

[Register](#) [Login](#)

# FutureCycle Poetry

poems for the ages

[Home](#) > [Reviews](#) > Water the Moon[archive home](#)   [the poetry](#)

## Water the Moon

**By Fiona Sze-Lorrain. Reviewed by Burgess Needle.**

*Water the Moon* by Fiona Sze-Lorrain. Marick Press ([www.marickpress.com](http://www.marickpress.com)) 2009. \$14.95. ISBN 10: 1-934851-12-4. ISBN 13: 978-1-934851-12-8. Reviewed by Burgess Needle.

In her poem, "A Brief History of Time," Sze-Lorrain writes:

Beauty is in the streets. Write everywhere.  
Undefined but pure, spirit is the raison d'être.  
After this year, everything else is an illusion,  
a sky falling out, just an incidental dream.

Truly, this collection feels as if the author wants to make certain at least her descriptions and analysis of the world remain if the sky falls or the universe implodes. Drawing from a rich background of music, language, food and art, Fiona Sze-Lorrain pulls from the symbol and paradox of the collection's title and first poem, to present unexpected delights in surprising contexts. Nine of the poems present food or the preparation of food as a metaphor for comfort, a bridge to memory and a standard for excellence.

A voice from the poem "Privilege" states:

"One thing," he proclaimed, "That all great chocolates have in common is that they are all different."

The same standard may be applied to these brilliant poems. And, in a line from "Instructions: No Meeting No World": "Each sweetness tastes different." This differentiation applies equally as well to the range of topics and style in *Water the Moon*.

Within the first and title poem, the author offers a hint of where she is about to take the reader. Describing her grandmother's deft attention to the creation of mooncakes, she writes:

Time to transform the mooncakes golden—  
over heat for thirty minutes. Her discreet  
Signature before this last phase: watering  
green tea over each chalked face. What is she  
imagining again? That some day grasses  
Spout with flowers on the moon?

How reassuring to track one's course through *Water the Moon* and discover upon the barren lunar seas the appearance of food! Not merely food, but a luscious litany of recipes and dishes that allows one to be hit by an awareness of food's preparation, placement and import.

...Grains of red beans churn in her palm,  
their voices a song of cascading waters.  
Rinses every seed warm to her touch, a blender  
crushes them until they are sand  
Soft enough to waltz once a finger dips in them.

So much of food is to Fiona as those madeleines were to Proust: a means of crossing time and space. In "L'Assiette de Trois Amis," she writes of cutting into "lean chunks of foie gras...his knife spelt sensuality..." Here is where cool intellect and wit is quite aware of food's sensuality, in some ways reminiscent of Lawrence's "Figs":

The proper way to eat a fig, in society,  
Is to split it in four, holding it by the stump,  
And open it, so that it is a glittering, rosy, moist, honied, heavy-petalled  
four-petalled flower.

Given her background in music, the surprise comes not so much from references to composers or compositions:

Sloshing

in her womb, you would crimp your ears to Dinu Lipatti's  
golden 45 rpm vinyls or Bach Partitas  
or Schubert's Sonatas, forging brain nodes,  
forming notions as unsettled as fingers one by one.

As from the grand range of styles that have captured her attention.

The voice continues to reach  
octaves until it breaks an imaginary line.  
Thick and taut, the line trembles like the old  
tramway path that crawls down Belleville where  
sparrows titter over first dawn:  
piaf, piaf, piaf.

[from: "We'll Always Have Her"]

One more paradox: here is a collection of poems by a writer whose life and work is infused with music, yet the word 'silence' appears in thirteen poems. Not only does 'silence' appear, it becomes palpable enough to acquire and lose gravity.

Silence lost gravity and hit  
the floor

[from: "A Course in Subtlety"]

Silence implies the loss of sound. The moon offers no auditory possibilities. Yet, the promise of water opens the door to life and with life the chance of sound.

These are poems by someone immersed enough in so much of the universe, from its carnal appetites to its soaring music, that she is not afraid of redrawing and renaming its basic elements. In her poem "A Brief History of Time," there is a reference to "Rimbaud's verses were scribbled on the wall."

And, later, in "L'Assiette des Trois Amis," are the lines:

Who was he,  
that Symbolist poet who defined seeing  
as renaming or forgetting the thing one sees?

Fiona Sze-Lorrain is undoubtedly familiar with Rimbaud's "Vowels":

A black, E white, I red, U green, O blue: vowels,  
I shall tell, one day, of your mysterious origins:

As Rimbaud was willing to assign colors and connotations to vowels, Sze-Lorrain is capable of and willing to create entire worlds within the microcosm of every poem. *Water the Moon* is a luminous blending of memory and art worthy of your attention and possession.

**J'aime** [Inscription](#) pour voir ce que vos amis aiment.

[Post a comment](#)

@2007-2011 FutureCycle Press. All Right Reserved.