

前言（一）

文 / 黃裕邦

每年上英語創意寫作課時，我必會向同學們提出一個要求：向內自觀，找找那個折磨自己，令自己不好受的人、時間點、說話、或者事情，然後由那裏開始寫作。說實話，這是一個自虐的過程，但結果寫出來的作品，往往總比一些不癢不痛的好。我相信每個詩人都會對自己提出類似的要求，透過向外界赤裸地表露這些拉扯，了解一下自己的精神和創作狀態。

二〇二〇年尾收到朋友邀請，要做一本關於寫作困難的雙語散文集，我立即對自己產生懷疑。我作為一個在香港用英語創作的詩人，夠資格去編一本中文書嗎？考慮了很久，我決定把「編輯」一個名銜淡化，換個角度把自己視為一個困頓收集者。而另一種懷疑就是究竟這本書在市場上有甚麼價值？難道時間不夠艱難了嗎？究竟有甚麼人會嫌自己的日子過得不夠辛苦，還有空去了解一些香港作家的寫作之苦？因此，我要向每位最後把這本文集帶回家的讀者說一句多謝，謝謝你們在已經可能千斤重的腦袋騰出空間，去支持一些年輕作家。他 / 她們有些留在香港，有些來到香港，有些離開了香港到外地升學，生活。縱然背景不同，他 / 她的文字讓我們知道寫作對他 / 她們的意義。我也感激每位作家，嘗試不遮不掩的把自己的困頓狀態記錄下來。可寫的，已經寫下來了。

文集內十一位作家的文章題材各異，我亦不打算逐一介紹，

也不想作篩選，不想營造一種這位作家的困頓比那位的較為重要的氛圍。個人的困頓（無論是關於家庭，空間，自我調節，社會，性向，經濟…等等）在世界崩潰的大前提下，是平等的。不過，十一篇原文呈現困頓的方式十分吸引，有淡淡然的幽默，有模擬自我對話，有像碎片的散文長詩，也有像自我精神狀態的記錄。在我們要求自己每天都要過得好些的時候，如何用最貼近自己的聲音的方法，把最糟的記錄下來，是每個創作人都必須思考的。

我最後要感謝的還有一起編輯這本文集的李薇婷，她彌補了我很多不足，和三位翻譯者：Mary King Bradley，Kate Costello 和葉梓誦，在我無論生活和文字創作都遺失了GPS的日子裏，與我一起把這個項目完成。文集編完後，我相信我的困頓沒有消失，日子也沒有忽然好起來，但起碼我很集中地在他 / 她的字裏行間尋找到彼此的共通點，然後把十一個關於困頓的寫作經歷好好保存在書架上。

Preface (I)

text / Nicholas Wong

translation / Kate Costello

Every year in my English language creative writing class, I make a request of my students: look inward and find the person, point in time, conversation or event that torments you and makes you uncomfortable and start writing from there. Frankly, this is a masochistic process, but the result is always better than a completely painless one. I believe all poets have similar requirements for themselves, and that laying bare this torment to the outside world allows us to understand ourselves and our creations.

At the end of 2020 I received an invitation from a friend to make a bilingual essay anthology about writing in difficult times, and right away I felt consumed with self-doubt. As a Hong Kong poet who writes in English, could I edit a Chinese book? I thought about it for a long time and decided to downplay the term “editor” and instead view myself as a collector of difficulties. Another doubt was what kind of value this book would have on the market: weren’t the times hard enough already? Who would think that they weren’t experiencing enough hardship in their own life and use their free time to understand the difficulties of some Hong Kong writers? So, I want to say thanks to all the readers who have picked this book up and brought it home, thank you for finding some room in your already heavy head to support some young writers. Some of them live in Hong Kong, some of them have moved to Hong Kong and some have left Hong Kong to study and live in other places. Even though their backgrounds are different, their words tell us what writing means to them. I am grateful to all the writers for trying to record their greatest challenges with no holds barred.

The works by the eleven authors all have different themes, and I don’t want to introduce them one by one, to make a selection or to create an impression that some authors’ difficulties are more important than others’. Personal difficulties (whether they are related to family, physical space, adjusting oneself, society, sexual orientation, the economy, etc.) are all equal in the face of the world’s collapse. The eleven texts present extremely attractive approaches to difficulty, from light humor to imitating self-talk. Some are fragmented prose poems, and some are more like psychological reflections. When we want each day to be a bit better, how do we use a voice that is closest to our own to record the worst times? This is something that every writer has to think about.

Finally, I want to thank my co-editor for this anthology, Li Mei Ting, who compensates for my many shortcomings, along with our three translators Mary King Bradley, Kate Costello, and Ernest Ip, who completed the project with me in a time when I lost the GPS both in my life and my writing. After the completion of this anthology, I don’t believe our problems will have gone away or that our days will suddenly get better, but I will have focused on finding common space between the lines, and eleven pieces of writing about difficult times will be safe and sound on my bookshelf.

前言（二）

文 / 李薇婷

過去一年替相知的文友 S 的網台節目代班，在最困頓的時刻，重新檢回了自己那些被人認為不務正業的興趣：流行文化與音樂。在香港 ViuTV《全民造星 III》突圍而出，終於成為歌手的張進翹 Manson 有首新歌《無可救藥的浪漫》，以一陣世紀末的頹廢曲風問了香港人一句：「如果生命是你的情人，你會談一場怎樣的戀愛？」在這個全球都彷彿被疫情偷走了人生兩年（或更久）的時刻，這問題實在令人感覺到一陣無可救藥的世紀末浪漫。

世紀末，這個詞與香港特別有緣。一九九七年政權移交之際，香港亦被一陣世紀末的氣氛籠罩。就像兩個世界，一邊天花亂墜，另一邊則頹墮委靡。頹廢派藝術家的狂歡之下往往是極度的悲憤。《今夜星光燦爛》，達明一派用迷幻的聲線向這個連張愛玲都一度迷失於海岸霓虹燈光之中的維多利亞城發問前進的方向，形容詞是淒美。而我們當然也不會忘記許鞍華的《今夜星光燦爛》，今天我更明白電影裏潘宗龍的慨嘆。

廿多年後，燦爛的星光同樣照着島上困頓的人。

文集的排序，來自裕邦和我閱讀稿件時的體會：一群書寫香港的人，在世界各地不同地方，竟也面對着相近的困頓。我們將之排好，讓文字彼此相知、回應與對話。網上一度流傳一張迷因圖片，嘲諷人類的二〇二〇和二〇二一年都被病毒偷走了。誠如盧

好所言，我們的確過了兩年嘖嘖咭嘖嘖（自己顧自己）的生活。封城的日子，人和人之間的距離既遠又近。被迫困在同一個空間，人便要展開許多不願的對話。然而對話總是困難的，沐羽在創作時亦慨嘆。然而寫作畢竟就是用語言來逼近人的處境，那麼對話則是必須的。只是，在如此低氣壓的日子裏，誰又能確保自己和別人能好好對話呢？又或者，我們需要的反而是，像潘禾那樣，和自己好好談談？

談到對話，過去幾時，「對話」大概是常被濫用的動詞。然而，在許多情況下，對話只是單方面的宣示，又或是沒有被順利承接起來的言說。在張欣怡筆下的屋邨裏，人的居住空間狹小，總是擦肩而過的人卻對話無多。無法溝通的語言不過亂碼。沒有落點的言語無用，人便漸漸不說話。靜默地生活的倖存者，他們的「新生活」就像是卡住了的齒輪，「就是滑不過去」，梁莉姿這樣寫道。問題是，在這樣「靜止」的年間，記憶變得模糊。時間有時被延長，有時被壓縮，專注寫作彷彿一場持久戰。盧嘉莉思考生活中可以留下來思考與書寫的時間。寫作不容易，特別在這段時間，人性都被放大。鄧小樺寫到在這過渡時期，環境大變，過往的文學發表園地變成現在網絡紅人的私語。環境改變，人們失措的有，頓時性情大變的亦有。

如果說困頓之時更見人性，那麼，我們或可明白黃可偉何以覺得路甚難行的。只是，難行的路，還是有人在走。張依婷為我們數算那些曾經承受過困苦的女性，包括她自己。然而她還是思考下一步該如何走，一如張嘉倫從公共世界回到自身，直面自己

的闕限。討論限制是殘酷的事。李日康索性將限制寫成寓言。蛇的祖先是穴居的，人類又何嘗不是？古時的我們將穴中倒映試當真，今天我們同樣將九格直播當成真——我們才是自身最大的蔽障，而困頓從來不是。

感謝黃裕邦讓我參與這計劃。當年在水煮魚文化出版幫忙出版他的詩集中譯，在與他來回修訂和討論之間，有天他問我，為何對他的詩集有興趣。我說，讀到一本好的詩集是應該要慶祝的。這次的出版計劃也是，寫作是值得慶祝的事。和 Nic 的合作總是很快樂，學習到他許多的敏銳，許多的想法。多謝出版社 Cart Noodle Press 讓這些關於困頓的文字可以出版。多謝三位翻譯者：Mary King Bradley，Kate Costello 和葉梓誦。有了他們，十一位作者以不同語言所寫下的困頓才得以交流。感謝本書的設計 Zac Choy 讓這本文集在美術上能以更好的面貌示人。就像 Nic 說的，寫作和編書並不會消除困頓，更甚者還可能添些煩惱。然而這或許是我們尚能緊守的位置。

所以，記住陪我。

Preface (II)

text / Li Mei Ting

translation / Kate Costello

Last year, I substituted on my friend S's online radio program. At the most difficult time, I retreated into an interest considered by others to be a waste of time: popular culture and music. On Hong Kong's Viu TV (*King Maker III*), in a burst of *fin-de-siècle decadence*, breakthrough singer Manson Cheung's new song "Incurable Romantic" asked Hong Kongers: "If life was your lover, what kind of love would you have?" While the whole world has been robbed of two years (or more) by the pandemic, this question makes us feel an incurable *fin-de-siècle* romance.

Fin-de-siècle is a word that is entwined with Hong Kong. During the 1997 political handover, Hong Kong was enveloped in a *fin-de-siècle* atmosphere. Two worlds: one extravagant and the other in ruins. Decadent artist's revelries are often extremely sorrowful and indignant. "Starry is the Night" by Tat Ming Pair uses psychedelic notes to ask the way forward in the coastal neon light of Victoria City, where even Eileen Chang once got lost. It's both sad and beautiful. And, of course, we can't forget Ann Hui's version of "Starry is the Night," today I understand Poon Chung Lung's sigh of regret more than ever.

Twenty years later, the starry nights still shine over people in difficult times on the island.

The works in the collection have been arranged by my reading experience and Nicholas Wong's: a group of Hong Kong writers, in different parts of the world, still face similar challenges. We have set this order so that the pieces

speak to each other: they respond and converse. A meme once spread online mocking how 2020 and 2021 were stolen from us by the virus. Just as Yin Lo has said, we have had two years of life talking to ourselves (and taking care of ourselves). During lockdown, we were both close and far from other people. Trapped in the same place, people needed to have conversations that many didn't want to have. But conversation is always hard, Page Fung sighs while writing. Since writing uses language to approach the human condition, dialogue is necessary. In such depressing times, however, who can guarantee that they will converse well with others? Maybe like Pamela Wong, we need to have a dialogue with ourselves.

Speaking of dialogue, the word itself has frequently been misused. In many circumstances, dialogue is no more than a one-sided declaration, speech that isn't easily accepted. In Cheung Yan Yi's estate, people live in narrow spaces and conversations with those we brush past are few and far between. Language that is incapable of communicating is nonsense. Language that doesn't have a place to land is worthless; people gradually stop talking. For survivors of this silent life, their "new life" is like a "misaligned gear... unable to keep turning," just as Leung Lee Chi has written. The problem is, in this static year, memory becomes hazy. Time sometimes extends and sometimes compresses, concentrating on writing is like a war of attrition. Collier Noguez thinks about the time in life that remains for thinking and writing. Writing isn't easy, especially these days, when humanity is magnified. Tang Siu Wa writes about transition and huge changes in the environment when the past field of literary publications became the current whispered words of internet celebrities. When the environment changes and people are at a loss, there are great changes in our nature as well.

If we say that we see more humanity in difficult times, then maybe we can understand why Tomaz Wong thinks the narrow road ahead is so difficult.

But, with any narrow road, there are still people walking on it. Ysabelle Cheung counts as one of the women among us who has experienced hardship, including from herself. She still thinks about how to take the next step, just as Karen Cheung returns from the public world to her own, facing her own limits head on. Speaking of limits is cruel. Angus Lee simply considers limits as fables. The ancestors of snakes lived in caves, and so did humans. Our ancient selves took the reflections in a cave as reality, and our current selves similarly take split screen livestreams as reality: we are our own greatest hindrances, challenges never are.

Thank you to Nicholas Wong for participating in this project with me. When Spicy Fish published the Chinese translation of his poems, he asked me during our revisions and discussions why I was interested in his poetry. I said reading a good poetry collection is something to celebrate. This publication is too. Writing is always something to celebrate. It's always delightful working with Nic, and I learned a lot from his acuity and thinking. Thank you to our publisher Cart Noodle Press for publishing this writing about difficult times. Thank you to our three translators: Mary King Bradley, Kate Costello, and Ernest Ip. Thanks to them, writing about difficult times in different languages by these eleven authors can be in conversation. Thank you to our book designer Zac Choy for making this anthology look so beautiful. Just like Nicholas said, writing and compiling a book won't put an end to the difficult times, and sometimes it can even add to our troubles. This might be a position that we can hold onto.

So, remember to keep us company.