

Rites

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Present turns to past,
When tenses change with
The flick of a tongue.
Passing along a scroll;
The distant ballads of his life;
Solemn tunes already sung.
With no music, no sound
To account for, mere lyrics
In thought, romanticised memory.
Only a visage, asleep at last;
An ending distorting the movie;
A picture, eyes closed with placidity.
Still as a crane, amid four walls
Of chaos and barn owl wails;
Unaware of tears deep and shallow.

Powerless in the palms of tradition;
In the ashes of earth and pails of water;
Sanctified by words foreign, hands callow.
On a bed of bamboo and taut rope;
Softened by a cloth of familiarity;
Ready for transcendence by fire.
Present turns to past,
As he prepares for his final journey.
Prey to a modern pyre.