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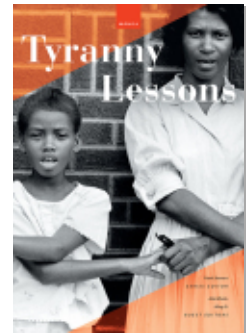
Beijing, My Phantom

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Beijing, My Phantom

Beijing, my phantom.
In the deep water, I see my sleepless reflection,
not shuddering or trembling,
but opening its gray, drowned eyelids.

People scatter like water drops,
disperse like doves or sparrows.
Gone, like a pear
swallowed and digested.

In the shadows of stones,
sad things remain.
Glass reflects the light, like the cold eyes
of informants. And memory flashes in the void.

Onlookers stand by as uniformly as a
row of tanks grinding forward, crushing
not only a statue, but living people.
What's left is scoured away,
without assistance from a heavy rain

or a street sweeper. Blood stains, idealism,
cigarette butts. To my left, doves
are silently pecking, swollen and morose
as the swollen corpses of dead children.

To my right, sparrows flutter
but can't escape my field of vision—
these poor, small, grayish, stone-like things
desire freedom.

After twenty years, how deep rooted is the silence,
how long will the dead remain dead?
The sky is heavy as lead, and the sunset, god of destruction,
drives its golden chariot, pulled by nimble hooves.

Someone weeping flourishes a sickle,
its purpose arrested. The crowd is drinking the years.
From its wide throat, a crow spits out a song.
I must have seen something, but I can't speak about it.

Beijing, my phantom.
Streets are burning, tall buildings loom over them
with chests swelling like ancient kettles. I dwell here,
but my reflection lies under deeper waves.

A piece of driftwood on the water.
Lips on the water.
Gray pupils on the water.
My Beijing, your chest and heart broken open.

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Translation from Chinese by Ming Di and Frank Stewart