

Ode to My Period

*In Cantonese women tell each other
“Yi ma lai dob”: My great aunt has come to visit.*

My “great aunt” rarely visits
now but she found me in Sichuan
half way up the slope of Er Mei Shan.^[i]
I was on the way to the peak
with four other women when great aunt beckoned
the monkey to leap from his leaf nest
in the mountain camphor tree onto
my pack full of apples. The monkey bared his fangs
when we shouted and waved our arms.
He lifted the pack flap and reached in for two pieces of
fruit. Then later, the raven that sauntered into
the women’s toilet in the monastery garden
didn’t fly away when I squatted over the stone hole,
plucked my used pad from the bin. He ambled
outside, scattered scarlet petals
of its blown blossom on the breeze.
Great aunt has retired since that climb,
but sends notes in the beak of
a dark bird. The stain of her sunset returns
after an afternoon of love.

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[i] Buddhist holy mountain in Sichuan province.