IDYLL

As the immortals used to ride on huge lotus flowers
the mind ferries a spirit on its bamboo mat
carried as a refugee carries water
in a bucket on her head

until its bottom breaks through
in a moment of bliss a few precious mementos
one's smile one's youth
pass nimbly through the universe

it is true our people left behind fields of hemp and citrus
threaded with gold
their sweat fell as rain
until a different season brought a chill

time has chiseled titles and praises
but we are not included
even if heaven is deep blue and endless
it cannot explain our wild love

saved in an alphabet of moss
the past cannot engrave its virtues
they remain as our ancestors
buried with the days

I am embarrassed to go out
among so many in a hurry
I trim the lamp's smoking wick
I take off my clothes

the fumes of wine and blossoms
are by nature fleeting
in cold weather they lose their fragrance
although I have studied poems I only now notice

they are not about farewell
in exchange for giving up land
the refugees sought a boat and a tent
but only received a decree

it is still a perilous time
the aristocrats will regret it
although my flute is quiet
my senses have not deteriorated

yes I've been too lazy to wash my hair
or stamp my papers as the situation permits
apprentices may ask about a spirit
perfumed as incense or steeping tea

just shy of life
you will be alive again in a shape
of fruitful meditation
like a beloved fig tree that follows you into exile

as if I had from time to time
eaten a sacred mushroom
even if your boat returns empty because of a storm
I have to acknowledge it

the beauty of form