



Memories of the Cultural Revolution: Poems

Luo Ying

Denis Mair, Translator

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A billionaire capitalist shadowed by his Red Guard activism during China's Cultural Revolution, Luo Ying is committed to facing down his own, and his country's, Maoist demons through the excruciating vise of poetry. This collection, the latest of several, is a memoir in narrative verse and the honesty he shares in stunning. Luo Ying currently directs the Chinese Poetry Institute at Peking University.

Chicken Blood Injections

*Liu Xiaobao's dad got a shot of chicken blood, and he found it energizing
He said it was due to the rooster's strength, because it had never mated
The neighbors pooled their money and went to purchase roosters in the countryside
The city was full of men strutting briskly to work
A line of men with roosters formed at the hospital door
Doctors busily stuck needles into chickens, drawing blood for injections
I don't know if anyone died later, but a fad was underway
In a materialistic time, what else did people have to do?
People said the shots made their bodies lighter, gave their steps more bounce
It made eyes bright, minds clear, faces youthful, and hair like crane feathers
Some said it would bring you a plump baby who wouldn't suffer as you had
Some said it kept you from getting hit by bullets in armed struggles
Liu Xiaobao's brother wouldn't get those shots, lest he start crowing or pecking
All over the city, people discussed how he had fallen behind the times
They said, "Going to college did him no good—it only made him stupid."*

MATT SUTHERLAND (Winter 2016)

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