

Terry on the Bund

A trim ex-Air Force officer of sixty-nine,
I've come again to scout the world that once was mine.

Behind the images that say the East is Red
The image of the Treaty Port is far from dead.

Facades unchanged, an architecture retrograde,
One sees the classic houses of the China Trade:

Dutch Shell and Dollar Steamship, Jardine Matheson,
The chartered banks, and, seized first by the Rising Sun,

Thereafter by the ecumenicals, the vast
Headquarters of the missionaries, now the last

Of Mao, bureaucratic blocks, whatever for,
Adaptable for uses in the culture war.

I left here as a raw flyboy of twenty-two,
But after ten years spent in China, through and through

An extraterritorial. I may be still.
My adolescence was not that of Jack and Jill,
Nor notion of the future Peace on Earth, Good Will.

So, over all the intervening decades, drawn
Toward ease, I've sought the cities where my teens live on.

Urbane bush pilot of an urban bush worldwide,
I've lived a life of side worlds, standing well aside.

Macao, Durban (India without the dirt),
Lourenco Marques. There, all currencies convert.

Hanoi and Saigon, even in the final days
A little of the French Concession in their ways

Not ever Hong Kong. Those of us who knew Shanghai
Will always think of it as where to go to die.

Across the river from the 30s Europe wrought,
A Deco future mocks the Chairman's every "Thought."

The short Long March of art and enterprise set free
Toward towering hotels and free trade zones to be.

And do I wish the student demonstrators well?
To the extent they study, yes. If they rebel
To save the world... Intentions pave the way to Hell.