

Durian on the Skin

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September 17 - October 22, 2022



There was a tree growing beside the water. It stretched roots into both the land and sea, drew water and salt up into its thick, convoluted trunk. It was a durian tree in full flower, and its yellow buds were already sending out that strange and marvellous odour that might be crudely described as cat piss blended with unadulterated euphoria. I made myself as small as a worm, crawled through the tiny aperture of a barely opened bud, and coiled myself round and round its small black heart. I closed my eyes and went to sleep. In my sleep, I dreamt the flower opening, dreamt it drinking sunlight and warming my belly with the heat. Its petals dropped half onto the ground and half into the ocean. I coiled more tightly than ever around the heart. Slowly, a shell grew over me, leather-hard and spiky on the outside, but on the inside smooth, veined and sticky moist. Around me seeds grew thick, and over them a dense yellow-white flesh. As the meat grew plump, that terrible and heavenly cat-piss smell intensified to an almost unbearable degree. Sometimes I felt disgusted by it, but sometimes it comforted me. I stretched a little, readjusting my coils around the fattest seed. She knew I was coming.

Larissa Lai, *Salt Fish Girl*. Toronto: Thomas Allen Publishers, 2002. p.208

Durian on the Skin brings together diverse practices that center the body as a sensational hub of impulses and discharges. Pulled apart, reassembled, reimagined, and transcended, the body becomes a place for navigating mythic inheritances and preparing for a dystopian future that has already arrived. In this way, the physical senses act as a passageway, mediating between deep past and all that is to come.