April 2016

The Future

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The Future

In the photos of your weekend lunch oat noodles float like gnocchi in tannin broth your mother plucks morsels of gristle with chopsticks son gnaws a dark barbecued beef bone sea buckthorn juice half-drunk green straw an extravagant tendril twining out of your glass of sunset nectar don’t worry my dear

I’ll wait for you with fragrant-flowered garlic greens dim sum baskets chili tofu sour cherry jewels little mugs of beer amber and steady and lazy as the Yangtze through Nanjing your promise is very precious to me more precious than any gift

evertheless the wandoo have dropped skirts and gaze timorously twist torsos like danseuses sun-dyed thighs flash ruddy buttocks bulge quadriiceps flex and ease my object of concupiscence has always been that seasonal miracle a nudist colony in neon winter flame a swallowing of the not-so Great Southern Highway
trending ironically east 15 ks from The Lakes (that once were) today the wind is kin to York rain—petulant, inconstant, heavy but to you this metaphor is meaningless do you care that I have a son? in the West, there aren’t the stigmas you suffer but there are others

and you will learn these vocabularies just as I learn how lichens punctuate the shed skin of wandoo and will learn where to buy size 48 shoes in your city and how to savour the smell of silk your heart is clarion but your loneliness is not profound not pernicious like mine nor has it ever been

a soft smile that is nuclear! on the street there are many beautiful women everyone is beautiful everyday is 32–35°C your father, a kung fu master in Shanghai wears prayer beads, a jet black shirt deftly steers a paddle boat with three fingers as melting ice cream streams down the stick you grasp like a fountain pen gushing vanilla ink you gaze to your son your pink pants glistening at night I must enunciate and listen closely otherwise rain pelting tin obscures your sighs silences hesitations sudden lapses into Mandarin you don’t need my language to know I am not

a figment my photos are of earth: spindly trees of roos posturing like teenage bodybuilders, females in summer heat with a tuft of face staring from their pouches of ivory sand beaches Down South wild cerulean seas butterflies lifting on leaf trampolines

but at Jinghai we will stroll Ming City Wall on Emperor’s concoction of lime and yellow soil glutinous rice and Tung oil as Nanjing irrupts like fire around us honey-comb apartment slivers sleek bridges over Yellow River I’ve been alone a long time now I see the future waving to me this future is you

John Ryan is Honorary Research Associate in the School of Humanities at the University of Western Australia. From 2012 to 2015, he was Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the School of Communications and Arts at Edith Cowan University. His most recent books include Posthuman Plants (2015) and The Green Thread (2015, co-edited with Patricia Vieira and Monica Gagliano).