

1976

At an Execution Square in Vietnam

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Played between millions of mouths and a few loaves of bread.
There is a long queue of wandering spirits
Their corpses—at the other side of the river—
Are waiting for somebody to put a coin under their tongue
The greedy boatman is cracking his whip in the smoky air
Look into your pocket, friend—
See if you have a coin
Perhaps this is your father who has spent all
His pennies bribing his way through life
Now frightened by soul-eating dogs he is running around muttering
the Kalb Surah
Look into your pocket, friend,
Even though it might be empty.

Translated by the author

WAN KIN-LAU / HONG KONG

At an Execution Square in Vietnam

one by one heads tumble down the sandbags
they fasten their ears to the earth
and listen to someone
singing an elegy for himself under the grass

the circular loosely stuck on the pole has floated away
in the wind
always
good-looking faces
disappear in mirrors

Translated by the author