

SLOWNESS

How bodies, manoeuvring, melt into moonlight,
or, after a rain, drops of warm rainwater
drip from the eaves. Or golden honey travels,
a bird builds a nest with twigs, spittle and precision,
or, after long delay, a long parabolic circling,
pleasure comes in for a slow, smooth landing.

The way Stefani takes small steps
across a yellow room, her hips swaying,
and a new dawn comes to the island,
darkness and stars turning incrementally to pale blue,
while, in the stout trees, mangos
are steadily coming to fruition.

In the eyes staring
out into the blue forever,
in the hazy, difficult place
where the sky meets the languorous sea—

clouds gather for months
in the run-up to rainy season,
floating in white isolation until,
little by little, day by accumulating day,
their army forms, and they begin
their slow march across sky and sea
to establish their wet assault
upon the grimy cities, the dusty plains,
the hungry, twisting jungles of an ancient Asia.

The static nature of rice,
growing daily in the sweltering sunlight
and the driving late afternoon rains,
bananas born in their clusters
and durian being born,
the steady road they all walk
to ripeness, readiness,
and time for a harvest.

As gears grind in exhausted traffic
and nothing moves, cars, buses, trucks
caught in amber, this moment on the road
when lifeblood stops flowing,
or spills in accidents, or stalls as engines
boil over in the three P.M. haze,
and the temperament of a people
notches up but one degree.

In an anonymous room somewhere
the foreign artist applies words to page,
paint to canvas, in a space
that is silent and subdued,
in a place that is far from bells
that toll the hour.

White pillows and spread sheets wait to impress.
Sumptuous beds where bodies will come to rest,
and names will be said or unsaid, pleasures given
and taken. Clothes will be shed while hours
are put upon the shelf, time itself
almost entirely forgotten or neglected,
in the vast, ordered space
of eight rooms of slowness.