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At West Lake, Morning Postcard, After Visiting Tiantai Mountain

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Recommended Citation

Alan Soldofsky. "At West Lake, Morning Postcard, After Visiting Tiantai Mountain" *Poetry East West: English-Chinese Bilingual Poetry Magazine* (2012).

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POETRY

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詩東西

EAST WEST

2012

主编 臧棣
编辑 麦芒 杨小滨·法 镭 明 迪
Neil Aitken 西渡 王敖
Chief Editor Zang Di
Editorial Board Mai Mang/ Yang Xiaobin/ Ming Di
Neil Aitken/ Xi Du/ Wang Ao
Executive Editor Ming Di
国际刊号 ISSN 2159-2772
Email poetryeastwest@gmail.com
网址 http://poetryeastwest.com/

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有时美丽如琴声

遮住那半张脸的不是头发
而是远方的云朵
风把头发吹开
那目光明亮而坚定
这时，缝隙便如大陆一般辽阔
而我，而我
只是一只徒劳的蜘蛛
勉强站在只能承受自己的蛛丝之上

Alan Soldofsky (美国)

加州大学圣荷西分校英语教授。《浙江明信片》组诗写于中国。

AT WEST LAKE

A small breeze shakes the leaves
beneath a tea-colored sky.
Boats bobbing on empty water.

A man lives only inside the face
of his language.
Words are the air and the grass.

Evening looms in his eyes.
It comes always later,
after the lines of mountains have blurred.

And the smell of rain drifts
across the strange pock-marked
bellies of rocks that out-last

poetry, which is what cannot
be named, a breath
coming up off soon-to-be-wet

sidewalks where no one is walking.

MORNING POSTCARD

6 a.m. I feel the gray lips of the wind
on my skin.

Most of the old frogs that sang last night
have jumped back in the pond.

A man knows that his words are like
a candle factory, a flickering façade.
A row of windows glistening across the road
through the mist.

The path uphill to the temple is slippery
smeared with streams of mud.
But can be negotiated.

When I get up I stoop over, my beard
rough as old newspaper.
My tongue blank,

The past tense of the rain,
writing its musty taste inside my mouth.

AFTER VISITING Tiantai Mountain

What do the old monks remember of the old places?
The sheen of plum leaves against an ochre wall,

wells of green shadow? Can anyone doubt the body
is engineered for suffering?

The trees seem foreign beyond the haze of rhododendron,
spikes of bamboo and ginkgo, interwoven.
The surrounding peaks like lotuses unfolded
according to Zhi Yi who in the sixth century noticed

the planes of existence are contained
not only in stones and trees, or in the many streaks
of water dribbling down the rocks into jade pools,
or in the electric hum of cicadas,

or in the shifting fleece of the sun,
but in the light that cannot be seen
except in darkness, and not even in darkness.
The sky a lagoon of milk, curdled.

Everything is a distraction; everything I wanted
impossible. The robes of evening descending
over the cities of moss, over the cobbled courtyard.
So much time spent trying to know the outcome

before it happens. Figuring the odds
for happiness, as if the rain itself were a calculation
falling in lacey cables from the suddenly roiled undercarriage of
clouds,

These words only able to describe themselves.