

FURNITURE SHIPMENT FROM FORMOSA

A small statue was all I meant to buy
as Chinese wood carvers told of Kuan Kung,
an ancient warrior still revered. Sweet shavings
curled around my feet, romance colors and breath
of auspicious beginnings swirled in my head.
The replica of Kuan Kung's buffet mesmerized me
like the artisans' shimmering tales.

The eight-foot rough-sawn crate came today,
rattling like a giant gourd of fertility--
three hundred twenty-one pounds (minus myth)
on the bill of lading from the Mikagesan Maru
out of Keelung. Outside our everyday Chicago door:
a sudden collage of neighbors, crowbars, splinters
and groaning nails forced from their pits.
The ordinary drifted away like incense smoke.

We rummaged layers of cardboard, scalloped
like Taipei roof tiles, wads of excelsior (or maybe
the phoenix's nest) and swathes of red tissue.
A sudden avalanche of dried mung beans
(source of the rattle, added as desiccant)
bared a fat in-curved leg. The scent of teak
lined with camphorwood conjured lotus pools,
burning joss sticks, folk dancers' flying silks.

A dragon's eye shone within shadow shapes
slashed with gold. Peering from depths
of the Ming Dynasty, urged on by its winged cohort,
it pierced the last wrappings by its own dint.
Coiled on drawers and doors,
enormous impatience slipping its bright ties,
the dragon flexed its magic.

Through a paper fissure on one flank, a trick
of light on hand-rubbed lacquer: the phoenix wing
was a battle-ax, and Kuan Kung, pursuing
his vow to liberate the mainland, adjusted
his armor and headdress, turned and vanished
behind the patina of legend. Only bird and beast
burst free, flaming pearls clutched in claws,
scales glittering blackly,
and shook off the last dust of island China.

台灣運來的家具

我本來只想買一個小雕像
當中國木雕師談起關公，
一個至今仍受崇拜的勇士。芳香的刨花
卷縮在我腳跟前，浪漫的色彩
與吉兆的氣息在我腦中迴蕩。
一個關公雕像的碗櫃吸引了我
如工匠閃爍的故事。

八呎的粗糙貨櫃今天抵達，
嘎嘎作響如一個大葫蘆——
三百二十一磅（不包括神話）
載於從基隆出發的貨輪
收據上。在我們日常的芝加哥門口：
一群突然圍攏的鄰居，鐵槓，木片
以及被強拉出來的釘子的呻吟聲。
平凡散去如焚香的煙氣。

我們在層層毗連如台北屋瓦的
厚紙板、團團的木花（或竟是
鳳凰的巢與一卷卷紅紗紙裡搜索。
突然崩落的乾豆
（嘎嘎聲的出處，用來做乾燥劑）
露出一條向內彎的胖腿，麻栗樹
摻雜著樟樹的香味，使人想起蓮池，
燒香，以及民間舞者飄揚的絲帶。

一隻龍的眼睛在金色的陰影裡
閃閃發光。從明代深處
向外窺視，在帶翅的武士簇擁下，
它用自身的力量穿出最後一層包紮。
盤踞在抽屜及門上，
不耐地掙脫束縛，龍顯示了它的威力。

從一側的紙隙，一個光影
在手塗的漆上：鳳凰的翅膀
是一柄長刀，而關公，爲了
逐鹿中原的誓言，調整
他的盔甲，轉身在神話的綠鏽後
隱去。留下鳥獸
四處奔突，燃燒的明珠在爪下，
黑鱗閃閃
抖落來自島國的最後一片塵埃。