

21 May 2000

The grand lake of the Summer Palace

Besieged with anonymous photographers.

The orange roofs of lake vessels floating across

Rippled waters. A dull sparkle in green and blacks.
Trees, in clusters, and clumps, spread across the hilltop.
A strange happiness, a kind of curiosity that peers over
Shoulders,
Buys water (bottles!)
Smokes invisible cigarettes.
Across the way, families cram into paddle boats,
Scramble up hills, paths that don't exist.
A wall separates the water from the mountain,
Topped like a cake
Its temples and palaces,

Its curved archways and imperial heights.

A frosting of people.

Today the weather is warm

And a trickle of sweat laces my chest.

Astonishing, it is already noon,

The sun at its hazy zenith,

Rays undulating down through the pollution

Low clouds, coughs.

A group of men walk towards me,

Each clad in blue/black camouflage.