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Poems

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Abstract
IN AUSTRALIA TWO EMPERORS MET IN MELBOURNE, SPRING AT KINGSBURY, MELBOURNE, ONE OF THEM, ALIEN, SEEING DOUBLE, WORD, MY LAST SAVIOUR

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Ouyang Yu

IN AUSTRALIA

TWO EMPERORS MET IN MELBOURNE

his name is liu bang the name of that famous emperor who united china some two thousand years ago after conquering xiang yu by forcing him to commit suicide by the Wu River and my name is li yu the name of the emperor who lost his crown due to excessive indulgence in writing erotic poetry and enjoying what was known as the music that could cause countries to fall

we met at the dinner table with a hundred chinese dishes at box hill melbourne one night and talked about many things liu bang who turned out to be a hong kong businessman sporting creamy coloured western suit and tie told me that he had been in australia for more than twenty years now that his father had been here before him that his sons were studying in hong kong because he did not want them to lose the chinese culture that australia had no culture to speak of being a country with only a short history of two hundred years while china had twenty times as many that if it was possible he'd really come down to take over the whole of australia if he could become the president of china and could-force all the peasants to come to this country who cares at all

did i say anything being not an emperor but a student studying a culture without culture i thought that how like that emperor who lost his country through poetry and music was me who had already lost his country to one billion people claiming to the same ancestry and was trying again to lose this country but to whom the country not being my own in the first place how could i even lose it but let me not argue the case and instead just recite a poem by that emperor to you liu bang:

wordless i went up to the western mansion
the moon like a hook
a clear autumn was locked
in the depth of the lonely \textit{wotung} courtyard
unscissorable
un-sort-outable
is the sadness felt at parting
and in the heart of hearts:
a different taste of things

how could i tell you that it was my father who taught me the
poem lying in his cancer ward and that countless times the poem
came back over a span of thousand years from the exiled and
imprisoned emperor like from a prehistoric radio station that
projected those waves of instincts into me as if he had already
known that there was destined to be some one in a future of
uncertain age who'd pick up his message and who being so
exiled and transplanted that he had to translate it with an alien
language that could not even bring out the beautiful rhyme and
could not find an echo in a plastic sea of faces

never mind the emperor hong kong businessman liu bang said as
if reading my mind we'd meet one day and discuss things over a
cup of coffee in the city

and that sort of wound things up for the night of emporial meeting

\textbf{SPRING AT KINGSBURY, MELBOURNE}

on a long empty street
in the suburb
in October when rain comes and goes
in spring

in deep night when you stop saying things on the tip of your tongue
at the edge of your dream
at a moment when stillness is so loud
at the point of your pen

after all desires
on a freeway
a little after the future has just passed
when you are looking back for things

between two hemispheres
at sea
in a sky that belongs to none
in exile

with quotation marks on life
and love in subjunctive mood
with no perfect tense for memory
and emotions in parentheses

when telephones reach everywhere
when bells remain mute
when the sky is free electronic waves
when homeless

in a continent that waits for no one
in a lone island
in a moment you can’t give vent to anything
among small knives of grass

in loneliness after loneliness
in misery after misery
when definition of words has been repeatedly redefined
and you know nothing more about the Chinese-Chinese difference

when life is only living
and survival is the thing
when thinking becomes thinking of home
at which you are laughing

in October when rain comes and goes
in spring
in a long empty street
in the suburb

ONE OF THEM

i know how lonely sometimes they can be
i am one of them
it’s our secret

i know it’s one of their problems
with millions of people under finger-tips
and not one to call
i know they don’t want to stay on
having lost their home
they’ll lose it again—it’s their problem

i know how they put up with all the holidays
i am one of them
it’s our secret

they care less and less
becoming silenter each day
looking at themselves—muttering in gibberish

i know they wouldn’t say it
i am one of them
it’s our secret

in the end even memory is useless
because of the semi-loss of one’s tongue
in exchange for an artless language

i know their heart on the constant look-out
for somewhere to belong to
having nowhere to belong to

they’re trees sadly oddly
they strike roots
without striking anything else
it’s their problem
not me not mine

ALIEN

I stand on this land
that does not belong to me
that does not belong to them either
alone like the land itself
alone like on a planet

I often tell myself to ignore those
unwelcoming eyes
unsmiling noses
In Australia

murderous cars
resentful phones
houses secretive houses

I don’t care
being alien
I stand alone
impervious to questions like
when are you going home
how do you like it here
etc etc irrelevancies
can you ask the land the planet the same questions?

to swap a question
Do you know why a Chinese
deleted of any smile
stands alone behind a window
gazing into the distant future/past
ignoring things passing by

your answer is simple:
the bloody inscrutable Chinese has no friends

SEEING DOUBLE

wherever you go
china follows you

like a shadow
its ancientness

recast in australia
you gaze at your own image

on the computer
its chineseness

becoming strange
like an imported antique

newly painted with foreign colour
a being of two beings
you can't help but
translate everything back and forth so many times

that it becomes unrecognizably
fascinating as a doubled tripled multiplied double

WORD, MY LAST SAVIOUR

Word, you are my last saviour
my final solution
to all human problems

you fill up the australian emptiness
and the emptiness of me
as no one else can

you come alive in my dreams
in the form of so many languages like so many bloody tongues
that I can only spell them out in English

you refuse to be translated into myself
even when you are being written
in this terrible primival activity

like fucking images in the head
where words emerge
that I can't even see myself

Word, take me out of this space
want to go home where everything connects
everything fits in with everything else not necessarily sexually

word, is that yourself?