

Ouyang Yu

THE MOST UNWANTED MAN

he moved among the books
glancing from cover to cover the way he is used to doing
from fruit stand to vegetable when he goes to the market
or when he goes to a jewelry shop
where he wonders why he's there
the names the titles the photos
of the famous and infamous people
he kept his lips tight shut
and thought there was someone behind him watching
turning around he saw rows and rows of printed images staring at him
in dumn accusation:

why are you here?
got anything to buy?
if not why here at all?

he felt for the fifty dollar note in his pocket
and told himself that he would not buy anything
he did not know why
only vaguely that he would never buy anything that did not contain
his own writing
selfish yes
narcissistic yes
but the paradox is that he never wrote anything
how can he buy his own writing
he laughed inwardly at his own absurdity
of regarding something being written as having been already published
something like the title of this poem
The Most Unwanted Man
a novel that he has seen published by Penguin or Angus & Robertson
or Faber Faber or whatever claims to be a good publisher
featuring the total view of a back turned upon the world

a multiple back that contains the man's childhood adulthood and old age
in the shape of inner rings of a cut tree
the book begins with something like this:

i can't understand why i was born but suppose i had to be born after all because it was by
pure accident that they had me

the words reminded me of lines I was composing yesterday on my way
back from uni when I thought how accidental my life was
inhabiting a body that was borrowed from some/ bodies else
that when I surprises upon them those listless strangers waiting for their
buses home how like an accident I must have looked to them

but let's get back or go on
did it come out of an interior rejection of things at large
a denial of everything unattached to you
and something alien in yourself

he is now quite aware of the change in tone and the point of views
in the branching of the poem
and diagnoses these as
a bewilderment of not knowing what to do
with himself yourself myself
for being unwanted

UNTITLED

The quietness of Melbourne hit me hard
On arrival from adults packed Sydney
A woman with Asian features wearing flowery blue skin-tight trousers
Standing on one heel like an inverted 7
A woman with Asian features kissing with her head tilted back a man on the mouth
In the café where I was having a latte
Each street corner seems shopfronted with an adult bookshop
A woman with Asian features paired with a man with Caucasian features
We talked about the punky 1970s
The woman said little
In a bar of beer stained music—
In the quietness that hit me hard
I began to wonder about the futility of poetry
The ultimate meaning of writing
As compared with the infinite possibilities of sex making
In adult stained Sydney