THINGS WE CARRY ON THE SEA
Wang Ping

We carry tears in our eyes: good-bye father, good-bye mother
We carry soil in small bags: may home never fade in our hearts
We carry names, stories, memories of our villages, fields, boats
We carry scars from proxy wars of greed
We carry carnage of mining, droughts, floods, genocides
We carry dust of our families and neighbors incinerated in mushroom clouds
We carry our islands sinking under the sea
We carry our hands, feet, bones, hearts and best minds for a new life
We carry diplomas: medicine, engineer, nurse, education, math, poetry, even if they mean nothing to the other shore
We carry railroads, plantations, laundromats, bodegas, taco trucks, farms, factories, nursing homes, hospitals, schools, temples . . . built on our ancestors’ backs
We carry old homes along the spine, new dreams in our chests
We carry yesterday, today and tomorrow
We’re orphans of the wars forced upon us
We’re refugees of the sea rising from industrial wastes
And we carry our mother tongues
爱 (ai), حب (hubb), لَبَنَةٌ (libe), amor, love
平安 (ping’an), سلام (salaam), shalom, paz, peace
希望 (xi’wang), أمل (‘amal), hofenung, esperanza, hope, hope, hope
As we drift . . . in our rubber boats . . . from shore . . . to shore . . . to shore . . .

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