

## Louise Bak / from *SOMATICA*

Two connected forms wake by a watery source. Water nymphs/girls?

**A: Ngo ghoch duk ngo ghoh toau yow siu siu umh toah**

A: I feel my there's a bit of an ache/my head is out of sorts

**B: Yee ghah, ngo hui ghang doeh mhung mhung ghun ghun**

B: Right now, my neck feels really tense/tight/choked/clenched

**A: Nhei phun ghun kui jun, nei umng hing jhoew dee ghue gwei yeh**

A: When you were sleeping just now, you kept doing strange things

**B: Ngo umng ghei dhuck. nei goh buey jhach jow gau jheem yaeh**

B: I don't remember. There's a sharp shape on your back

**A: Nei jhow mawn mawn dei mhow mhow gung nei ghoh . . . jik hai ghao  
hhoew poh**

A: You were slowly touching, stroking your . . . just like a woman of ill-repute.

**B: Nei ghong siu. Nei mhun hah quei jhoem hauem suey mai  
heung nei gho soh**

B: You must be joking. Take a whiff of the salty sea smell in your hand

**A: Ngo umng ying duc nei. Nei fhei di gut. Moeh lhei ngo.**

A: I don't recognize you. You should take off. Don't worry about me.

**B: Nei jhuen hei goh soh mui. Ngo wing heen umh wooie lei huei nei  
Ngo umh lei nei deem yeung soh soh dei**

B: You really are a silly girl. I can never leave you. I don't mind how stupid/  
geeky you can get

**B: Quei goh yaeah herng nei goh buey jhach wooie dukh pei Nei bei ngo tei ah.**

B: The shape on your back feels like it can break skin. Can I get a little peek?

**A: OK**

**B: Whah . . . nei hoew dukh yuen ghang**

B: Whoa . . . you're very scary

**A: Nei yoe seung gic ngo**

A: You're trying to irritate me again

**B: Qhuei goh yaeah wooie yookh. Ngo gui nei moew ghueh di gwei. Nei sang yuet ghue di deen yuen . . . di whei yuen**

B: The thing is moving on it's own. I told you not to mess with ghosts. You're always calling strange people . . . creepy people

**A: Ngo umh dei nei nghup mut. Nei uhm haung ying bei nei jhee gei, nei haum sup, daaun hei moew yuen haung doah nei**

A: I don't know what you're talking about. You're not willing to admit to yourself that you're lusty, but no one wants to touch you

**B: Ngo ji lew laing di. Nei sang yuet banh nei huei dim yeung puei di nam-jeih. Tai ah nei yuk goh soh mei.**

B: I was always the prettier one. You're always pretending to be hot, like you know how to get with the boys. Look at you waving the silly tail.

**A: Enough. We're identical.**

**B: Nei ghoch duk deem?**

B: How do you feel?

**A: Ngo moew yaeh.**

A: I'm okay.

**B: Ngo ghockh duk hoeh kheh gweih. Nei jic hei joew goh realistic mermaid tail Nei joeh ghoah di mhuet yaeh lai?**

B: I think it's strange. You look like you have a real mermaid tail. What did you do to yourself?

**A: Ngo moew mut deem. Ngo umh dei nei ghong mhut.**

A: Nothing much. I don't know what you're going on about.

**B: Ngo umh mheet dut qhwei huew.**

I can't tear it off.

**A: Ai ya. Ngo hueng. Ho hueng . . . Ai . . . Hueng sei . . .**

A: Ai ya. It hurts. A lot. It hurts (deeply, terminally) . . .

## THE WATERS RISE

[ . . . ]

**B: I want to leave you.** (struggles to tear herself away)

**A: That's impossible. Mhauk die nei goh hoew . . .**

A: . . . Open your mouth wide . . .

**B: No fucking way.**

**A: Please . . . Let your lips cover your teeth . . .**

**B: No way. Let go of me.**

**A: Crawl over and atop of both worlds . . . Nei gei dhuck di laat maeh mah?**

A: . . . Do you remember the spicy scent?

**B: Let me go.**

**A: The three of us went for a nature walk . . .**

**B: I don't know what you're getting at.**

**A: You liked the music and atmosphere of the place . . .**

B: Let me go.

They wrestle.

**A: It had been cloudy all day before drifting into a strange night.  
A neither here nor there kind of day, before the infesting sights.**

**B: What the hell?! Oh. Cripes. Your tail is fast growing.**

**A: You were wearing a red cashmere scarf around your neck.  
You got off on your appearance, with your siee mun checks.**

A: . . . modesty checks.

**B: Nei loew di choew wah, jic hei goh soh mah-lau ying.**

B: You leak such low/dirty language, appearing like a deformed monkey spirit.

**A: Ngo seurng-sun nei gei dhuck nei haum: more, more, more.**

A: I figure you remember crying, more, more, more.

**You said make it a little harder, thicker to even the fish-score.**

**B: Nei nhoe ghun chee sut, nei goh hoew leet hooie yoeh sing.**

B: Your brain system is all mangled, your mouth looks cracked, diseased.

**A: Nei ghue jhung nei yoeh lei mau, nei lackh mui, nei damh damh daeh  
Ngo ji nei whun di yeeph, jing sup nei goh hei, jing quei yoeh heurng mai**

A: You think you're polite, you're a smart girl, that you're demure/reserved  
I know you find wet leaves, to wet/lubricate your ass, sweetening it

**B: Go wear out your own cunt. Nei quei sut sum, nei doh ming.**

B: . . . You're so crazily wound-up, you can still surely understand. (She loosens herself away)

**A: (an accelerating gurgle like water going down a plug-hole) came out of you  
A smile hardened on your lips like painted sugar as if you wanted it to . . .**

The tail lunges at B. B tries harder to tear herself away.

**B: Sneaking down to shore, it was you forcing, my legs trembling . . .**

**A: You called the deeps to reveal a thing, all spongy, tuberous, warty, eeew then you get all dreary about meeting some demonic shark sister, boo**

**B: Hah, your hindmost corners are so rank, your thingy is shrinking**

**A: (trying to grab her back)**

**Oh, I ask you to drown her to sense. Diluvial cares, give me the flood-hand, You can't go denying a backlog of undress you denied with decided demand**

**B: Your tail advances to my throat . . . nei ghoh sum doh mei qhuik ding.**

**B . . . Your heart still can't decide**

**A: If I let you leave, you'll still choke in the absoluteness of your sick cry**

**You'll weep a mythic flood, ngo wing heen uhm sing ying ngoch seet dieh**

**A . . . I will never admit we've fallen/depreciated in to shame together**

**B: Ngo seet mhut? Hei nei fhooh goh suen mei huoi goh see-haup, lei jing . . .**

**I've lowered myself? You're flinging yourself in to the toilet bowl, licking the remains**

A's tail tears B ferociously away. The water rushes torrentially around their separating forms . . . rippling, distorting the surface of each twin . . .

**A: Nei yuen ji . . .**

**A: Watch out for . . .**

**B: Nei ho sang . . .**

**B: Be careful . . .**

They break away from each other.

## Note on the text

*Somatica* involves a dialogue between conjoined twins, who are parted. While submerged in local polluted waters, they invoke the highly polluted river systems of China. The text was written as part of a collaboration between com-poser Nilan Perera and dancers/choreographers Susanna Hood and Marie Josee Chartier. It incorporates Toisan, a dying almost-embarassing dialect rarely used in the contemporary Chinese communities of Toronto, which Bak finds compelling in the way it can relay aspects of the corporeal.