

Strolling in Guangzhou

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It's afternoon in Guangzhou
and I'm out with Maia,
pushing the foldup stroller
down paved pedestrian lanes
arched over with unfamiliar trees
whose fruit ripens in the muted sun,
whose flowers sway in the breeze.

Passing behind a government school,
we watch children speed by us,
crossing from the playground
to music lessons we hear
from barless open windows:
they do not stare here
or whisper audibly, pointing
with small conspicuous fingers.

At a junction an old woman
like an aged postcard figure—
patterned silk blouse, felt slippers,
conical tawny straw hat—
watches us approach,
opens a warm, gapped smile,

and asks, pointing to me,
American? When I nod
her smile broadens
and she crosses her wrinkled
brown arms across her breasts,
bows and nods, unspeaking.

Walking beyond, I am warm
with more than the sun,
her blessing light on us both,
this new father in a foreign land,
his new daughter dozing
in the fragrant breeze.