

# *Fan Wu on Alice Gong Xiaowen*

## *Heavy Fog, Wind on Steel*

I walk into the room wearing a suit of sonic translucence.

Strings vibrate in a cluster where they once were set apart from each other, bringing forth the body's guise as a vibrating vessel, for whom position is material.

Heavy fog hanging over Franz Kaka is identical to the San Francisco of childhood, a synesthesia of air.

An electromagnetic relationship sustains infinitely, energy pouring back and forth, and how relation secures eternity.

I'm rhyming "solenoid" with "void" until semantic saturation takes hold.

Although sound in the air is consistently moving, I experience plenitude as emptiness, a cool dip for frayed nerves.

As if a pause in sensation could set off a gap in history, wherein the accumulated past could more clearly settle into me: and this was my fantasy.

The replacement of silk with metal in the material of the guqin's strings is a readymade metaphor for China's twentieth century.

Not through any will of my own, I had waited until the lilies were already dead before I put them in a vase.

Trying to get stories out from elders who lived through the Cultural Revolution is trying to squeeze blood from clouds, and I get why.

She watches them eat mud to survive, and cries when remembering.

Communism unbound from the human is its last hope.

Each piece "plays" a part by affecting the totality, which is itself a composite of affectedness, and a composed totality zooms out into the aureoles while microscoping into the eustachian.

Each line of speech is a string just taut enough to admit meaning, while loose enough to hold the zoning-out of associations.

Transformation is distributed between so-called "subject" and so-called "object," even while the function of transformation puts at last to rest the old myth of that difference.

Alice writes "What changes most is perception: the longer one listens, the more audible the subtle becomes."

The *Daodejing* tells us that "The five colours blind our eyes. The five tones deafen our ears. The five tastes dull our palates."

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In other words, a richness of stimuli stifles the potentiality for detail and the openness to suggestion, like slathering sauce on the whole meal, not feeling alive unless stuffed with stimulation.

Subtlety takes its place when we let the world occur to us, approach us, the prey creature no longer led by fear.

Fog blooms by your being of it as much as in it, our prepositional logic dismantled, the grammar of our conventions vanishing in midair.

— Fan Wu, 2025

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