KAI CHENG THOM

DIASPORA BABIES

diaspora babies, we
are born of pregnant pauses/spilled
from unwanted wombs/squalling invisible-ink poems/written in the margins
of a map of a place
called No Homeland
old gong gong honoured uncle is the man i won't become/
BBQ pork-scented sorrow and red
bean paste buns he sold on street corners in Chinatown/handing out sweetbread and stories
for seventy-five cents each/ red meat and red hands stained
by the winter wind’s violence/as the Goddess of Mercy watched/pitying
from her curbside altar
diaspora bodies, we
wrap lips around pregnant pauses/spill
salt fluids from unwanted bodies/squalling invisible-ink poetry/written in the margins
of a map of a place
called No Homeland
my boy makes me breakfast the morning after/he's the air i breathe/love-flavoured oxygen/i taste him everywhere/sun-dried orange peel candy/like the kind
my father used to bring on car trips/the colour of his skin/brown
salty-sweet/we gorge ourselves on love
not thinking about tomorrow/there's never enough
time/to make you full/never enough flesh
to fill your skin/we open our mouths for stories/for sun-tinted histories
and swallow each other whole/here in this place
with no room for mercy
diaspora secrets, we
enclose in pregnant pauses/write on the walls
of unwanted wombs/invisible-ink poems in the margins
of bodies/living out a map of a place
called No Homeland
red's the color of my mother's scars/as though the Goddess of Mercy
went finger-painting across my mother's face/a mask
made of Things We Don't Talk About
there some stories that are never told/but known
nonetheless we bake them into bread/fill buns with secrets
like sweet lotus paste/ “what can't be cured must be endured”/

“chinese families
don't talk about our feeling” / “we wash them down
with pork”/ “do as you are told, child”/ “eat what's in your bowl”
swallow it/bitter or sweet
some violence, we
keep inside our bodies/scar tissue / “what love?
the kind they show in gwai lo films?
chinese women don't speak
of love”/ “we know
that people will laugh at us”
some bodies can't be touched/some poems
cannot be written/just felt
diaspora haunted, we
hunt for pregnant pauses/give birth
from unwanted yellow wombs/bodies
like invisible-ink poems/ghost children drawing maps in the margins/
of a place called No Homeland