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Chronicle of a Cross-Cultural Queer Relationship

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Abstract: The following sequence of poems chronicles the evolution of a cross-cultural queer relationship. Written from a queer Chinese perspective, these poems explore the role of cultural and personality differences in mediating queer intimacy, as well as the (de-)territorialisation of queer desire by family and kinship as well as the intersectionality of racial, ethnic and cultural identities.

Keywords: Culture, Intimacy, Migration, Queer, Relationship

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Chronicle of a Cross-Cultural Queer Relationship

Self Portrait as a Banana

Think of myself as a banana:
yellow skin, white flesh,
glaze of tropical sun,
fragrance of autumnal breeze.

Not yellow as in Yellow Fever or Yellow Peril,
but as yellow as a sunflower admiring the golden light,
a cab zigzagging along grey Big Apple streets,
a submarine hibernating in the deep blue sea.

Not white as in whitewash, or white privilege,
but as white as a lotus flower serenading the moon,
a polar bear melting the Arctic skyline,
a vast stretch of snow sharpening the crisp winter air.

If I must choose to be one, let me be
as bent, bastard, queer as a banana.
My skin's in the game,
take care where you step.

Rhapsody

table and bar stools stand still
 amber ale ripples in the tumbler
 hearts are grapes
 hanging low on the window frame

the form is infinitely open
 two bodies move in synchronicity
 out of the constraints of the day
 into the darkness of the night

your gaze benign
 your movement mercury
 my mind ambles, my body
 silky as the lube, naked as the moon

Moments Like This

I wish the music would stop
 and your smile would linger.
 Our eyes met on the dance floor.
 The night breeze was tender.

I wish the birds would stop whistling
 and my muscles would relax.
 You rested your head on my shoulder.
 The morning air was crisp.

I wish you would stop posting
 our pictures on Instagram.
 Sitting on a giant Ferris Wheel, hands linked,
 heart pumping, big, balmy smiles

bathed in a warm afternoon sun,
 which would then attract
 people's comments like:
 he's Caucasian; *he* is Asian.

Fascination

The garden always gives you plenty of pleasure.

See that blackbird! She really likes the cherry tree.

Look at the bees! They really love the lavender.

An exclamation mark on your face.

A spark of light in your eyes.

A city boy I am, with zero interest in gardening,
have not learned how to appreciate nature.

But I love standing next to you,
observing with fascination
your fascination for life.

Waking Up

You jump into my bed,
sandpaper face rubs my neck,
warm breath moistens my hair,
rhythmic snores beat my eardrums.

Now I'm wide awake,
eyes fixed on that small, oval-
shaped device by the table lamp,
anticipating the alarm.

I'll whisper to the flickering blue light:
Alexa, stop!

She'll stop, for she wakes up
much faster than you and me. I'll roll
around, nudge, elbow and push you

to roll around too so I can breathe
into your neck, your hair, your ear.
And so

we lie in bed on a Sunday morning
while Alexa is looking, perhaps laughing,
at us

The sky is grey between the curtains.

Moving Home

We stand in front of a weathered
oak wardrobe, doors wide open.
Final decisions about what's to stay.
This jacket can go. You point

to the black woollen jacket
hidden in the corner, white dust
sprinkled on black shoulder pads,
snow lingering on a Spring hill.

You haven't used it for three years.
Obviously you don't need it.
I lift the jacket up from the coat hanger,
feel its weight, peel off a strand

of hair. Could've told you my mother
bought it when I left home. I decide
to keep the information to myself.
These boots can go. You point

to a pair of heavy-duty, black
leather boots. *It seldom*
snows here. You'd be lucky
to be able to wear it once a year.

I turn the shoes upside down,
mesmerised by the sand, soil
and pebbles trapped in the soles,
souvenirs from past trips, carried

through silver ice in China, soft
snow in Germany, occasional
visits to aurora-lit Nordic
capitals. I hesitate, then nod.

Piece by piece have my jumpers,
thermals, long johns gone.
Bit by bit dissipate my frozen
memories of the winter.

Perhaps moving house is just
a convenient excuse for both
of us to move on in life.
Perhaps your suggestion is simply

the prompt I need to bid
farewell to the past, to start
a new life with you
on this warm, insulated island.

Invisible

At the reception, the middle-aged woman with short hair greets you with a radiant smile. 'Welcome to our art gallery!' She introduces the treasured paintings by dead English artists: the Constables, the Turners, the Lowries. Her hands flourishing, face lit in the bright autumn sun that casts shadow and light on the grand county houses, cottages with thatched roofs, rippling mountains of the Peak District that stretch to the vanishing point. When we leave, she asks if you'd mind completing a customer survey because 'that would be really nice'. I stand next to you, eyes sharp like an eagle, ears erect like an antenna, eager to capture the tilt of her head, the squeeze of her smile, the utterance of a sound that might acknowledge my presence, knowing fully well that I don't exist in her eyes. Is it because I am Asian and you are White?

Pot Noodle

No matter what and how much I've eaten
 during the day, at midnight and in the dark
 I always fumble my way to the kitchen. Eyes sharp
 like an owl, homing instinct of a pigeon. Digging
 in the pantry for the pot noodles I've recently bought.

Kettle on. Water boiling. White steam
 evaporates in the air.
 The smell, the taste, transports me
 to another time, another place.

The childhood when I learned to make pot noodles without
 getting burnt, while Mum and Dad were out at work.
 The school days where the canteen food was never
 sufficient for a growing body and stomach.
 The university days when sharing a hot pot of noodles was

 the only way for two men to have a moment of intimacy.
 The years I've lived in the UK and become disillusioned
 with fish fingers, fried potatoes, boiled veggies.
 The discussions, rows even, between you and me about ready-
 made food containing preservatives, bad for health.

No sage advice can deter my passion for pot noodles.
 On cold nights like this, I open the lid and let the spicy
 soup and smooth noodles envelop my body, warming up
 a thousand cold nights away from home,
 from Mum's hands, Dad's eyes, lovers' kisses.

After devouring the noodles, I pour the soup down
 the drain, hide the pot in the bin, tiptoe upstairs,
 feeling content and accomplished, as if I've just left
 the crime scene with a perfect alibi.

In the bedroom, you are still sound asleep.

Chinese Gooseberry

I bring home a Chinese
Gooseberry, also known as
a kiwifruit – for reasons I don't know.
Egg shaped, green, brownish skin,

thin fur on the surface, looking
uncanny and menacing.
You frown at them, and then
at me, as you often do

with the green Longjing tea I drink
which, in your eyes, is tasteless,
coloured water, loose leaves a huge
nuisance, without even a drop of milk;

the Laoganma chilli sauce I eat,
fiery hot to burn lips, peppery numb
to paralyse the tongue, much too
strong for ketchup-loving stomachs;

the steamed garlic and ginger fish
I cook, head and tail intact, a lot more
realistic than the fish fingers
you love, which don't even look like fish.

Wait till the fruit softens, dissect it
with a knife, scoop up its flesh
with a teaspoon, let the juicy pulp
dissolve on your tongue.

You'll be greeted
by its sweet and tangy taste,
the warm, dazzling sunshine
of my hometown.

Nomad

I say I come from a nomadic land
made of deserts, oases and kumis wine,
roofed by yurts, horse carriages and velvet night sky.

You say you want a stable life, a long-
term relationship in a suburban house
surrounded by sprinkled lawns.

I fear its double-glazed windows will keep
the fresh air out of our life; the weed killer
will murder my favourite dandelions.

We say we should break up so I can
continue to roam around in a caravan, you'll find
someone to settle down with, to mow your lawn.

We are like the two poles of the globe:
constantly gazing at each other, trajectories
eternally apart.

Mist

as we sit in silence try to finish the last sip of tea as the music changes
the noise from the bar grows louder as you look down staring at the
folded lines of the tartan tablecloth as your right hand reaches for the jacket
on the back of the chair you mumble some words I can only guess
as I stand up accept your hand give it a feeble shake your hand is
freezing we used to hug each other
as you zip up your jacket push the door open without looking back
the air must be cold out there as my eyes follow the movement of
your body smaller and blurrier with each stride
until mists take over