

Yang Lian

A SUNFLOWER SEED'S LINES OF NEGATION

For Ai Weiwei

unimaginable that Du Fu's little boat was once
moored on this ceramic river
I don't know the moonlight see only the poem's clarity
attenuated line by line to a non-person
to the symbols discussing and avoiding everything
I'm no symbol a sun dying under the sunflower seed's hard shell
nor is the sun snow-white collapsed meat of children
nor have I disappeared daybreak's horizon impossibly
forgot that pain bones like glass sliced by glass
I didn't scream, so must scream at each first light
an earthquake never stands still
no need to suffocate the dead planting rows of fences to the ends of the earth
handcuffing ever more shameful silence so I don't fear
the young policewoman interrogating my naked body
it was formed by fire no different to yours
knowing no other way to shatter but a hundred millions shatterings within myself
falling into no soil only into the river that can't flow
that cares nothing for the yellow flower within the stone having to go on
to hold back like a drop of Du Fu's old tears
refusing to let the poem sink into dead indifferent beauty

Translated by Brian Holton & William N Herbert
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