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## In the Silkworm Pavillion, Hirohito 1937

Gail Shepherd

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IN THE SILKWORM PAVILLION, HIROHITO 1937

Half mortal, half divine, in sleep's parenthesis  
he drifts between worlds. Though old  
with the meditative, figured inwardness  
of Bodhisattvas whose gold-

leaf grounds are dust  
beneath the rub of acolyte's prayer  
and tourist flash, he's just  
thirty-six. In the mulberry-scented air

the silkworm spins  
a mile and a half of moiré  
from a belly's worthless crystallines:  
the larva eats itself away

when trussed, and once the skein's unwound,  
resolves to a half formed wing  
or crude mandible still bound  
to the fractured thing

which gave it form. Thus undressed  
in the silk-weaver's palm, the lines  
between monstrous and blessed  
dissolve. Now, like airborne valentines,

the game survivors ascend through potted trees  
to paste themselves flat where hothouse  
and heaven separate: brittle congeries  
of paper hearts. And only rouse

to spawn and die. Elsewhere the dead  
litter the ground where a burning zeppelin thrashes  
earthbound for prophesy. Around his dreaming head  
pale wings flutter like ashes.