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FINE GAUZE, SILK, RAW SILK, SATIN, BROCADE

A Thesis
presented in partial fulfillment of requirements
for the degree of Master of Fine Arts
in the Department of English
The University of Mississippi

by

SIYUN FANG

May 2023

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ABSTRACT

A collection of poetry.

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I would like to thank the journals in which these poems were first published.

Rigorous Magazine: “Grocery Shopping”, “Hotel on Rainbow Road” and “Spider”

In Parentheses: “The Temple”

Tule Review: “I Suspect”

Seven CirclePress: “Subtraction”, “Organizing the Bones” and “Purchase”

Kind Writers Journal: “Memory Is Just the Tears of Plants” (“Only This”) and “Tyrant”

The Bare Life Review: “If I Die”

K'in Magazine: “Pushing the Pawns across the River”

Minetta Review: “Father”

Roanoke Review: “Hat”

Right Hand Pointing: “Pot”

Dream Noir: “Emptiness” and “A Person is a Reed that Loves to Contemplate”

In Parentheses: “The Green Vine”

Global South: “The Woman Waiting for the Bus”

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A FAN-SHAPED GINKGO LEAF—

I place it in a book of poems.

Each line
tastes of soil from Nanjing.

It has the chirping of crickets, the green of grasslands,
the white of cooking smoke, the clarity of a river,
the bountiful basket of apples.

I trace my way home
on the skeleton of the leaf.

A beam of sunshine
shakes back and forth from the mountain ranges in the east
to the paddy field in the west—

While my home in the south
watches at me quietly in the depths of the map.

SPIDER

When I lay a world map open on my desk at night
and begin to study the history of human civilization,
a small spider which is as tiny as the pen-nib falls on it.
When I touch it gently with my fingers,
it rolls itself into a ball with fear.
When I tease it with my pen,
it also rolls itself into a ball.
When I blow on it with my mouth,
it rolls itself into a ball again.
At the moment when I can't help
trying to pierce a hole through its body with a needle,
a flash of lightning lights the sky—
I curl myself into a ball.
After I realize what has happened,
I see all regions on this map
shrink into themselves; there is only a black dot
left on this white paper.
And then, that small spider is crawling out of it.

I SUSPECT

I suspect there is a middle-aged scholar in exile
living in my body
He takes a boat during the night, confronting the cliffs on both sides of the river
using a double handful of moonlight and river to wash his body
He rides across states and places in the day, getting drunk
Finally, he scuttles the boat, selling his horse to obtain a cassock
also sharing my father's gray hair with me
He is a prisoner captured in my bones during the day
He is reading the Bible in my blood at night
Sometimes I even suspect all my poems
are just the echo
of him ruining his manuscripts, throwing them into the stove

EVERYONE HAS A MUSEUM

There is a wisp of black hair on my left, some white hair on the right,
and stones in the middle.

You have a monarch, chimes,
swords, needling instruments, miserable faces and honey in your room.

You have hourglasses, bamboo slips, scrolls,
a compass and gunpowder.

Your mind has wine vessels, horses,
depression, hard lives, mountains and rivers and ashes.

Has a heart and a white human skull,
has butterfly specimens and a dark apartment.

EMPTINESS

Emptiness comes to us indistinctly.
Sometimes we catch it, intending to
carve decorative patterns on it, firing it at a moderate heat in a kiln,
making it a beautiful utensil, offering sacrifices to it.

This is difficult.

We are not patient enough to accomplish such a challenging task.
A crescent moon is slight of figure.
Love also becomes rarefied.
A child sits melancholy on a stone step,
holding a flat balloon in his hand—
emptiness is standing around him.

STILL ABOUT EMPTINESS

The temple is next to a boundless river
a carpet of moss grows up the wall
Countless people decide to become monks
but how many people will choose to jump into the river

Everything is nothing—
the boatman must yell this out each time he passes by

Emptiness, emptiness—
the valley answers back carefully

POT

There is a one-eared pot
on my left

There is a three-eared pot
on my right

There is a two-eared pot, which is neither too big nor too small,
in the middle

Three pots— they have been listening to rumors from the Tang dynasty to the modern era
with their six ears

The museum is extraordinarily quiet today
— it is afraid to disclose the secrets belonging to tomorrow

THE GREEN VINE

This tiny green vine
soon casts its green net
over everything

BLUE AND GREEN

Green is planted by Earth. It's the fundamental color of leaves as well as forests; it's also the skin of vegetation. It's the vigor belonging to the youth of the Earth.

Blue is produced by the chemical reactions between the sky and ocean and light and water drops and salt.

Green is closer to the soil; blue is closer to philosophy. Green is a chorus sung by flowers and butterflies; blue is a solo performed by a lonely saxophone in front of the sky on a moonlit night.

Our minds and souls will eventually find their own color between green and blue: the color of dreams, the color of poems, the color of our own thoughts. We add the pitch-black belonging to death, fiery-red belonging to history, pale white belonging to time.

RED

A vermilion peony. A koi fish. The flush of sunset. The burning of a scar. The gush of a drop of magma.

When a person is at death's door listening to the inquiries derived by the red flame in an infusion bottle, would he also faintly see the vibrations of cockscombs and greetings from a bloody rooster?

BLACK AND WHITE

Black is extracted from White. White is a paraphrase of Black. We are all human shadows and figures on a black-and-white negative. We define the opposition and unification existing in a black-and-white world. We understand the barbarity and human nature of Black and White. We are both the angel and devil in a black- and-white thought.

A black fly falls into a white glove. A white moon hangs above a drop of black ink. A black ant inches along a white desert. White egrets fly over black debris. A black platform scale weighs a pale ivory tusk obtained by poaching game. Ebony keys play with ivory keys, performing an elegy which flows into the Milky Way.

Those celestial bodies which are called “black holes” can swallow lights, the stars which are passing by, and then build a pitch-black empire based on the pale ashes of the dead.

HISTORY OF COLOR

People are color-blind when facing the sun. Color has its formal beauty, cultivating traitors to be loyalists. After several years, maybe it would turn into flowers in the wind, ashes in the air or even dust under the ground.

The status in between melt and solidification is color. If there are no autumn leaves, there would not be a real autumn. Color is autumn leaves for those ancient buildings.

Flowers will be the only exception to this world that is composed of sky and earth. They all have poetic colors painted by God and the Devil.

But Blue has been polluted by the human mind already. What is hidden behind the blue sky are haze, surface dust, flames of war, and smoke of gunpowder, human beings, ashen faces.

DON'T AWAKE THAT WORD

Don't awake that word please
It must sleep because it is exhausted

This word this soul-stirring word
it made me fall in love with it at first sight seducing me
with its expressive and intriguing nucleus
when I was young

From then on I still read it frequently in newspapers
even after several years
Sometimes I also read it in official documents
in lyric songs and poetic lines
also books

Maybe because it wants to be a conspicuous figure
it is happy to be used repetitively
Playing an important role is of course an exciting thing
it never gets tired of life
even though it is placed in a conservative corner

I literally dare not awake that word
(People who have already used it
have been careful enough)
I am afraid that it would burst into my poems after it wakes up
and thereby make them ordinary

Because poets go for novelty and tension
when they select their words

PROBLEMATIC WORDS

These words
once slept in the depths of a dictionary.
What time do they usually wake up?

When they wake up,
they let out the craziness they have stored up in their dreams.
It seizes the sky, rivers and cities.
It even wants to dominate my poem.

(Poets all want to live in a world filled with words
in a world constructed of words.)

I really want to shoo those words
such as smog, sewage, methamphetamine, prostitute
back into the dictionary, let them die.
Then we can get back the bright blue sky
and a limpid river....

However, my poems are not powerful enough—
the only thing I can do is watch them running amok all over the place,
while wringing my hands and sighing.

A MASTERPIECE OF IMPROVISATION

You write about love,
write about the snow lotus blooming in the human body.
You write about ghosts,
write about exiles who roam in this world with unknown futures.

You write about nothingness,
write about Death who is approaching but hasn't arrived yet.
You write about father, about destiny,
about the barge, about the shipwreck that happened last night.

You write about your *Life Log*,
about how an elegant young man turns into a taciturn old man.
You write about daily tediousness and minor annoyances,
about boorish spiritual dwarves.

Now, what am I writing about?

In facing this peach in my hand,
I can just write about its perfection.
But when I bite it,
what I bite, in fact, is a black worm, still wriggling.

FINE GAUZE, SILK, RAW SILK, SATIN, BROCADE

Fine gauze. A young girl in an orchard stands on tiptoe
to pick a bunch of grapes. Her gauze dress
is caught on a branch and torn.

Silk. Servants of the palace all say
that each time the Emperor goes to the toilet,
he uses three feet of the finest silk.

Raw Silk. That skirt made with raw silk
is as silvery as the snow on snow-capped mountains.

Satin. A poor young man has sold eleven sheep,
in order to purchase a satin dress
for his beloved.

Brocade. A young girl takes off her brocade garment
at the riverside of Kaidu River,
exposing her body which appears even smoother than moonlight.

In Bazhou Museum, I bow my head,
and stroke my brand-new shantung shirt,
feeling like I am touching the Tang dynasty, the Song dynasty,
as well as the Republic of China.

STEAMING A FISH

The body of the fish is wide and flat as grassland.
It is as honest and frank as my life.

Pouring cooking wine over its body, I wipe off the fishy smell,
break off gills and cut open the fish belly.
I see gullies and abysses, coldness and darkness.

Making a gash in the back of the fish to thicken the sauce.
The edge of the knife avoids obstructions,
wanders alone, following the direction of fish bones.
It draws a very fine line,
when it plans to press forward.

Spreading salt on this fish evenly,
I slide down its satiny and delicate skin.

Spring onion and ginger have to be exact;
adding more or less
will alter the taste of tears.

I garnish the fish with slices of lemon
and put it into a bamboo steamer.
This white plate now turns into a coffin.
The fish sleeps forever with its burial gifts.

What a soul-stirring rite!
I am a cold embalmer,
harboring wild tenderness.

HAT

The hat on my head wants to jump off the cliff each time the wind rises.
It wants to pour the darkness down its throat, into its belly.
It wishes to hold the small fate of a blade of grass in its arms.
It does not want to be worshipped by me.

It wants to be more like wicker, bending down,
looking at those naked insects, flowers and plants.
Scraps of paper, bloodstains, also have their own grief.

It will never know this head held in its mouth
is in fact a turbid teardrop.

I sit at the mountain pass.
I know it's a bird hoping to return to its flock in the air,
understanding its boredom with me.

At the moment when it is blown away by the wind,
as a person who once was ambitious and arrogant, I have to bow to it—
after I pick up that hat,
I can see myself and my childhood in it.

NAILS

I have only seen three hard nails
throughout my life
They are nailed separately
from the left to the right of grandma's coffin

Moving into a new house
I have spent about half an hour
and I haven't finished nailing a nail
It bends into a loop the first time I beat it

How could such a piece of iron be the same soft as my mind
and vulnerable when I beat it again
the hammer falls onto my finger

In fact I just want to hang grandma's black picture
on the white wall
so I can see her smiling face each time when I look up

ONLY THIS

Bed, mosquito net, quilt, desk, chairs,
hat, glasses, and walking stick.
Clothes worn or unworn—
textured peach-pink groom's tie and dusty tie,
things used or never used, I throw away or burn.
Only this—
I am listening to it when I squat down
and hold a wooden box in my hand.
Oh, there is a red plum, two flowers, three birds on it.
A pink butterfly is flying out of the paint.
Touching the box gently,
I feel that my dead father is coming back again.

PURCHASE

I purchase everything
when I feel tired and sick—
black silk scarves, sackcloth cushions,
a small glass pot, antique candlesticks.
I purchase dumbbells, a wastepaper basket made of bamboo,
ice-cream that has already melted, dumplings I don't want to eat,
a dozen tissues, a full carton of milk,
dresses, shoes, the begging bowl of a beggar at the street corner.
I walk toward them as a customer—
please purchase me.
Please purchase my weakness, suspicion, exhaustion,
decisions that I must accept no matter how unwilling I am.
Please purchase the dark circles under my eyes,
wrinkles on the back of my hand,
vegetable juice that spills down my chin,
each long, long night when I am unable to fall asleep.

Please purchase, please purchase,
purchase the wall that I cannot move,
fish in the fishing net which can no longer sing,
laughter confined to a small wine cup and never released.
Purchase my ending, my beginning,
my blind fate as an ordinary human being.
Purchase your pity for me, your pity for everybody.
Everything in this world has its own destination,
even though it's just a grain of sand.

THE SECRET OF TRAVEL

Staying in different hotels every day
she opened and closed this suitcase

When she was in a panic she pulled
the folded scarves hats jeans socks out of the box furiously

After she calmed down she folded them up in silence
categorizing them and putting them in order

This was a suitcase that she opened and closed every day
This suitcase once came back full of the smell of red chili pepper

A TOY DOG WAS LYING IN THE ARMCHAIR AND WATCHING TV

No one remembered where he came from.
Almost everyone ignored him.

This toy dog was lying down, lying down.
Lying down, waiting to be buried.

He ignored those murky smiling faces,
let alone the stumbling steps of the drunkard.

He remained motionless and watched the news on various channels.
He just lay there, and moved when the sofa was moved.

TYRANT

A moody tyrant
is walking with his head high
on the ridge between fields.
He frequently issues orders,
“Stop running, otherwise I will fracture your leg. Follow me.”
Damp voices
waft from the sky.
Beat him.
Beat him.
Peaches are still very young.
Ruthlessly, I pluck them from the tree.

Tyrants—
they all shed their feathers little by little.
He becomes leafless and sits in an armchair;
he is paralyzed and weak as a bag of flour.
I always move close to him silently,
observing his facial expressions when he falls asleep,
imitating his manner as a tyrant.
Daddy, daddy.
Sometimes I also inadvertently
wake him from sleep
as I am afraid that
he will die.

THE LAST LUMBERJACK

The lumberjack is recalling his past. When he was sawing trees
with a chainsaw on the Stone Mountain,
he felt like he was overthrowing himself again and again.

It is dark outside. There is not much charcoal fire left in the furnace.
He stands up to get more with a limp.
It seems that his legs are still stuck in snow— they can't pull themselves out.

I ask about his condition.
“I have arthritis, which is an occupational disease!”
he says with a smile on face.
The disease becomes even worse in winter.

Later on, we talk about the ban on logging.
I can see a forest in his eyes—
deep, unpredictable, and unfathomable.

SUBTRACTION

The rain submerges my city.

The building shrouded in thunder and lightning always reminds me
of a man and his way of closing his windows against the rain.

Heavy downpour, red alert, windows and doors tightly closed, isolation.

I begin to delete contacts from my phone.

The first one I delete is a chairman,

his marijuana widely publicized and traded on the market.

The second one is an advertiser,

he mentions at a cocktail party that he once was also a poet.

The third person is the mother of a child-star,

her kid has a smiling face which looks even more confused than those adults'.

A person can meet up to three million people in his life,
but I just want to have a friend in each city.

Thousands of numbers, I have deleted nine hundred numbers from my phone:
relatives who have passed away, I still call their numbers when I startle from sleep—
there are some strange men and women on the other end of the line.

Sister, who died several years ago, I haven't deleted her Facebook yet.

The host in that live-radio program anxiously holds a microphone and calls the police,
each block of each avenue has someone missing.

After considering for a while, I decide to
keep the number of that funeral parlor's manager.

HALF OF MY FACE

My friend is taking pictures of me
I can only see half of my face in his photo
the other half is hidden behind the wall
Once I believed that his camera only had half a lens
or maybe he only opened half of his eye

From then on, I begin to use half of my face
I hide half of my face deep down my heart
I hang half of my face on the beam of the house
I stuff half of my face into a chandelier
I grind half of my face to powder and scatter
I bury half of my face into the grave
I look in the mirror and see half of my face

THE PERSON WHO IS HOSTILE TO HERSELF ALL HER LIFE IS...

- A person who sits at the crater of a volcano, eating volcanic ash
 - A person who goes up to the top of a hill, jumping off the cliff silently
 - A person who carries a corpse on her shoulders, walking back and forth
 - A person who has a pink areola, mistaking water for a poisonous drug
 - A big-bellied person whose shadow looks haggard
 - A person who performs a simulated striptease in marshland
 - A person who plucked her eyebrows a minute ago, falling in love with Death a minute later
 - A person who has bright eyes, leaving a trail of blood behind herself
 - A person who carries a pitcher of cloud on her head, treading in a field of wheat
 - A person who holds a bunch of red roses into her arms, who just seized a penguin by the throat
 - A person who grabs her hair, pulling herself out of the soil step by step
 - A person who paddles back and forth in the sky
 - A person who fights with the sound of wind by using a question mark
 - A person who builds a memorial, who is plagued with insomnia
 - A masked burglar who stands in front of a mirror, looking at herself
 - A person who plays hide-and-seek alone under the waning moon
 - A person who chews words day and night but always feels hungry
- A person who comes back from a graveyard
storing placenta, darkness of night and bee venom by burying them in earth

A PERSON IS A REED THAT LOVES TO CONTEMPLATE

In her parents' mind,
the family would benefit more by letting her clean the reed curtain
than by spending money to allow her to go to school.

Come summer, this sixteen-year old accepts her yellowish fate,
handing her illegible silhouette over to the earth.

The reeds become straight and soft in her hand,
leaving the village in an orderly way, walking toward markets, cities and towns.
The sky is blue, clouds are white, river is limpid;
her slender body keeps stooping down
until it turns into a question mark.

Several years later,
the villagers simply scratch the surface when they retell her story.

Her funeral is in the dead of winter.
Unmarried all her life, she doesn't leave children behind.
Music and drumbeats are not blasted out, nobody attends the funeral—
only reeds over the slope
still waving in the wind.

PARAQUAT

Paraquat is good at disguising itself.
It looks like milk when in a white bottle;
it turns into fruit juice in a glass bottle.
Also could be Coke—
a drink filled with bubbles,
which every child in this world worships.
No matter what kind of bottles it's kept in,
its direction is extinction,
is death.

Has anyone done statistics on it?
From the moment it was invented, to the time
when there was a flood of paraquat on the market,
how many weeds it has eliminated?
Or how many people,
who once crawled along the ground, unable to yell and cry out, like weeds?

Paraquat does not have only one name.
Some people call it “weed poisoner”;
some people call it “prairie fire”.
Remember that poem we recited when we were young:
the grass cannot be eradicated by a prairie fire but grows again with the spring breeze.

THE WOMAN DRANK PESTICIDE

“Another woman drank pesticide.....”

I am listening to a conversation between two passengers behind me on the bus.

“Peasant women, they tend to take things to extremes;
they take pesticide, making repeated suicide attempts.”

a man standing beside me responds.

By his tone, it seems he’s used to this.

“Fortunately, people found her in time, she is out of danger,
I heard she just divorced, her business crushed,
she drove her child to school, then went back home, and drank pesticide.”

I give a sigh of relief immediately— the woman they are talking about
is neither the one from Gansu Province,
nor the one in Sichuan Province.

She didn’t kill her child before taking pesticide,

like a desperate female beast,
taking her cubs,
rushing toward the cliff, like they are
running for their lives.

THE WOMAN WAITING FOR THE BUS

It's not even light out.
She has been standing in deep snow.
Her red headscarf and black eyelashes are catching snow.
She is wearing the earth on her feet.

She was a woman who spent half of the year,
embroidering her handkerchiefs and knitting sweaters.
After she left the village,
she became a wild beast who tried to catch everything.

Now she works as an attendant at a breakfast stall,
early, every morning;
and then goes to fast food restaurants to make dumplings.
She does skillful needlework each night.
She makes cloth shoes for the child of her manager.
She hopes that as long as he is pleased,
she will keep her position.

Now the bus may already have departed,
moving back and forth between white snow and black night,
like a blind drunk shoe,
staggering along the rough mountain path.

How quiet.
She holds her breath for a moment and exhales,
just like a stick of incense,
sighing in a burner filled with quicksand.

MOTHER SELLING HER HAIR

The man who buys hair says the texture and condition of the hair are not good— he could pay two-hundred Yuan at most. Mother is not happy with that, bargaining with him on the price. She wants one hundred more, which in total, would be my monthly cost of living when I was in high school.

As her daughter, I totally understand that mother's hair doesn't qualify because she washes her hair only once a month to save on shampoo. If you are a woman who lives in the city, you will never understand my mother. You can never imagine how "dirty" a peasant woman can be, in order to save and earn money. The long, black hair means nothing about beauty to a mother who lives in the countryside. It's just a resource— a source of income. It's like a fertile river, bringing profit and income to a continuously destitute family.

Mother asks the man to cut her hair shorter. The shorter the hair left, the longer the portion she has to sell, the more she will be compensated. The man handles the scissor deftly, cutting off, in one swift move, the hair she has kept for several years. Mother suddenly looks like a man, which in fact, is another role that she has been playing— she once was also my father, when he was away from home, doing temporary work.

By next spring, mother's hair will have grown out again. By next spring, she can sell it again. Her hair is just like Chinese chives, one batch after another springing up. Mother's body is the soil in my homeland; from which we keep deriving nourishment, until she becomes the same as her mother turning into a part of the land, our hometown.

FATHER

My father comes through the door
one after another.

His footprints come through first, and then his hands

and arms arrive right after his feet, together with his shadow, his smell,
and finally, he comes through, with his face.

I see his weakness through marketplace gossip.

I make up his loneliness from mother's scorn.

My father comes into my life
one after another.

I see him through my weakness.

I am more and more like him, just like the way people
described him when I was young; I have grey hair; I weep over my misfortunes weakly—
it seems that he has been growing in my body from the very beginning of my life.

AT DUSK

In the evening at dinner time,
I go out and call my father, who is rambling in the woods.

The night permeates little by little,
the darkness spreads like ink on rice paper.

Every time I call, the night is pushed away a little bit;
when I stop calling, the night gathers again and crowds round.

My voice reverberates in the woods for a long time,
rippling in the wind.

Again, father's response
makes the night seem brighter.

ORGANIZING THE BONES

When the grave was opened, he suddenly stopped crying. His father was reduced to several pieces of bone, like a tree without leaves, lying in wet soil. The geomantic master began to organize the bones of his father— skull, frontal bone, and ribs; forearms, metacarpal bones, and collarbone. He saw the hand of his father, the one that once beat him and stroked his hair. It's transformed into broken branches blown away by wind. It has no temperature, and it's lost its weight. After moving his father's grave, stripped naked and lying in his bed, he tosses and turns without getting a wink of sleep. He holds his right hand tightly with his left hand, using every ounce of his strength— he has already reached middle age; he has begun in advance to clean up and organize his own bones.

IF I DIE

If I disappear on your right side
one day in the future
please do not bury me
or place me in a box

If you pity me
please lay a thin layer of clean earth over me
so whenever I am awakened by insects in autumn
I can hold trees by the arm and walk home
to see whether you still expose your toes
outside the quilt

OUTSIDE MY WINDOW

I see harpies hidden in the shadow of shade trees.
I see suffering humanity, a stubborn son, and a father pushed by a rifle butt.
I see a funeral melting in the treetops.
I see a lover from my past life sitting there in a trance.
I see people carving poetry on trees again.
I see people making the sign of the cross.
I see the Virgin Mary, her penetrating eyes.
I see people hiding among the trees, with loudspeakers in their pockets:
 they give me a furtive glance.
I see black bulls frolicking in the fields, one after another.
I see a pile of snow at the corner of the garden— it has not melted, even after thirty years.
I see dead souls still flogging themselves to death.
I see the summer on that tree and the impending golden autumn.
I see the saddest waltz on a spring meadow.
I see everything, as if I am looking at a dream.
I feel another person with me, standing behind my right shoulder;
she goes up the winding road in front of my window.

PUSHING THE PAWNS ACROSS THE RIVER

That is not the Republic of China; it is the porch outside the Republic of China
A few yellowish rays of light lie on a mottled street
An old man is pushing his pawn across the river

It is not the Republic of China; it is the light in twilight hours
It is not the Republic of China, but the porch outside the century-old street
Time pushes pawns across the river

The scenery is dilapidated; it is not the Republic of China
The groups of elders are piles of gloomy time, but they are not the Republic of China
They are playing chess
The knight is killed, too

Pushing the pawns across the river step by step
Now that the pawns have passed the river step by step

Come on
What's the hurry
Time urges the elders; the pawn pushes the knight; they have crossed the boundary

THE TEMPLE

I hear the bell of that temple
beating bones like a steel spoon

A breeze goes through the Buddhist shrine
gently blowing on me

My body is a temple too

At the moment when I close my palms
my heartbeat sounds like a wooden fish

The real temple is death
What a wonderful prayer that is

HOTEL ON RAINBOW ROAD

The exterior walls are substituted by accordion reeds.
That shy and bashful revolving door seldom paints
the scene of travelers flooded in. The lobby
does not have a waterfall composed of chandeliers; registration desks
do not stand in a row, clocks contradicting each other,
the dining hall hides itself in shadow after dinner immediately.

Tears of streetlights drop onto the asphalt road,
the smallest rainbow is shining lonely.
Here, I shake hands with thousands of strangers on
the doorknob, I think about how to play chess with the northern region,
I am a migratory bird who has been foraging in the dead of winter,
carrying a heavy responsibility on my shoulder when I walk quickly in wind.

The shape of each room is not repeated—
maybe it's a square with a broad balcony;
maybe it's long and narrow, a dark temple corridor,
the end is a wardrobe in a monastery;
or maybe it's a frivolous "L-shape"—
the corner can hold a sofa which loves rambling around in a sea of lights.....

That's the joy of being folded up into a wall.
We don't need to carry a thick novel in our suitcase,
since each "check-in" is just like reading Borges
or Calvino, the plot is replaced by space and
it's meditation, time can no longer depict characters who are worthy of being portrayed
when it is as chimerical as a sandglass.

Occasionally, I read Henry Miller:
the magic show next door at midnight seems to have
exhausted those magicians; it's as ferocious as when
a car is bumping against a wall.
Reading Solzhenitsyn, I can feel women's sobs
following infants' cries all night.

The morning has always been tranquil, the cart of the attendant
is cleaning up traces left by yesterday,
that long alley is just like a telescope's
filter, there is a small patch of blue in the grey clouds at the end—
I am left behind by pilgrimage and expedition,
I arrive at the cliff where I need to make decisions.

Now I have already moved into this city,
each time I pass here, those windows stare at me
with indifferent cleanness:
the shackles of life are broken by coat hangers again
and again; it's impossible for human beings to live in a rainbow,
although the hotel finds itself on a road named "Rainbow".

THE LIBRARY AT NIGHT

Nobody is left there. Bricks and tiles
interweave on the lawn. I walk
along the library's wall of glass, my shadow keeps me company,
as if I were going for a walk
ten years ago. Time
appears in the glass
and in the heavy greying clouds.
I am as calm as this huge library, which locks
up all my past. I wonder,
have I lost my passion? I no longer
believe in mysteries and miracles. It's getting
darker and darker. There is a couple
outside the rails, sitting on a newspaper,
chatting in a low voice, kissing each other, exchanging
smiles as if no one else were here. I pass them—
I will never know them, but they are
more like people who blend with the sky, compared to me.

GROCERY SHOPPING

Three of her are shrinking and jostling against herself.
She sees herself in the elevator cabin
and her distress from the left, right, and back.

The silver box is carrying her body and sinking. Silver...
She had silver high heels, sapphire silk stockings
and two red lips which made the night's heart beat fast
at the age of twenty. When gentlemen's arms were slipping around her slim waist,
her present day was flying out of the shadow soaked by champagne.

Monday is potatoes, corn.
Tuesday: cabbages, tomatoes.
Wednesday, doesn't want to eat white gourds and damn lettuce any more.
Thursday, chopping too much meat into pieces.
Living on the blade of a knife day by day,
writhing in the broth of the human world for the first half of life, falling asleep later on.
But how could a fish without bones help to save
an anxious ant on a hot pan.

When the door opens, three of her
are gushing into her body,
the way dust, parasites, and muddled logic
return to their carriers.
At the moment she steps over the threshold, the feeling of falling
suddenly catches her shoulder,
making the basket in her hand shake slightly.
She takes a deep breath, walking toward the "old place" under her life.

SLAUGHTERHOUSE

The butcher has consummate skills.
His knife becomes a compass in a geometer's hand,
it de-fleashes the beef as quickly as the geometer solves that intricate geometric problem.

What makes the butcher become helpless, like a lost soul,
are the bloodstains flowing on the ground.
They solidify together, strongly and firmly.

After the terrazzo floor is brushed by water,
those bloodstains grow into the earth—
they stare at the movements belonging to this human world indifferently.

SHADOW

It's a part of light,
absorbing black
— dark ink is falling.

It is a part of flowing water.
It once was wind, soaring freely above the ground.
It grows with the moon, witnesses its perishing.
People have it when they are born and when they die,
when they squabble and fight with each other.

The world has it,
but it does not have everything on the earth.

SHARPNESS

The treetop of a cypress is sharp.
Its sharpness comes from its nature.

The roof of a church is sharp.

I cannot imagine the sharpness
belonging to a wide expanse of water.

The sea needs to be extensive by itself,
in order to let spring tides come billowing

and give birth to fish and algae;
to conquer and annex vessels, spitting volcanoes...

People look up and gaze at the stars and their prickles.
The church roof cannot approach those prickles.

The steeple of a church is always sharp.
People are unable to arrive at that distant place.

THOSE ARE WORTHY OF NOTE

I mean drawer, not hotel safe
riverbed, not river
telegraph building, not private courier company
glacier, not edelweiss
anticlockwise, not a lift
an expired postmark, not a valid official seal

But once I speak it out, I feel relieved, I disclose,
I say what a frivolous thing it is
Being caught in a dilemma,
I see writing as an arrow—
I nail my word into silence

FORGOTTEN

I have forgotten about my childhood.
and blossom and the moon.
and the wind of early spring.
and the babbling of flowing water in front of my door.
and the purple swallow in front of the hall.
and the spring grass.
and “spring” as far as the eye can see.
and peach trees. pear trees. the night when apricot blossom wither and die.
and summer. apple trees.
and light belonging to leaves.
and winter.
and wildness. sunny morning. white wind.
and autumn.
and afternoon. sunshine. tree shadows.
and a front courtyard. a door leaf.
and a stone bench. the deciduous forest.
and white poplar. palm tree.
and the wood forest. the loud noise under the blue sky.
and moonlight.
and tears. sigh. sleep.
and that open horse-drawn carriage. the road is obstructed by smoke and dust.
and spring under the wheel of history.
and rain. cry in rain.
and the snowfield where you once were walking with me— we were hand in hand.
and sunshine. sky. the thatched shed in snow. the morning we decide to go on a
 long journey.
and the darkest hours before the dawn.
and morning stars. treetop. solitary.
and mountains.
and mountain slopes. hillocks. mountain ridges.
and rivers. riverbank.
and the sea.
and rocks. waves.
and an afternoon staying with a river which flows along slowly.
and the chestnut in wind.

and the shade of a tree. petals. pain.
and love.
and kisses. hugs.
and March. wind. oaks.
and darkness. darkness. darkness.
and boundless spring.
and boundless destiny.

VITA

Siyun Fang is a poet and translator who was born in Nanjing, China. Her poetry and essay have been published in *Rigorous Magazine*, *Tule Review*, *Seven Circle Press*, *Minetta Review*, *Roanoke Review*, *Right Hand Pointing*, *Bodega Magazine*, *Global South* and among other journals and magazines. A Best New Poets 2022 nominee, she has also received the Cantrell Poetry Prize. She graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Economics from Centre College in 2017 and with a Master of Arts in Humanities from New York University in 2019.