

**'Diaspora'**  
**Pey Pey Oh**

Ladies' fingers  
widespread for my mother, green thumbed  
in improbable places –  
balconies in China,  
plant pots in Michigan,  
patios in Penang.

Pineapples  
by the chain-link fence  
discouraged burglars;  
my father joked the spiky bromeliads  
would be a blue-sword surprise  
for any creeping teens.

Papayas,  
a whole grove of  
Goddess-chested trees  
shielded me and Ambika  
from boys' catcalls  
as we harvested the bitter leaves  
for dengue-cooling juice.

Lalang grass  
sharp as a knife –  
its long reddened scratches  
on my legs – mark my carelessness  
to gossip, that serrata of small town life.

Its red feathery seed blooms  
on the empty lot next door;  
I gather armfuls that blow away  
through my sister's glass-louvred windows –  
to where their lightness yearns  
to set down roots  
and cover the earth.