

NLB Online Repository of Artistic Works (NORA)

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE LANDLESS

Alvin Pang

For permission to print, download, produce or otherwise use this work, click here:
kmap@mailhost.net

Note: Content layout and formatting are as received from author.

Alvin Pang. All rights reserved.

This copy is for online viewing only on the NLB Online Repository of Artistic Works and may not be printed, downloaded or reproduced in any form without prior permission from the copyright holder.

what it means to be landless

When I look out the window I can only see cloud
and the top of other people's roofs. Gardens
are out of reach, even the smallest blade of grass.
In stormy weather rain dashes right past me
on the way to somewhere important, thirsty.
It means shade. It means the herbs and spices
I try to cultivate wilt under fluorescent lighting
and air conditioning. It means safety. It means
clean hands. It means I taste the abundance
of old tin, of sodium benzoate, of vacuum
sealed meats with the market closed. I can have
whatever I want as long as it's something on offer.
I can offer an address that in fifty years
will not even be memories of a lost childhood.
When I travel, I look for floodplains and unscalable
mountains, for the small scruffed dogs
scratching at dung and soil and fresh greens
we eat later not knowing where they came from.
It means I will be burned, not buried. It means I am
the son of no soil. It means I have no fear of
droughts and bandits, of hard work, and children
at play have earth brushed away from their knees
in case it makes them sick. It means enough,
and nothing and smiling, every morning as I rise,
the puzzled smile of the long asleep.

Alvin Pang. All rights reserved.

This copy is for online viewing only on the NLB Online Repository of Artistic Works and may not be printed, downloaded or reproduced in any form without prior permission from the copyright holder.