Walking Through Chengdu
by Mark Eastwood

Walking with friends through Chengdu at night.
In an alley the silhouette of a young couple osculating.
Unusual—China is not America.
Closer, and I see they are not kissing; her head is in
his chest.
Closer, and I hear her speaking in the dismal language
known to all humans.
They are behind us, and Nathan speaks:
"She was crying."

The Cup of Coffee Next to Me Makes Me Feel Idle
by Wenona Jonker

Those were the neglected days, neglected
summers, of hours that felt at once too quick and uncomfortably
slow. I lived them with a cup of coffee on the table beside me and
a pencil in my hand that would only occasionally spill onto the
page. For every sentence there was a quick hour of busy stillness,
too full of quick thoughts to overflow into anything meaningful.
Intentions never actualized by inspiration—inspiration never
bigger than the moment it took to take a sip of coffee and put a
pencil to the page. I wish I could say that the stillness was full but
I was too afraid to let it be full, or rather empty (stillness is usually
fullest when it is (empty). I was too afraid to attend the day.
So I busied myself with other people's business.

The chair next to me has been occupied by three different cups of
coffee: a white mocha, a cold brew, and a decaf latte.
Why decaf? It isn't late—oh wait. It's been four hours. Quick hours
that move too slowly for me to notice that they're moving at all.

I feel guilt about the idleness.
That's what it is—
not stillness.

Evenings at my parents' home could be still. They have all the
potential to be still. The windows in my bedroom face east.

Their is not the dynamic light of the late evening west
Their is not the golden waves of high tide crashing through
the living room
Their is the tide rolling out,
a still pond, warm pink water
flowing through the trees between our house

and the next,
over windowsills,
over the sandy riverbed blanket on my bed,
turning to blue
Blue like the music from the record
playing in the living room,
crackling with dim stars...

This is where the moments are longest: when I can see the old, yellow light reflected off the steeple of First Baptist through the trees, like a mirror at the end of a hallway. When the clouds float across the blue stillness, silent ships.

This is where the moments go too fast: when I try to use my page to soak up the late evening sun.

I feel sorry for the late evening light. I think I exploit her in my writing. She is the only place I feel still; she is where he walked with me after all.

But “light like water” has been done before.

And my coffee is cold.

from “Life”
Ana Balestrazzi