BY BUBBLING WELL ROAD

If you look into this old Yangpu River where it flows past wharf and pier, past creek and bridge and tower, you see in its darkness the floating weeds the murk of muddied lanes and streets, the spent humours of these multitudes who have endured dynasties on these banks.

The delta’s drainage meets the ocean’s tides and the outflow is all the ends of lives. Nearby waits the great Yangtse’s flood that spends its strength through highland and gorge, tumbling from distant tributaries.

When morning’s eastward paleness lights the pall over all these sprawling suburbs, I think of fresh mountain streams that plunge among the rocks and have four thousand Yangtse miles to run. Such young torrents have no patience for the last slack reaches of an indolent river. Darkened waters resist embraces of open seas; measure time’s vast stretches which pass swiftly and forever.