

when I close my eyes the island rhythms

Kathy Mak

the taste of salt and humid heat
burnt incense and graveled voices
fill through empty pores and crevices of
memories

not made to remember

I see Popo
who grows smaller and smaller from the rear
window legs crossed against the curving bench
shrouded by hedges gently nipping at the nape
mapped hands I've learned to know stay twined
atop bony thighs eyes seeing and
unseeing

離 to part to leave
an ancient Chinese character in shape of a bird
two lines crossed within the heart of enclosure
each strike representing a shift in meaning
a trickle of change
dragged and recalled into the aftermath
of every parting

we learned to write
by fingering charcoal lines on gridded
paper the depth of our nails covered in residue
as sweated dents streaked across
the page it took eighteen strokes to brew
a character of complexity
eighteen strokes to hover in gray before
understanding what it took to

離

yearning comes when we no longer
have when the way to remembering is
desperate
and deliberate no use counting the paces
between ocean and land
each breath a puncture to every step
not taken
who is it that leaves
and who returns?
sometimes neither gets to decide
questions laid bare permeates into dreams
an awakening reminder for what we
cannot
change



Gradient Gliding by Zeh Daruwalla