

CHAN LAI KUEN

**Lesser Panda**

Since that happened  
Some women would lose their homes  
Some of them lose the countries they have once called home  
Some of them have lost their children  
Some of them their (borrowed) names  
As for me  
My surname has always been the same  
But I lost my species  
By which you used to call me  
2019  
Translated by Chan Lai Kuen

**小熊貓**

那件事發生以後  
有些她們會失去居所  
有些會失去她們已經當作故鄉的國家  
有些失去小孩  
有些會失去（其實是借來的）姓氏  
我呢  
我無所謂姓什麼  
但我失去了物種  
你叫過我的

2019

### **Tangled Hair I**

When I am alone  
lying on my pillow  
An empty carcass of a raven  
I am scared of this black

### **Tangled Hair II**

Your shoulder draped with my hair  
I searched upward for you  
From the slit towards your soul, all I saw was  
Greyness of marble, like cataract

2019

Translated by Chan Lai Kuen

### **亂髮 I**

一個人的時候  
枕上攤軟著  
一隻被掏空的烏鴉  
我被這黑嚇倒了

### **亂髮 II**

被我的髮披著的你的肩  
我往上尋索你  
通往靈魂的裂縫只見到  
雲石如白內障

2019

## Song of Mei-ling

-after "I Come From" by Robert Seatter

I come from Kowloon City  
but not the Kowloon Walled City full of dark fantasy  
I come from a language that cannot be written.  
From fish balls, *wonton* noodles, *cha shiu bau*, *hargau*, and *shiu mai*  
(Have I made you hungry?  
but I don't know how to cook)  
I come from a language that has six tones  
I come from a name that you won't remember after I tell you about a hundred times  
I come not from the "East-meets-West" rose garden tea party  
(I've never been in one but am sure there are some if you happen to live on the Peak)  
I come from a "wooden hut district"  
with cats and giant geckos that come and go through your window  
I come from the Joint Declaration  
and (the f\*\*\*ing)"One Country Two Systems",  
(whatever they might mean)  
I come from a land that exiles itself without even moving  
where we have become refugees in our own homes  
(and many of us don't own our homes)  
You don't have a language, they say

I come from a place you call Hong Kong  
But not your Hong Kong (I was once asked, "If Hong Kong is an island, then what is  
"Kowloon"?)  
Every day I translate for you,  
(so that you don't have to talk to the natives)  
I'm a product with many functions, all-in-one  
The latest model is  
a damsel with a yellow umbrella  
waiting to be wiped out

Let me tell you something  
It's no fun, being that real Mei-ling.

I come from a language that they say cannot be written

2016-2017

### **Mollusc's Libido**

'birds do it, bees do it  
even educated fleas do it  
let's do it, let's fall in love'

so we do it, we turn and boss  
in the specimen bottle,  
wet and warm inside

'dream a little dream of me'  
in the dark the crocodile's tail caresses my back

air as thick as oil  
did we first meet in the plastic bag of a fish store  
or down in the baby mice liquor bottle—  
among those hugging mice?

'romantic sponges, they say, do it  
oysters, down in Oyster Bay, do it  
let's do it, let's fall in love'

women riding fish  
having such fun  
a mix of cheese and old quilt odour fill the air

please excuse me for having laid sticky  
octopus on the office floor.

3/2003

"Let's Do It (Let's Fall in Love)" (Cole Porter, 1928)

"Dream a Little Dream of Me" (Gus Kahn/Fabian Andre/ Wilbur Schwandt, 1930)

Translated by Kit Kelen and Penny Fang Xia.

軟體動物的里必多

「鳥兒來，蜜蜂也來  
就連受過教育的蚤子也來  
讓我們來吧，讓我們來戀愛。」\*

於是我們來，在濕暖的標本瓶裡  
翻過身來翻過身去

「做一個小小的夢，夢見我吧！」\*\*  
鱷魚的尾巴在黑夜裡搔我的背

空氣呈油膏狀  
我們的邂逅是在金魚店的膠袋裡還是  
老鼠仔酒的瓶底—  
在這些緊緊擁抱的老鼠們中間？

「浪漫的海綿，他們說，也來，  
蠔灣裡的蠔也來  
讓我們來，讓我們來戀愛。」\*

女人們騎著魚  
快活得不得了

空氣滿是乳酪和舊棉被的氣味

請原諒我在辦公室的地毯上產下一窩黏稠的章魚

3/2003

\* 〈Let's Do It (Let's Fall in Love)〉 (Cole Porter, 1928)

\*\* 〈Dream a Little Dream of Me〉 (Gus Kahn / Fabian Andre / Wilbur Schwandt, 1930)

**K A T E     R O G E R S**

**Scrumptious Mah Jong**

Clacks its ivory teeth  
the sound a Sunday imperative  
in Hong Kong. Decisive  
as the pile driver  
in the huge hole on the corner.  
Pan-fried fish is never arbitrary either,  
pungent as sex and that ocean  
we swam in my bed for five days.  
No need to jog for exercise that week.  
Though we did pause enmeshed  
like the rogue orchid  
colonizing the crack on my  
concrete roof, sweating nectar.

**Poem for an Aviator**

—*For Dai*

The first time we meet your eyes  
out blue the sky.  
On this high pressure day  
I can see for miles.

The second time, your eyes are grey.  
We take a ferry across the harbour in fog,  
follow its damp footprints  
along the mountain trail.

Your flat is full of light.  
Clouds unravel as they rise  
outside your window.

You expected to die young,  
like air force friends  
who burned out in earth's atmosphere.  
Instead, you have lived long enough  
to feel alone,  
to come to rest in my arms.

Our first flight together  
we share the language of clouds  
as thunderheads shimmer below:  
Altostratus and Cumulonimbus,  
we name them as we climb.  
My father taught me their names.  
He learned to fly,  
but never brought me along.  
When turbulence hits  
you hold my hand.  
I am calmer than I've ever been, so high.

**Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Baker**

—*For Dai*

My man could shoot the eye out of a bird,  
when he was young,  
though he prefers to watch them now:  
wakes me to follow a ballet of curlews  
at low tide, to see a kingfisher  
thread the lightening sky with blue.  
He has picked up the bodies  
of other flyers in pieces,  
toasted their sacrifice, paid their tabs,  
then taken to the air the morning after.

Yet nowadays my man chooses to fly a desk instead,  
to stare through darkened glass at mounting clouds  
of bread being born. He bakes when he is sad  
to feed the crumbling hearts  
of those he loves. And when he is annoyed,  
he doesn't loaf around—sets the bread maker  
on boxing match so it can spar  
with his lazy dough.

Whenever his daughter returns, he makes  
a gingerbread house so she can savour  
sweetness under his roof.

My man tests different yeasts  
to learn which rises best,  
what will plump up  
whole wheat in hot weather.

When we take a few days  
apart my man gives me his best bread  
because he wants me to think of him  
whenever I make a sandwich:  
the two of us in nested embrace,  
like perfect slices from the same loaf.

**For Dai**

You run to work most days.  
After your shower  
before you face your office  
you wedge bunions into polished Oxfords.  
The view of the sea out my study window  
opaque green glass.  
At my desk my back stiffens.  
I stretch on the floor in our hallway,  
the only space in the flat long enough  
for my legs, except our bed.  
I lift my hips in a wide Pilates bridge,  
hollow navel to spine for one hundred  
ab lifts to tone my girdle  
of strength. On weekends we climb  
steep hiking trails, descend the hill towards home  
fast. Meet on the mattress with relief.  
We curve into a comma. You hold my breast.  
We lick salt from each other's skin.  
But these days we must check—  
are the reading glasses on our night stands?  
So you don't rub K-Y Jelly on your aching Achilles,  
so I don't lube my passage numb  
with Ibuprofen gel? Just as often now  
we opt for a post-coital hug—skin on skin,  
the length of your leg on mine,  
my head on your chest:  
inhaling, exhaling.  
Outside, on the beach  
the ocean retreats  
swells, surges.

**Love Song from Edinburgh**

—for Dai, half the earth away

From this cottage attic by the Loch  
my voice lilt, flirting with you  
on the phone. Your breaths roll in slow  
just like the tide where fresh water meets salt.  
When you lived here you surfed dark night,  
balanced on the surging kelpie<sup>i</sup>  
without bit or bridle. Unafraid  
of its curled brine lip.

Each mountain ledge is muscled  
as your calf, cliffs broad  
as your shoulders riding  
the winch line above Ben Nevis  
in a 40 knot gale.

Your knees, your elbows—cobble  
like the streets of Edinburgh Auld Toun<sup>ii</sup>.  
The bones of your ankles the strongest  
stones in your foundation. The ridge  
in your spine where you hit the ship deck  
is my path to the sea.

Your body is the island I swim to,  
your eyes rare blue granite,  
in the worn rock face.

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<sup>i</sup> Kelpies were mythical water horses in Scotland. Not easy to catch or tame.  
<http://www.historic-uk.com/CultureUK/The-Kelpie/>

<sup>ii</sup> Old Town in Gaelic