

Shanghai Pregnant Afternoon, Sunday

Thunderstorm creeps across Pudong
Expectant heads strain
hopefully toward the
Eastern rumble black cloud bank, their
parasols still poised against
a merciless overhead sun.
Sweat has beaded on upper lip
and brow since 5 a.m.
even before Tai Chi in the park,
before scrubbing the sidewalk
before washing the children
in sidewalk pots, before
frying the bread and jawzi, those
“Egg McMao’s” on street charcoal, even
before the first steamed dumplings and buns.

The storm will be welcome.

Like the 9th month of pregnancy
the wait is eternal,
the outcome uncertain.
Lotus leaves quiver
slightly in the park pond,
their white blossoms leaning
toward each other,
metaphorical miracles
from muddy water
as Buddha said.

At last, a distant flash
from the rumbles, closer now.
The crane withdraws to a safely lower place
(national bird is
now construction equipment cranes, goes
the tourist joke).

The insistent bell of bicycle cart peddler
passes.
Almost silence on a
late Sunday afternoon.
Still, the Post Office is open,
and many banks. No religion,
of course, yet Sunday
remains distinct.

Could it be the treasured relief
is passing to the south?
Like the unwelcome message
from doctor to mother:
Two more weeks.

Saturn's Sea Water Inferred: We Are Moving Inland to Inferred Water

My sea rolls and roils today, southwest humid flow
sprays surf,
coaxes spring blooms from sand, beach daisies smile
in sea oats dunes;
the New York Times reports
a newly discovered sea on a "cue ball shiny moon" of
Saturn, where "ice crystals geyser up" from its south pole.
I contemplate my impending move inland, forever,
becoming waterless, rudderless, a dustball
dancing on the wind like the ping of a disappeared jetliner,
distress in a slapping halyard from the old sailboat.

I read my grandfather's obit, yellowed dusty clipping from that
same paper, nearly 70 years ago, on
the same day intrepid Lindbergh resigned from
the air corps in protest of FDR

Another crumbly headline shows a cartoon of Hitler's advance
across Eastern Europe with FDR smiling:
"Germans March on Ukraine, Nazis encircle Kiev, Russians flee"

Today the Russians are back, taking Crimea's people and seas,
our always smiling president sees allies, appease please
My friend with a son in Kiev frantically arranges airfare
for her Jewish boy, but not for his new Ukrainian wife.
Today, Iraq and Iran make friends, aim missiles at one tiny democracy nearby defends
its nuclear facilities alone.
Thousands rush to us from the south, finding no borders. Our president fundraises, averts his
eyes.

Space travel dreams a childhood idea for Americans now. Not really for people.

Saturn's seas are "Inferred", the Times says, NASA's craft cannot exactly discern water,
but it's mapping, seeking "building blocks for life."
What if there's no water? We are moving inland. My seas will now be inferred, too.
We've become flood insurance refugees, but we also seek water,
our "building blocks for life."

Relocation is so intense, air-conditioned,
Adrift in these airless, waterless waves.
Never enough cartons. What to save, what to cast overboard?
I mean, bury.

Foundation Jesus

Foundation Jesus,
bronzed nipple-length beard,
hunches over power trowel
ice boat, blades scraping cement circles
building a foundation,
walks stilted across the wavy cement lake.
The third day, we listen
to his quiet words about fish fossils
found in the Himalayas.
We listen, bend near.
He personally dug for an
Adirondack mountain pond,
walked across its imaginary water
on a seashell carpet snow-silver
in August moonlight.
We listen, bend near.
He works nineteen hours each day
so his daughter can study geology
at the University of New Hampshire;
he pauses, gazes skyward
for messages, prays no flood
on his new creation
at the feet of his cement block throne.
We listen, look down at our home's new cradle.
His name's Thomas, actually, not Jesus.
Humble. Only a disciple.
Doubtful, like us.

Sea Turtle Prescience

Waves, sea foam dreams
dressed in seaweed
and shells' sharp edges, roll me out of bed, daybreak,
Onto the beach, her massive, laborious flipper tracks
Lead to her nest,
my fingers explore gently, I'm
elbow-deep into thrown sand, seeking
prehistoric rebirth, that
ancient symbol of beginnings, of cycles:
A rubbery sea turtle egg cache,
stored deep with hope by
aching 300 pound mothers
whose memories of their own
nests rest deep in primeval brain centers,
Imprinted. Perhaps this egg I
touch, a hatchling in two months,
crawling to the sea, is that one
of a thousand to return
here, to this stillness, for our children
decades ahead,
so their children also know
waves, sea foam dreams
Dressed in seaweed.

Interlude: A sonata patheticque

Grave

It was night
the wind screamed like
escaping steam from
shrieking tea kettles
your back a mountain
the covers formed cliffs to climb
or fall from.

You'd turned, resentful, to snore
as I lay sleepless, surrounded
on an imagined riverbed floor,
our mattress in a dark gorge
near a village of secret
skulls singing their
mournful melody line,
all history's cruelty a
grave e flat minor,
their voices like islands bravely
broken away from mainlands
both isolated and crowded,
fugitives forgotten,
whispering hushed harmony,
waiting.

Waiting for the House Sale Contract

I only wait for house sale closing now
Though it is not my house nor is the next

How strange, I thought I'd own by now a home.
Humility is new to me perhaps

Yet others in despair read biopsies
Or pray for just a chance to swallow food

Outside the rainbow promise, summer clouds

over the Gulf seethe storms, cyclonic force

My desk is cleared, my music packed once more
Scribbled notes, desperate lists are swept away

Gratitude prayers lack sincerity now
Though purple torenia lean sunward

Pelicans swoop, dive for breakfast mullet
while white ibis peck soaked lawn anew

The blind lady walks her dog to market
each day, I never offered her a ride

Plumbago's blue arcs over beach daisies
Gardenia holds its breath until next spring

An ancient hand sewn baby-wrap rescued
In Hunnan Province, the old woman begged

arms outstretched, how much? Hungry. You take. Love.
I emptied my wallet into her hands

her eyes were wise, her weight a feather, knelt,
her hands to bless what's now plastic encased

to travel who knows where; first sea turtles
due to hatch this week, the paper says

Nine years we hovered over each new nest
yet now it's time to give new souls that chance

Sad sailboat never got much past the bay
Once its world travels ended years ago

A sunset photograph by artist friend
Rattled by termite inspector's shrill call

I should be better equipped at my age
To accept unknowns, not pace with worry.

What grace we can't see the future! If so
would we tumble toward it so quickly?

All poems I read this week, paralyzing.
Not just in dreams do I fly my airplane.

Tomorrow, the mountains and waterfalls.
Instead of dreams, create the memories.

after July 4th's uproar, too much peace
restless heat chokes energy, a death march.

Angry teachers already seek classrooms
and parents seek refuge from summer's tasks

the old plan cruises off season, I wait
while young ones drink and dance til three a.m.

lonely prayers seeking gratitude, rainbows
rise above the sea surf, sandy toes

my selfish blindness shames me once again
no contract means I write another day