

Shapes & Sizes

When couched in one of Man Ray's glycerine tear drops
at 30 clicks an hour, immediate danger is understood
abstractly. Like your tax return, or The Cloud—
& Rain has made an executive decision.

Your *laowai* tongue will make such a cockup
of the tones, you'll end up in a 2nd or 3rd tier Chinese city
in a very bad way. The word for foreigner being ghost—
& home, *Jia* 家: a roof, under which, a pig. Animal husbandry!

Shang Dynasty! says Rain. & so your insubstantiality bundled
in the back of the bubble car. Capacity: two humans, one cat, an amp.
Siouxsie & the Banshees, Big in Japan. Yes, fight & flight
have taken a staycation, & your hangover coiled in your buzz

like a scorpion in formaldehyde. It just seems wrong, a city
the size of Belgium: endless ring roads, bypasses, & tunnels
where taxis are sleeping it off, the lighting cranked
to Ibiza. Ribbons & ribbons of highway

playing cat's cradle with each other. Not moving
so much as moved. A God, quite bored, tipping
a silver ball through a wooden box maze. & nothing
to yoke the eye, save fractals of neon. Or the promise

in chubby letters: Home Inn (the full English, black-out curtains),
crescent moon with a night cap spooning the wastes
of his dark twin. Rain is telling you about a club in Berlin
where people freeze their shits into dildos

and fuck each other to dream pop. You sort of get it.
Right now. The combined gigantism and lack
of detail: simulation of a city and graphics
on a shoe-string, where the video game limit drops

its particulate soft-focus somewhere between
a stone's throw & middle distance. The pollution's worse
at night, but you take off your mask & breath
the invisible PM 2.5's. Embracing the intimacy

of carcinogens small enough to take a hair-pin turn
into your bloodstream, the one-off alleys of capillaries,
to darken the doorsteps of your cells.
Tower block after tower block, (some still being poured),

Home Inn after Home Inn—
& that trick of a lone lit window
glowing more human life through synecdoche
than anything wrought of hair & blood.

STEPHANIE WARNER