

Kristen Lang
The turning

How the dawn does not end but travels
ever westward, always arriving. How the dusk
sails forward, and the float of midday, the stroke
of midnight cannot dissolve – here,
and here around the world.

The woman waking, the man soothing the child
who is afraid of the dark, the goatherd
under the baobab, the florist in his van of flowers...

And the morning, like the sun
itself, stitching us all.

Kristen Lang
The view from Chhampi (Nepal)

The air has been sung so many times the cicadas,
skins drawn thin on their hollow drums and the thrum
compounding, feel it is they who are played –
the sky's long fingers in their cellophane wings
winding them into the tune.

They cannot choose to be silent – without them,
the hour cannot turn. They are full, now, of tremor
and their song trills above me,
here, in the hill-top pines that rise
on this crease of crumpled land, long
needles and heavy bark giving all of us shelter.

Like nets made of air, the coils of frenzied noise
flood into the valley, sweeping with the eastern winds
into a haze of other hills, in the hem of the Himalayas.
Near my feet, the ground drops steeply. Patched fields
and clay-orange homes tuck into tiered slopes.
The green of past months breaks into yellow, into brown,
the stalk and husk of the paddy fields. The rice
has been cut and lies, now, over roofs and flat ground,
drying out for the winter.

The houses speak in the slow, stretched tones
of seasons gone; their curved steps remember boys
long buried, great grandsons courting girls
who are echoes, too, of an earlier time, the stone
slower than flesh in its crumbling.
Among the pines with the cicadas, the hour
still unrolling, I write my reply, my hands, like the page,

empty. A wing beat in so much time. I descend. The zigzag
swaying down to the dirt road and the villages,
through the concertina hills and valleys, to my own town,
and to that door where it is my weight
crowding on the stone under the lintel. There,
I will enter bearing the view
from Chhampi.