

## *German Letters, 1935*

Dong Li

### **January**

toward unshakeable evening  
fanatical engagement of the SA  
no complaints exchanged  
in between hiccups nausea  
when do you call on fate  
listless opus  
hopeless Hitler  
black white and red  
Jew's flag flapping in triumph  
pipedream on clothes pole  
who votes for the status quo  
next payday more vivid than Hindenburg's deathbed  
Hitler's Germany  
no Germany  
Führer servitude slave ballot  
death of the Jews  
on earth  
lulled in

### **February**

still at the beginning  
Eighteenth Century for weekends  
shortage of breath burden of house  
wearing thin  
is your heart calling  
tangos on records  
years of the Republic  
historical landfill  
a world free and decent  
who were the Europeans then  
books not for the people despite the censor  
Hemingway too pacifist  
Wassermann intellectually Jew  
do the English still feel for the landscape  
evening dress ultimately for dinner  
are you against mass  
is Europe against city and state  
whose intellect against whose blood  
what do you say say

sense of justice whisking off battle line  
nocturnal galas painting communist gang  
romantic Dölzschen from a distance  
he falls on black ice  
anything pulls in the left leg  
damped face hampered in  
politics unchanged  
through the park reminder of the past  
Hornung for February  
the Teutons oozing in bottomless well  
frost and snow

### **March**

general mood  
dully yielding waiting despondent  
who points to hope or less hope  
victory of National Socialism  
Hitler on the Saar horse  
severe cold amounts to resolute cough  
life work no more than journalism  
who keeps a journal on raw wood  
insipid intellectualism  
what does the heart try to find

### **April**

idealist nationalist communist  
are you enslaved  
snail pace of Eighteenth Century  
Jewish child or Nordic child  
are you coming on your own  
what is your misfortune  
who knows the evil  
short walk on the Dölzschen plateau  
dismissal through the mail  
Germans  
nothing short  
of tragic  
are you already there

### **May**

in the name of the Reich  
who needs house and garden

philosophical comforts suffice not  
changing moods  
who will be the next  
were you dead through bullet rains  
war mentality  
if only  
worse  
who saw happy times  
he wrote she typed  
the keys lost teeth gathering dust  
naked misery  
government firm in the saddle  
radical measures on the go  
who clings to his house  
who stays in Germany  
in comfort and dishonor  
do you have the face  
when does the heart go out  
reading inward

## **June**

nothing but rumor  
anything but secret  
everybody has a condition  
what's yours  
do you call it human  
no space between lines  
memento mori mori memento  
day after day digging in  
delphinium for the garden  
like this  
no post  
thus no prospect  
limits of literary history

## **July**

vanitas in machina  
who jumps in the trench  
who worries about the next shell  
fleas and bedbugs  
are you the enemies of state  
Jews nationalized  
Catholics sacrificed  
set alight your own house

the roof falls first  
time to dig your own grave  
digging without hate  
who is un-German  
Nazi or you  
sick on the Eighteenth Century  
besieged besieged fortress  
plague raging and wipes through  
what principles do you hold about Germany  
wobbling old man's teeth  
sink the pleasure peasants

### **August**

purger of the people  
tram signs on Prager Straße  
who buys from the Jew  
traitor to the nation  
no Jews do you want no Jews do you want  
like this  
or that  
closing on the end  
fermenting  
gunrunning Levantine monster  
who whispers the Jew  
Jews Jews  
are you yet to break the word

### **September**

économiste finished littérature under way  
nothing reckons on nothing  
Jews cannot publish in Germany  
helpless condition  
what's yours  
new laws on German blood and honor  
no marriage between Jews and proper Germans  
helpless condition  
civil rights withdrawn  
prohibition on proper German maids  
helpless condition  
bitter and bitterly German  
who's in your camp  
Brecht smuggled from Denmark  
long live Lenin Heil Hitler  
tear down the wall

helpless condition  
winter garden roofless  
elegant veranda useless  
everybody has a condition  
colored windows stripped light  
spring without summer

## **October**

Zion Zion  
Jewish nation a comedy  
candles burnt  
nothing but  
mood of panic  
crowds of people  
broken windows unrepaired  
prayer for the dead  
flee flee like a bee  
no buzz in many tears  
the loyal and the brave  
this is the how  
do you scribble it down  
raised arm criminal or idiot  
what do you say  
serenity of heart embittered  
who's there to cry out  
German unity  
special trains to the east  
curved ceiling on the lookout  
the last judgment near  
whose carriages move sans horses  
butter lines snaking  
NSDAP youth über Berlin  
without you and after  
rabbis in England  
boycott preach of German goods abroad  
Hitler in Nuremberg  
whisper due to larynx cancer  
amplified thunder by loudspeaker  
blood determines character and soul  
does your soul rest in your blood  
has the Jew spoiled your blood and soul  
then you are dead, dead for race and Fatherland  
ritual murders one more time

## November

Hitler's apostles fell at Feldherrnhalle  
and rose from the triumphant grave  
religion destroyed and sprinted from radio  
everybody is a mythic or has to be one  
the age dependent on the cats  
tragic or comic  
what's your call  
Nichelchen ailing in the music room  
Muschel overnight in bed  
Marta asleep on the floor  
a stray cat needs a hut  
where's yours

## December

attend to tension  
frivolous to the utmost  
radio and airplane  
power and powerless  
Nickelchen fades daily  
dreadful looking dreadful smell  
will the tomcat recover  
will you live a long life  
path through park  
morning memento  
what's a rich way to repress  
do you know  
senseless in snow contrary to nature  
shut up your mouth and drive your car

only the personal only the faith  
God will not be taken you will be fine  
language of the Twentieth Century:  
We Would Die

mild winter no snow it is a sunny day Dölzchen alive the cemetery full of locals flowers laid  
words left in fogged breath will return after a short walk taken slowly they are hesitant to  
leave the house Nichelchen the tomcat died last night a soft little lump wrapped by her  
cracked hands the cat used to sleep in the music room neither of the other two cats would  
move in they have their own rooms they are still sleeping in their rooms their lethargy not  
yet contagious everything takes her heart away now the cat intimacy dooms and looms when  
the living pays tribute to the dead will the dead listen she does not cry but digs a little pit for  
her dear cat its fur feels still soft to the touch its warmth evaporates with the slight wind the  
garden is fenced will the corpse of the cat root its body fluids will flow its blood will brown

the earth she wonders whether she should plant a tree so that she can see it through the kitchen window will she then forget she almost forgets that they have just moved here not long ago but it feels like another life yes another life she knows he must be plowing through his Eighteenth Century now the part on Voltaire is done will he cheer up a little they have not taken a walk together for a long time they are attached to the house now they are enslaved by the lacks of electricity of heater of everything that needs to be in but they had no choice and they willed their own moving his boxes of books returned his other boxes of books shuffled up and down the stairs to the cellar the roof flat it looks all German no one is supposed to stand out Dölzschen houses all look the same brick wall rock garden and flat roof their house wooden at least not a dog kennel she looks pleased then her heart drops she hears a meow light yet insistent he is reading out loud his manuscript she shouts to ask him to shut up he runs out she runs to the fence a tomcat is trying to squeeze itself into the garden it gets stuck what is it looking for another stray cat dreadful looking and dreadful smell the old ailing Nichelschen went early perhaps it envisioned its quick return magic is not to be believed miracles do not happen in their desolate garden but something does stir like a little breeze in the tranquil air like a meow among the silent throng to the graveyards he seems to be smiling standing on the threshold she looks at him and around they are not taking a walk today the house is here the cat jumps off her hands she follows and flings her cold arms Schubert Schubert Schubert

