

## A Drive in Ubud

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He said had he known I'd go  
for wood carvings he would have taken me  
to a village nearby that do them best  
and the wood is good and heavy, very unlike  
the ones I just got for a price he thought  
well above their worth. He said he made no move  
to walk me out of the lengthy bargaining down  
I nearly walked out of myself  
because he did not want no trouble  
with them sellers. He kept taking his eyes  
off the road to take a good look  
at the sucker seated beside him.  
How would I know if he knew  
it was not even the Sukawati market itself  
he drove me to but one  
in the outskirts of town, as I found out  
from the hotel driver next day  
who brought me to the airport.  
The two wood blocks in mid-relief  
of four-armed Sarasvati  
in erotic pose with her icons  
and of Krishna and his man  
on a chariot pulled by two ardent steeds  
in front of his temple, both divines  
in a halo of leaves and flowers

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framing their scenes,  
were the price of one  
Keith Jarrett double cd  
in a shop in Greenbelt, Makati.  
No, I paid for the cheap  
nirvana of details worked into the wood  
by years of working at the craft –  
I looked back at him but  
shared nothing of the thought.  
Enough attention and practiced ease  
of the trained eye and hand went into it.  
And that was good enough for me.  
The shame was that the extra rupees  
did not ply back to the carver's keep.  
I took my eyes back to the road.  
It was late afternoon, and had been so all day.

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## Nocturne, Paco

Late evenings the children's unruly choir  
of laughter, tauntings, and grown-up curses  
cutting down to size the moment's dunce or  
the next breath's lameduck, trading guarded secrets  
armpit for armpit and coming to blows nearly,

die down to the street's self-appointed fix-it-all  
jack-of-all-trades at work, his squeaky saw  
lopping off corners and misjudged protrusions  
before his hammer takes over, pounding  
loose boards, planks, and odd wedges together.

His food cart of sorts, sans wheels, takes pained shape  
in an isle of light from the chapel's bulbs,  
his son's radio blasting away with old songs.  
Later, the dogs on the prowl will start to growl  
and yelp and bark at lost spirits passing by.

The street drunk's moans will fail to lift him up  
from the gutter where he has made his bed.  
At dawn, the next-door neighbour's frisky kids  
will throw a tantrum and raise hell, bawling  
out their mother and thumping on the wooden floor.

The man next door, woken with a start, will pound  
on the wall and curse the brats to kingdom come.  
He will note in his fuzzy mind to turn up  
in the morning his stereo's volume level  
and blast out the competition in the

daily karaoke showdown in his street.  
Against his crackled sky of sleep, he'll close  
his eyes before the cats chase the rats on the roof,  
heartened to have played his part (late as it is)  
in preserving the neighbourhood's broken peace.