you crossed the yellow river to seek me out
you traversed the south all the way
from no. 1 to no. 203
the 202 households were individual ones
no. 203 had over 1000 people living in it
you were surprised
full of complaint saying that it was so hard to find me
did you think that the south was all bird nests
you were tall lying on your stomach in love every day
like a happy stud
i was short creeping in and out of love
like a male cat that could not find its nest
you were white skinned i was black in the face
the sun was closer to me distant from you
we were sitting in an inn in the south
feeling like old friends at the first meeting
like two murderers feeling like old friends at the first meeting
you told me about many geniuses in the provinces
this so and so called han dong
this guy who wanted to be a sartré
this guy of fine, delicate features
this guy who was living in nanjing
this guy who could only run for sports
you read my work in a winter
and were quite taken aback
you said that apart from you
yu jian was our enemy
we'd have to be cautious about that bastard
probably he'd got his ticket for sweden
feeling like old friends at the first meeting
i was happy i did not know you in the past
i was happy there were things to talk about
the women in the south were beautiful like spring in all seasons
many men had affairs all their life there
but in the south you could not say anything
there were tall mountains
the sun was the golden pendant on its neck
there were deep rivers
when the sun dropped in them it would not even make a splash
many years no-one knocked on my small room
han dong said we could have a chat
we then chatted about
writing first-rate poetry
reading second-rate work
falling in third-rate love
as for what poets meant
we sneered
it was dusk outside
someone was selling evening newspapers
drinking coffee then beer then cold water
pissing three times at intervals
when the dinner time came
ding dang your name was really ringing
i did not have money today
next time i'll take you to shuncheng street
to eat the rice noodle across the bridge

written in 6/1985
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[Note: “the rice noodle across the bridge,” commonly known as “guo qiao mi xian,” is a name given to a particular rice noodle in Yunnan Province where Yu Jian is based. No Yunnanese myself, I have heard about the story attached to it but have forgotten about it. As I have no friends who are from Yunnan, I have no way of finding out about its origins, one of the saddest things that often happens to this translator. But I am content with the surface meaning of this one on this occasion.]