THE MANDARIN HAS A VISITOR

David Parsons

The soft reeds whine asthmatic minor
And the single stringed mandoline,
Cymbals clash the conclusion of epochs.
Symbols of jade and bloodstone
Gleam in joss-murked recesses,
While I play the Chinese mandarin
Thinking of previous failures and successes.
“O beauteous stranger, tiger lily,
Deign to enjoy the poor fruits of my humble abode
But now honoured by your presence.”
This antique social gambit
Hides the most devilish pride,
The absurd male desire to save face,
To keep time safe in a cabinet
For calm curio deliberations.

Oh, stop the gongs and music sounding,
Crack that wan alabaster pose,
Sad self-pity's whining counterpart!
“Your kisses are sweetest sugar cane,
Your kindness irrigates a dried-up heart.
Come, beyond this carefully formal garden
I used to think was art,
And I will show you how
The river of your kindness flows
From where your tender fire melts the mountains
Of the world's cruelty.
See and hear by my side
The gentle waters of the heart
Flow on, now slow and quietly sad
Bearing away time's ruins,
Now swiftly gay among the singing canes,
Or to smother rocks with turbulent defiance.
Above in the argent-amber sky
Note the dove and eagle fly  
In answering amity  
Triumphing over our world's fertility.”

THE MODES OF GREEK SKEPTICISM: NUMBER THREE  
(“Based upon differences in perception”)  

Martin S. Dworkin

In the order of battle: pikemen,  
sharp as the rip-rap of stone-hard silences;  
archers, clothyard-cold, playing to bowstrings;  
slingers, sniffing trajectories of happenings;  
horsemen, hawking their learned bile,  
widening horns in chill cooperage of neutral air,  
shaping the emptiness to solid battle sound—  
and all thinking swords.  
In contest is a castle in the mists,  
a crenelled argument or two  
hovering on the spoken smoke,  
bulging through vapors  
like any solid prize.  
So brave, so brave, the heart’s wild wisdoms  
win glories in the glare of fear,  
and see all that’s to be seen.

FORTY-SIX POEMS

Martin S. Dworkin

The words are waxen flowers,  
not dead, but longer still from living.  
They grow in gardens on the moon,  
harrowed by telescopes, and watered  
by numbers. In spring, the stars  
make peace, and planets fertilize the rows,  
and space’s little seeds  
compute their poetry.