

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,
winding horns in chill cooerage 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.