

Karl Plank

FOUR MEN, THREE MADE OF MUD

When loss lurched through his mind,
he took comfort in the miniature—pen'jing.
A landscape of tree and rock entire on its tray.

Thus, he beholds the world without fault,
made as before, but in small scale.
He sits in the company of mudmen

dressed in mustard, cerulean, and celadon.
One figure holds a scroll; another, a moon-shaped lute;
a third rests, regarding the bank, the wood.

There is no lapis lazuli here, no gaiety.
No red-crowned crane in flight.
Only harmony and the interior trace

of fingerprints, fired in the clay,
undiminished, still of human size.