

*Ming Di*

**River Merchant's Wife**

And I will come out to meet you  
As far as Cho-fu-Sa.— Li Po, from *Cathay* by Ezra Pound

How far was Cho-fu-Sa, she didn't measure, it only took her  
many days to walk— but nobody was there.  
She waits at a junction, everyone biking or driving by  
seems to be on bamboo stilts, playing horse.

She takes out her dried plums, only  
to find butterflies  
yellow, dancing a mysterious counter-sign.

Li Po fictionalizes her past, she trusts  
him;  
Pound misspells words, she takes all puns  
as her hours—  
she walks and walks, sees a windy town of people

and dust. She builds a temple  
with the wind, touches dust into fruit, vegetables and corn—

but no one sees her skills (or her lucky hand). She has patched the sky  
once. No one knows her. Homeless. She makes it home,  
the foreign wind,  
the foreign dust. Where is Cho-Fu-Sa  
matters little,  
it's Li Po's line of  
telling Pound to go kiss his wind.  
And she is in her backyard, weaving silk

out of cornstalks, her hands  
shaped human fish once. A green bird flies up, the sky  
flies up,  
but no one recognizes her monster. Thump, into the water.

The town's folks don't know her name, only notice her bangs  
cut straight.

Wind east and west of Cho-Fu-Sa  
snorts, in disdain.

River Merchant's Wife, a self-made commodity,  
abandoned,  
outside of Cathay and the *Cathay*. (Bad timing, always

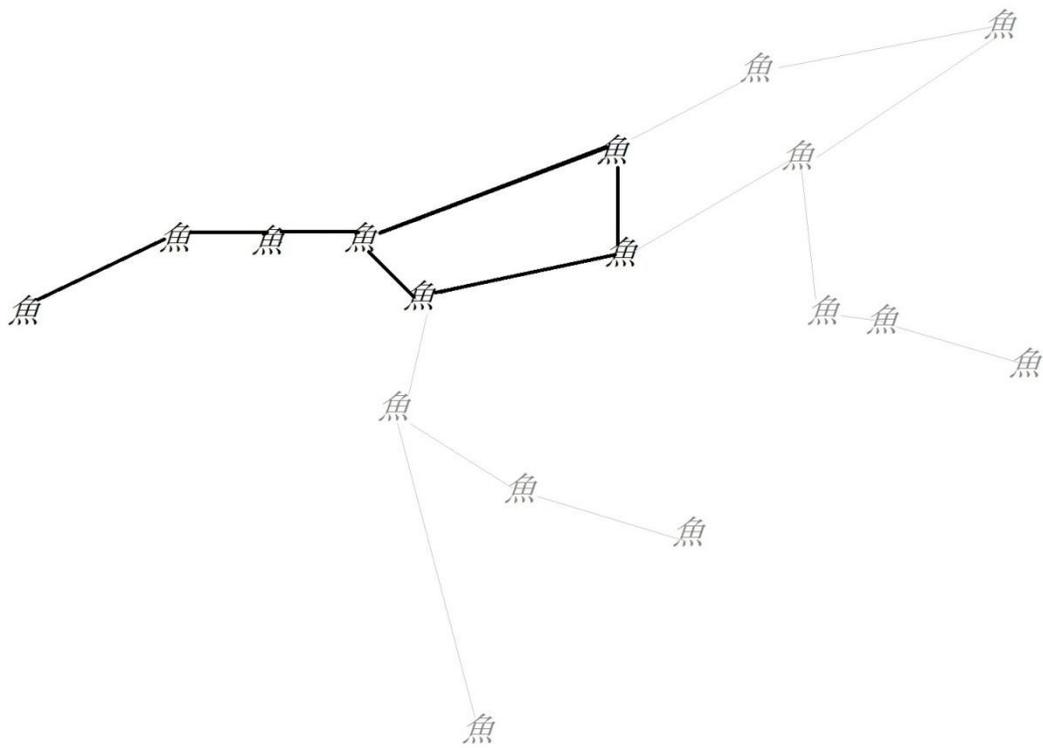
bad timing in *Cathay*). But she believes  
in the hours,  
not self-abandonment (perhaps out  
of laziness).

Laziness plants herself, and there grows a bamboo horse,  
from the earth, with plum-leaf wings.

***Translated from the Chinese by Katie Farris with the author***

\* *Cho-Fu-Sa = Chang (long) Feng (wind) Sha (sand dust). "Weaving-woman" is the Chinese folklore about the "Vega constellation": the grand-daughter of Kuafu lives on the eastside of Sky River and gets to see Niulang (cowboy) only on the Lunar July 7th. "Shaping hand" comes from the Chinese mythology of Nüwa whose last name was Wind and who patched the sky after a storm and formed first humans from clay. (Now we make clay from humans.)*

One Visual poem by Ming Di



魚 = fish

Fish (yu) and Universe (yu) echo each other in Chinese.

## Ocean Leaves

The sea is a tree and the fish—  
the fish are leaves,  
the leaves that waft in the water.

Mother— she belongs to the sky  
and my father, she says, to the earth  
as she's a believer,  
she says, and he— he is not.

From where I was born, China,  
I don't know what it is  
to be a believer but I see many fish and they fly

toward the sky  
each night. Some fall back  
to the earth, some stay there longer.

When I pray, I see a big bear  
like a tree branching out  
reaching you in the April night.

Look down, Mother, look at me and look into my eyes,  
you'll see many more stars—  
they're trees, trigger points of pain  
on my retina.

**Bio:**

**Ming Di** is a Chinese poet and translator living in USA, author of six collections of poetry and four books of translation. She is editor of *New Cathay: Contemporary Chinese Poetry 1990-2012* (Tupelo Press, 2013). Her own work has been translated into English (*River Merchant's Wife*, Marick Press, 2012), German (Ein Leeres Haus, DJS Chapbook, 2013), Spanish (*Luna fracturada*, Valparaiso Ediciones, 2014), and French (*Histoire de famille*, forthcoming in France 2015).