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Freeway

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Oh what, I wonder, do the postgrads make of my soft irony, that “humour of slaves” deep in the Englit soul, after your hard brilliance? They respect the old nowadays!

We have seen Great Causes come to curious effects; the cities of the word overthrown by videogoths; the rational light turn thick with avarice.

Twilight.

Our voices echo. Flowers have closed.
The cage-birds huddle and the hornets sleep.
Now the cats stretch in their welcome yoga; we stand and bow; your wife comes home.

The title of this poem is from the Tao Yuanming 365-427 C.E.

**Freeway**

Mid-afternoon, the sun already amber in Guangzhou’s distant pall, glints like a lost coin under the delta bridges of the Pearl, is smashed underfoot by workers straddling rusted mesh, hunkered down in exhaust where the concrete pours eight lanes out to Gong Bei and Macau.

The old dust road bumps and roars in a barter of horns and bells, bicyclists balancing ruts between lorries, tractors, cars, the odd Mercedes enjoying better air than ours on an express bus, rolling to rhumbas over the humid plain, across flyovers where rattan shacks lean out of the monsoon rain and the Unit’s migrant youths lie in the vibrating, toxic night, dreaming of out-reaching Li Bai when day’s new-minted in the East again.