

SALLY WEN MAO

Immigration

—from “Migration Suite”

Howl forever if you must, but it will never be music.
Make deaf monkeys out of everyone.

*Father, you leave us without explaining but I heard
the rumors saying you can heal or fatten the wound
on your knees with the clot of a stranger’s country.*

Sepals crown this city of sloughing light.

*Maroon us here in the flying city.
If your heart is a stunt man fishing for ice then mine
is a cold ingot gilded to the stairs.*

Sorrel, sorrow, spumes of science furl
over your reddening sclera. Your breath
beneath the ochre. What troubles make you?

*The kind of father I want will dig a hole through
the floor of his home to find a deeper womb for me.*

Ask the earth what it will feed you.
The truth is a pyrrhic purring—listen
on the airbus with crackling ears.

*Father, I thought you were a revolutionary! Every day
you were gone, I anticipated my own journey to the west.
I was the Monkey Princess. Every day I sketched
a different charcoal portrait of you.*

Here is the lesion on your couch, the tomb,
the television. Take what is abandoned,
thresh the silver from the dross. When the water
crosses the dam, be ready and on your knees.

It is not a life if your neck is (is not) soaped with sweat.

Set your watch back, the rain is beginning.