



a Shanghai poetry zine
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家

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Halfway No More

Lei Wang

When he asks if we could continue
being lovers without loving, I laugh
because I too used to think the body
could beat without the heart, or only
half of it. I know better now.

After too many starry nights failing
to convince the blindfolded to look at
the sky, I want someone with a skylight
in his soul, one who already chooses to see.
I know now a perfect pillow does not a
perfect bed make. And even a perfect bed is
only one part of the wholeness of the house.
I want a kitchen and a garden, too. And
a fireplace in the living room so arguments
once had can be burnt away forever.
Nothing in between.

Driftwood

Lei Wang

Not all affairs are alike, so don't trust the others
when they say

don't believe him

when they say

*men want two boats and if
they could, the whole ocean*

—you are not just a boat waiting for his left foot.

You are the rain that makes the ocean.

You are the ship on shore that has become a roof.

You are enough. Whatever you have is enough.

To hold

him just that much. To have been reckless *ringless*
but know—

whatever you have asked for you have been given

and you asked only for love, not for forever.

You're not sure if you believe in forever.

But right now you're the only thing he's got in the middle of
an ocean with a hurricane on its way and while men face
imminent danger, they think only of the danger and not

of you.

So be

driftwood. Necessary—
in the right moment.

*'Cause you're an in-the-moment kinda girl.
Aren't you.*

And when he drops you back into the ocean after
you save him from drowning when he doesn't even

thank you

—remember that you once were
a dock
a proud helm
an oar
a lonesomeness
the sea salt-kissed and transformed.

Your purpose is not to give floundering men a dead thing
to hold onto. Because one day

someone else will find you
beautiful and whorled
curled up on some shore after too many
whirlwinds

and he will take you home.

This one will not be like those ones who needed you.
He will want you.

Only the ones who want you without needing you
can see
your beauty.

Home's Teeth

Ryan Thorpe

As an expat, I always imagined home as a monster, a beast lurking in distant shadows, gobbling up my friends as they departed like the walk through airport security was off the plank. Home meant a lie that made me want to die when through a flat smile he says that will see each other again soon, like miles of ocean were a state of mind.

To me, home hulked far away, a monster more teeth than eyes that gnashed its teeth so long and so often, that people said it smiled. To me, home took but it did not give, something that killed instead of lived, a one-way ticket from which no traveler returns.

When people said they were going home, it always confused me because where had we been living for the past six years? Where had we celebrated Christmas next to Charlie Brown trees and exchanged presents wrapped in newspaper? Where had we ordered cake for birthdays, singing out celebrations for surviving one more year, gathering in groups so big that no selfie stick would ever capture us all. Where had we been? I thought it was home.

Home ate them all while they stood in the airport security line, as soon as their bag hit the security scanners, they were already half gone, starting to be digested by home. They messaged at first. A facebook message. A quick email. Maybe a letter, but at some point home decided to quick playing, to swallow them home and let the digestion begin.

I know home is out there. It calls me sometimes, a voice far, far away, farther than a fairy tale castle, telling me that the dog is sick and the water filter is broken. That the girl down the street married last week. That the weather is hot and wet but everything is still fine.

Home Is—

Ryan Thorpe

She told me what it was
in whispers so fragile that
she dropped them into my
ear in the middle of the night,
so soft that even the darkness
crouched closer to hear
what was being said.

She said it was a temple,
a place to pray, to one another
with our bodies as alters
in candle washed moments
where we whispered sutras and
hymns as only the faithful can.

She said it was a time machine
where we would grow older,
shut the door, lock it tight,
let the river of time drown us
in our two bedroom, one bath
tomb, until we looked at each
other and asked where the
world had vanished to.

She said it was a cradle for
us to birth a future that looked
like us, a future swaddled so
tight that it only knew how to
cry, and while we ate cereal for
dinner, we promised each other
that one day we would eat meat.

But I knew it was her, that she
had stretched out her arms, ran
through the walls like cabling,
breathed out more than a
rusty heater in winter, made it
a life buttressed by paper cutouts
because that was the only way
she knew how to make it.

Bike

Patrick Schiefen

5.21.2017

I stole a ride on your bike
and crashed it square into the Maple Tree
that stood deeply rooted in the front yard.
I brushed the dirt off my scraped knee
and quietly put your bike back in the garage,
hoping you wouldn't notice
the bent spokes.

By the time you outgrew it and I grew into it,
I no longer had the desire to ride it.

I'd Gift the Moon to You

Patrick Schiefen

I'd gift the moon to you
if it didn't mean
a hundred men at sea
would be without a beacon home.

And I'd tie a ribbon around each star
if it didn't mean
quieting the wishes
whispered from the windows
of sleepy children.

And the peace
composed to the night
is what you deserve
but not mine to give

but a love
that rivals the Milky Way is

and so
that, in its entirety,
is what you shall have.

The Wanderer, Part 2

Patrick Schiefen

5.16.2017

We hung our feet over the parapet
of my apartment's rooftop
with cheap convenient store beer cans
sitting next to us.

We stared at the aircraft warning stars,
twinkling from Pudong in the distance
and listened to the car horns
echo up to us from the streets below.

This was our last night alone in the city
and the words asking him to stay
were echoing up from the depths of my brain.

“I wouldn't be able to point to home on a map,” he said,
“and I don't know if I'd ever want to.”

He flew in on a Thursday
and I canceled dinner with a friend
to greet him at the airport.

He departed on a Monday
and I watched his plane pull away from the terminal,
imagining the man
he would eventually ask to come with him.

Sugar, Oh! Shanghai

Giuseppe Daddeo

Momentum intermitted by laughter,
A joy mist with freedom

You come over in tiptoes, anxiously looking for permission
gladly suspecting
that somebody would through this night right.

An innocent flower, lost in your eyes,
and we, sitting by,
colloquially committed
to the monstrous beauty
of the opposite building,
pink in her imagination,
hollow tunes scanned on the facade,
gated prison looking back at us
with a softer personality;
here Jesus Joseph and Mary
united in a single-minded thought
for impersonal purposes
twisted into our conversations:

there Tommy on the guitar
molesting the next piece of beauty,
scientists wondering
whether reality fits
the ultimate test of tonight,

I'm disappointing the rules,
and Madame Monia
justifies our looks,
finally released,
beneficially concerned
upon mysterious jungles of this monkey mind,
didn't I ask you already
which was your latest hot story?
didn't I believe already,
in everything that look may mean?

A fancy dressed
total beauty

passes by
eternally perceived
probably un-existing...

smoked around the trash
of this tiny park

there's nothing left
except the void of this whole
suggested by a motion of your lips,

while Gloria stays up tuned
lonely at the bar

and eyes camp out around,
as broken cracks down the misty walls

as a morning jacket

over the next unsweetened day
as lovely as it comes,

cats furring among corners
Yoga pleasing
one more destiny,

that guitar stringed too right,
a fluorescent lab sample,
all signifying
all making it up
all suggesting it all,

and I turn around:
make the next minute
a believer out of me,
and the next hour
a saint proposed by nobody,
striped silent empty

3am morning Shanghai streets
a night bought
by a beer,
beauty scattered

we please it on,
for a minute stays longer
than what we imagine about,

for a life stays deeper
than what we even dare of...

Wait is a Verb

Shelly Bryant

if wait is a verb
why does he idle here
until his time comes
 a metropolis on the move
 on bus train car bike foot
squeezing him into a corner
that begins to feel like home

Blue Moons

Nina Powles

(for b.)

you would be able to tell me the difference between a mandarin and a tangerine. you would explain to me again in simple terms exactly why the planets move in perfect orbits and don't just collide with all the space debris. I would tell you I saw him again in a dream this morning, one of those dawn dreams that feel too raw to lay your fingers on directly, like a fresh bruise—he was standing in a doorway with the light behind him, his hair falling over his face and you would say *the difference is in the sweetness and thickness of the skin*. I feel so sure that wherever you are now there is a tall window overlooking silver trees. in my last email, one of those I send every few months just in case, I said *I think we are blue moons whose irregular orbits get closer and closer then move gradually further apart* and you wrote back: *soon*.

When We Talk About Home

Nina Powles

the smell of my mother's hand cream
lavender beneath the letterbox
voices shouting down the phone
all over my hands feeling for
to place here
bursting in yellow
dreams of *baicai* fried in ginger garlic
all over me the taste
carried on a galeforce wind
nothing broken nothing blown away
hello hello it's strange to think

like soap & jasmine january air
crushed a in the grass
peeling fresh ginger in the sink
the biggest softest lemons
beneath the kowhai trees
pouring through my window
crispy chicken rice wine dreams
of sand & salt & january sun
to a place that always feels the same
hello I can't quite hear you
it's summer where you are

Caricatures of Seattle, WA

Damon Hansen

Guilt Tripping Health Nut

“Yum --- Pop tarts produce pleasure”

*“Poppycock! Your pancreas protrudes and
professes its misery!!*

*Trans fatty acids, additives, preservatives, carcinogens – beware the blasphemy of non-local,
unsustainable agricultural practice!*

Your body screams and scrambles for scarce nutrients!

Fie and shame!

Fie and shame for failure to fixate on the towering temple with sacred cells!

Fie and shame -- your heavenly heart hath halted its flow via the globs of pop tart nastiness!

Fie and shame -- your sensitive stomach contracts and convulses!

Fie and shame --- your convoluted colonic currents shall collude against you!

Untitled, unfinished

Xoai David

Home (an indignant prologue)

I mean honey why you keep throwing this
topic at me, don't you see it always sends me
into the throes of existentialist and identity crises?

untitled, unfinished

when I think of my body, I think of temporary
I think of whole but separate
solid. Able to occupy and vacate space
I'm the tin cans ribbon-tied to your wedding limo
I'm unpacked belongings, smelling
of shipment and suitcase, newspaper, stale
that old scent forgotten if not searched for in vain
I'm the college offers wilting in my inbox and
a radar for all the people I've known,

Home
is a longing ache I've learned to live with
became possible just when it was ready to devastate me,
is the wistful twinge that draws me into isolation
no matter who I'm with, home is more residue
than residence, cos I carry nostalgia with me everywhere in compensation
the people who share the memories aren't around, it's a lonely weight –

I suffer from chronic restlessness. It's a side effect of the
nostalgia, or, more a side effect of withdrawal,
see no matter how sick I am of transitions, moving,
no matter how warped it can be for my psyche, I'm addicted
to strangers and airports, I feel strong at my most vulnerable,
when I've been stripped down to my essence
when home becomes the infrastructure, the ornamental
the weakness? I might have thought so
but it took just one country to realize
what had been missing

i should be grateful, they say it makes me special

so am I defined by the fragments, or by the loss of what they didn't grow into?

But this is home too, this fortitude, this change
knowing you know it'll end, this minority in the city
this community, we all bring in our stories from everywhere
local foreigners, foreign locals, hand-me down patriotism
knowing the world beyond maplines and movies
become something else altogether

can't say whether it's worth the sacrifice,

but it's what made me.

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