

LANDSCAPE WITH TRANSLUCENT MOON

Palm trees, like old pilings, tip
in the sand toward the Maldiv Islands still.
The moon,
 a slice of green coconut, floats
in a sky streaky with cloud.

Ten winters after the tsunami hit,
 off-shore
the coral reef is reinventing itself
by fits and starts, by hook and foot
and reef-wasn't-built-in-a-day
 steady calm.
Patience comes easy to gastropods.

The after-war
news is of atrocity, in this like
 before-, during, after-
war news everywhere: rape, torture, mass graves,
the usual list, human power
reasserting itself
 on the bodies of others.

Deep in the once
 jungled, once war-riven
Tamil north, a Buddha carved in living stone
still falls smiling into death,
 serene these last thousand years.
How many wars
has that peace survived?

It's said that just before he died,
the historical Buddha
 sent south to Sri Lanka
a slip from the original
enlightenment tree at Bodh Gaya.

That tree planted between the sites of tsunami and war
is now one of the oldest trees on earth, a living
 emblem of compassion
for these last two thousand years.
It's guarded night and day at gunpoint.

