

# *Vociferate*

詠

Emily Sun



FREMANTLE PRESS

For my mother  
&  
my two grandmothers:  
Wong Tai Mui (黄大妹)  
Lucy Chang Ro Lan (张若兰)

‘I have begun with the assumption that the Orient  
is not an inert fact of nature’  
—Edward Said, *Orientalism*.

## CONTENTS

### Beginning ...

Origins	10
Causeway Bay	11
Maybe it's Wanchai?	12
Romeo would, were he not Romeo Call'd	13
Ah! vous dirai-je, maman	14
Long Grove	16
Bedtime Stories	17
Redhill, Reigate	18
High Tea	19
Lord Ewart's Street	20
Backyard Smelters	21
June is Not Winter	22
Toxic Childhoods	23
1989	24
怪怪的	25
Noblesse Oblige	26
Over the Mountains and Far Away	28
Impromptu	29
Culinary Interpretations	30
Brief Overview	31
Vociferate	32
Six Two Six	33

### ... Wandering ...

Orientalist Me	42
Bak Kut Teh on Wuyishan	43
Waterloo	44
Kinda Like a Country & Western Song	45
Billy Was Just a Kid	46
Which Genre Were We?	48
Clichéd Rhizomes	49
By the Western Door	50
Between the Stars	51
Red, White, Blues	52
By the Eastern Door	53

Heavenly Piece	54
Impulse Buys	56
The Empress	57
Smooth Criminals Revisited	58
Tampa Tanka	59
Boxing Days	60
Gods of Te Anau	62
Day Road	63
National Treasures Coming Home	64
psithurism	67
<b>... Continuing ...</b>	
Freshwater Swamps	70
Disclaimer	71
We need to talk about immigration ...	72
Siamese Cat	74
Doppelgänger Across Lands	75
New New Speak	76
Palatable	77
Virtus	78
Bonus Baby	79
打完仗总会有和平	80
Norwegian Would	82
Double Exotic 囍	83
Property Rights	84
Under the Dome	85
Verisimilitude	86
Come Visit Us?	87
Tour Guide	88
Starry Night, Ward 9	90
Once upon a time ...	91
They Are Now Our Customers	92
妈妈为什么?	94
Newborn Australian	96
On My Way to Tempura Udon	97
so what if I smash a bowl?	98
Initialisms	99

Temporality	100
Wandering Minstrel in Translation	101
What Did the Fox Say?	102
Tribal Affiliations	104
<b>Notes</b>	107
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	110

**BEGINNING ...**

## ORIGINS

let's see how we want our story to unfold  
 从前有一个小妹妹.

it should be a trip ... ..  
   ... .. to piece together  
 flows of stories  
 ... drifting ... pondering  
   discovery  
 ... .. social introspection ... travel ... love

*agape* as well of course  
   and heartache  
 the heart must bruise until  
 after the inevitable climax.

topics and chapters need some working out  
 themes. how should we collate it.  
 one larger project.

we need to discuss this properly.  
   fiction? memoir?

Perspective?

  it's theirs not ours  
 we have yet to experience insurmountable loss

Il faut que jeunesse se passe

there has always been loss.

---

从前有一个小妹妹 chung chin yau yat go siu mui mui (Cantonese) – once  
 upon a time there was a little girl

## CAUSEWAY BAY

Before there was  
 a 2047  
 baptised collectives  
 did not settle

Kashmir  
 Palestine  
 Hong Kong.

Home is a memory reinforced  
 spun from the ethereal

大丸  
 placebo playground  
 grows an economy  
 even with the sun setting on the union jack

Pretty in pink and tartan skirts  
 and baby FM boots  
 distractions grow economies  
 built on land, speculative elation

There is no rhyme  
 only reasons why  
 we fly and float  
 to your shores.

---

大丸 daai yun (Cantonese) – big pill<sup>1</sup>

**MAYBE IT'S WANCHAI?<sup>2</sup>***For 伍姑娘 & 云姐姨婆*

Tape deck, SONY  
 made in Japan  
 too many places and too many dark spaces  
 soft wave radio  
 white noise comforts in mah-jeh's refuge  
 masking the sounds of a forgotten city

Non-recyclable plastic and metal, magnetic tape  
 Tony Leung pre-lust but with caution  
 together we unspool the tangles and with an  
 octagonal pencil, made in the people's republic,  
 rewind  
 re-spool  
 until the music plays  
 the 香蕉船 song  
 tonic to sub-dominant fragment  
 then the world started laughing  
 when I tried to start a joke there were  
 too many men in skinny flared jeans.

---

香蕉船 heung jiu syun (Cantonese) – banana boat<sup>3</sup>

**ROMEO WOULD, WERE HE NOT ROMEO CALL'D**

gifted with the radical  
 a foundation  
 of written culture  
 traded for Wuthering Heights  
 because it was too difficult for  
 everyone else  
 a good industrious Christian name  
 but more Germanic than Jesus.

no Germans were in the mountain  
 when Wei developed her principles eight:

点 dian, a strange stone  
 横 heng, a jade table  
 竖 shu, an iron pillar  
 钩 gou, crab pincer  
 提 ti, horsewhip  
 弯 wan, the horn of a rhinoceros  
 撇 pie, bird pecking  
 捺 na, press and wave<sup>4</sup>

but *my* eternal, *my* forever looks like  
 the carcass of a dragon fly.  
 people demand a refund for my  
 jade table and whip  
 for I dare not dig my spurs into the horse.

**AH! VOUS DIRAI-JE, MAMAN<sup>5</sup>**

don't go.  
 ... he takes the eldest to a safer land  
 mother's sensually  
 smokey eyes now smudged by sadness.

... shoeless girl  
 poor little rich girl  
 everyone else's

memories of her Saigon father  
 将美金  
 挤喺  
 埋喺  
 藏喺  
 腊肠里面

now works in a hospital  
 not a nurse, nor a doctor.  
 in America they call them janitors.

the domestic returns home  
 unshaven breakdown of  
 protein, sweaty smells of unwashed  
 clothes of cinnamon,  
 bromhidrosis, osmidrosis, ozochrotia

no longer perfumed  
 nor in tailored dresses  
 with imported fabrics from Paris

---

将美金 jeung mei gum (Cantonese) – American dollars

挤喺 jai hei (Cantonese) – squeeze

埋喺 maai hei (Cantonese) – bury

藏喺 chong hei (Cantonese) – hide

腊肠里面 laap cheung leui min (Cantonese) – inside Chinese sausages

never raged  
that she'd leave school  
(no one wants an overeducated wife)

now she empties an accountant's garbage  
for a living.

**LONG GROVE**

一九八四年  
 back and forth  
 back and forth  
 back and forth  
 白痴

silly simpleton  
 halfwit dunce  
 clod  
 cardigan wrapped  
 by nurses  
 Edwardian asylum  
 繡线院.

far from the great hall  
 sequestered royals (血太近 呵!)  
 Polish people  
 war traumatised (conveniently)  
 forgotten footmen

the woman sees  
 the visitor and waves

we rock  
 back and forth  
 back and forth  
 back and forth  
 perpetual motion

I giggle.  
 She laughs.  
 Remember the apple trees of 狼高苦?

---

一九八四年 baat sei nin (Cantonese) – 1984

白痴 baak chi (Cantonese) – simpleton

繡线院 chi sin yun (Cantonese) – mental asylum

血太近呵 hyut tai gan la (Cantonese) – ‘blood too close ah’

狼高苦 long go fu (Cantonese) – transliteration of ‘Long Grove’<sup>6</sup>

**BEDTIME STORIES***For Sun Chi Ying*

the beginning of a new empire  
 on a small stretch of forest clearing  
 two freshly decapitated heads on a stake  
 calm, clean-shaven, eyes half-closed  
 sad faces in the middle of a narrow mud road  
 children walking past  
 the sentry unimpressed.  
 two thirds of a rainbow

faint in the post-monsoon sky.  
 hope hid in the blue eye of the South China Sea.

*Momotaro-san, Momotaro-san  
 Okoshi ni tsuketa kibi dango!*

they were great cyclists and  
 kind to the children they orphaned.

he never saw them  
 bayonet the children  
 the villagers did that  
 after Nagasaki.

... the daughter of a collaborator  
     was left to bleed out next to her mother  
     until someone said she was only adopted

*Banbanzai, banbanzai,  
 O-tomo no inu ya saru kiji wa,  
 Isande kumruma on enyaraya!<sup>7</sup>*

**REDHILL, REIGATE**

clichéd bowl haircut  
 mini mongolian mozart me  
 gold medallion in hand  
 sodden music scores

no walker.  
 no refuge from rain  
 no bus  
 a green wagon circles  
 once, twice  
 no choice but to  
 accept a lift.

a pub  
 the native's world  
 warm. light  
 dries fears. laughter

RH1 or RH2?  
 It doesn't matter  
 white knight  
 yeast, barley  
 malt and hopes  
 brew in the air.  
 Friendly faced natives

disillusionment will come later:  
 it begins with coal and  
 national fronts follow.

## HIGH TEA

Beat an egg  
 Mash a banana  
 Add flour  
 Oil  
 Beat again  
 Add sweeteners to taste  
 In Guyana add a spoon of sugar  
 In Malaya try condensed milk  
 In Australia stir in Vegemite  
 In New Zealand, manuka honey  
 [mash kumara instead of banana]  
 Bake until it looks edible  
 Plate it and  
 Drink it with Lady Grey.

Lord Grey is too busy with his cabinet,  
 And Napier, the sheep-farming  
 Bagpipe-mending flautist and navigator  
 Who intends to conquer superintend a  
 Celestial Empire.

## LORD EWART'S STREET

arrival in the valley of filled-in  
 tarred streets off  
 great eastern  
 highway homes on quarter-acre blocks  
 later a VHS store  
 chaplino moustache  
 a gun mart alongside  
 broken homes

we slept with the doors unlocked  
 our neighbour hated japanese  
 thus we were safe

walked to school barefoot in summer.  
 past a broken home with broken people.  
 smiling faces until the time  
 a teacher voyaged to the moon.

a boy was dragged across the desk  
 by sir  
 a girl broke  
 another sir's arm  
 he carried it in a sling.

I copied words and more words from  
 the chalkboard. running  
 writing something about captains and banks.  
 drew pictures of botany I'd never seen  
 sang school songs about condemned convicts  
 a self-fulfilling prophecy.

was it even supposed to be ewart or did  
 someone deaf confuse them with tuarts?

there was one red gum tree  
 an asbestos house  
 in the wetlands now wasted.