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The Morning Reading

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Do you have a loneliness you couldn't expel?
Do you have a formidable fear?
Did you discover something that startled you,
That made you warn my hometown?

Wang! Wang! Wang! Wang! Wang!
Your unbearable barking.
Each bark is more anxious and sorrowful,
But only to disturb our deep slumber.

All is quiet and calm, no problems.
Except for your barking
All is quiet and calm, no problems.
Suspicious fools! Why don't you sleep?
Why don't you sleep peacefully?
What are you so worried about?
What is there that you see?
All which is nonexistent and imagined.
Do not bark anymore.
Your unbearable crying would only
Make us angry.

translated by Marilyn Chin and Jesse Wang

THE MORNING READING

Each morning
I race to school against the morning sun.
You, with your little brilliant faces, say, "Good morning."
On the back wall, the map of China,
Shaped like a begonia, also greets me warmly.
In a silent flowing of glances,
Each river on the map is growing;
Each mountain is becoming taller and taller,
Each plain is enlarging slowly.
Listening to your monotonous English reading
I am tempted to say something . . .
I am tempted to say, "Stop reading," and
That we should be listening to what our rivers have to say,
And discover how much love is harbored in our mountains.

Look at the plains, how its chest is so broad.
Don't forget how dear they are to us,
Though we have never seen them.
But as I was turning my head to speak,
My eyes met the anxious glare of
Our kind Sir, Dr. Sun Yat Sen.
Incidentally,
Our Dr. Sun Yat Sen
Is also looking at you with full expectation.
He looks at every mountain, river, shrub and plant of our
motherland.
Provided that you are reading Chinese history,
About the pure and righteous officials,
About the heartrending songs of sorrow
Of our ambitious heroes,
About the high passions of our chivalries in past dynasties . . .
And not the muddled and droning English,
The sunshine on your little faces will get brighter.
And the anxiety in Sun Yat Sen's wet eyes will clear up.

Each morning
I race to school against the morning sun.
I say, "Good morning," to you
And to the begonia map.
I say, "Good morning," to Dr. Sun Yat Sen,
Then loiter around the doorway.
A question would suddenly dawn on me—
Why must we learn English?—
We learn it so that
The next generation doesn't have to learn it.
My English teacher had said so,
And so did yours.
But imagine the day when Chinese children
Won't have to learn a foreign language by force—
Except, of course, they must study nothing but
The straight and square Chinese.

translated by Marilyn Chin and Eunice Chen