

*This poem is available for free public use only on 20th March 2011, as part of the worldwide readings in support of the internationales literatur festival berlin's Freedom for Liu Xiaobo appeal.*

**This poem is part of a selection of Chinese poetry translated by, Zheng Danyi, Shirley Lee and Martin Alexander, and published by the Asia Literary Review.**

You Wait for Me with Dust

*- for my wife, who waits every day*

by Liu Xiaobo

nothing remains in your name, nothing  
but to wait for me, together with the dust of our home  
those layers  
amassed, overflowing, in every corner  
you're unwilling to pull apart the curtains  
and let the light disturb their stillness

over the bookshelf, the handwritten label is covered in dust  
on the carpet the pattern inhales the dust  
when you are writing a letter to me  
and love that the nib's tipped with dust  
my eyes are stabbed with pain

you sit there all day long  
not daring to move  
for fear that your footsteps will trample the dust  
you try to control your breathing  
using silence to write a story.  
At times like this  
the suffocating dust  
offers the only loyalty

your vision, breath and time

permeate the dust  
in the depth of your soul  
the tomb inch by inch is  
piled up from the feet  
reaching the chest  
reaching the throat

you know that the tomb  
is your best resting place  
waiting for me there  
with no source of fear or alarm  
this is why you prefer dust  
in the dark, in calm suffocation  
waiting, waiting for me  
you wait for me with dust

refusing the sunlight and movement of air  
just let the dust bury you altogether  
just let yourself fall asleep in the dust  
until I return  
and you come awake  
wiping the dust from your skin and your soul.

What a miracle – back from the dead.

April 9th 1999