Selwyn Pritchard

Two Poems Inspired by China

1. Recollection in Tranquillity
   —for Professor Dai Wei-Hua et al.

Thursday afternoon was Party time:
I could usually run a post-grad class.
I remember once I played “The Prelude”
then standing at the window, down below
I saw the faculty raking leaves with zest,
collecting garden trash, smoke rising
fragrant from their dotted fires.

I turned up Wordsworth. Faces shone:
they waved and laughed—
it made me smile to see professors
and the rest, both sexes, deft
with collective skills learned in the dynasty of Mao ...
They seem to enjoy it now.
2. Home

How good to be back
in our bed under
the iron roof and
amazement of stars,
the wind continuing
where the sea left off.

Where is the Chinese train
which hoots disdain for sleep?
Where are the rats' squeals
outside our door, beyond
the net the compulsive
mosquitoes' bloody lusts?
I cannot sleep without them yet.