

## Recalling the Immolated Man in Tiananmen Square, Several Years After the Sighting in 2014

Anvar Dean Ly

I can't remember if he was singing or not, the limbless man in the Square. In my memory I hear singing, wailing, traffic.

If he was wailing, he was also rocking, swaying side to side on his.. thighs? sit-bones? Was he gone from the mid-thigh or lost even higher up? Was he shirtless? Penniless? Penis-less?

In my memory I see third-degree from the belly up through his face, his body eaten by flame many years before, and his upper arm simply a sleeve of skin, tied in a knot before any elbow.

Thinking again, he did have one limb, it was how he got around, pivoting on his right palm and jolting a few feet at a time this way and that, his head rearing back and forth, never going far.

How he had gotten here, in the middle of a summer crowd at China's Capitol Square, or why he was allowed begging at all, eludes me—though he was not begging at the time, instead only wailing openly into the hot day—yes, I remember it now, the wailing and the heat, the waves of heat and hordes of

tourists flashing around, eating green and yellow melon from long picks, water and frozen drinks sweating onto the ground.

The millions under the Chairman's swelter, watchmanning the masses, his obsequious, towering portrait more fearsome than the rifles of his men or the cameras high-posted at every nook and pole, where we dared not take a photo.

Yes, the sea of faces rushes back now in this memory, sun umbrellas, the maze of the square, the fortress wings and underground passages, the smell of forgotten history on the walls, and then this one limbed screamer, holding his chest out as if to stop the beating foot-traffic, his half-lidded look everywhere and nowhere.

They recoil, then he is stepped over, stepped on, brushed aside, a remnant, an image in the mind, not unlike that man, that boy, who, on these same red streets, stalled tanks, drew the eye of the west and the ire of the east, not too long ago.

Could this be him again, in another form, another symbol all together?

