

The Tiger Drinking – Sue Wood

Drowsy time of mid-afternoon,
The watering hole is quiet,
No scent of humankind.

His urgency is water,
To drink his fill, elixir,
From the muddy pool.

Thick loam and ooze line the bank,
With heavy weight,
He descends, taps the surface,
Paw grimy from clay slip,
His belly, hind quarters
Deep in liquid chocolate mess,
Chin hairs, a bespattered beard.

Reaching forwards
A beautiful pink tongue unfurls,
A flower-bud,
Lapping, lipping, softly drinking.

Tail dangling freely in dappled stripes
Fur cooled by cloying clay,
Lapping, drinking, refreshing him.

Retracting back,
Manoeuvring weight
Counterbalancing his awkward state
Till he is safe, on terra-firma,
Trailing drips of loam and marl
His rough-rose tongue licks his fur-
An imperial creature clean, pristine,
Drowsing the afternoon,
Till twilight brings the hunting time,
Or the scent of Man.