

CLEAR WHITE STREAM

Clear white stream—
a dead horse drifts;
its legs are branches
piercing the sky.

Clear white stream—
a child dangles her pole;
deep in the water
a lungfish bites.

Clear white stream—
a man mooring a boat;
his cormorant is diving
with rope around its gullet.

Clear white stream—
a woman pounds hemp;
headbent, she hums,
“ripples washing sand.”

Clear white stream—
a ripe red sun
drags its head
across the hollyhock.

Clear white stream—
how all will pass:
days and nights,
one horse’s demise.

Clear white stream—
above my forehead
blue flies tarry
around a naked bulb.

Clear white stream—
am I river or horse,
man or cormorant,
woman or child?

Or Chuangtzu's bad dream
shorn of an awakening.