

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.