

musings of a nervous traveler

packing reflects an estimate of tomorrow's desires today,
blind trust in your own intentions, predictions that could prove
ridiculously wrong, outmoded as last year's weather reports --
and what's the forecast this week, anyway,
unlimited horizons, a climate warm and mild as love?
perhaps a sweater then, forget the shorts.

flyswatting the unexpected, that's what credit cards are for.
limit the luggage to basics -- socks, three pairs.
five would be better, it could rain. say six.
nail clippers and hair brushes. Q-tips, a score.
lotion, cologne, your reading glasses; pills, and underwear.
grab soap. sometimes hotel brands make you itch.

taking a trip is nesting in reverse. empty a drawer,
test your faith. will the dresser stay put while you're gone,
or waddle off? big, toothless, wooden turtle, it wouldn't get far,
but chasing runaway furniture, that would be a chore --
returning home to rugs slithering out the pet door, dishes flown
from kitchen coops, pillows prowling behind the breakfast bar.

nothing left to do. like Hermes with bunions, the airport shuttle's
slow. an hour, till these sensible shoes detach from ground,
to puzzle whether -- watch that frown -- some task didn't get done.
sheer panic at takeoff, that's the next hurdle,
and buying gifts. how soaking dull it would be, to be found --
did Albert Schweitzer screen his calls? when does it start being fun?

there's a lucky ring around the moon tonight, pale yellow on a cloud.

our plane roars at it, a tiger leaping at a hoop.

time enough later to second-guess, to waver,

click through an adding machine of misgivings no one admits aloud.

a trip's for learning, growing, sorrow, celebrating — our group's

a cocktail mix of plans, a packaged tour

of leavings, and returnings. each passport sleeps like a child held,

with its promise — salve for routine, soul-balm —

suspended in transit. my prodigal mind, find rest;

endure this borderless, elusive sense of self,

abide in ephemeral nowhere, while your storms and fears

wait to be smoothed and folded, placed into quiescence.