

## BBQ Meat Shops

by Ya Xin Lu

I wasn't here in 1970  
when a hundred golden-brown ducks lined the windows of this street  
and a thousand voices flew raucously  
*char siu rou!*  
*niu rou ga li!*  
*bai zhuo gai lan!*  
and little footsteps pattered on the concrete  
begging *mama* for just one treat  
while big laughs bounced off watery glass  
onto salty air and sweet grass

I wasn't here in 1975  
when the white men came knocking on the door  
rows of *kao ya* thrown on the floor  
voices dead  
air sour  
bullshit about cooking temperature spewed for hours  
because buttered steak raw is bourgeois  
but *char siu* pork tended fully is deadly

I wasn't here in 1976  
when my people rose  
a whole association to oppose the people who took our laughter when they left  
voices turned redder than red  
marching up Parliament Hill ahead

I am here in 2022  
when a few golden-brown ducks line the windows of this streets  
and a dozen voices walk peacefully  
try all they please  
they cannot take away this salty breeze