


THE BITTER OLEANDER

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OVER

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Special to this Issue

*An interview with
Fiona Sze-Lorrain &
a current selection of her poetry.*



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CHIKUBUSHIMA ISLAND / JAPAN MARCH 2011

You have to take it both ways.

Dragon King with his fiery orange mane,
and Lilac Goddess with her pale silk robes.

Stoic ducks
ride out Winter
on a Lake Biwa "of the placid ripples,"
their red heads bobbing above water.

Surviving.

You have to take it both ways.

The earth shifts
and gobbles whole villages in a flash.

First Lilac Goddess emerges from her shelter,
protecting.
Then Dragon King kicks his heels,
unleashing a huge wall of water.

Earth shifts
And nothing is the same.

Ducks on Lake Biwa
know Spring is in the air.

They keep to themselves
and stay away from noisy calls
seagulls scatter on their shore.

Stand on the gentle shore
and gaze out at Chikubushima island.

Maybe someday you will climb the stairs
to that sacred island shrine,

even if you have to pass row upon row
of cheap tourist shops along the way.