

from Opposite of Home

By Nicholas Wong

An umbilical cord grew after it was cut
a swerving, a moving-on

* * *

The taste of childhood
no longer whole

That you kept disclosing it
did not mean your tongue could thicken

the phrase *the unrest singing*

* * *

The year Margaret Thatcher was elected, she was elected
The year Margaret Thatcher was elected, people began
panic buying oil
The year Margaret Thatcher was elected, history was tossed
That she was elected tussled with your city's umbilical chord

a swerving
The year Margaret Thatcher was elected, you were born

* * *

This is how I was captured: a crude silhouette, said your childhood

* * *

So much sense of achievement in giving
birth, as in delivered, peached, perpetuity

There was passivity in being a mother. Being yours
she paused, dreaded, as if she knew the rest
of your life would be spent
with insistence on the how rather than what with men

Those men

* * *

You decided breakage was a form
of re-knowing her, and her hand
thudded into a rhetoric repulsive
to your feet

Rush: never applicable to the action called coming home

* * *

From a cab, you watched a street sweeper make a living
Her fingers were looking for a surface to throw themselves
into chaos. Each sweep, each attempt in clearing the silt
and dry leaves, the hay of her broom split

* * *

Your boyfriend named his campaign
“Led by Her.” *The phrase is in the public domain. Free for use*

This was your longest relationship with women

* * *

When you were born
your mother rested her finger on your face, the lip-colored
leakage. Suspense –

Wasn't giving birth also a kind of removal
a handing-down, a succumbing-to

* * *

A rhythm. You kept listening
to the broom of the street sweeper
It was more rhythmic

than your mother's spatula clattering
the greasy wok. Corn
soup with eggs, burger steaks

The taste of childhood was no longer whole

* * *

The flaw of house chores was the reliance on tools with handles: brooms, woks, shields

* * *

You had problems sleeping. A kiss was not a way to focus

* * *

To re-know her, you could not avoid the connectedness
in the days that followed. The sunsets. The many things.

Hyphens were cuts, a hewing to thinking

A wave of annoyance. The many things

* * *

Her womb was not warm, did not hold you long
enough for a natal chart
that would land you beyond the reflection

of luck. Her uterus
clogged with blood, mucus. The fluids –
not a problem

The fragility of their tension was. Always transitory

to breakage, your face, a counter-surface

* * *

(Hyphens were cuts, a hewing to thinking)

* * *

Your chart said your biggest luck in life came
between age 0 and 10, during which you had the most
whimsical pencils, the least troubled school bags

* * *

Accuracy? Go on, then –

to write about the tragedy of this body