



Evening Alone

Last of the strong sun
on white tiles, stack of white towels,
faint piano melody from downstairs,
and the downpour of hot water on my shoulders.

I lift my face to the nozzle, close my eyes
and see mountains folded
over mountains,
smoke rising from a woodcutter's hut,
and in the distance, billowing pastel clouds.

It must be China I am beholding
on this early summer evening—
the great sway of rivers,
thousands of birds rising on the wing,
the jade and mulberries of China,
plum blossoms—now the cry of a pheasant.

It is a vision that drains me of desire,
and leaves me wanting nothing
but to be here
in this hot steamy room
washing my neck, rubbing my sides,

the soap slithering down the chest and stomach,
eyes still shut,
while in China,
a light boat crosses a lake,

and in a wooden house on the shore
a young woman in a tight-fitting silk dress
lifts a cup of cinnamon tea
to her painted, slightly parted lips.