

yellow / 노란
노랑 / yellow

poems Margaret Rhee



Retro Series chapbooks are printed in Hawai'i on recycled paper.

NECTARINES

When my mentor Beth was pregnant, 10 dollars' worth satisfied her cravings. She also finished her Stanford dissertation. Mouthful of honey. Her womb. A pit. Was it the baby or the nectarines?

“Whereas contributions of Korean Americans include: the invention of the first beating heart operation for coronary artery disease, a 4-time Olympic gold medalist for diving, and the nectarine.”

The flesh is delicate, easily bruised in some cultivations. It is a peach with plum skin. “A peach without its fur coat.” “Slice them into a salad or serve them with cheese.” This is the way of the nectarines.

“Judging by their achievements over the past 100 years, theirs is an American story that confirms opportunity in these free United States.” The name is from the drink of the Olympic gods called “nektar.”

Julia learned in her freshmen year of college, nectarines were created by two Korean brothers. “The Kim brothers.” “It’s like a peach and a plum, together,” she said, “the nectarine.”

In the article “The Yellow Peril,” Jack London wrote, “the Korean is the perfect type of inefficiency—of utter worthlessness” and “tested thus, the Korean fails.” *He probably didn't know about the nectarines!*

Then, Julie tells me later, “you guys can be the nectarine sisters!” I say, “More like she’s a beautiful rosy peach. I’m a lovely purple plum. And together we make a nectarine!” Nectarine family love!

Terry Hong: “I consider myself Korean and American. A Korean American is a hybrid product of both U.S. and Korean countries and cultures.” Beat. I am proud we helped develop the nectarine.

For Javier’s belated birthday, I decide to make him a sundae. Caramel chips. Vanilla ice cream. Lines of poetry as topping. Before we take a bite, I add his favorite: Fresh plump pieces of nectarines!

“The first wave of immigrants from Korea began to arrive in the early 1900s.” “Harry Kim (Kim Hyung–Soon) created history in 1921 with the ‘Fuzzless Peach’ otherwise known as the Sun Grand Nectarine.”

My parents made love sometime in the year of 1983. I was born in the Hollywood hospital. I have dad’s mouth & mom’s eyes. I’m a crossbreed. Or a hybrid. Magnificent mixed breed. Am I a nectarine?

AT THE BLUE MOON CAFÉ

We met at the Blue Moon Café Friday
Behind his seat was a blue painted moon
A date or not a date I think I pray
I gaze into his eyes and think of June
The gurl I used to love, whose brown eyes mowed
My heart into lumps of red wet clay
His eyes were still the same—as Derrida
Would say—only body part that never
Changes, even as you age. June now Pete.
Pete, with his hands folded strong, like men do.
Pete, who doesn't like most people, but me.
Pete, who has a partner, but isn't happy.
Keeping options open, I see no inch
Of gurl in him anymore, only man
Who sits before me, smiles like the moon
Some things you cannot change
Some things you just have to hope and pray

YELLOW

yellow room

yellow skin

yellow yolk

yellow yellow

yellow butter

yellow moon

yellow discharge

yellow bruise

yellow hello

yellow lamp

yellow skin

yellow snot

yellow yellow

yellow other

yellow stars

yellow sign

yellow diarrhea

yellow fellow

yellow jeans

yellow cunt

yellow poo

yellow margarine

yellow yellow

yellow hydrant

yellow girl

yellow gurl

노란 노랑

yellow slut

yellow cunt

yellow butter

yellow other

yellow mellow

yellow sign

hello girl

yellow hurl

노란 노랑

yellow sun

yellow crayon

yellow truck

yellow luck

yellow face

yellow vase

yellow mold

yellow rose

yellow hand

yellow tan

yellow moon

yellow chink

yellow paper

yellow net

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. . . organized crime syndicates, sell cunt; racism is not wicked or cruel when the black cunt or yellow cunt or red cunt or Hispanic cunt or Jewish cunt has . . .

The stain of love
Is upon the world
Yellow yellow yellow

—William Carlos Williams

There's nothing as yellow as the yolk in a fried egg
There is nothing as yellow as a crushed egg carton
the whites oozing into cardboard

There is nothing as yellow

219% x (a + b + c) x A I R =

The innards of lesbians are the same as yours.

She told me.

Still, she wouldn't let me touch until I agreed.

She would navigate.

Her body was mapped. Alone, I could not know her secret parts.

She whispered.

The regions marked girl were strange.

Back of her heel.

Collar bone.

And her left breast, it was evil. Always bigger than the right.

She smiled then

—a toothy grin.

I'm nervous. I've never been with a girl.

You are the only one I've ever desired.

You are questioning. You have time to learn.

To demonstrate. She marked her body with a Sharpie.
The lines were thick and crooked in every way.
Separating limb from limb.
Her left hip was circled with elaborate doodles.
That ran up and around.
Almost touching the edge of her dark nipple.
Never mind this, it's just a design I made up.

She arranged a list of her parts
Using a range of symbolic theorems.
One who never got past elementary math
Would have figured it rubbish or brilliant.
Don't think of this as my stomach, it is now a black board.
Scrawls of figures and numbers galore.
I love making arithmetic, it makes me feel free.

We counted together slowly. Her skin, 67.45 percent boy but 2%
The two black moles on her back ● ● . Her eyes were 98% boy
Except 5 eyelashes 👁 . But her heart, the only organ that matters.
 $219\% \times (a+b+c) \times A I R = \text{boy boy boy } \♂ \♂ \♂$

A dive bar off Santa Monica Blvd. And eyes, cocky ones. That lured me in.
I sank into them and was reassured
I was still straight and a very good person.

Since scientists never consider those breaths that never leave you.
That is essential to the body.

GOOD

I kiss my lover while her legs spread open I pull my fingers through
and through she asks in moans why does it feel so good?

I drown gulp salt ashes & mermaid hair the waves murmur me home.
At seven when I cleaned the house—I got three quarters, like a good girl should.

We were on the telephone. He wanted me to go to the police station. I said no.
I knew the end would come, when my father said Margaret, I don't feel so good.

When my father called my name it was four words: mar, gar, e, t! His singing
Voice not like a tuba or trombone, but a blend. Korean melodies good.

Whoa! I feel good, I knew that I would, now. I feel good, I knew that I would.
So good, so good, I got you. So good, so good, I got you. So good, so good, so good

I like watching bisexual themed reality shows starring Asian Americans
Tila Tequila's on television she's eating fried chicken mmm mmm this is good.

I let my lover sit inside I don't want them to stare at her because she's butch.
God is so good. God is so good. God is so good. Is so good to me. God is so good.

We were deciding what to watch together, my father sees my first boyfriend on the TV,
Black jackets like Columbine, the Matrix, this all is: no good no good no good!

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. My father's ashes are
Scattered in the Pacific Ocean. [I miss him] . . . and then He declared it was good.

She nibbles at my neck, my toes she kisses each part of my back side
It all takes at least an hour I start to dream and die she whispers I taste good.

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ABOUT THE POET

Margaret Rhee writes poetry in the morning, teaches ethnic lit in the afternoon, and researches race, gender, and sexuality at night.

Dreams—digital or otherwise—tend to occur all day long.

In 2004, she attended the inaugural Kundiman retreat where, in the hot, humid, and beautiful Virginia landscape, she fell in love with poetry.

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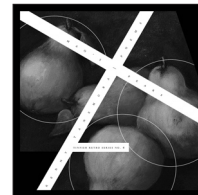
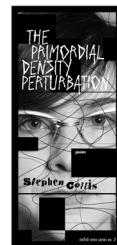
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