

Mao's Melons

First we get the damn pagodas.
Then the little pagodas they put the crickets in.
We hang those on the huge red willow
at Xiang-pei, and then get some sleep
or crawl around in a sleep-like manner
under the huge willow. We crawl
among the egrets. In dumb egret fear
they startle. We crawl to the creek
and get some honeysuckle or some lilies,
and some of those big watermelons.
Christ, those melons are big.
They are without precedent.
History pares out their seeds on a cool day
and the wind yaps at its side.
Crickets wrench their way
into the melons' pulp.
On a cool day History leaves the creek
with skinned toes yawning.
Long leaves slither on the yapping wind.
O salt of my willowed skin! we want those melons.
It's like a bastinado to eat one, little workers,
and the egrets start awfully inside you.

57