

Listening

Silent and lotus-postured under the maple tree,
Buddha's *bodhi* sprouting in my body.
Three branches dip like the triskelion,
rising and setting to the rhythm of the Serpent
that slides between the descant of the whales,
the tympani of the gorillas and the low whispers
of human voices, engrained in every truncheoned
annular ring and pericoloured torn-leaf tangram.

Mongolian *khumii* meditators call from the
cardboard box thrown into the crusher by two garbage
collectors across the street. The grumbling truck's
jowls close on another pile of fish fin in
Chinatown's Great Wall of refuse, rebuilt every day
by grocers, peel spitters and solitary women
who mutter about the properties of marriages
that rely on temerity and laconic lies to survive.

I overhear a bruised neighbour call it pain redress,
while another names it *manji*-pleonasm, desire
inescapable as they slowly circle half-bled *lik-kiep*,
relocated narcosis and promise. I try to piece together
the confusing sounds sweeping back and forth
before me. A woman pushing a stroller stops,
telling me how strange it is to move so far
to Canada and still end up in the *Namib* desert.

My hypochondriaxles roll, panicked at feelings
of isolation in a folded city, growing with each
anæsthetic moan. I remember *ah-poh* telling me not
to mistake resuscitative breathing for mere CPR, like
the time she was scared when a giant grouper swam up
beside her, its pectoral fins the same size as her
flippers, dark body heavily scarred like the
three-inch lotus hooks she listened for as a child.

I see her again, weaving through a loud mass of Chinese
cyclists, thumbing tinny handbar bells, touching or
knocking strangers down with shoulder-pole loads.
She stops and takes my hand as I move from the tree,
making the noise of the grouper opening its mouth,
exposing rows of gill rakers. Cleaner shrimp and
wrasses listen for a yawn from the carnivore's mouth,
a signal to enter.

Lui kou ying

She hears the squeak of alloy wheels
along a narrow track
row of taut skinless bodies
still warm on metal hooks
snout roughly removed
for being too white with pss
hydrous pattern of fervid calyces bluster
from inmost carcass like the kangaroo rat
— urine so dense it crystallizes hitting carmine air —
her eyes like lidded wells
each blink holding warm summer rain

When she gathered stones
from the river to make stupas
first storey for her mother
second for saddened twin brother
third stone returned to river
When father took *Xishi*
crying to the hospital
When sand fleas had so grown in her feet
she could no longer dubbin-walk to
sister who secretly wished
she was born a lost *mabiki* baby

She tensed at the thought of knife
and iodine on paws
but father did not return with the sow
claiming it was just not *chih-te*
like his eleven-year-old blind daughter —
widow-whore's *kuo*
wrinkled fast by tongues

Her youth worth remembering
a charming toddler small enough
to hide under one of his scales

when he recited *The Wood Scripture*
to rebuild her arthritic leg

Woke each day
bracing pain in thighs
recalling Xishi's *longzhu* eyes
that saw her face roil and churn
in hypnomonotony as she chewed lunch
in rumour-refrain school

They noticed lickety sounds in her uniform
as she stuck their tongues as far down
her throat as she could stretch
minds who refused to see *Cockayne*
creeping umbelliforms of *da-ying*
from the last pointed incisor:

Who stole my *nao-ke-pearl*?

Defenceless

*i don't mind the cold of a recombinant dream
where nothing furred, feathered or haired
moves in past-forward ...*

For the longest subaperture second, you squat three miles up from the beach. Talking to a stream that is 112° Fahrenheit in the breeze, full of giant four-headed golden carp and cyclopean turtles, you receive no response, like jerking off to the test pattern post-Baywatch.

Gluing apart another neon Jesus wristwatch with eyes that follow you wherever you go, you wonder when you can afford matching DD-xenotransplants. Television overbombs mind, distracted from *brahmacharya* and constant muted sound of humanure falling into itself.

Having only one finger left on either hand, he unsuits the skeletons he imagines want to use her body, including the *mudhwallah*, calling his wares while cycling past. It slips out, all the while swearing at pre-sated *Chinnamasta* loins.

You dimly remember a home where mother called you *chen-jen* in your pressed fetal dress, before crying at the traces of a practiced hand. Running, you wanted a shredded in-tray of those penises from the view of satellite altimetry: not even dots.

You heard what could happen to women possessed by labial ghosts. The bored pathologist fits a circular clamp around a dead woman's skull, removing her brain – a puddle of blood poured into his *heh ko* sample, dusted with a haze of fine white bone meal.

You feel him slice Mother's 'sick' brain into thick slabs that tumble like the traffic in cheap radioactive religious icons from Chernobyl. I have abseiled your head without fear. Waiting by nuke-water, we are startled by the wakeful song of the last *baiji, kala*.

Beatroots

She calls on a cloud to wring a strange applause of rain
over the paddle mark between the eyes. Hurt
by silence, co-creators think: *ugly*, twiddled knobs
for ears like old mother's crumpled bodice and belly folds.

Whisper-whipped and reviled after three sets
of fingertip whorls rustled love's lure. Gums on nipples
during wet minutes, enjambed line by line of *hello*,
before air-browsing lips fell silent on sheetside placentaë.

Beyond the blackened fields, trailing blankie, she licks
the cloth and savours the blood.
Euphoriant and emetic, a shrunken bush
sops up her tears, falling by the quart, as she buries the dead.

With a single orphaned potato, thieved for the last thing
said of her, *you must be juz ...* she answers the silence
with poofed breath, *ahh-oohs, laja, do you yooth?* and
a creed of screams that could settle the mills.

Pleading for food from the priest, she chokes on
communion wafer with each heave of pellucid desire.
Lifting biretta, he wipes his saltwash sap from
her back, sharing the moistness of decaying blanket.

Aurora hour iterates corky rot in the fields, while
hunger roars polymath pain that coats her door
in bastard umber. Opens to a bulge of boozy
complex sugars, lies that fit between the rain.

Too weak to rage at the bleached clay he wears,
she cries a little, milk-substantial, thinking it will spoil
in his mouth. She makes a rasp, tottering against the pulse
of ant-shrapnel on forgotten faces, bonneted in history.

Inky jackals file her womb under conjugal mastery.
Sugared umbilici reach for a head against a tuber mound.
Time-pocked insisrences plant a calabash, root-willed like
the wanted posters on each face, the suppliance of lodging
and departure.

Ride

switched on
recorder listens
jerks open briefcase
lipsynching remains
snaps it shut
paces under skylight
slubs and rips in panty
build patch of finish
where subjoined silence
clads the faultless lover

scrumpy touch
of rasp and whipcord
scrapes against jodhpurs
he rips it to ankles
in double-locked livery
bidding equine croup
with Morris slapper
leaping backward
in the winking light

shakes off midden efflux
sprayed on riding boots
before massaging
calomel conditioner behind ears
moving unsteadily
on black bars of high heels

one foot in stirrup
he spirals in mid-air
detaches saddle
exposing fur back
bare for biddable kisses
pubic sweat epigraphs
hairy toes rub against flat tops

falling in front of its start
on the pig bladder
tangled in sticky stocking tops
his fingers strapped
her cheeks bone-tight
pulling her hair like reins
he rode her face
while she giggled
at the infield flies
amber to heavy
the gelid tip of his cock

tensely tabulating
the price of being the fool
outsize hankies
leather hockey sticks
swipes of safe-home instructions
wondering
if love will come for him

in the crush of hooves
poised before a feeble light
seeing her somewhere
closing in