

THIS SONG IS DEDICATED

After Snack Witch Joni Cheung's Songs to My Ancestors

to my mother and the radio
silence we maintain. To the kitchen that heard it all:

slow simmer of Saturday morning congee,
afternoon crinkle of grocery bags, Saturday night fights.

To the rice cooker beside the radio, its gentle click
coaxing us toward the table, its light a beacon

toward an illusion of family. To the earbuds
I stuffed into my ears to listen to the *Top 10*

at 10 and the syndicated late-night advice
show that made up my sex education, the static

I needed to fall asleep, drowning out the soundtrack
of my childhood: crash of metal spatula

against a worn steel wok, the ailing refrigerator
droning in the background of my father's temper,

the murmur of my mother's sadness. To AM1470,
its talk radio, Cantonese pop, the songs I couldn't sing,

to Paula Tsui, Faye Wong, Eason Chan, their notes
returning as earworms crawling through the dust

of misunderstanding, of what's left unsaid
across the distance required to untether myself

from home. This song is dedicated to itself,
to the ghosts that carry me across space and time

back to my mother's kitchen. To the radio
on my mother's kitchen counter,

antennaed toward heaven, its choir of voices
that kept her company in the loneliest place.