

The Burden
(A Poet Nevertheless)

*with a debt of gratitude
to the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Garden*

Fallen out of favour with my countrymen
I take refuge within the borders—
The bordered furies—
Of an ancient oriental garden.

And while I'm left unaccounted for
By his silences, a poet
Nevertheless takes the lead, onward
And upward, past the nighttime shrubbery
Of his near-fatal genesis.

“See here,” his dream insists, “The Burden
is everywhere,” and directing my gaze
Turns toward the floating corpse
Of a life—a turtle's life—risen
To the surface of this ocean
In reverse, for all of me to see.

*Joe L,
1999*