




## Tree-rings

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### LIU NIANCHUN

What times are these, today  
That overlap times past  
So that one can't distinguish  
Like rings on an old pagoda tree  
The past written, the present laid bare  
But no road  
To the future

Where evil comes from  
No one knows  
Like yellow earth, layer compacting layer  
Like years shrouded in cobwebs and dust  
Numb, or devoid of feeling

Like breakers crashing in river, lake, or sea  
Like sun and moonlight crushing yesterday into today  
Yellow leaves swaying in the breeze  
Finally someone knows  
The road circles and begins again  
Indifferent, no attempt to hide it

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

Samsara<sup>1</sup> is open and completely bare  
5,000 years of hurrying back and forth  
80,000 *li*<sup>2</sup> of birth and rebirth  
Chasing history  
Tracking the present  
Avenging the future

Samsara hurries  
Along the road  
But it is hard to recognize an instance of deception in the present

#### 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.

Today, history is forgotten  
Because of deception the forgotten is beyond the bright blue sky

Today one wants to tell again  
Of the evil that lurks beneath willow branches in the spring breeze  
Not knowing when it acquired that patina of sanctity  
Yet not allowed to speak of it freely  
What times are these

# 年轮

刘念春

今天，是什么年代  
却和以往年代重合  
以致分不清  
老槐树似的年轮  
书写过去，坦呈现在  
却没有一条路  
通向未来

邪恶从那条路走来  
没有人知道  
象黄土地一层压着一层  
象蛛网尘封的年代  
是麻木还是冷酷

象江河海一浪击碎一浪  
象月光昨天击碎今天  
黄叶在风中摇摆  
终于有人知道  
路在周而复始  
冷漠而不掩盖

在邪恶中寻找光明  
在冷漠中祈求希望  
终于有一天  
却在泥泞的道路上收获无奈

轮回坦荡一丝不挂  
五千年匆匆往来  
八万里生生不息  
追讨历史  
跟踪当代  
报应将来

轮回匆匆  
走在路上  
却难以认清一次当代的欺诈  
今天，历史的遗忘  
遗忘因欺诈而在朗朗青天外

今天，又想告诉  
春风杨柳枝条下的罪恶  
却不知何时披上一层圣洁的光泽  
还不准自由表达  
这是什么年代

*Translated by J. Latourelle*

## Notes

1. Buddhist cycle of death and rebirth. ^
2. A Chinese unit of measurement, equal to approximately 0.5 kilometers. ^