

Yiu Ming Cheung

You shred daikon in winter, buckets
of crisp white you stirred with rice flour
and dried shrimp, every year preparing
turnip cake for the spring festival.

A good wife, a good mother, you followed
your husband to Thailand, even though
you both couldn't read the street signs
and on hot days your children would wash

in the city river, you followed him from Bangkok
to Hong Kong, you followed him through bankruptcy,
the night markets in Mong Kok, the nylon factory,
and then one afternoon you shut your eyes.

Maybe you expected a bodhisattva to meet you,
or an Arabian horse, but I only know the nights
when cockroaches chewed at my mother's skin,
finding the fingers she had forgotten to scrub.

You would never see Edmonton, the snow packed
roads, the salty cars, your husband floundering
in the bath tub, living with cancer, his lungs
trying to exhale the words he had learned each week:

disparate, irrupt, patina, perdurable . . .
Sundays you steeped laundry in water,
the detergent cracking your palms, cuticles
bleeding. Where is the honey in this brick?

ASHLEY CHOW