

Bishop Allen, The Chinatown Bus

I caught the bus in Chinatown
And slept the whole way up I-95
The driver, cut and weaved
So crazy, just his luck kept him alive
I guess I believed his rhythm
On that morning after New Year's Eve

And I remember Shanghai
How I wasn't sure just what was safe to eat
The chickens pecked and wandered
At the barefoot ankles of the children
Hawking figurines
Of workers smiling
What's the Chinese word for cheese?

Watched a sidewalk butcher
His instinctive understanding
Made the carcass snap and clarify
Beneath his nimble hand that held the knife
So long, so many times
The handles changed to shapes
Just like his fingers and his palms

And I
I am the passenger tonight
I watch the world
From inside

2AM in Tokyo
It's still too soon to call back
To the people who will soon begin
The day I polished off
And I will walk a mile amidst the neon lights
That advertise
I don't know just what they sell

I tell the taxi driver
To the park at Hyato (?)
And his gloves his pristine white
just like the girls I used to know
Would wear to dance their first cotillion
Every single one of them named Jennifer

I clutched at the Saint Christopher
I picked up at some country abbey
Long ago when I believed
He'd keep me safe and make me happy
But it seems the luck he brings
Is not the common currency
A penny in Japan

And I, I am the passenger tonight
I watch the world
From inside