

LIU
XIAOBO

念六四



June Fourth Elegies

CAPE POETRY

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About the Book

Liu Xiaobo (born 1955) is a pre-eminent Chinese literary critic, professor and humanitarian activist. Since his hunger strike in Tiananmen Square in June 1989 he has been a thorn in the side of the Chinese government, helping to write the Charter 08 manifesto calling for free speech, democratic elections and basic human rights. He was arrested and convicted on charges of ‘incitement to subversion’, and sentenced to eleven years in prison. The following year, 2010, during this fourth prison term, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for ‘his prolonged non-violent struggle for fundamental human rights in China’. Neither he nor his wife was allowed to travel to Oslo, and the Chinese government blocked all news stories of the prize and intimidated Liu’s friends and family. He is the only Nobel Laureate in detention.

June Fourth Elegies is a collection of the poems Liu Xiaobo has written each year on the anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989. An extraordinarily moving testimony and an historical document of singular importance, it is dedicated to ‘the Tiananmen Mothers and for those who can remember’. In this bilingual volume, Liu’s poetry is for the first time published freely in both English translation and in the Chinese original.

About the Author

Liu Xiaobo is a political activist, author, university professor and writer. He was awarded the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize.

Jeffrey Yang is the author of two poetry collections and an editor at New Directions Publishing.

*This book is dedicated to the Tiananmen Mothers and for
those who can remember*

念念六四

JUNE FOURTH ELEGIES

刘晓波

Liu Xiaobo

Translated from the Chinese by Jeffrey Yang

Foreword by His Holiness the Dalai Lama

CAPE POETRY

Foreword

As a firm believer in non-violence, freedom, and democratic values, I have supported the non-violent democracy movement in China from its beginning. One of the most encouraging and moving events in recent Chinese history was the democracy movement of 1989, when Chinese brothers and sisters demonstrated openly and peacefully their yearning for freedom, democracy, and human dignity. They embraced non-violence in a most impressive way, clearly reflecting the values their movement sought to assert.

The Chinese leadership's response to the peaceful demonstrations of 1989 was both inappropriate and unfortunate. Brute force, no matter how powerful, can never subdue the basic human desire for freedom, whether it is expressed by Chinese democrats and farmers or the people of Tibet.

In 2008, I was personally moved as well as encouraged when hundreds of Chinese intellectuals and concerned citizens inspired by Liu Xiaobo signed Charter 08, calling for democracy and freedom in China. I expressed my admiration for their courage and their goals in a public statement, two days after it was released. The international community also recognised Liu Xiaobo's valuable contribution in urging China to take steps toward political, legal, and constitutional reforms by supporting the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to him in 2010.

It is ironic that today, while the Chinese government is very concerned to be seen as a leading world power, many Chinese people from all walks of life continue to be deprived of their basic rights. In this collection of poems

entitled *June Fourth Elegies*, Liu Xiaobo pays a moving tribute to the sacrifices made during the events in Tiananmen Square in 1989. Considering the writer himself remains imprisoned, this book serves as a powerful reminder of his courage and determination and his great-hearted concern for the welfare of his fellow countrymen and women.

HIS HOLINESS THE FOURTEENTH DALAI LAMA, TENZIN GYATSO
3 September, 2011

Author's Introduction

From the Tremors of a Tomb

31 December, 1999, the eve of a new millennium. Everyone in Beijing was busy preparing their festive celebrations. A friend phoned from the street, crying out in agony that the markets were so packed with people disaster was imminent. Another friend phoned inviting me and my wife, Liu Xia, over for drinks and some card playing, but we had accepted an earlier invitation a while back and were going to visit two Renmin University professors, Ding Zilin and Jiang Peikun. My wife and I must have unconsciously wanted to offer the eve of the new millennium to the departed souls of June Fourth.

With their family of three – the two teachers Ding and Jiang, and their daughter – we ate a simple dinner. After chatting for a while and catching up, the mood quickly turned serious. Each of us sitting there tried to think of something lighthearted to talk about, and yet, between our shared memories and adverse circumstances, we really couldn't think of anything to say that would make us laugh out loud or at least amuse us for a moment of relief. Teacher Ding repeatedly exhorted me to please take good care of Liu Xia from now on. I knew this was really his sincere concern for my own welfare – one human being's concern for another. In the past decade Teacher Ding has been consumed with assisting families who had lost loved ones during June Fourth, helping them with their daily subsistence, bearing those innocent departed souls to their surviving family; for it wasn't just the sorrow of losing a loved one, but more significantly it was a totalitarian state's brutal persecution and conscienceless indifference toward society that have created a collective amnesia. Teacher

Ding deeply empathises with the loved ones of our society's dissenters who must carry on in intense anguish.

When it was time to leave, Ding and Jiang gave us the written record of their long-suffering tribulations, *Seeking Justice for the Witnessed Massacre*, which contained a list of 155 casualties of June Fourth along with testimonies of survivors, and then exhorted me again to please, please look after Liu Xia.

On the road home, my wife and I remained silent. As we neared our place we quickly discovered that our street had been blocked off, vehicles unable to pass. A policeman, face taut and directing cars with brusque gestures, unexpectedly enlightened me: 'Eh, there's another tire-the-people-drain-the-treasury farce tonight at the altar of the newly built China Millennium Monument, and coincidentally this road leads straight there, no more than a two kilometer stretch.'

In China, the twentieth century didn't end on 31 December, 1999, but rather on 1 October, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the ruling Communist Party. With corruption spreading thick, popular grievances boiling over, what is the morality in wasting one hundred billion yuan to stage a huge tire-the-people-drain-the-treasury celebration? It's hard to imagine how much Chinese citizens have suffered these past fifty years, and yet has anyone in power even once said to the populace, 'I'm sorry.' Besides spreading lies to the public while pounding one's own drum, this grand festivity for the fiftieth anniversary is merely a celebration of extravagance, a cult of personality, disguising the government's fear and anxiety with the pretence of prosperity. China - whose experiences of suffering and national absurdities are rare in the world - till today has yet to undergo a process of wakening and repentance, but instead intensifies its flashy bubble of prosperity coupled with a vain servility. Can we still possibly save ourselves?

As the twenty-first century began, those in power insisted on imitating the Chinese emperors of the past and staged a single performance at the sacrificial altar. Beijing has served as the site for many ancient dynastic capitals – relics and ruins are everywhere – so it’s especially easy for people to associatively think of an autocratic monarchy. In this place long ago emperors presided over ritual offerings to Heaven at the Temple of Earth and the Temple of Heaven, though for the purpose of ushering in the twenty-first century, to build another ‘Temple of the Chinese Century’, another tire-the-people-drain-the-treasury (while the General Secretary craves greatness as Premier Engineer) just to satisfy the vanity of the potentates, and then with work not completed yet rush to open it to the public (nearly half a year had passed and the Millennium Monument was still a closed construction site) – even the taxi drivers saw it as a kind of monarchical, ritual demonstration of supreme imperial power.

In the face of a nation that shamelessly assails the very marrow of our bones, memory is but a pale grey field. To use ‘amnesia’, ‘blasphemous spleen’, ‘soullessness’, and other such descriptive phrases I feel is so much wasted praise and a great irreverence to those forsaken departed souls. Sifting through the storehouse of my vocabulary, I’m unable to find a fitting word and have no alternative but to use Lu Xun’s sardonic ‘national profanity’ to loudly shout, ‘MOTHERFUCKER!’

2

Once home, before even taking a sip of water and with an impatience too burning to wait, I flipped open *Seeking Justice for the Witnessed Massacre*; as I read the first page my eyes began to blur with tears. I read some aloud to Liu Xia, unable to finish the briefest passage before breaking

into sobs, and though I cannot remember now how many times I broke off, each broken moment of silence was like death's stillness: one could hear the cries of injustice from those departed souls buried beneath the earth, their cries so faint, so helpless, so heart-lung-rending. Teachers, we give you our heartfelt thanks for allowing such an extraordinary means of spending that New Year's Eve of the new millennium while so many others put on conventional ritualistic, cultural airs. For as a majestic, resplendent ceremony beyond compare was taking place not far from our home, the night and the departed souls became intertwined, consoling our hearts so that we felt at peace. My wife and I both agreed that this was what infused that New Year's Eve with such a profound significance. Now, as I sit at my computer writing this memorial for June Fourth, my ears can still hear the soundless cries of those dead souls.

Eleven years have passed - between the executioners and the survivors what have we really done for the aggrieved ghosts of the innocents? Within the last nine months Communist Party authorities have perpetrated some of the most contemptible actions: first, detaining the activist Lu Wenhe in Shanghai to block overseas humanitarian donations to families of those killed On 4 June; then in Beijing intercepting two white-haired mothers to prevent them from meeting. One mother had been seeking justice for her seventeen-year-old son who was shot and killed during martial law. After the tragedy, she was summoned by the CCP police, spied on, followed, put under house arrest, among other such harassments - ten years like a day hurrying for the grave, by way of a mother's tenacious love, an intellectual's unrelenting search for knowledge that exposed lies and interrogated a cold-blooded society in order to appease both the departed souls buried beneath the earth and the loved ones left upon the earth, dispelling the inner fears of those loved ones and

gradually consolidating community strength in facing a dictatorship's abuses of power. The other mother had crossed the ocean with her son to once more pay respects at her husband's grave in a faraway land, while also hoping to meet Madame Ding Zilin to convey her protestations against the massacre, her humanitarian concerns toward the families of the killed, and her admiration of Professor Ding. Her husband was once close to the Communist Party during one of its most troubled periods, and as an American journalist he publicised overwhelming moral support for the secession of the Yanan, Shanbei regime. But Madame Snow never thought the CCP was such a cynical political party – yesterday: sweet-talking her with honey words, praising Mr Snow for his enormous dedication to the Chinese Revolution, that he was a steadfast old pal of the Party and Madame Snow had come to sweep his grave personally accompanied by Zhou Enlai; and today: skinning aside any appearance of face, staring at each other with glowering eyes, tapping phones and sending out numerous policemen to harass her, and of course don't speak of reputation, morality, friendship. As the proposed appeals of these two mothers were quite simple and direct, so much so that they didn't even need to meet to discuss them, Madame Snow decided to write a personal letter to Premier Zhu Rongji. But the reply to these two white-haired mothers was yet more police officers cutting them off from the rest of the world.

With a government like this, what about the populace? In an autocratic power structure replete with the little comforts bribes concede, the majority of people remain silent, numbed, soaked in the affected unconventionality of Yu Qiuyu's bitter journey through culture and his *Yongzheng Dynasty's* flattering self-righteous praise song. Yu's book transforms an escape from reality into a resentment of tradition, or as Zhu Da Ke put it, 'Turns a lost civilisation into the condom of culture, the lipstick of

culture', evoking a kind of safe faddism and painful cultural posturing. Or consider what's been called 'the most inquisitive, most energetic, most stimulating' of the new generation of Chinese writers in authentic Hong Kong-Taiwan Mandarin, and read the fully bared sex, crime, drugs, and loads of name-brand fashion of *Shanghai Baby* and *Candy*, what in the West has long been old hat - cliché New York, cliché Paris, cliché decadent taste - and wholly lacking in any 'Chinese characteristics'. Or compare Wang Shuo's 'hooligan' style to Liu Sola's typical hippiness. The new generation rarely directs their blasphemous rebelliousness toward totalitarian ideology, and is mostly concerned with reveling in the ephemeral pleasures of the present - their self-absorption and self-pity borderline pathological as they intentionally plunge into the debauchery of love-whomever-wherever, dwelling on the ephemeral feelings and minor matters of an individual's superficial sufferings that truly deserve the little comforts of the times, as if they're living an obscene, desolate, drunken dream between life and death. They face the ruthless realities of a totalitarian system with extreme world-wise unctiousness - yesterday: indignant denunciations before the US embassy in China; today: standing in the long visa-application line to study abroad in the US. In this age of illusions, they've mastered the astonishing craftiness of a trickster and know when and in what situation to approach which person with keen blade raised or an offering of roses. They've matured without experiencing innocence; they've given up without experiencing the pursuit.

If one says that our parents' generation as well as our generation have been brainwashed by both Communist class struggle and Buddhist asceticism, we will have lost the memories and visions of a glorious humanity; and yet this new generation has been brainwashed by the materialism and hedonism of the Communist Party: they

have no memory of the past sufferings of the Chinese people. Seventy years ago, totalitarian rule in the Soviet Union left the population with the proper noun, 'Gulag'; fascist rule during the Second World War also left the world with another proper noun, 'Auschwitz'. And us? A frightening emptiness: only the artificiality of cheap high-rise towers, not a trace of the grave's ever blooming flowers.

But still, compared to a survivor like myself, a June Fourth celebrity like myself, a self-proclaimed cultural elitist like myself, what have we done for those departed souls? My good friend, the Sichuan poet Liao Yiwu, after the bloody events of 4/6 wrote two long poems, 'Massacre' and 'Requiem', for which he was accused as the chief instigator of the 'crime to incite counter-revolutionary propaganda' and sentenced to four years in prison. It wasn't until the end of 1999 that I heard him read 'Massacre' at a friend's place, or rather recite not read, or not recite – nor shout nor roar – but a rare, solemn display of the physicality of words that required the activation of the body's whole force and strength to complete (a hollowing of the flesh and extracting of the bones). In the final section of the poem, I thought I could hear a tortuous, self-questioning ripping noise from his vocal cords saying, *Who are the survivors? The survivors are all sons of bitches!* – though I feel our company of survivors are even inferior to motherfucking sons of bitches! Dogs retain their dog-nature but do we as humans still retain our humanity?! Those self-professed intellectuals with so-called intuitive knowledge, why ask them to boldly step forward in the massacre's terrifying aftermath, rank with blood, so as to show that one's own humanity barely exists, for we are told that even during the Holocaust few people dared to go into the streets to care for the dead and wounded. And as of the turn of this century no one's yet written our 'In Memory of the Noble Miss Liu Hezhen'. It's apparent that Lu Xun

possessed all the qualifications to deride the many assorted intellectuals throughout Chinese history. After all, one flash of the venomous glare from Lu Xun's eyes revealed that China has never had an independent intelligentsia. At the beginning of the last century, Chinese watched Japanese kill Chinese citizens with a wooden face and foolish smile as if observing the expressions of a guest; as the century closed, the Chinese faced the horrifying genocide carried out by totalitarian states with a cowardly stance of cold detachment and obliviousness. One hundred years of suffering and suddenly nothing's changed: 'Time forever sails on: the metropolis as of yesteryear calm and peaceful – for in China, a limited number of lives lost counts for nothing. At most, it merely gives thoughtless idlers something to talk about after a meal, or provides thinking idlers seeds for gossip.' Truly life counts for nothing into the new century, yesteryear's darkness unchanged even if there is the faintest glimmer of light, which isn't 'the courage of the true brave warrior' who 'dares to face the wretchedness of life, dares to witness spilled blood', but rather the greed of parasites, the gleam from a coward's eyes.

3

Teachers Ding and Jiang's cause arose from the renouncement of their solitary sorrow: these passing years they've both cared for and encouraged each and every person they've come across who happened to have shared their fate. Such a humble, honest, flesh-and-blood just cause permeating the earth with warmth and kindness is far from any 'looking down upon all living creatures from on high preaching trying to pass as giving'. As they both travelled around the country looking for family traces of those lost on 4 June, I could still see the little that remained

of real intuitive knowledge, of love's tenacity. This, I believe, is the only living memory left of 4/6 – and the most worthy and just of causes. If all the other survivors were like them and made even the smallest effort for those innocent dead souls, the executioners could never have continued to be so unscrupulous after killing so many people – the tomb of June Fourth would never have become so forsaken.

In *Seeking Justice for the Witnessed Massacre*, the most heart-and-lung rending thing for my wife was that those whose lives were so casually extinguished by the bloodlusters in power weren't part of any privileged group but were ordinary civilians content with their simple desires and common needs. These were people who never tried to block any military vehicles, never even tried to see the excitement, but while chatting in their courtyard at home were suddenly killed by a stray bullet, or while walking on the street by chance crossed paths with martial-law-enforcing officers, or randomly chased down and killed by soldiers with red-death in their eyes. But certain self-serving, elitist philistines were also survivors of the slaughterer's knife – even if they had once been forced into exile overseas, they were still arrested and imprisoned in this country, and thus muddled into a small or large reputation, received a small or large measure of solicitude. Recently, the Communist regime was granted Permanent Normal Trade Relations (PNTR) with the US, bringing forward the early release of 4/6 political prisoner Chen Lantao. After hearing about the massacre, this young man from Qingdao had given only one public speech in protest and was handed a severe eighteen-year sentence, while the maximum prison sentence for those famous arrested '4/6 black hands' in Beijing was thirteen years – and each of these individuals received early release. From the beginning of June 1989, I've been imprisoned three times and released three times, though if you add up the total

amount of time I've lost it comes to about six years. In the whole of China, in numerous places outside of Beijing, those given harsh thirteen-year sentences are like the unknown, non-celebrity Chen Lantao, and many are still in prison cells.

What, then, is the real truth of June Fourth's history? Why do college students and the intellectual elite attach such great importance to the '89 Movement, despite the fact that when the tragedy happened those who were killed were mainly common citizens, and those who were arrested and severely sentenced were also mainly common citizens? Why are the silenced nobodies who paid the highest price with their lives powerless to narrate history, but those privileged elite seen as fortunate survivors have the authority to chatter on and on without rest? Why after June Fourth is the blood of common citizens still used to nourish opportunists of all stripes who shamelessly presume that the so-called 'democracy movement' is actually a vanity fair? What is suffering and sacrifice? What is life and the price of blood? In this land of ours, the distribution of happiness has long been as divided as heaven and earth. Could it be then that suffering is a kind of natural resource, that those who suffer equally or by degrees, unequally, are thus destined to be as divided as heaven and earth?

To this day in China, we haven't been able to overcome the cold-blooded self-interests of totalitarianism, but at the very least we could exercise self-discipline, hold fast to the crux of humanity in valuing freedom and the countless individuals who replenish life's natural resources of morality and justice: the only natural resources we have in resisting tyranny. The hanging medals of suffering that fill the chests of the elite mean nothing, and even signify a negation of suffering. Can we not expend a little fraternal love and cultivate a yearning for equality and a moral society by serving those who have suffered deeply as they strived for the justice that originally should have belonged

to them? Deep in the stillness of the night, staring into our very soul, do we still truly feel in our innermost being the pain and moral necessity of guilt? If so, then for the moment a grain of good still lingers in the disaster; if not, then there's nothing left. Eleven years have passed and the blood of June Fourth – save for what goes into the steamed human-blood buns that are fed to the 'heroic men of the passing wind and clouds' here or abroad – has scarcely allowed our callous, obscene nation to attain even a crumb of progress. Suffering is a natural resource: an individual, or nation, who refuses to forget could transform this natural resource into soul-ascending wealth. But in China, suffering has always been only a fishing-for-medals-and-straw natural resource, and very rarely transforms into wealth. So let us recognise our shame and guilt; let us ache with self-reflection; let us eradicate the repetition of suffering and resist anger; let us learn to concretely tend to the suffering of an individual, of our common citizens, with equality; let us learn how to live life with honour and dignity and a wealth of humanity.

4

These past ten years, I've often been plagued by a guilty conscience. When I was in Qincheng Prison I betrayed the blood of the departed souls by writing a confession. After I was released, I still had a somewhat notorious reputation and received an excessive amount of attention. But the ordinary victims, the nameless who to this day are still in jail – what have they received? Whenever I think about this, I can't bear to gaze into the depths of my soul – there are too many weaknesses to face, too much selfishness, too many shameless lies. For too long now we've leaned upon the blade of the bayonet's lies, shamelessness, selfishness, weaknesses, so that we've wholly lost both memory and

time – life numbed, unceasing and interminable, from zero begins to zero it ends: what qualifications can we claim for our mighty nation? None with the least merit. And what remains for us? Across this land even the deserts are at fault. The deserts with their vast nothingness and desolation – is this what's left for us? I, too, eat steamed human-blood buns: at the most I form decorative ornaments against an anti-humanist system – caught then released, released then caught – and do not know when this game will ever end, nor know if I've actually done anything for the departed souls, to be able to let myself recollect with a clear heart and conscience.

I long to use resistance and imprisonment as atonement, to try to realise my idealistic convictions with integrity, but this creates deep, painful wounds for my family. In truth, imprisonment for me, for activists working against an authoritarian system, is nothing to flaunt – it's a necessary honour living at the mercy of an inhuman regime, where there's little choice for the individual but resistance. Inasmuch as resistance is a choice, imprisonment is simply a part of this choice: the inevitable vocation of traitors of a totalitarian state, like a peasant must take to the fields, or as a student must read books. Inasmuch as resistance is a choice to descend into hell, one mustn't complain about the darkness; as far as I think there's an indestructible wall up ahead, I still must exert the strength to smash into it – and the wound in my head that flows with blood is self-inflicted: one cannot resent anyone cannot blame anyone, but must bear the wound alone. Who was it who let you deliberately fly like a moth into the flame, rather than circle around?

As I toasted the elders of the autocracy, and my unwavering stance – with a righteousness inspiring reverence – won me the brave epithet of 'democracy activist' with an awareness that this was a moment of consummate achievement and virtue – precisely then the slow inner torment of my close, extended family began.

Each day I'm rarely concerned with the actual people who live around me, but am usually only concerned with sublime abstractions: justice, human rights, freedom. I use my family for my day's security as I gaze with troubled heart and trembling flesh upon the everyday failings of the world. During a three-year prison sentence, my wife made thirty-eight trips from Beijing to Dalian to see me, and eighteen of these trips she couldn't even bear to actually face me and quickly dropped some things off and hurried back alone. Trapped in an icy loneliness, unable to preserve the slightest amount of privacy while being followed and spied on, she tirelessly waited tirelessly struggled, with a hair-turning-white-overnight perseverance. I'm punished by the dictatorship in the form of a prison; I punish my family by creating a formless prison around their hearts.

This is a particular kind of totalitarian cruelty where the bloodshed remains unseen - and in China it is especially cruel and severe. From the time agrarian reform was initiated in the 1950s ('suppress counter-revolutionaries', 'ideological remoulding', the Three-Anti/Five-Anti Campaigns, the Gao-Rao Anti-party Group, the Hu Feng Anti-party Group, 'purge counter-revolutionaries', 'socialist transformation of industry and commerce', the Anti-Rightist Movement) to the 1960s and 1970s (the Four Cleanups Movement, the Socialist Education Movement, the Cultural Revolution, 'criticise the rightist deviationist wind of reversing verdicts', the April Fifth Movement) then through the 1980s and 1990s (the Anti-Spiritual Pollution Campaign, the Anti-Liberalisation Campaign, the June Fourth Movement, 'suppress the Democratic Party and all other political dissidents', 'crack down on the Falun Gong and all non-governmental organisations'), fifty years have passed: China grows in enormity with a population of 1.9 billion and yet it's nearly impossible to find a whole family intact; man and wife divided; father and son turned enemies; friends betray each other; a dissident tries to

implicate a group of innocents; an individual's imprisoned for holding different political views – among family and friends we all must bear unlawful harassment from the police.

While across this stretch of earth, so many innocent victims are condemned and even derided behind the so-called 'selflessness' of career politicians. For their own power, reputation, status, and so-called 'perfection of character' – in order to receive the adoration of a god – they treat people as their personal stepping-stones; even those closest to them can only serve the authorities' absolute perfection and sacrifice everything for nothing. China's ancient political wisdom and political character, too, was one of 'self-perfection to achieve selflessness', and was marked by a cold-bloodedness that lacked a shred of humanity or human happiness – from the mythical Yu the Great trying to tame the floods for thirteen years and *passing his home three times and not entering once to see his family* to Mao Zedong's wife who died in prison – such has been consecrated as a paragon of political character. The victors in particular among them never say to those they've victimised (including their own family), 'I'm sorry'; their hearts ever at peace without any anguish (at most they assume the *appearance* of a guilty conscience and remorse). Instead, they transform these victims into saintly, godly capital for themselves to flaunt about society – upon their own fake faces they paste another layer of gold.

If the excessive blood-soaked policies of the totalitarian state didn't exist, a politician would have no need to let others sacrifice so much; and family, in particular, pay the highest price of the sacrificed. Often when I think about the road of resistance I've chosen, scattered with the sacrifices my family's been forced to make, it's almost unbearable. During these recurring moments I truly resent myself, to the point that I feel I am indeed a most repugnant cause.

Long before June Fourth, I had been digging plots of unfilial piety and national nihilism in the ancestral graveyard; yet what nation do I face – ‘motherland’: this large, empty word has always retained a suspicious posturing, and especially for us here patriotism is a villain’s last refuge. I’ve never been one to ask about a person’s race or ethnic background, but instead ask about the place where this person became one of many unique individuals, if life there upholds dignity, civil rights, freedom, love, beauty. Long ago I once made an excessive statement about ‘three hundred years of colonisation’; today, I lean toward ‘comprehensive westernisation’, in the sense of ‘westernisation’ meaning humanisation: to treat people equally as human beings. For in China, past and present, the government has never treated its citizens as human beings, to the extent that the Chinese people must experience the servitude of Wang Shuo’s *Please Don’t Call Me Human* to know how to live. And China’s so-called intelligentsia is, for the most part, the dictator’s conspirator and accomplice. Some have called me conceited, and yet I cannot deny the awe and humility I feel deep within my soul. In the presence of Christ’s sacrifice, in the presence of Kafka’s desperation, in the presence of the true backbone of Lu Xun’s *courage to embrace the corpses of dissenters with bitter tears*, in the presence of Kant’s wisdom, in the presence of Daoist metaphysician Jin Yuelin’s pure love for Lin Huiyin, I’m always the smallest of humans.

In 1988 Jiang Peikun was on my doctoral defence committee, and so one could say that on our visit to his home that New Year’s Eve, being able to call him and his wife my teachers was determined by chance and proper etiquette; after reading their witnessed account of the dead, however ... *Ding Zilin, Jiang Peikun, you are two teachers who have my deepest admiration – not only for your rigorous intellect, but more so for your integrity. My*

two teachers – and the departed souls buried beneath the earth – please accept a student's reverence from one unworthy to be your student: with the awe and humility from the tremor of a soul.

The anniversary of June Fourth is almost here again – my wife and I are most grateful for that eve of the millennium, which has been engraved in our memories for the rest of our lives. Of course that night wasn't extraordinarily significant *for* us, being just one night among countless nights, and yet possessed by the bitter grief of the tomb it continues to confront the memory of the departed spirits. The living should really shut their mouths and let the graves speak; let the dead souls teach the living what it means to live, what it means to die, what it means to be dead but still alive.

LIU XIAOBO
At home in Beijing, 14/5/2000

念念六四

June Fourth Elegies