

## Journey to Suzhou

We leave under skies tinted yellow by smog,  
Aboard a *Fuxing Hao* from Beijing,  
And speed past squares of farms, winter barren,  
Or laid with tunnels and sheets of polythene.  
Both sides hurtle away, flat and opaque,  
Skimming, without break, across the vast plastic lake

Occasionally, a nameless new city hurries into view.  
Slim slabs of concrete stand bare and tall  
Like headstones placed over the lifeless earth and,  
The bones of older homes, decrepit and weak walled.  
Or villages clustered around short trees, leafless and black  
Against the paler cinder brick of one or two roomed shacks.

Where did all the colour go?  
The land, bland and bleak and deadly cold,  
Slides by steadily in a constant monochrome,  
At 300 miles an hour. In Suzhou, the sky is just as thick,  
A distance gone the same as London to the Med,  
Beneath a constant haze; polluted, grey and pallid.