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## Gulf Streams

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## Chinese Wood Cut

A bamboo pole  
creasing her shoulders,  
she swings her double load of soybeans  
like pendulums in the sun,  
deftly tightropeing an invisible line  
earth hard beneath her feet.

Helen Petter Westra



## Gulf Streams

Hung Tu has the lean legs  
of a long distance runner.  
In English class, he names himself Louis,  
swift and fearless in conquest.

He dreams new states of mind  
Maine, Ohio, Mississippi, Montana.  
Fingering the braille of contour maps,  
he treks great plains, canyons, peaks,  
thrust faults, gulf streams  
far from Sichuan.

Flushed from vaulting the Pacific,  
sprinting the Atlantic,  
Hung Tu's face gleams like ruddy cinnabar  
from his Tah-hsueh birthplace.  
The veins on his temples throb.

Like a Confucius, he speaks in proverbs:  
books are pocket gardens;  
history travels through misty mountains;  
the landscape of the imagination  
is not for the timid.

And I say:  
a running stream cannot  
be cut with a sword.  
Run, Hung Tu, run.

Helen Petter Westra

