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Mai-Anh Tran

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It's a farce!—he cries—a trick!
 Disregarding the fluttering-paged pleas of protest
 He throws away Aristotle, rips up Nietzsche
 (Humping the dear old corpse of Western tradition)
 And lets myriad treatises on the new Chinese economy
 (Fellating the myth of Orientalism)
 Preach their sermons to empty plebeian air.

Traditional revolutionary! Go to war
 Against the sages of the street,
 Denouncer of those pastoral clichés of reality!

and meanwhile against a wall
 In some back alley, perhaps
 Or out the back door
 Of a populist bookshop
 The truth slouching slinks
 In corners between cracks
 On empty open streets

He searches for it, without desperation—
 He has sinned enough to know
 The marks against him,
 Too much for redemption,
 He knows he cannot be allowed to find it
 (His vision has been becoming too clouded for that)

Covering its face the truth
 Brushes past him
 Dodges the quiet battle
 —it needs to buy cheese, and milk.

Tomorrow
 The old book soldiers resign their commissions
 and themselves to their new careers
 (recycled paper is all the rage these days).
 Tomorrow the sun will still rise,
 As long as we remember which way is east.

And tomorrow evening
 Perhaps in a seedy booze-hall
 Mr. Disillusioned—
 You may be able to sneak a bare glimpse
 Of him through his rampant dissolution.

Good luck.