

My Apologies to the Sparrow

A lamentation for the countless sparrows killed, under the direction of Chairman Mao, during the campaign known as “The Great Sparrow Campaign” and “Kill A Sparrow Campaign,” which caused a profound and irremediable ecological disequilibrium.

A rice farmer bangs pots and pans together and eats well.

For they know not now who pulls the chariot of the amorous goddess across the sky.

A rice farmer measures the curvature of the earth and goes to sleep.

For they know not now who threw the genitals into the sea.

A rice farmer writes a letter to the Ministry of Passerines.

For they know not now to whom like Catullus they shall address their odes.

A rice farmer receives an envelope marked “Icarus’ Wings” and stuffed with sunflower seeds.

For they know not now which war-beaked bird attacks their children while they sleep.

A rice farmer plows his terraced white hill and arms himself with slingshot rocks.

For they know not now why God fails to notice the fall of the sparrow.

A rice farmer stands in his field among the swarming of locusts and the winds falling.

For they know not now who sings in the Chinaberry trees.