

Our Pilgrim Allegory

by Susan Carpenter

Poised on the shore of Cape Cod Bay

A sleeping dragon,

It bides its time

While people turn their heads away,

Denying its presence

But it is old, this dragon

Old and vulnerable.

It will be safe they said in 1972

It will rest for forty years.

After forty years they said

It will rest still for twenty years more.

Fukushima, its twin, slept for forty years

In February of 2011, they said

It will sleep for ten years more.

But the dragon was awakened

Within the first month

Of his ten year slumber

Awakened by the thrust of the earth

And the salty waters of the sea

Its fiery breath blew forth devastation.

The people had said

This dragon is good

It gives us money,

Builds our libraries,

Brings us jobs and prosperity

We would not otherwise have.

Now the libraries stand empty,

The fields lie fallow

The houses empty

Livestock perished

In the barns built for safe refuge.

We sold out souls, the people said

What was once our prosperity

Has become our ruin.

Homeless they crouch

In towns and villages not their own

Waiting to return to a life now lost to them.

Our dragon slumbers

But for how long, we ask.

We saw him stir when the snows came.

Then resume his sleep

For now,

His body slowly decaying

Scorched by his own fires within

Unaware of the sea's slow rising

The increasingly violent storms

Unaware of his vulnerability from above

Or from his own digested waste

Lying in a spent fuel pool

Overstuffed with lethal leavings

Capable of erupting anytime.

As they told the people of Fukushima Prefecture

Days before their dragon woke.

He will sleep, they tell us.

He will sleep.