

The Last Page

Kathmandu

1.

Foul soup of damp, smeared, particulate air
simmers outside the Hotel Tibet
whose dirty prayer flags hang strung
from its rooftop to an abandoned lot.

In the lobby, foreigners discuss their tours
over tea. Exhaust belches outside.
Trucks, jeeps, and land cruisers clangor.
Motorcycles rev, shift, surge, dart without

order. Migration and politics mix
too combustible for rules. Petrol booms.
This dark Kali of a swollen metropolis
oozes out plastic, aluminum, batteries, humans.

2.

There is a lecture at National Law College
on law and globalization to get to. On the sidewalks,
dust, heat, and sweat. And children, brown
in blue uniforms, ambling, seeming oddly free.

Girls, half with parasites, smile a faint light.
Boys, some stunted, arms scooped around shoulders
or swung hand-in-hand, gabble and grin
through the fumes of fog, making their way home.

Gregory Shaffer