经一代  
一代刻在民族记忆里

*Translated by J. Latourelle*

### Notes

1. Lu Luo (b. 1942) is best known for his 1966 essay, "On Family Background," in which he argues forcefully against the idea that family background is the main factor which determines one's attitude to the Party. He was arrested in 1968 for counter-revolutionary crimes and executed in 1970, at the age of 27. ^

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