

CU *Writing in English*

Volume X / 2010



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I am delighted to introduce this landmark 10th volume of *CU Writing in English*. Ever since 2001 the students of this Department, particularly those enrolled in our creative writing courses, have been producing high-quality collections of poetry and stories under the guidance of a series of excellent editors. You could say that one or two years of an enterprise, even three or four, do not make it a permanent institution. Ten years is a different matter. *CU Writing in English* now moves into its second decade and you could say it has become a fully mature publication.

Reading back over some of the earlier collections I am impressed by the consistency of the writing standard. The feel for words and the understanding of human nature required to produce a good poem or story is something that doesn't come easily even to those who have only ever used one language. It is very much to the credit of our students that they have been able year after year to write so creatively in a language not native to most of them. But our hope has been that the exercise of writing creatively in English has taught our students, maybe even better than we can teach them, that this is their language too; that they own it and have earned the right and the skills to use it for the rest of their lives.

This year the editors have had the new and excellent idea of arranging the contents by theme: showing creativity as much in the layout and overall conception of the volume as the contributors have shown in their own pieces. They have also included contributions not only from current students, as in the past, but from alumni too. This is a distinct broadening of the contributor base and of the editorial role which is highly promising for the next ten years.

Well done to all who have played a part in making *CU Writing in English* such a success over all these years! Well done to the contributors this year! Congratulations to the two editorial teams, and especially to Michael Tsang, the General Editor! And many thanks to Tracy Liang who as ever offered valuable administrative support.

Simon Haines
Professor of English
Chair, Department of English

Reflections on ten years of *CU Writing in English*

CU Writing in English began in 2001 with the first time we put on the course Reading and Writing Short Stories here at CUHK. I felt then, as I have always felt since, that some of the students' work was so interesting that it deserved to be published. We soon added poetry, written in the course Creative Writing. Then the students went to the Fine Arts graduation exhibition and chose an art work to form the basis of a cover, with the help of a little creative ingenuity and flair from Tracy Liang. And so began a series of nine volumes, predecessors to this one.

Some of the work in these volumes has been chosen to be anthologized in *City Voices: Hong Kong Writing in English 1945 to the Present*, edited by the novelist Xu Xi. I am pleased for those students whose pieces were selected. But for me *CU Writing in English* was never about producing formally sensational fireworks of the kind usually selected for anthologization in professional publications. It is rather a record of the quieter imagining and creative expression of students who, in their formally modest way, found something special to make of their everyday experience. I have never ceased to find surprise, delight and indeed enlightenment in the new angles these pieces presented on life in Hong Kong. I quickly realized that, as an outsider, I never had much idea what Hong Kong life, especially the life of the Hong Kong family, was really about. Like a complex Chinese character, the family, as presented in these *CU Writing* pieces, is often a series of lives crossing each other in amazingly unexpected and intense patterns of interaction. Following such lives through to moments of epiphany has been one of my most important learning experiences in coming to Hong Kong.

But the writing in *CU Writing* is never just a form of sociology, holding

up an empirical mirror to Hong Kong society. It is always finding new patterns in experience, finding the metaphors, the new perspectives, new modes of dialogue between different voices and ways of life. It is always about bringing life to articulation, making sense, creating fresh understanding. The art of literature, as has been understood for thousands of years, is a making, a *poesis*, a shaping of new insight. This might sound like a large claim, but the work in *CU Writing* is, in its mostly modest way, always a shaping of something new.

And so I think that the ten volumes of *CU Writing* have an important value. Looking back, I'm pleased to have had a part in setting them in motion.

David Parker

Research Professor

Former Chair, Department of English


As a poet and as someone who teaches creative writing, I am often asked the following question: Why would anyone choose to write creatively? There is, of course, another question embedded here: What is the use of creative writing?

Anyone who has lived here for a period of time would understand the fundamental drive that propelled Hong Kong into the thriving city that it is today. Hong Kong is a pragmatic society, its people generally more concerned with material attainment than with the development of cultural and aesthetic sensibility. This is to some extent true of many thriving Asian societies—the world is pressing down on us and demands that we behave in certain ways and devote our time to various productive economic activities.

Given this, why should one devote time to creative writing? The stories and poems here, I believe, speak for themselves. Cecilia Chan’s “Brainchild”, for example, is a short story about a writer’s personal sense of achievement. Andrea Liu’s “Becoming Steamed Dimsum” may be read as a commentary on the drive to succeed:

We sit in our metallic steamers
That run on gas and perspire
In the humid temperature that
Cook us until a distinct aroma arises.

We are like that cuisine so ubiquitous to Hong Kong, both created and consumed by a materialist-oriented climate.



Here then is a brief answer to the question posed at the beginning. In a world that is increasingly pressing down upon us, there is a need for a kind of cultural and aesthetic sensibility that is able to comment and take stock of who we are and what we do. For it is by developing this sensibility (and one of the ways to do so is through the practice of creative writing) that we begin to be able to know ourselves, transcend ourselves, and imagine our future.

Eddie Tay

Assistant Professor

General Preface

Who says thin must be bad and thick must be good?

Since its first issue in 2001, *CU Writing in English* has been producing quality work written mostly by English majors. This volume is the tenth installment of this anthology that demonstrates our students' creativity and mastery of the English language every single year.

There are a few firsts for this volume. The stories in the past were written by students of the short story writing course. To commemorate the 10th anniversary of *CU Writing*, this year we invited alumni of the department, instead of current students, to submit short stories. After graduation, the way we see things, the subject matter we choose to write, and our style of writing may be hugely different from our undergraduate years. This is therefore a good chance for us to explore and reflect on the ways we have changed. We received some very good stories, with a wide range of themes and styles ranging from personal journeys to social criticism.

By stunning coincidence, these themes complement the poetry sections quite well. We have therefore grouped the stories with the poems under the same title, so that readers can be inspired by the poems and, with their aftertastes, enjoy the stories as well. As opposed to past practice for most volumes, where poems and stories were not in a systematic order, this volume marks the first collaboration between the story and poetry sections.

This is also our first attempt to publish with a different paper type, and in a different typeface, not to make it look like other journals seemingly more mature and sophisticated, but simply to fully utilize the potential

of the cover and the imaginative muse it offers.

With these firsts in place, we hope to fully demonstrate the extraordinary strength and quality of these creative pieces. It may not make sense for a 10th anniversary issue to be its thinnest, but we are confident that the enjoyment of reading is at its fullest. Huge thanks to Prof Haines, Prof Parker and Prof Tay for their guidance, Ms Tracy Liang for her support, and the poetry editors, Felix Law, Ling Cheung and Lydia Ng for their editing work.

Michael Tsang (2009)

General Editor

Preface (Poetry Section)

As we read through the poems submitted for *CU Writing* this year, we came across many good ones. We love most of them, and we had to make tough decisions to pick the most enjoyable ones.

There are philosophical yet playful poems among the works we have chosen. They begin with ordinary things but attain extraordinary observations. Others portray intimate emotions and are vivid illustrations of our lives. We also have chosen some poems which are the products of languages. There are bilingual poems, translated poems, and poems inspired by other artworks. Our vibrant city is portrayed negatively in this collection, and this prompts our readers to re-examine Hong Kong.

We would like to thank the English Department of CUHK for giving us the chance to take part in the preparation of this important publication and Prof Tay, Ms Tracy Liang and Mr Michael Tsang for their guidance and support during the publication stage.

Ling Cheung

Felix Law

Lydia Ng

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Hong Kong , Hong Kong °

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Private corners

Two-O-eight

Alice Chan

This is the minimum requirement
I have to achieve in order to have my dream come true.
This might not be a difficult one for others,
But to me,
It is really hard.

When I was a little girl,
my mum urged me to do more rope-skipping.
She wanted me to get taller, but what I had in mind was
'Why do I have to get so tall?
I don't really care about my height.
What if I am taller than I like?'

Now, I realize how ignorant I was,
how this hinders the pursuit of my dream,
and that is why I am trying so hard to stretch my fingers and my legs.

This is the moment that I realize why my mum always says,
if you don't listen to the saying of elder people, you would regret it.

Mum, I understand now.

Dressing for a Date

Lydia Ng

My hair is not dry yet, it's fluffy, not straight

Should have curled it last night

Maybe I should perm it, or iron it

Should I wear it up or down?

That dress makes my arms look flabby

That top makes my tummy look big

That skirt makes my thighs look fat

How come I don't have any clothes?

My skin is all blotchy, I need more concealer

The eyeliner looks tire marks on a slippery road

My cheeks are too chubby, I hope the blush will help

Why don't I have a face like a model?

There are hair products all over

Clothes piled on my bed

Makeup strewn over my table

But the mirror tells me I look fine so I head out the door.

Wind that keeps blowing 風繼續吹

Christy Chan

From breeze to storm, 風繼續吹。
Leaves waving their hands at the sun
Greens that echoes with the cloud
Orange, yellow and brown dancing on the ground

People 追, chasing after things they could never get
A cent, then a dollar, then another billion
A bike, then a jeep, then a Ferrari
An ANS, then an agnès b., then an Anna Sui
They never realize 明星 is a star beyond our reach.

What's the use of 無心睡眠?
Can another sleepless night redeem the past?
Can another sleepless heart resolve the guilt?

Drip, Drop, Drip, Drop
Tick, Tock, Tick, Tock
Inhale, Exhale, Inhale, Exhale
Red, Green, Red, Green
Open, Close, Open, Close
Hello, Goodbye, Hello, Goodbye
Yes, No, Yes, No

Patterns
Forms
Routine

Stand Up...as much as I wanted to,
I couldn't even find the Strength to spring up to my feet

I long for the 紅唇烈焰, the furious red and the seducing rose
to hypnotize me, to get me through another.
But 你我相隔多麼遠, there's no way for me to get to you
and no path for you to come home.

The distance,
The repeating sounds,

The things I do every day,

The things I yearn for,

The blowing leaves,

They all remind me of you, **Monica**.

I know what's gone is gone forever,
I know you could forgive, but you'd never forget.

Today, I am flying.
Feet as light as breeze,
Heart that beats even stronger than the best drummer in the world.

There, between the debris
Beyond the lights of multiple colors,
I see you, and I realize that God is good to me.
He offers me the second and the last chance to tell you the sentence
I should have said before the **Lonely Lonely Christmas** that you've
decided to spend without me:
有你即使最平凡卻最重要

Author's note: In the memories of Leslie Cheung, my father's favorite
artist.

She Who Loved Me

Vina Leung

She loved me like a mother loves her child

Having written our address on it
I dropped the cartoon envelope
on the floor below the mail hole

“We’ve got mail”
I yelled and ran into the kitchen
holding the surprise letter

With a wide smile and eyebrows
raised too high
She opened it, and read from
the blank paper:
“Wing Hei says she likes Che Che!”

In the supermarket
she put bars of chocolate
into the basket

I asked for one
but “they are for the kids back home”

I pouted, frowned, and cried aloud
jealous of a few Filipino children
I did not know

Finally she took an extra bar and paid for it
with her tiny wage

I never wanted her to go
but “things just can’t be so”,
the adults said

“I will kiss you on the cheek
before I take leave”

I turned away and pretended to sleep
with cheeks moistened
by hot tears

She left Hollowness attacked
before I understand what the word means

One morning the phone rang
a voice both familiar and strange
she was almost in tears
I was still half asleep
“My dear,
anything to say to me?”

“No”
a decisive sleepy voice

A syllable can corrode a heart

I never again hear from her
who loved me
like a mother loves her child

*Che Che: big sister in Cantonese

Sore Throat

Vernon Lau

Melody hovers here,
lingers for a thousand years.
Notation turns alive, dancing around the lavender field.

Milk and honey has nourished this field,
yielded a sky of paddles.

Here once decorated with flowers,
sent out by wind to the beloved.
You see faces flush, and lip dressing red.

Day by Day,
the spell has lost its charm,
and violin its bow.

There left only a fork and a pan,
to compose their metallic verse.

Today's Theme: Say Goodbye to 粉紅浪漫 Johnnie Chan

Who says you need the taste of romance?
When everybody is bathing in flowers and chocolate,
You're drinking a bottle of poison, but still alive.
Valentine had mischievously made a global humour harmony.
He'd veiled the truth that compact is fierce behind the scenes,
And verdict today in sensational case is always 無罪釋放.
Please erase the memory of 自認拍拖無人知,
For that is the rest stop of death.
Why not get excited about exercising,
Or enjoy the magic of the creative process,
Or celebrate Grammys hit for six by Beyoncé?
Wake up, be strong.

你是最強的!

The Kiteflyer and His Dove

Viona Au Yeung (2006)

“Ay, screen thy favourite dove, fair child,

Ay, screen it if you may,—”

Once upon a time, there was a little kiteflyer. Every day he went to his favourite plain to fly his kite. Today he took out his kite, white as snow and made in the image of a dove. He flew it the way his dad used to teach him, and within five minutes the dove was high up in the sky. It spread out its wings and surfed the wind. The child smiled as he saw his dove enjoying the blue, blue sky. Then he went home, embracing his dove who was never tired. He loved his dove and his dove loved him.

The next day he went to the same plain with his dove. As he was about to let go of his dove in the wind, his dove asked, “Can you fly me higher this time?” “I’ll try,” the child looked at its round eyes and smiled. When the dove was in the blue, blue sky, the child let out more of his string and the dove flew higher until it almost touched the sun. But he held his wooden handle really tightly because he was afraid the string would break. The dove came back to him with a radiant smile on its face. Seeing that his dove had a good time, the child was happy too. He folded his dove’s wings with care, and carried it home. He loved his dove and his dove loved him.

It rained the day after, and the child could not go outside with his dove. “Why can’t we go and play in the sun?” his dove frowned. “Tomorrow,” the child felt a little ache in his heart as he saw his dove’s disappointment. He took out his crayons of yellow and orange, and painted a big, big sun on the wall. “It is beautiful,” said his dove. Then they went to bed. He loved his dove and his dove loved him.

The sun was out again the next day. The child and his dove said good morning to each other, and joy filled their hearts. They talked about the

sunny weather on their way to the plain. When they reached the plain, there was a little girl flying her kite. "Hello there," the child greeted her. The girl smiled back faintly. Then without letting his dove wait too long, he kissed its wings and flew it up in the sky. The dove felt the warmth of the sun and danced in the breeze. As it was about to look down to the child, it saw an enchanting phoenix in the air, her eyes fiery and her wings golden and sparkling. "How beautiful!" it exclaimed. When the dove was back on land, the child greeted it and asked how its journey was. "It was good, but if only I were as beautiful as the phoenix!" Seeing its blue teary eyes, the child's heart was broken. He nodded, and brought his dove home with care.

It was a very calm day with no wind at all. Pushing his windows open, the child greeted his dove with a good morning and a gentle smile. "Are we not going out today?" His dove pouted. "I'm sorry, darling," the child felt very sad. As he was about to think of things to talk about with his dove, it asked, "Can you make me as beautiful as the phoenix?" The child hesitated, but he saw the yearning eyes of his dove. He took out his pair of scissors, papers and crayons. He cut the golden papers into a pair of wings and glued them onto his dove. "Paint my eyes fiery!" demanded the dove. The child wiped his drops of tears and took out his crayon, red as blood. He looked into his dove's eyes, as blue as the sea. "Please!" begged his dove. And he smudged his crayon onto its blue, blue eyes, and they became eyes of purple.

The next day the sun shone brightly. The child greeted his dove, and his dove greeted him gratefully. He went out to the plain with his dove, and on their way they sang. The little girl was flying her phoenix kite today too. The child greeted her, and she smiled back faintly. "Now am I as beautiful as the phoenix in the sky?" asked the dove. The child's heart was troubled. He missed its wings, as white as snow, and its eyes, as blue as the sea. "Am I?" asked his dove once again. "I love you," answered the child. He kissed its golden wings and clasped them close to his chest. Then he flew his dove up in the sky. As his dove was high up among the

clouds, he let out more of his string because he knew it liked to be closer to the sun. But he then heard a twang of the string which broke. He looked up and desperately searched the sky. He saw his dove falling. Its golden wings glimmered beautifully in the sun. The wind blew violently, and his dove dived into the deep dark green of the forest.

*“Ever amid the sweets of life
Some evil thing must be.”*

It rained miserably the day after. The sky was dark. The child went out and tried to remember the way to the deep dark forest where his dad told him never to set foot in. He missed those days when he loved his dove and his dove loved him.

As the child reached the entrance to the forest he heard the low grumbling voice of a tree, the guardian of the forest. “Child, not a good time to venture into the muddy woods,” he warned. “But my dove has been there for a day, and I need to find it,” the child gripped his fist so tightly that he felt his nails hurting his palm, which was still tainted by the red from his crayon. He thanked the guardian tree, and continued his search.

He passed a long path that was covered in dark green canopies. Beside the thickest trunk there was a pair of butterflies resting under the shelter of a piece of wood that leaned towards a stone. “Excuse me. Have you seen a dove nearby?” asked the child. “No, sorry,” said one of the butterflies.

He thanked them, and resumed his journey. He looked around for someone who might be of help, but the rain was still pouring and there was no one. He remembered the butterflies, whose wings were as white as snow and whose eye on each of their wings was as blue as the sea. He missed his dove very much. A tear rolled down his darling cheeks that were wet in the rain.

“Why are you weeping?” asked a red, red rose that had drooped in

the rain. "I was looking for my dove, but I can't find it," the child looked up, and saw the soaked petals of the rose, red as blood.

"How does it look like?" asked the rose. Seeing that there was a tint of hope, the child's eyes grew bright. "It has eyes like the violets, and wings golden like the stars," said the child. "I saw a phoenix with purple eyes and yellow wings, but not a dove," frowned the rose. "It doesn't matter. Which way has it gone?" asked the child. "Along the rill and into the marsh," replied the rose. "No!" cried the child in a trembling voice. He was about to run, and heard the rose calling out, "but it's a phoenix, not a dove."

"Yes, I know." The child thanked the rose while quickening his steps along the rill, which was still flowing fiercely in the rain.

The child's boots got very heavy with the mud and water inside them. He tripped over a stone and fell. He was too exhausted to get his legs out of the thick mud. He lifted up his eyes to the canopies that shielded the forest from the grey sky. Rain fell onto his darling cheeks and rolled down with the mud that was dissolved in it.

As the child was about to loosen his boots with his tiny hands in the water, he saw a tint of gold lying on the bed of the rill. He desperately pulled out the weeds and lifted up the pebbles that were blocking the way, and he saw the broken wings of his dove which was crippled by the weight on top of it for very long. He gently lifted his dove, and saw that its eyes were tightly shut. He clasped it close to his chest, and his tears dripped onto its feathers.

He caressed his dove's snowy white feathers tainted dark by mud. He felt the remaining warmth of his dove's nape, and missed its eyes that were like the violets. The rain had ceased, and he remembered those days when he loved his dove and his dove loved him.

*"That dove will die, that child will weep,—
Is this their destinie?"*

—'A Child Screening a Dove from a Hawk' by Letitia Elizabeth Landon

Brainchild

Cecilia Chan (2009)

“In the digital world, it is possible for authors to publish without publishers. It is therefore incumbent on us to prove our worth to authors every day.”

—Carolyn Reidy, C.E.O. of *Simon & Schuster*

The intern fanned out the last book on the bench, on which cream-coloured cloth draped just above the teak panelled floor. There were supposed to be flowers on the signing table, *to accentuate the elegance and to liven up the ambience*, the publisher said, but for the new born baby’s shameless rash. These days, the author is queen, and on this day in particular, no one would say otherwise.

“Just to get her a signing pen and all is set,” the intern added hastily before shuffling off to another errand.

It’s already buzzing outside with clanking of champagne flutes and clutter of heels. ‘Private Party’, so it announced at the entrance of this quaint little eatery, but from the size of the crowd, you can see how far connections could get.

“It’s all about connections, you see. It’s far better six degrees, thanks to social networking; if it’s in any way social after all.” A hearty chuckle was heard, followed by the echoing nervous laughs, more to please than to agree.

“It could be another reviewer in disguise, or some people in power; or a possible talent just there to give the right marketing kick. The book is here, and the endless possibilities will be there; you’ve done your part.”

Alone in a quiet corner, making sure this hushed voice was well muffled by the noise all around, she coached herself before heading out for handshakes and rounds of applause and what was to follow. She needed to straighten herself up. This new mother, of a real child she’s left off her arms for the first time since five months, and one of a brainchild,

almost incredible, almost illusive.

“So this is it. And I’ll bring you to the world.” She brushed the matte cover of a compact paperback, which had no flowery designs, nor any chunky, blaring blurbs and media claims upon her hard-fought requests. This was her book, she insisted, and above anything else she should determine its look.

The launch has been a huge success, without any need for false claims or hypocritical talks and all. She knew; it was. The best ending note was to see her child safely harboured in daddy’s arms, her pink flushed cheek rising and falling on the chest of this silly-looking guy sleeping in a slightly drooped coil. They looked most alike when they were asleep, carefree, dreaming like babies.

Encouraged by the flustering night with the extra kick from alcohol, she had to send this one last email before collapsing into deep sleep.

This incoming email was timely, as always when she needed it to be.

“Congratz on the book launch. Let me express my heartfelt joy and pride in the making of the book. It’s my pleasure to be part of it. m”

And she knew she was going to say, “it wouldn’t be without you. can’t thank you enough. all my best, h”

She would never forget the first time she got handed over the marked manuscript. Mark was the word because she really felt humiliated. *My work was marked*, and it never would be the same again. It’s the bitterness, the resentment, the jealousy even. How come he could spot it but not herself; how on earth could he manage to digest every word, to claim to comprehend every single thought she had religiously organised and painstakingly distilled through her days and nights awake, wracking her brain for just a line, a punch; *who is he, how dare he!*

Amidst the shameless marks of criticism, the only sign of humanly touch, was this scrawly scribble on the dog-ear of the bottom right corner of the last page: *All best in collaboration. m.*

Collaboration, how dare he!

And in no time things took their turns. Her disgruntle gave her power and fiery to write things she never thought would appear on the page; the plots, the pace double-timed, the punchy lines cracking right in place. Every time she made amendments, nothing less than radical, but as well remaining its own integrity as the work of her own, she'd send it to this person who dared suggest a share of her glory, her creative might, her craft. She'd send her revised draft as soon as her fingers could type out her racing mind, for fear of letting this superfluous "m" raise any condescending remarks on the lines she took pride in. As the work came to a close, his replies just got shorter, less harsh, less of solid matter so to speak.

Time was also racing, because another child was due to be born. It's hard to juggle with the two, but a bulging belly could generate more admiration and empathy than this utter frustration of having to wait for a brainchild to take form.

The last correspondence between these unwilling collaborators, was to finalise on the first line readers should see.

"For my child, whom I'm proud of the making, and to whom I'm thankful for being my pride."

"There are other ways to dedicate it to your child, let us just say, more direct ways. m"

"i'm not going to haggle on this line, nor am I going to give in. this is my book, my brainchild, and who are you to negotiate with me?! i'm sorry for being so irate but no one is going to do anything to my child. h" Prenatal depression might be on its effect, or the fatigue through this taxing process.

"Sorry, I understand it must be very touchy and it was inappropriate of me. Agreed, stet. All my best. m"

As usual, no matter how ugly it got. It's always the calm, professional voice, and the unrevealing, m.

It takes some time to shake off the fear to re-read one's work. For an author and an editor alike. For an author to read her work, it'd be like reading a dusty diary uncovered from a long ignored cabinet. There is this embarrassingly cursive handwriting spelling out a name in a precocious, but nonetheless innocent manner. Heather Holmes, fit for a writer, and proud enough without any need for dodgy pseudonyms. The thing is, to read what you wrote is a perilous journey of discovery, since you'd never know, or perhaps recall, what crossed your mind one moment in time, especially when a frenzy of inspiration stretches all the possibilities of time. Just like what happened in the distant childhood, the definite past. Sometimes it's scary, to know it truly is written by you.

And for an editor, it's sheer sense of responsibility. Any typos or misaligned space would be a flaw in profession. Reading for an editor is like how a chemist perceives things: not that they understand any more or any less; for it's a different level, a different system.

The minds of the two parties meet, when they are working towards the same goal. To bring forth this brainchild. Inevitably carrying traits of both, whether they'd admit it or not.

Finally, when she had time to sit herself down, it's been another five months since. With her baby lulled to sleep in the cot, she laid hands on the book, her other loved child. She smiled at the first line that caught her eye,

“For my child, whom I’m proud of the making, and to whom I’m thankful for being my pride.”

She read it with fresh eyes. Must be the baby brain; it's not the first time memory fooled her, or that it failed her. Somehow, as she was turning pages, she just couldn't remember when or how she managed to write those lines.

Nonetheless, she was proud.

Hong Kong , Hong Kong ◦

Becoming Steamed Dimsum

Andrea Liu

Sometimes when sitting in the bus
I imagine each one of us to be
Not so different from dimsum.
Like them, we were created carefully
And quickly with meat in our bellies.
We sit in our metallic steamers
That run on gas and perspire
In the humid temperature that
Cook us until a distinct aroma arises.

Skating Cross the Lands for a Life

Jessica Chan

Sometimes I could not differentiate,
whether the dududududududu is a comma of my mind
or a ready-to-re-depart kind of a sign,

Through the doors men come and go, talking of massages angelos,

And nannies tell
yes, no, yes, no ...

Advertisement broadcasts deafen my nose,
thunder voice bangs the LCD screen with an unsmellable ...

(swearing words) shut! your vivace-wakening-up-all-ants-forte-subito
voice up!

No sleep last night ain't you thrust me no breakfast—

Pains sparkle from my spine,
I toss to the jolts I watch out (count the buildings) for my stop,

No escapology for ads or babies

Or superoversized bums,

People also bring their weapons, elbows swaying to NDS wars,

My lungs stink the dududududududu stinks,
sometimes when my nose hears no air-conditioning,

Oh, please mind the swallowing gap

Learning to love HK

Ling Cheung

The hustle and bustle
Right here, right now!
Pearl on my cheek
I know I am home

The smell of the traffic
Pushing and squeezing
Drills that wake me up
How could I love home?

Breakfast in the morning
with my mother and father
and my brother and sister
Well, this makes me love home

When at the end of the day
seeing your loved ones equals peace
When at the end of the day this is what I breathe
I know I love home

The Folly and Fad of Ads

Lydia Ng

Wellcome to the world of ads
It's full of folly and fads
It's Y!ou who gives it \$ to spend
Through being cheated to no end

Don't Analyze This & That
You won't get your Money Back
Just try not to spend to save
Avoid becoming a fashion slave!

So shopaholics beware
Visit Hong Kong if you dare!
There's no need to tell you twice
It's known as the Shopper's Paradise.

In the new Statue Square

Felix Law

I stand lonely by the sea,
thinking of what has happened.

I am a gift
to this city,
but how come
there is no one
of this city
coming to see me?

The people I meet
every day
come by coaches.
They get off,
take pictures of me,
then get on the coaches
and go *home*.

My elder brother says,
Let it be!
I see much more foreign faces
every Sunday.
Just wait and see,
you will eventually become
a part of the city.

He wants to make me happy,
but I know the truth.

His body is a gentleman,
while mine is a flower.

The Judgment

Mak Ka Yu Flora (2009)

The sky is innocently blue. A bird chirps somewhere near, somewhat weakly. The young man rushes out to the building's roof and slams the door shut in frightful violence. Some invisible force is chasing after him. Looking around suspiciously, he shifts towards the edge of the rooftop. He can oversee the densely built landscape. Everything beneath his feet is still and seemingly under control. He draws a deep breath. The air of the international city stinks. In a moment of suffocation, the repressed voices burst into his ears from within. He turns his back from the edge and shuts his ears with both hands. The door is shaking. The voices grow stronger and clearer into one chorus of the same horrifying word, "murder-er." The young man screams to extinguish the pressing voice. "I am sorry, sorry, sorry!"

Then, a strong wind, like the graceful hand of St. Michael's, blows towards the young man and fends off all the sounds in the world. He looks up at the boundless sky. A feeling of peace overcomes him, as he stumbles and falls.

A news car stopped abruptly at the roadside. A woman in a beige suit pushed open the door and walked quickly into the restricted area where curious housewives and elderly people gathered outside the area marked with the blue and white tape, "POLICE CORDON DO NOT CROSS." A few men carrying a video camera and a microphone followed the woman. The scene was clouded by a sea of muffling murmurs.

As the woman showed her working identity card to the police officer, she got into the restricted area and stepped towards the concerned garden, where the wildly-growing bushes were crushed and coloured in blood. People in white robes were busy cleaning up. Over the bushes, a twisted shape of a human body was outlined with white tape.

The woman shot a glance at the empty shape uneasily. Despite ten years of working experience, her well-composed expression betrayed a tint of unexplainable pity. Upon confirming the details of the incident, she planted her feet in front of the death scene and nodded to her crew. Immediately, the camera man signaled, "In three seconds. Three, two, one!"

"A teenager fell from his flat on the forty-fifth floor in Sunny District this afternoon. Cheung Wing Fan, 14, known as 'Ratting Rattler' in the online community recently, was found lying in blood on the ground floor garden of Honest House of Sky High Estate. He was dead when being discovered by a passerby. No witness was found at the moment. The police searched Cheung's flat and did not find any last messages. It commented that the death was of no suspicious nature. Whether someone fell by accident or committed suicide would have to be determined after a detailed investigation. Cheung Wing Fan was one of the most searched entries on local internet search engines recently. In an online video called 'Cruel boy tortured animal to death', Cheung was suspected to have violently kicked a street rat to its death. The netizens nicknamed him the 'Ratting Rattler' after a slayer-character in the online game, 'Apes Crash.' The relevant video clip will be played at the end of the news report. Jessica Chow, HTV NEWS."

It is late at night. A 24-hour convenience store shines in ghastly white light on United Road. A slender boy with dyed hair is visible next to the store. He is continuously kicking something at the bottom of the window in front of an eatery. Whatever got kicked lets out desperate shrills. The camera zooms to the helpless creature and reveals the shape of a kitten.

"How dare you! How dare you! Afraid now? Afraid? You filthy rat!" The boy yells.

"Stop!" A male voice comes behind the screen. "What are you doing?"

The boy halts and gazes at the screen. He is wearing a white shirt with a school badge. "Piss off. That's none of your business!"

The one who is holding the camera walks closer towards the boy. The boy threatens to kick the comer with a raised leg. The screen moves a few steps back.

"Stop abusing it! Or I'll call the police!"

"Asshole! I am afraid! I am afraid of it more than you! It so deserves death!"

"I'll sue you for ..."

The boy interrupts. "It's but a rat. I'm doing nothing more than cleaning the street!"

"You're sick! I'll put you up online and make you regret what you did!"

A staff comes out of the convenience store. "What's the noise?"

"Do what you will! Blah-blah!" The boy gives off one last kick fiercely and darts away.

"Hey! You!" The screen quickly moves towards the boy. But the figure soon disappears at the corner of the street. The screen turns back and stops at the trampled body of a fat street rat, whose viscera and blood have spilt all over the place.

"It's also a precious life, isn't it?"

The bedroom door was thrust open. Hurriedly King Chi deleted the video from his mobile phone and hid it under the quilt.

"Hullo, son." It was his dad, Inspector Lee, who worked in the Technology Crime Division of the Police Force. "'m back from work."

King Chi grunted, "How many times have I told you to knock before coming in?"

Inspector Lee snorted. "Don't be so sissy. Come out. 've bought some roasted pork for dinner! They're still hot." He walked into the room and tried to drag King Chi out of his chair.

King Chi pushed him away. "'m not hungry tonight. Skip my portion."

He regained his posture and grabbed the mouse to wake the computer from sleep mode.

Inspector Lee stared at the pale face. "Is everything alright?" He attempted to feel his son's forehead.

But the young man immediately backed away. "'m fine. 'm already eighteen years old! I can take care of myself."

Mr. Lee peeked at the computer screen. It showed the picture of a girl in school uniform on *FP*, the social networking website, *Face Page*. "Alright. Love sick. Don't be a stalker. Muster up your guts and ask her out." Relaxed, he hummed his favourite tune and disappeared from the door.

Without hesitation, King Chi locked the door. He returned to his chair and refreshed the home page. New comments were made on some of the old topics in his profile page.

News Feed

Top News. Most Recent.

Natalie Fung Hail to the Hero Boy who caught Rattling Rattler! <3

On 22 September. Comment. Like.

Natalie Fung, King Lee, Ken Sun and 87 others like this.

[View all 52 comments](#)

Natalie Fung The news!

30 minutes ago. Like.

Penny Shum R2 committed suicide...!

29 minutes ago. Like.

Joyce James OMG...

27 minutes ago. Like.

Chung Yi Weak guy who only hurts animals! Like!

8 minutes ago. Like.

Chris the Best Hero Boy becomes the villain then.

5 minutes ago. Like.

Natalie Fung I am not so sure about Hero Boy

now...

3 minutes ago. Like.

R2 Hater Maybe I should change my name into Hero Hater???

1 minute ago. Like.

Clown uploaded a new video, **Hero Boy**—You are sick! Watch video.

15 minutes ago. Comment. Like.

Clown, Chung Yi and 13 others like this.

Clown ANTI-HEROISM RULES!

14 minutes ago. Like.

Atom Boy That's so funny! XDDD

12 minutes ago. Like.

Chung Yi Hero Boy does nothing wrong!

6 minutes ago. Like.

Clown U SURE?

6 minutes ago. Like.

Ken Sun > King Lee Is that you who caught R2? The voice sounds so much like yours!

On 23 September. Comment. Like.

Natalie Fung, Gensan Ko and 20 others like this.

[View all 10 comments](#)

Chris the Best Did you really shoot the video?

4 minutes ago. Like.

Gee Yu joined the group, **I believe I can find 100,000 people who are more afraid of Rattng Rattler than the Rat.**

20 minutes ago. Comment. Like.

Gee Yu and 40,236 other members.

The various remix versions of the video clip spun in King Chi's mind. He could not tell what exactly was pressing upon him. Drops of cold sweat grew on his forehead. In a fit of rage, he threw the wireless mouse on the floor. All he knew was that he was in desperate need of a glass of water. When he passed by the living room, Inspector Lee was watching the late news. He asked his son, "Do you know that 'Ratting Rattler' is dead?"

King Chi halted. "Of ... of course."

"What a fragile kid! It's only his first taste of the society's cruelty."

"You're kidding ... that he killed himself because of the online comments? The news said that he fell."

"We can't say for sure unless the work is done. But most of my colleagues guessed so."

"Dad, which team is in charge of the investigation? Not yours?"

"Why not?" Inspector Lee replied, "your dad's in TCD! We're going to investigate the cause of his death tonight. To see if it has to do with the online attacks. You know. If not for his recent notoriety, the other division would have processed the case. Actually, gotta head back to the station now. Gonna be a long night!"

"The ... the online attacks ... will the commentators be punished? What's your task?"

"To conduct a thorough online search of anything related to the kid. It's hard to lay charges on the netizens. They are the invisible blood suckers. The law's still primitive. Well, 'm sure that the public's going to criticize us for not foreseeing this."

King Chi hesitated. Apart from being a father, Inspector Lee had also been his good friend since his mother left. "Dad, I ..."

"Look how his mother cried! Alas! Parents provide their children with the best of the best and then the kids just kill themselves like that. How many years it takes to bring up one kid! Big he may be, his mind remains fragile." He paused. "Fortunately, my son is not like any of those

reckless lads.” He winked at King Chi. By then, The Evening News was over. The television was replaying the hit drama, Everybody loves Kucchi. Inspector Lee yawned and stretched his arms. “ ’ve left a few pieces of pork in the fridge.” He put on a jacket and left the house with an empty bang.

King Chi’s eyes swam to the Best Junior Police Call Member trophy above the television set. He was eight years old. During that award ceremony, Inspector Lee smiled widely and put an arm over him. The master of ceremony, a family friend, asked him, “What would you like to be when you grow up?”

“I want to be a virtuous policeman just like dad!”

The line had been imprinted in King Chi’s mind ever since. But the high-pitched voice was forever lost to him. When he recalled it now, the line sounded funny with a deep male voice.

As if defeated by something unnamable, King Chi drained the glass and carelessly dropped it in the sink. He surrendered what’s left of his soul to the call of the great network.

Spotlight Article

4th October, 2007 02:30

“Ratting Rattler” Seeks Forgiveness by Death

“Ratting Rattler,” or Cheung Wing Fan, revealed in his school journal that he was disturbed by the online attacks. The online search of the 14-year-old school boy resurged after the news of his death was reported yesterday. It was two weeks since a video of Cheung kicking at a street rat had been uploaded to the most popular video site, Wewatch. The video received fierce feedback from local and even overseas netizens, who criticized the boy’s behavior as cold-blooded, heartless and insane.

Different from all the existing stories and discussions online, there may be an inside story hidden from the critical eyes of the netizens. After the Internet hunt, Cheung attended several counseling sessions

in school and showed signs of regret. He wrote in his weekly journal, “I am sorry for my momentary hotheadedness. But they do not let go of me. It was a street rat. I was afraid. I got bitten by a rat at five and since then I hate them all. I have apologized. But they do not let go of me. What can I do to gain forgiveness?”

Yesterday, Cheung fell ill and took a sick leave from school. In the afternoon, he fell from his flat. His mother, a security guard, cried over the dead body, “Why did the guy have to post the video of my son on the Internet? You hardly know his true nature at all and have forced him to his death!” His classmates were shocked. “We did laugh at him during the first few days. But we forgave him soon because we’ve always known that he is indeed harmless.” However, Cheung was often seen avoiding crowds and became less talkative in class.

On the other hand, “they,” the netizens, are quick to reflect on their initial response. Several hours after the news was released, different social networking sites and forums experienced an explosion of discussion on the unexpected death. One of the main topics was the notion of responsibility. Some netizens criticized Cheung’s flawed mentality; some raged at the mother’s accusation. Alarmingly, the other person in the video, “Hero Boy,” was also placed under the microscope, as some netizens argued that he was responsible for Cheung’s death. Until now, more posts on the young man’s identity were flooding the local online community.

Undoubtedly, the “Rattling Rattler” tragedy calls all netizens to consider the immeasurable impact of the online platform urgently. Will Cheung ever be forgiven? And who on earth can grant the forgiveness?

Catherine Liu
Money Daily Correspondent

King Chi’s face was as white as the flashing computer screen. His photo

with his dad at the Junior Police Call award ceremony had been dug out and posted to the most popular local online forum, Happy Discussion. Comments of all kinds, serious, supportive, positive, rational, updated the message board. More were the harsh ones, careless ones, teasing ones, joking ones, and they washed over the forum like a tsunami. As he clicked into item after item, King Chi felt being thrust deeper and deeper into the vast catacomb each netizen took pleasure in digging. His green mind could not understand the rapid turn of tide, how people who had hailed him for his virtue were spitting on him ruthlessly.

And he did no more than what was right! Cheung Wing Fan was cruel to an animal!

It was the ringing phone that had stopped King Chi's rhapsody. He tore off the electric wires of the computer and escaped to the living room. The caller ID was "Inspector Lee."

Tears gushed off King Chi's face. "He must have, he must have known what I've done ..." His conscience became too heavy to be carried. King Chi left the house in the futile echo of the song of the police force.

It was two hours before dawn. The district was shrouded by blinding darkness. King Chi walked past some gangsters and beggars, whose gazes scanned him like the pairs of eyes hidden behind the computer screen. They were laughing at him. THEY KNEW HIM. Behind his back, they all called him, "murderer."

He had walked endlessly until he found himself standing in front of the convenience store on United Road. He walked involuntarily towards the closed eatery. He began to kick at the ground. Each strike caused him pain. It was a pleasurable pain. So he continued. Once, he kicked the eatery's iron gate by mistake and created a thundering noise.

Startled, King Chi looked around and found a face peeping out from the convenience store. King Chi screamed and darted away. All the buildings surrounding him had transformed into prison bars, blocking

him from where he used to be. He cried as he ran. He wanted to be a policeman. That was all. In haste, he broke into one of the few old buildings left empty in the district and started climbing the stairs. It was almost dawn.

The sky was innocently blue. A bird chirped somewhere near, somewhat weakly. Cheung Wing Fan looked out of his flat's window on the forty-fifth floor. He was bored staying at home for a fever. In slight dizziness, he saw a golden-eyed bird flapping its wings fervently in the newly installed tube for the air conditioner. Apparently, its plump body got stuck in the open end of the narrow tube. He had a good laugh before quickly reaching out his hand. But he could not reach it. Carefully, he climbed out of the window and stepped onto the flowerbed. As he clasped the fluttering bird in his palm, he could feel its heart beating rapidly. "You won't bite me, will you?" He opened his palm. The bird spread its wings and set off in a flight of joy. As he relaxed, he lost his balance and fell.

The Precious Child

Eva Leung (2010)

It has been pouring the whole morning, and when Mr Lo comes into our *cha chaan teng*¹ he is dripping, but he looks positively radiant.

Mr Lo comes to our *cha chaan teng* four to five days a week. I know business at his fish-ball stall is not very good, so I am a bit surprised to see him coming at 10a.m.—three hours later than his usual time—as if he were having a day off. For a split second I think, “He’s won Mark Six²?” He is wearing a bright orange T-shirt and a pair of black jeans I have never seen before, and he seems to have combed his grey-white hair. He places his dripping umbrella on the umbrella stand, and selects a seat opposite the entrance.

“Bo Yee must be back,” Papa says to me. I nod, and turn to get two cups of water. When I put them in front of Mr Lo, he grins at me, showing his yellow teeth. “Summer holidays, eh?”

“Almost. Starting my summer job anyway.” I reply. Another customer has shot his hand in the air, and I go over to take order.

As I deliver the luncheon meat soup-based instant noodle to a customer, I pass by Mr Lo’s seat and hear, “Ah Sze is a good girl, helping out during summer.”

“That’s just because she has no appointments today,” Papa waves it off, though I can see he is quite pleased. I am flattered and I say, “It is a blessing for a daughter to help out in a family business.” Though privately, I think it’s a “duty,” as Mom always says, since it has been his hard work that puts food on my plate, and he has spent his youth giving me a shelter and a bed.

Papa slaps my back and I slip to the other side to clear the table.

“She just can’t get a better job, unlike your Bo Yee. How’s Bo Yee doing?”

1. A Hong Kong-style restaurant serving wonton noodles, fried rice, fried noodles, toasts and Dai Pai Dong milk tea.
2. A lottery betting in Hong Kong.

At the mention of his daughter's name, Mr Lo's face lights up like a Christmas tree in a shopping mall. "She's doing great, but the world is different now, young people have their own lives. It's hard for old people like me to catch up with them."

Bo Yee is Mr Lo's only daughter, and, as the saying goes, a pearl on his hand³. Obviously so, "Bo Yee" literally means "treasure," "the treasured child." Papa always says that she is the reason Mr Lo could endure widowhood. She is three years older than me, studying Fashion Design in the United States, and Papa says she'll have a very promising future. Every time Mr Lo talks about her, he beams with pride.

Papa asks him, "*Lai pai*⁴? Are you going to order the usual thing?"

"Yes, but I'll wait till Bo Yee comes." Mr Lo gives a wide smile. "She will be here in 10 or 15 minutes."

When Bo Yee steps in about an hour later, she stands at the entrance and surveys our *cha chaan teng* like a queen about to give a speech. She has tied up her brownish-blond hair in a knot with a tail sticking out, quite fashionable I think, and she has put on heavy make-up with some glitter powder, like the older girls in my school who were attending their graduation dinner. She is wearing a shocking pink tight spaghetti strap, and her white miniskirt shows off her "model legs" as I call them.

"Bo Bo!" Mr Lo calls and waves his arm, and I can see Bo Yee rolling her eyes. She tiptoes over the black-grey rain-smear floor with her four-inch high heels, and carries her umbrella with her, so it continues to drip all the way to Mr Lo's table. She drops the wet umbrella on the table, beside the menus and the salt and pepper, then she wipes the seat with a tissue paper before sitting down opposite her father.

"*Lo dao*⁵, this is so embarrassing. Can you stop screaming it at the top of your lungs like that?"

"But that's your name, Bo Bo⁶." Then he turns to me, "Give her a condensed milk toast, with extra condensed milk on it."

"Anything el—" I begin.

3. This expression is normally used for daughters, not sons.

4. It means "as usual" in Cantonese.

5. A less polite, sometimes more intimate address meaning "father".

6. This term of intimacy also literally means "Baby" in the sense of a newborn infant.

“Stop calling me Bo Bo! My name is Andromeda Regina now; I’ve changed it for ages—you should remember it.”

“I thought it was Akiko ... Akiko something?” I cannot help asking. I am sure it was a very Japanese-sounding name the last time she came.

She gives me a smile which does not reach her eyes. “It’s Andromeda.”

Andromeda Regina Lo! What a cool name—and with a middle name! It sounds like a princess from a fairy tale. I am proud to be able to spell it because I am a member of my school’s Astronomy Club. Maybe I should also give myself a name like Epimetheus or Artemis, or Epimetheus Artemis.

“Anything el—” I begin.

“You know it is really disgusting you’re announcing my name like that!”

“Okay ... okay ... okay, Bo Bo,” Mr Lo is still smiling, though a bit sheepishly.

“Anything else?” I venture again, not completely sure if I should.

“Two iced milk tea, with extra milk.” The father says.

“No,” Andromeda says. “Get me an iced cappuccino.”

I suppose she is referring to iced coffee, so I return with one and an iced milk tea.

“I believe I said cappuccino, not regular coffee.” Andromeda stares at me, like a boss questioning a colleague who has failed his task.

I cannot answer. “I thought ... I thought ...”

“Bo Bo, this is a *cha chaan teng*,” Mr Lo interrupts, and motions me to leave. As I turn I hear Andromeda saying, “Then she could have told me they don’t have it. Why, no wonder she can only work here. So stupid.”

A middle-aged man is leaving his table, so I rush over to clear the table.

When I deliver the condensed milk toast with Mr Lo’s *lai pai*—fried instant noodle with double eggs—Andromeda almost squeals, “I can’t

believe you are still eating this *crap!* Do you know it contains a lot of fat and chemicals and preservatives, and it is *completely* unhealthy?”

I can't believe my ears. Mr Lo dives into the noodle and mumbles, “It is the most deli ...”

But Andromeda's voice drowns the rest of the sentence. “Do you know how much fat and how much sodium there is in one packet? Do you know it is actually not noodles, but a packet of chemicals? You are in your sixties already, you are not sixteen! If anything happens to you, who is going to take care of you when I am miles away? You should at least have a healthier diet! And you are having it *fried!*”

Andromeda pronounces “fried” as if she were saying “poisoned”. I hear Papa chuckling behind the cashier.

After several trips to and fro the kitchen and the tables, I pass by Mr Lo's table again to change the “Today's Special” lunch menu at the entrance.

“Don't you lecture me on what is healthy and what is not. I'm old enough to know what's suitable for me. Be reasonable, I'm already nineteen. Everyone my age sleeps at half past four and wakes up at one. I was in Lan Kwai⁷ last night, but I still got up early this morning just to have breakfast with you, can't you see? Now you're lecturing me on a healthy lifestyle. Look at what you're eating!”

Andromeda has not said this in one breath, but Mr Lo's responses are barely audible.

“... but you can come to our place once in a while; I'll let you know when André doesn't come back for dinner.”

“It is still beyond me why he wouldn't ever treat you a nice meal,” Mr Lo says. “Or a breakfast like this. Even before I married your mother I wouldn't have let her pay her share.”

“The world has changed, it is equality now. André is doing an LLB. It's not his problem that he can't always spend time with me. You see, he needs to socialise with his friends.”

7. Lan Kwai Fong, a section in Central district in Hong Kong with lots of bars and clubs. A lot of young people go there dining and clubbing till late at night.

“A what?”

“A Bachelor of Law.”

Mr Lo takes no notice of it. “I don’t want to see him taking advantage of you.”

Andromeda frowns. “You just don’t like him because we’re living together. I can’t believe you are still so old-fashioned.”

“Of course I don’t, I’m a father.”

Andromeda glances at the clock on the wall. “Anyway I’ve got to go. I’m meeting André for lunch.”

“So soon?”

She picks up her umbrella and throws down another sentence, “I’ll call you tomorrow.” I look up several seconds later, after delivering an omelette, and the treasured child has gone.

Mr Lo finishes up his iced milk tea, and leaves his seat. When he reaches the cashier, Papa remarks to him, “Bo Yee has grown prettier.”

Mr Lo smiles dimly. “They have their own way of thinking, the youngsters. The world is theirs now.” He pulls out an LV wallet. “Father’s Day gift. Not bad, eh?”

“Very nice,” Papa says. We watch Mr Lo collect the change, his umbrella, and step into the rain.

Free-losophical

Solitude

Wing Wong

When my moving heart is no longer able to move,
Or when I am no longer able to move your moving heart,
My influence is gone.
What is left between us,
Is simply solitude.
It imposes the most wicked curse,
Departing you and me.
What is underneath of sobbing soul,
Is solitude.
What is hidden between you and I,
Is solitude.
It is when we've both gone stagnant,
We died.
Because our attachment is nurtured by,
Solitude, the bitterest ingredient in love,
Which I have long resisted to taste.
But now is forced to swallow,
The bitterness of solitude,
Bit by bit.
Till it finally vanishes,
And my soul, vanishes.

We are inseparable

Sada Leung

You are a toothbrush,
I am the toothpaste.

You are a pillow,
I am the bed-quilt.

You are windows,
I am the curtains.

You are a printer,
I am the paper.

You are a table,
I am the chair.

You are a bottle of shampoo,
I am the bottle of conditioner.

You are a pencil,
I am the eraser.

You are a television,
I am the remote control.

You are a door,
I am the handle.

You are a keyboard,
I am a mouse.

You are a bowl,
I am the chopsticks.

You are a tea-pot,
I am the cup.

You are one and
We are two.

Colors

Eric Kwan

When I was born, I was coal.

When I am shy, I am coal.

When I am afraid, I am coal.

When I run 10 km, I am coal.

When I die, I am coal.

When you were born, you were a pig.

When you are shy, you are a tomato.

When you are afraid, you are a sheep.

When you run for 10 km, you are King's robe.

When you die, you are a wolf.

And you call me "color"?

Looking Through Elephant Eyes

Andrea Liu

Up the ladder
Gazing into her eyes,
Her lashes waver
As I trace the hard, etched lines
Running through her face.
Her eyes are like a dark pool
That reflects my own eyes,
Which caused me to reflect
Upon the colors of eyes.

Human eyes are like
Two white-shaped fishes.
Each with one black dot
Covering its body moving
Back and forth,
Soaking in
Every color,
Every movement.
It's strange
How our eyes
Can only see through
Black
And not through
White.
Why do you think
That is?

Love letter and Reply

Connie Wong

Dear my dear Rose,

Everywhere I go, I see your rosy cheeks

Everywhere I go, I smell of roses

Please be my Rose.

The affectionate,

Pine Nuts

Mr Nuts,

Check your eyes

and your nose.

Find your Apple.

Rose Thorny

To Pirate, From Dolphin

Johnnie Chan

I really want to swim, but I don't know how to.
Peter is whistling on his ship in the Caribbean Sea.
He's a pirate who steals trust from me.
I love pirate whistling, I must go.

I see dolphins crawling on the beach.
I'm a dolphin because I bear a water tank.
No, I think I need to swim as fast as I can.
There must be tones of tear coming ahead, which I must learn to survive.

Maybe the beach is where I can be safe,
If Captain Hook is the best friend of Peter Pan.
Seriously, I swim because of the whistling.
I'm eager to swim until my skin is bleached from silver to scarlet.

I say, swimming is sometimes sweet, sometimes salty.
S is suffering, W is whip, I is isolation, and M, of course, is massacre.
In the morning, I long for my future, and in the evening, I moan for my present.
Oh! Do I know how to swim?

The beach is steaming.
Peter opens his mouth and eats all the dolphins.

The Birthmark

Leung Mei Yee Claire (2006)

The struggle between stepping out of her comfort zone to reach the sinister world and bearing the unbearable boredom under her father's dictatorship really disturbed her. An unspeakable voice recurred in her mind and haunted her for years. Bridget learnt from a philosophy class that Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche once said, "He who has a 'why' to live for can bear any 'how'." She wondered where her "why" had gone. If her "why" was based on her father's "why" or if pathetically there was no "why" at all, she would have no "how" to find the exit.

A magnifying glass enlarged her hazel eyes in front of a mirror. The reflection on the iris revealed a red dot. That tiny little red dot sowed in her eye signified the mania inherited from her mother. It lay in the iris. It was not her mother, but her father. Her father's dimple on her right cheek assured herself his daughter. From this, her attraction depended.

After college graduation, she worked in her father's charcuterie as a watcher. The duty of a watcher was to examine people coming and going, observing customers making deals mechanically with the butcher—her father. Every day, she sat behind the cashier desk, clenched her hands in raised position or sometimes sat still as if she was petrified like The Thinker, Rodin's statue. Her melancholic destiny was knotted since her birth. The "butcher girl" mark was stamped even when she was in her mother's womb. No one in Kenilworth would object that her father was the most prestigious butcher in town. He supplied fresh pork to his neighborhood from his own slaughterhouse daily. His charcuterie proved that he had the ability to raise his daughter alone. His food attracted villagers but his temper scared them away. Once a boy sang aloud the nursery rhyme "Grumpy Humphrey" outside his "Humphrey's Butchery,"

“Grumpy Humphrey stinks in his shop,
Grumpy Humphrey has a great chop,
All his men splash in blood,
All his butchery money floods,
Humphrey’s knife is meant to be blunt.”

On the spot, he lifted up the boy with his arm and threatened that child with his fist, “You silly boy, don’t you dare get near my shop in ten miles!” Bridget noticed that no one sang that nursery rhyme ever again, perhaps not in front of his face. Other butchers in town envied Humphrey and they fabricated stories, and even accused him of injecting hormones into the pigs, making the pork taste better and chewier.

Through daily intensive observation in the charcuterie, Bridget apprehended a theory of “piggieology,” i.e. the philosophy of pigs. Since birth, they were predestined to be chopped into pieces. They did not have a choice. When people called Bridget “butcher girl,” her father nodded—his daughter stamped with his trademark. Nobody approached or befriended her, the “butcher girl.”

A mosaic tile fell from the wall. Bridget picked up the blue fragment and squeezed it in her palm. It was light but frozen. She squatted and embraced her shivering body. Where were the others? She caged herself in her bedroom. Her bare hand reeked with blood. The smell was raw. Her wound needed a blue handkerchief, her mother’s. When she was still a baby, her mother chose to fly away one day. Her feet could not flee. This was the first time that she really hated herself. Her father’s claws would come at night and slice her into pieces.

She saw herself stuck in a crowd of pigs, being loaded from the pigsty into a truck. The truck stopped in front of a glass house. The howling could be heard from the house. Then she was unloaded like the other pigs. Pigs were rendered unconscious by gas and then turned into carcasses. They were hung upside-down by one of their hind legs on the production line. The slaughterhouse workers started to torture the

carcass with a meat hook on the left hand, and a boning knife on the right. Some meat was minced and roughly mutilated. Blood splashed on their face. There was an indifferent crew staggering on the production. All her neighbors stood outside the glass slaughterhouse, watching her, giggling. A shock went through and she woke up, electrified. Her father never knew about this dream. Was it too horrible to mention again or was it a joke to him?

Every now and then, the smell of her hands and body encircled her. Even after wearing the unbearably common rose-perfume, the stinky raw meat embraced her. That smell transmitted a weird thought—the stench had already penetrated her blood and cells. By no means could she get rid of it, yes, a shackle. It was too heavy. Who should be in control? Whose life was it?

Beatrix appeared. Then she came again, standing beside her.

“It’s time. Go out and savor the world.” Beatrix said.

That mid-night, when her father’s lights were out, she carried out a plan. A blonde wig, blue contact lenses, heavy make-up and a pink mini-skirt almost put her on her knees to pray. On the way to a local pub, whistles shrilled from men around her.

The bar table was inviting and she lit a cigarette skillfully as if she was used to smoking. Her introductions, quick and all at once, surprised her. Her name, she said, was “Beatrix.”

A sense of liberation and exhilaration transpired. Encircled by drunkards and dudes in the nightclub—she fondled the stem of the wine glass. One man caught her eyes, ignited her heartbeats. She waited till he gazed her back. He was a total stranger. Obviously not from Kenilworth. He moved towards her unhurriedly.

She nodded. Her first steps on the dance floor were light and slow. In the dance, her eyes did not stray away from his. Her head leaned against his chest and he kissed on her dimple. He embraced her slender waist; her arms dangled on his shoulders, and danced and danced ... till their

feet ached to alert them to stop.

“I am a doctor.” he revealed his identity and examined her eyes carefully. Bridget came alive inside her. At that moment, she yearned to break away from the manipulation of Beatrix.

A beefy man with a strong whisky smell burst into the pub out of the blue.

“Benjamin Kaufman! Where’s Rebecca?”

The man staggered on the floor and howled. The motion of the people in the club halted. Relaxing dance music was covered by the cry. He was not from this town, she thought. The accent uttered sounded like a Londoner’s. “You return my beloved sister back to me!” he crawled in front of Benjamin, begging him.

Who is this man? Who is Rebecca?

“Beatrix?” murmured Benjamin. “Are you alright?”

She was paralyzed. She tasted the crimson liquid coming from her lips, mingled with drips of salty tears. The awkward raw meat smell hurt her. Time to run. Her father’s image shot up, her feet chained. The chain lock had no keys. What was left, a joke. A wail came through. She walked straight out of the pub without a word. He did not follow her. The eyes found the window once more. The pub music continued. The doctor was in raptures with another woman. The wig came off. Her blood oozed from the bandage. The chilly fog surrounded the street. The chill penetrated through her pores and into her heart.

A familiar smell came. Her father’s figure approached.

“... let’s go home.” He did not bombard her with questions. His warm palm held her wintry one. Perhaps, there was nothing else in her life, but a balmy birthmark.

Sam

Huen Yuk Wan Betty (2010)

Gregor was nothing more than an ordinary fifteen-year-old.

The room was rather dim; it was already dusk. The blazing heat of the day had been cooled and it was Gregor's favourite time of the day. He liked to leave the lights unlit although it was almost completely dark in the room. People liked to say the city where Gregor lived was an international one, but he never felt that way because all those cosmopolitan elements never formed any parts of his life. The modern and stylish stuff were entirely out of his reach; they were usually on the island in the South and since he lived in the north, it didn't have much to do with him.

He continued to meditate. The thing he felt closest to, emotionally as well as physically at the moment, was Sam. Sam was more like an immobile lump of fur than anything to Gregor because he always thought animals were meant to be mobile; although when this particular thought was resonating in his mind, he and Sam were already two of the most static animals in the neighbourhood.

Strictly speaking both of them were doing "something." One of them was lying on the table and its company was reading something. His eyes were moving in a very lazy manner to trace the symbols on the screen and trying to perceive their meaning. Suddenly, his pupils dilated; muscles around his eyeball contracted so that Gregor could focus. It was a piece of foreign news, and no one knew if it was verified. "... TOXOPLASMA, A PARASITE COMMONLY FOUND IN CATS, IS SUSPECTED TO CAUSE MASS SCALE CULTURAL CHANGE IN HUMAN BEHAVIOUR ... TOXOPLASMA COULD CAUSE FELINE-LOVING BEHAVIOUR ... DRUGS TREATING SCHIZOPHRENIA ALSO

WORKS ON CAT PARASITE.”

“Are you gonna make me like you more and more?” Gregor patted and stroked the fur of Sam while he was relaxing on the desk. His face almost touched Sam’s petit, pink nose. The pair of golden eyes met the pair of bigger, equally puzzled black eyes; and neither of them blinked.

“No idea.” Sam replied.

“Will you stay with me forever?” Gregor gently scratched Sam’s small chin, he knew for sure all felines liked this.

Before he got any answers, somebody knocked on the door.

“Gregor?” a deep male voice asked.

The door was opened the instant when Gregor decided to ignore him. It was a man with glasses and he said he was his father; yet there was no way to verify, Gregor always thought.

The man asked, as always, whether Gregor was talking to somebody; and as always, Gregor’s answer was “No!”

To avoid conflicts, Gregor’s dad left him alone. Gregor could still hear him speaking to somebody when he stuck his ear to the crack of the door.

“Have you read the news today?”

“Not yet, what?”

Gregor heard some sound of paper flipping.

When Gregor sat in front of his desk, Sam was again lying in front of him. Gregor gazed at the white, soft fur on its belly. The fur was dense like a hayfield, where if any kid entered there was definitely no way for the kid to be found ever again. He liked to scratch Sam along the side of its body from the hind leg up to the neck and lastly the chin. In this way he could disrupt the smooth layer of fur and at the same time feel its volume. Sam didn’t seem to mind at all, and sometimes it even liked it. Gregor knew it when the happy, heart-warming purr was heard. Gregor could feel the vibrations emitted from the belly, which signaled comfort

and contentment. He knew all these because Sam told him so.

Gregor liked talking to Sam, because Sam didn't talk much and Gregor was afraid of people who could not stop talking. It annoyed him a lot when he was forced to listen to others and to receive any unwanted signals. He flicked his fingers across Sam's whiskers, fixing his gaze on the series of contraction and relaxation at the abdomen. His eyelids eventually dropped and he rested his forehead on his arm.

Sam stood in front of a cave, hesitating. When Sam finally entered, Gregor wanted to follow but found himself somehow glued to the ground. Sam dragged itself further into the cave and stopped at a stone table. There was a tall and built man dressing in white standing behind the table but Gregor could not see his face.

"Are you sure you want this?" asked the man. Gregor thought the voice was familiar.

"Yes."

"Very well, then. Your race would be able to perpetuate forever, your kind would spread to every corner of the world, and you would have no enemy ever after. You will be in alliance with a giant race, but you would have to surrender your liberty to them."

"Our liberty?"

"It is too late to regret now." The man then pressed Sam onto the stone table and forced a glowing thing, something like a glowing string, down Sam's throat. With the tiny source of glow, Gregor immediately recognized the man. "NOOO!!!" Sam and Gregor screamed at the same time but the thing had already entered Sam's body.

Gregor opened his eyes in fear, and found himself at the desk. Gregor immediately rushed out of the room.

"WHAT DID YOU DO TO SAM?" He yelled at his dad and his voice

shivered as he spoke.

His dad was gripping Sam's tail. Sam was hanged in his hand, lifeless. Gregor seized Sam back and stared at his dad fiercely.

"I saw you forcing something down Sam's throat, on a stone table!" Gregor yelled. His dad did not speak but he just looked at Gregor in a freezing, manipulating way.

"Gregor?" His dad tried to reach out for Gregor's arms and shoulders, "there is something I have to tell you, a story about Sam."

"A story about Sam?" He thought he had heard of it but he sensed some unnamed fear. He took a step back.

"It is a myth about the cats. All these happened a very long time ago. In the time of my story, cats were fierce animals. They ruled the wild and received great respect. The cats were proud and they yearned for eternal glory. However, one day, a traitor betrayed its own kind. Having grown tired of restless life of hunting it made a deal with humans. This cat led the cats to the wizard, who promised the cats that they would perpetuate, spread to every corner of the world and live without enemy. But little do they know the price to pay; they would be bound to live with humans and lose their most precious, invaluable liberty. The traitor wished for an easy life and changed the fate of cats forever. The wizard placed a toxoplasma in the cats. Guess what, it works not on the cats, but on the humans. It made us love cats. This is really where the pain comes. When we think they are cute, adorable kitties, they very well know they are the betrayed captives. This is why adult cats always seemed alone and in melancholy. How could anyone ever be happy in captivity? Sam was that very traitor!"

"You're a LIAR! You killed Sam!" Gregor dashed back to his room and slammed the door shut. He was dumbfounded by what he had just heard. "Toxoplasma ... traitor ..." He could not get the weird name of the

parasite out of his mind. Did Sam really have one of those in him? Was it why he liked Sam so much? Did Sam betray his own species?

“BANG!” Gregor’s dad hit the table so hard with his fists that for one moment the doctor thought about calling the security. Still watching the screen, his mind went blank and for a moment he could not speak. After a while he left the surveillance room. Leaning against the wall, he slid down to the floor. It was his first time to pay such a visit in years.

In a room penetrated by white light from the only light tube, a boy in a yellowish cotton gown sat on the floor, barefooted. His eyes were black and hollow. A moment ago, he was rushing from one corner to another, gripping a white stuff animal. On his wrist was hung loosely a bar code wristband. The toy was torn and was losing shreds of cotton. One of its limbs was dangling at the joint, on the pad it said, Sam.

He picked up a pencil and drew a long slender tail, almost horizontal to the ground, continued upward to the left, curved a bit for the shoulders and made another smaller, upward curve for the neck, inserted a pointed ear and then the forehead, nose, chin, chest, foreleg and thigh. He completed everything in one stroke, and naturally, as if he was born to replicate the feline silhouette. It was perfect. He hesitated. He laid his pencil on the position of the eye and traced the eye socket, an elegant horizontal italic “v” opening to the left. He added the orb, then the pupil; no, he was sketching half a full bloom sunflower. One of the petals fell off the eye, forming an irregular drop of tear. It gradually sank to the throat where it could no longer hold itself together and finally uncurled into a thread.

“NOOO!”



Beyond languages

Dimgai

Jessica Chan

Somebody said thinking is a process of question and answer

“Why?” is probably the question most frequently asked

“Pourquoi” is French;

“pour” is “for”, “quoi” is “what”

“Weishenme” is Mandarin;

“wei” is also “for”, “shenme” is also “what”

“Dimgai” is Cantonese;

“dim” is “how”, “gai” is “to explain”

“Why” is English;

“why” is just “why”

(People also say “for what?” or

“what for?” when they mean “why?”)

But for what am I thinking in English?

What for “pourquoi” is “for-what” and why is Mandarin English?

How, to explain?

520 (after Yu Guang Zhong's *Red Bean*)

Wilson Lam

The gloves I knitted for you are the reminder of winter.
The scarf I bought for you is my warmth on your shoulders.
Let this text message, the modern mailing pigeon,
Fly across the air and land on your phone:
Three simple digits as a sincere confession.
I needn't speak, since
They have spoken for me, a shy guy.
They are a cliché in this generation:
Its Mandarin name is too bare to utter.
33 roses are not the way we are used to say,
Yet please document this manifesto
That has been kept in my heart for all these years.

思念

Ro Lee

如風 如霧 如水
若暖若涼
拂過思緒 融入心扉

喜 櫻桃現美顏
怒 橫眉提圓眼
哀 采枯光華淡
樂 馨韻傳唇間

情來舉目星星笑
心傾俯首輕輕禱
恩幸友相感 難常敘 長相憶

Longingness

Ro Lee

Deep as water, soft as wind;
its taste is like the fragrance of mint.
Passing the mind, resting at heart;
the fire of which pierces the dark.

Joyful sadness; painful peace;
touching anger; distant relief
So overwhelming are our lives' shared
countless, precious vivid memories.

Oh my beloved friend,
our love is like a bright bright star
beaming in the blue blue sky
forever and, ever

Shalom! Brothers and sisters in Europe

Wilson Lam

I know you are breathing
with your big nose
a heritage left by Abraham
and I know you are breathing the dews
on potatoes
gripping a little cart
loading the mud until
the luminescence of a smile
sings you a lullaby.

The Eagles are menacing.

I know
you are breathing the metallic odour of Cornflowers
from somewhere
you never know yet
stabbing through your hair
and then off you see our Father
and I know you are breathing the smell
of dead bodies lying
in the dark corner of a street.

The Eagles are dancing.

I know
you are breathing in front of Goliaths
who laugh over
Magen David tied on your right arm
and I know you are breathing the soil you are digging
yet no chests underneath your feet
is a coffin.

I know you are breathing the odour
of withered Cornflowers
the inflamed claws
of the Eagles
the scarlet skull
of Goliaths
and I know
you are breathing because
we are living under the same rainbow.

The Eagles are fleeing.

Untitled

—poem inspired by Li Shangyin's 'Wu Ti'

Christy Chan

It is hard to arrange a date and even harder to say farewell.
Spring does not come as it should.
Wind of the East is fading; flowers of multiple colors are fading.

So long will the candle take to draw its last breath,
So long will my wasted heart stop lamenting your absence.

Therefore, treasure the time, my friend.
For it would be too late when your hair turns grey
with no one by your side but the cold lonely moon.

Time passes, people come and go,
What I pray now is that the bird of fortune could fly to the enchanted land for me,
to see if my love was there, finding a way home as I do to him.

Contemporaries, in troops*

Translated by Daniela Roschke

It is not easy to depict them without hatred
and entirely impossible without sneering.
They have heads like transfer pictures
and where the heart should be there is a telephone.

They know exactly that circles are round
and peg legs only made from wood.
They speak fluently, and for this reason
are proud of themselves every day—also on Sundays.

In their hands everything turns into goods.
Electric light is burning in their soul.
They also measure the incalculable.
The uncountable does not exist!

There is an enormous callus on their brains
almost as if they used them like a *derrière*.
They blush when playing with children,
making love according to schedule.

They sing never (not even in August)
nice Christmas songs in the middle of the street.
They are never happy and always feel like doing something.
And think, if they think, with their nose.

* Translated from "Zeitgenossen, Haufenweise" (1972) by Erich Kästner

They tirelessly praise our times,
as if they could claim a bonus for it.
Their intellect usually spreads out twofold.
They can only pretend to feel ashamed.

They are witty and cannot keep their jokes to themselves it.
They know a lot of things they do not understand.
You have to see them split hairs!
It makes you want to go up the wall.

Smalls holes should be shot into them!
Their last cry would be another dernier cri.
However, they have too many accomplices
than allowing us to shoot them.
You never hit them.

Pine . Away

Li Kwan Wing Eddy (2009)

For my Beloved Granny



The room was filled with a delicate fragrance. It was the freshness of the wood, I supposed, a smell that had cost us the earth. Her carmine cheongsam harmonized perfectly with the golden bracelets and the jade, though not with the over-heavily make-up.

“Too much face powder!” I whispered to my mum who herself looked pale enough.

“That’s decent,” her tears ran.

“Do you really think so?” I insisted

“Stop it, Eddy!”

In my memory, my grandma was never fond of cosmetics, not even after nearly a century of assimilation. When I first arrived at this place several days ago, I wondered how she would feel when she found all her cosmetically different peers. But she was here, anyhow, as what she wished for. I guess it has been her lifelong desire since her leaving this place in 1940s. When I was passing through a river with a pungent odor of corruption this morning, I recalled all of a sudden a phrase from her—“the water of your homeland tastes much sweeter.”

A man came in and shouted at us, with the familiar but distant rhythm. Grandma would certainly understand it; Mum and my uncles could understand it well; but I didn’t, not fully. As they all burst into tears, I realized that it’s time for us to put a stop here. “*Hei Gua! Hei Gua!*” They all yelled “walk carefully” in Hakka, the dialect which my grandma spoke. It was the last word that she heard from us—the word that brought her back to her roots after a sojourn of 60 years.

Being the eldest and the only female among her siblings, granny was forced to leave TeoChew, her poverty-stricken homeland in Southern inland China, soon after the retreat of Kuomintang in the Chinese Civil War. My great-grandparents, I was told, decided to abandon their

daughter while retaining their 2 sons, who have thereafter immigrated to Singapore. My grandma became a mother of four after meeting my grandpa in Hong Kong, and years later, a grandparent of 10. As a refugee, her motherhood appeared to be the greatest success of her life. *“It’s the fortune of war,”* she said. *“So don’t complain of your lot when everything seems going to pot. It may be a blessing in disguise, Wing!”*

It was her privilege to have me answer to my Chinese name that carried an uncommon rising tone, the tone of Hakka. It could be quite embarrassing, however, when my classmates in kindergarten overheard my weird nickname. When I was young enough, I tried hard to teach her to say the word “Eddy,” but she could only make it “Weddy” with the best of her ability. Eventually I gave up on teaching her, but not my gender, and instead asked her not to shout out my Hakkaness-Chinese name in public. I used to suspect that all people from TeoChew did not have good ears, as they usually articulate in a deafening voice. My mum said it’s a sign of happiness and excitement, only to those on intimate terms. I giggled when I heard that, having in mind the scenario when my father was lecturing me with a clothes hanger. I believe that’s the reason why I had never, during my tender age, spoken a complete sentence in Hakka; though I listened, and might occasionally say a word or two as replacements when needed.

Hakka was certainly the language of my childhood, when I was most of the time taken care of by my grandmother. I have a feeling that I could understand it well, at least before the birth of my sister, upon which my parents decided to hire a Filipino maid, who has afterward subbed for granny, both physically and linguistically.

“Jek Boon Lah!”

It’s the most frequent phrase that I heard when I was small, indicating

that “the meal is ready.” As a nanny plus a post-war Chinese, granny seemed to be most concerned with my tummy. After picking me up from school every day, she would shop with me at the market—the market with several drifters who looked vague and smelt of fish.

“Where do they live?” I once asked.

“*Mor Da Mor Shui!*” grandma murmured, meaning that “it’s disrespectful to ask such question.”

“Why? Do they have home? Why are they staying here?” I was not satisfied.

“*Stop it, Wing!*”

It was left as an unanswerable question. Gradually, I became indifferent to the existence of the drifters, though they stank like rotten fish. Both the fishmonger and the butcher in the market spoke Hakka. Their stalls were must-visit stops for grandma, where they exchanged information about their homeland and, most of the time, gossiped (in their familiar rhythm, of course). It’s a wonder to me that they never found the repetitive conversation boring—“*Jek Boon Meh?*” “*Jek Lah!*”—I rather pretended that I was not listening, and played with the stray doggy in the market. “He’s an orphan,” the butcher once told me.

“*Hei Gua!*” the fishmonger handed the exceptionally heavy red plastic bag to grandma. I said “Bye Bye” to the doggy and left. When we were shopping in other stalls, I needed to help granny out once in a while. Living in Hong Kong for more than 40 years did not grant her a native accent. It was not uncommon for people to misunderstand her Cantonese, which sounded very much like Hakka. I would help, albeit reluctantly, when people began to run out of patience and speak as loud as if they were speaking Hakka. Some people in the market were very rude. With the hostile eyes staring at us, I spoke in Cantonese, softly, in great contrast with the noise. These were the awful moments of my

childhood—in nine tones, flat.

When we were at home, grandma spoke to me in Hakka in spite of my Cantonese responses. It was the only rhythm that she could freely express herself. When I didn't seem to be listening to her, she would first bellow "*Wing! Wing!*", and then resorted to her awkward Cantonese, as she presumed that I was not able to understand her Hakka. Nevertheless, the fact was I did, but I was sick and tired of answering. I knew all the answers to her reiteration: the breathtaking scenery in TeoChew the clear river where people bathed and swam the well which provided iced water twenty-four hours a day the big mansion with open courtyard where children gathered and played the ...

"You'll be astonished when you are there, I am sure," granny claimed. *"By no stretch of the imagination could you fancy how marvelous they are!"*

I had to admit that it's perfectly true, when I have never been to the place and could only associate it with its language: the language of both alienation and connection. Being the only one in our family who hardly knew a bit of Hakka, I knew my father could never empathize with his in-laws, nor could he fully with my mother and me. Although I seldom spoke the language like my father, we were somehow different, I felt.

There were several moments in my life when I felt like speaking Hakka. They all occurred when granny was hospitalized. As a heavy smoker, she suffered from lung cancer and her days were numbered. With unknown reasons, she seemed to have lost her Cantonese, and was only willing to speak in Hakka when she was in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Her sudden aphasia in Cantonese was a hard nut to all the medical professionals, as they could only interpret her words by means of her tone—which was indeed most of the time rising—and her facial

expression.

It's the last time I saw her.

"*Jek Boon Meh?*" the first question she asked when I arrived at the ward, in the familiar rhythm. It was our language, the language that filled my childhood with overwhelming love and care.

"*Jek Lah!*" I responded in Hakka out of hand, when normally I would say "Sik Jor Lah" in Cantonese, which both carry the meaning of "I have had my meal already." I said nothing much then, as usual, while hearing to the good many complaints that she lodged with respect to all the doctors and the nurses (I was told that the cleaning woman in the ward happened to speak a little bit of Hakka, and she was the only one whom my grandma found helpful).

She kept on telling me her wish of going back to TeoChew.

"Sure!" I thought, "but only after you have recovered, and that's why you have to be cooperative, instead of nagging all the time!"

"*Hurh—*" I attempted to articulate my thought in the familiar rhythm.

"*Hurh—*" I imitated the rising tone of the language.

"*Hurh—*" I tried very hard to recollect the words that I knew.

"*Hurh—*"

I failed. I was not able to speak the language like an aphasiac; I was not able to connect with my beloved granny in our language. I rushed into the washroom and starred at myself in the mirror. I sobbed, loudly, with the sense of alienation that I had never experienced before. "*Hurh—?*"

The footmen carried the coffin and we all followed. The road to the graveyard took us more than an hour on foot. By tradition, we have to walk in order to show our respect for the ancestor. It was the first time I walked on my homeland, the land of my childhood fantasy. My

baby cousin found it funny when he saw all our footprints on the sandy soil. I tried instead to locate all the imaginary yet familiar breathtaking scenery.

Yes, I tried ...



C'est la vie

Eight Moments of an Athlete

Kitty Lau

I

Waves at audience, and
Laces up his shoes
Moving down the body
He turns into a leopard

II

Eyes gazing straight ahead
Inside the pupils narrow
Yeah, keep that focus
On the red line

III

Raises hind leg, and
Pushes head in front
Looking at opponents beside
He teases with smile

IV

BANG!

V

Rush! Rush! Rush Forward!
Cries aloud his desire
Leap! Leap With Thrust!
The beating heart is gay

VI

He flies like wind
Extending his both arms
And soon he will
Tear that red line

....

...

..

.

VII

Suddenly, he falls down
With a silent cry
He lies without a movement
And never wakes again

VIII

The ground is cold
Time is frozen up
Slowly closes the eyes
He drops a tear

Departure

Vernon Lau

You know the day
before the bird took leap

You know the day
After the wind stirred the cloud

And the day before the sun set

You said

When the sun rise
The year next
I will see the sun again

Rise
On that horizon

Sip
My memory of that day
On the day the flight took leap

And look
The tears dropped me

On the road

Generation Y

Daniela Roschke

workhardpartyharder
earnmorefunctionbetter
studylongerunderstandless
buildyourcvwinatrophy
upgrade your flight to Neverland
crash into an ocean of digits
movefaster beatthecompetition wintheratrace
workhard partyharder
live hardly

The Lemon

Eric Kwan

The lemon looks bright but is sour inside.

The lemon and lime belong to the same family.

The lemon is yellow and the lime is green.

The lemon is squeezed by the lime.

The lemon pushes back.

The lemon has to be a demon because the lime is slime.

The lemon shook hands with the lime but was rejected. Twice.

The lemon is living in its world. The lime is locked in its island.

The lemon leaves the orchard. The lime grows leaves to engrave this event.

The lemon enters the grocery store with apples and bananas.

The lemon is “L”, the apples are “A”, the bananas are “B”.

The lemon is “Lower” class. The apples and bananas are “A” and “B” class.

The lemon has lost status.

The lemon falls to its trough.

The lemon cries sour juice. Two glasses of sour lemonade.

The lemon becomes sweet juice.

The lemon reviews the sweet success from the past.

The lemon starts to work hard and is in battle mode.

The lemon is pumping more sweet juice.

The lemon believes one day it would shine like its skin.

The lemon ripens.

The lemon is bought by a customer.

The lemon is cut into halves.

The lemon’s first half is sliced. One cut after another. One bruise after another.

The lemon's other half is squeezed. No more sweet juice left. Only bruised skin.

The lemon pieces were made into lemonade.

The lemon could never escape from its destiny.

The lemon is bitten and forgotten.

Happy birthday

Sada Leung

One, two, three,
Happy birthday.

Twenty-one, twenty-two, twenty-three,
Giggling with my classmates.

Thirty-one, thirty-two, thirty-three,
Constructing a home with my soul-mate.

Forty-one, forty-two, forty-three,
Waiting for my sons and daughters to graduate.

Fifty-one, fifty-two, fifty-three,
Ready to abdicate.

Sixty-one, sixty-two, sixty-three,
Travelling around every state.

Seventy-one, seventy-two, seventy-three,
Idling around with grandsons to spend my days.

Maybe I meet the God one day,
And all my dreams disintegrate.

As long as you remember my face,
And smile me away.

The Cut

Kitty Lau

Last night, I saw
Your shadow in the bathroom
Dark and slender
Sweat silently slid along the oval face
You even didn't notice my cautious approach
Two hands remains hiding under the soapsuds
Kept rubbing and pushing the clothes
Slowly, I embraced your waist
Lifted your right hand
My nose was rified with lemon flavor
Pushed aside the bubbles on chapped skin
I saw pain inside the split
Instantly, you removed the hand
"Don't worry, just a band-aid on the cut,"
You said,
"And it won't cry for pain anymore."

A Story

Ling Cheung

It's what she saw in books
that clung on to her like hooks
Unbelievable
Such greatness in her fate is not feasible

Summer, she would describe
But shivery, she would ascribe
Tumble and rumble
Boom boom fumble

She had to take a video
Of this boy like Romeo
Run away and vanish
A video before it vanished

Summery days and wintry nights
Her life went on despite
in a moment, she had already forgotten
That beautiful scene left alone, rotten

Then one night Mother took her blouse
and slithered through the house
Left in the morning, everybody mourning

Blood stains with people scorning

Once again the scene appeared
Like a whisper: 'not to be feared'
Twilight exist for a reason
Funny how we miss the seasons

The Interview

Jennifer Lan

'Why do you think we should hire you?'
An alliance of three men with bald heads,
Three Rolex watches on their left wrist,
Three pairs of sharp and strong eyes,
Three sets of Armani suit,
Three big arm-chairs.

A long wooden conference table

I
sit alone
like a pot of Baby's Breath.

The Everest March

Michael Tsang (2009)

I have always wanted to climb Mount Everest. I often lay on the grass wondering what the view from the top of the mountain would be like. How magnificent it would be if Mother Nature stretches beyond my feet! Needless to say, when I was invited to join a climbing expedition to climb Mount Everest, I was overjoyed. It was one taste of challenge I could never resist trying. I was excited to be able to fulfill my dream; anxious was I, on the other hand, at the tough challenges ahead.

Even as a veteran mountaineer, I still needed to undergo intense physical training for three months, mostly to build my physical stamina. After that, I met the expedition in Beijing and we flew to Lhasa, planning to approach the mountain from the barren tableland of Tibet. When we reached the leg of the mountain where the base camps were set up, the first problem hit.

We chose to conquer the mountain between April and May before the snow in June. We also expected the snowfall in winter would melt during the short period of sunshine after February. However, we reached the Base Camp in late April only to find the winter snow still fresh beneath our feet.

This was only the first of many challenges ahead, I told myself. If the snow was still here at the base of the mountain, then it must be much worse at the top. Of course, we brought along our spikes, but as I installed them firmly on my shoes, I stared mindlessly at the sharp points, wondering if these tiny pointy pyramids would see me to the top.

Facing the Base Camp was a 12-mile-long expanse of pure ice called the East Rongbuk Glacier. Along the glacier up till the Northeast Ridge

of the mountain were six camps set up by previous climbers. For the next few days, we stayed at the Base Camp for acclimatization, while local porters helped us transfer essentials like food and sleeping bags to the upper camps, a common mountaineering practice to make our start as burden-free as possible.

What bothered me was air. At 16,500 feet it was exceptionally thin. A few members of the expedition already had AMS—Acute Mountain Sickness, commonly known as altitude sickness. I was fine at the moment, but God knows—oops, I have stopped believing in God since I was twelve—I mean, no one knows what would happen next. At higher altitudes the oxygen content in the air would be even less—only one-third of the normal composition.

But there was no time to get cold feet; sometimes, you just had to do it. Everything was ready; the summit was waiting. When I first looked at the summit towering nearly 13,000 feet above me, I knew it was going to be a long march.

As a test, we climbed from the Base Camp to Camp 1, just to test our health condition. We all finished with ease and this was definitely a good start. That night, we even drank to our health in Crystal.

We spent the next two days climbing along the East Rongbuk Glacier hoping to reach Camp 3, which was just under the Northeast Ridge of Mount Everest. I was so confident with my physique on one hand, and over-excited to see the beautiful views on the other, that I decided not to put on ice goggles. Having had the experience of climbing most of the highest summits in the world, I again reached Camp 3 easily.

While waiting for the others, I did a 360. Standing at about 25,000 feet, I could oversee the East Rongbuk Glacier. I could spot Camp 1 and the Base Camp below. Then I raised my head. The summit was the only thing I had in focus. I smiled. I told myself, it's no fun being in the middle. Mediocrity was one thing I could not tolerate. I had come up to this very

point. I had pushed my anxieties and hesitation to the back of my head. There's no reason to return anymore. *And I will reach that point.*

After dinner, my mistake of not wearing ice goggles struck. I had only just looked at a burning candle for one second, and before I realized, I was nearly blind. It was as if someone had pulled a dark curtain in front of me. I couldn't locate the candle accurately and accidentally knocked it down. My tent caught fire. I stepped on my foot and fell on the solid rocks. Shouts were echoing. Someone must have grabbed me out of the tent while I was struggling and fumbling. I tried to stand up but my shoes only scratched blindly on snow. Then out of nowhere my stomach gave an agonizing lurch and I vomited, my stomach squeezing out everything in my intestines. I might even have thrown up on somebody else's shoes. Then intense pain took over and I passed out.

I woke up the second day with my eyesight partially recovered. A member of the team, who was also a doctor, gave me a body check and sentenced me with a few days' rest. I should enjoy a little repose, and with sufficient rest, I could fully recover from sickness and snow blindness in a few days, he said. And so I was, recovering patiently, looking up at the summit from the campsite bitterly, and blaming myself for my stupidity every single minute. But I also vowed, to myself. This tiny setback did not stop me from reaching my goal; it only made me ever more determined. I must never turn back. *And I will reach that point.*

It was three days before I could set off again. From the notes the others had sent down, the weather up the mountain was a lot chillier. They urged me to clothe myself better. Wrapped in extra clothes, I inched my way up the Northeast Ridge with a Nepalese Sherpa guide, setting my footsteps on the true slopes of the mountain. I knew the challenge had just started; my endurance would soon be put to test.

As I advanced, my vision grew blurred due to the strong wind. Besides,

I was tired. We decided to take a slight rest. Halting in the shelter of a giant rock, I thought of the Long March by the Communists in 1930's. I remembered the Communist Army crossing the snowy mountains west of Sichuan. With heavy burdens on their backs and the lack of modern windproof clothing, the army of several thousand managed to tackle the cold weather and completed the Long March. If they could, why couldn't I?

Thinking of that, my spirits restored. The wind did not weaken in the slightest bit, but I knew I must go on. Progress was painfully slow, though. Every few yards I needed to stop and gasped for breath. The wind blew so hard that I couldn't breathe. I had no choice but to use the oxygen cylinders on my back. We also tied ourselves and the ice axe with a rope to be more secure. I guessed I was torn between pushing myself to the limit and learning from my mistakes; I spent a few minutes debating with myself whether to start using ice screws, which are tools that set up something like a reference point and would save me from falling.

I bypassed Camp 5 as it was very close to Camp 6, which stood at 27,760 feet. When I removed my last ice screw and arrived at the camp, I was greeted with warm welcome from the climbers. They were glad to see me back to myself; and I couldn't have been happier. We had another celebration later that night. Yet, as I recalled, we were so happy that we were totally unprepared for the calamity that struck us the next day.

When I woke up at 5 a.m. the next morning, snow was falling on the tents. The last of all things we hoped for had happened. We had no choice but to deter our schedule. With blowing wind and snow, we could not move on anymore. For the rest of the day we sat gravely in the tent and did nothing but hearing the whistles of the wind and the pattering of the snow on the tents. As these moments one would strangely think of clichés. *C'est la vie*. What goes up must come down. We had a great

night and I a smooth climb, so this was yet another test we had to face. I could understand that, but I just wished (as I had nothing to do but to pray to God, although I don't believe in Him) that since we only enjoyed brief hours of food and laughter last night, could our wait be as short?

Somehow, God seemed to be so kind as to answer my prayers. The snowing stopped in the evening. The ray of hope seemed to emerge again, but no, and this time it was not nature that stood in my way. When I declared that I wanted to continue my reach at the summit, all other climbers and Sherpa guides wanted to give up. I knew it might have been too dangerous as they all advised me against going. When I insisted, they left me alone. I knew they were afraid of being stuck in the snow and not able to descend, but that didn't stop me from detesting their cowardice. Reaching the summit was supposed to be the common goal of the expedition! How nice it was to be abandoned by your own teammates at twenty-seven thousand seven hundred and sixty feet! Yet of course I would ignore them and go on. I made a vow that I'd never turn back unless I reached that point. It was a vow to myself—the last thing I would ever break. Besides, as the snowing season approached, it was best to finish before another fresh downpour.

I decided to plunge ahead. I was probably the first man in recent years to challenge the summit alone, which actually made me feel like a hero. After a brief replenishment and dinner, I was avid to start my final ascent. The common practice was to start it just after midnight, from a camp close to the top.

Climbing at night was even more dangerous. The mountain was full of newly fallen snow. I had to act swiftly as the strong wind buffeting my skin could drift down a big mass as effortlessly as a baby babbling. After a long night of snowing and wind-blowing, the previous trail on the rocks had been destroyed and the ground was slippery. For each step

I had to try harder to ensure there was support and the snow was not too loose. The silver lining was that my crampons, spikes and spurs were working excellently, and I was kept clear of frostbite thanks to my extra windproof jackets.

By dawn I reached the base of the final pyramid. Exhausted, I sat on an outstretch of a rock, admiring the most beautiful sun I ever saw dyeing a sea of clouds in yellow.

When I tried to stand up, my legs were paralysed. I should have kept my legs moving more often while sitting, but moving on a slippery rock was extremely dangerous. I was left with numb legs anyway, and at 28,500 feet, the air was so thin that an obstructed blood flow could be disastrous. Names of fatal oedemas flashed in my mind, but I did not have time to even imagine them. Staying as calm as possible, I massaged my legs slowly to accelerate blood flow. Yet, with bulky oxygen frames at the back, I couldn't bend my body. Instead I had to raise my legs off the ground a little. After fifteen minutes of rubbing, my legs were good to go. Just as I lowered my feet I accidentally skidded out of the slippery rock.

I was completely caught off guard. My legs were pitched into the void and suddenly I was about to lose balance and cart-wheeling off a slope as steep as a cliff. Luckily (and I had never meant it so earnestly), I had planted two ice screws beforehand and those stopped me from falling, plus I was alert enough to ram one of my ice axes into the rock. I drove the axe with extraordinary strength at waist level. This was called a self-arrest, and I was literally arresting myself from rolling down a slope.

I was in an awkward and extremely dangerous position. With my legs pointing at the summit and my back facing the bottom of the mountain, I was hanging on the rock in a V shape, with my axe, waist and arse as a leverage point. I must not lay my back on the snow, for any unusual

weight addition onto the fresh snow could trigger an avalanche, the last thing I wanted now. As I recovered from the shock of almost falling, I closed my eyes and imaged slabs of snow hurtling towards me and the total darkness and immobility I would have been. I knew no instance of surviving an avalanche alone. We mountaineers talked about the fifteen-minute rule; survival becomes difficult after 15 minutes of being buried in snow, but given that there's somebody around who could yank me out. If an avalanche occurred, I would be dead for sure.

Very carefully I moved my weight onto the rock and stood up. Now I only had one thing to do. As I continued my nightmare ascent, the slopes became steeper and more slippery. I had to pave my steps and swing my ice axe more carefully, making sure they were planted overhead firmly, then as gingerly as possible pulled myself upward. It was a race against the sun, as the warming snow could trigger an avalanche just by itself. The summit looked tantalizingly close, but the gradient got steeper. It was like crawling on roof tiles. I kept telling myself:

I will reach that point.

Step after step the summit drew nearer.

The fierce wind was snatching my breath away. I didn't care.

And nearer.

I could hear the wind screech annoyingly. I didn't care.

And nearer.

I could feel the sun's heat already. But I pushed it aside in my mind.

And nearer.

So near, that after taking one last step, I found the barometer reading 29,035 feet.

So near, that after taking one last step, I found myself overlooking beautiful white mountains.

So near, that after taking one last step, I found myself conquering the highest mountain in the world!

“I DID IT!” I roared, and it reverberated like an eternity. No worries of avalanche; noise wouldn’t trigger one.

I looked around. These were the prettiest snow mountains and sea of clouds I had ever witnessed. Mother Nature was exhibiting her full naked beauty. It reminded me of my first kiss. Magical. Captivating. Bewitching. But these words seemed so miniscule now; only some background music seemed to fit. I hummed the tune that was playing at the background that night.

I didn’t give much thought to the descent. Let me enjoy the heaven a little bit longer.

Epiphany

Hui Yu Ting Iris (2009)

“Step by step, we could eventually arrive,” says Father. Though sweat is dripping down his cheeks and he keeps panting when he struggles to make his words loud enough to be heard, he looks very determined.

“OK! Yes I know, you have been saying that like a million times since we left home!” I reply, giving him an impatient look. Bad attitude, right? Hope you don’t mind, this is how my dad and I communicate. Rebellious puberty, I guess you would understand. Despite my not-very-nice attitude, I have never doubted that we could not get there. In fact, I have never doubted anything Father said. Father is known for his exceptional wisdom. Every time our tribe faces a crisis, no matter that be a drought or hunger, flooding or foreign attack, he always has the solutions for the tribe to get through the crisis. He obeys strictly to the philosophy of Taoism: “to live peacefully with the nature” is his motto. He used to tell me stories of our tribe when I was a child. He told me that the physical form of our species has gone through a series of transformation before we become the shape we are. We survive by adapting to nature; when there was drought and food shortage, we grew to have a stronger stomach which could digest whatever food we could find; when there were enemies, our body grew a tougher helmet to protect ourselves against their attack.

This time our tribe faces an invisible enemy which killed our brothers and sisters with a weapon that was almost like air. It first happened with one of our tribesmen returning from his trip. He was the bravest man in our tribe and he went across the border to find a rare plant for the medicine for his dying mother. The journey should have taken a week

only but he returned 15 days after his departure. We found him lying on the doorsteps in front of his house. We thought that it must be a beggar, or a homeless man who was lying on his doorsteps: clothes torn, limbs feeble, skin dehydrated, and eyes deadly shut. He was in coma for seven days. The only proof that he was alive was the irregular tremble on his eyelids.

“Beware of the mist!” Those were the words he screamed out when he opened his eyes. Some of the tribesmen were very grateful as they thought that he finally regained consciousness. However, they were wrong. He was still asleep, only with his eyes open. His eyes were wide open, so round and empty. He stared blankly at his front and he told us that he saw a wave of almost transparent mist rafting towards him, then he felt as if he were dreaming, then became weaker and weaker ... so weak that after finishing the sentence, he could not even speak, hear, eat, move ... and in the end, he could not even breathe. He then turned into a corpse. We grieved over his death, and blamed destiny for taking our bravest man from us, but then we realized that we were wrong. Destiny did not want to take our bravest man away from us. She did not want just one, she wanted thousands.

According to the eldest man in our tribe, this is the punishment from the noble tribe. We enraged them because our tribe had been growing too quickly that led them to believe that we were endangering their wellbeing. Father and I set out to the realm of the noble to offer peace and stop them from slaughtering our tribesmen.

Honestly, going on this journey was not my wish. There were thousands of brave men in our tribe fighting for this chance, so I just do not understand why Father and I had to be the one who took up this risky quest. But Father said we had to go, or more precisely, he wanted me to go. “You will understand, when the time comes.” He said. Oh yes,

what a wise conclusion, if the time does come.

The journey was long and dangerous. On our way to the realm of the noble, we fought against monsters and traps. Father protected me almost every time we faced danger. Not far from our home, we saw a gigantic monster which had a long nose like elephants. At the end of its nose, there was a rectangular bar attached to it. Father warned me, "This is a pet of the noble tribe! And it could suck everything inside. Once you are sucked inside it, you could never get out alive!" Father decided we should climb quietly pass the monster in order to make it to a cave nearby. Quickly, we ran with no sound. We watched alertly at the monster when we were moving.

"PHREEEEEEEEE!" The monster roared and started running towards us. I screamed and Father dashed over and pulled my arm. I felt a strong stream of wind sucking us towards the monster. Just as the monster was rushing towards us and I thought we were going into that black hole and would disappear forever, a white object suddenly flew to the end of the monster's nose and just stuck there, blocking the pitch black hole. Then it became silent as if it could not breathe. As I was stunned by this abrupt change in this incident, Father grabbed me and pulled me into the cave.

"So now you know how to deal with this monster when it attacks you next time." Father said. The only response he could get from me was my heavy panting sound. Kneeling on the ground, I think, there'd better not be a next time.

As we were resting in the cave, I smelt a sweet scent. It was the smell of summer roses, ripe peaches, dessert wine, and ... girls. The smell reminded me of home: the endless garden party with unlimited supply of exquisite food and intoxicating wine, and of course, the company of young and pretty girls. I couldn't think of anything but home. I missed it! I wanted to go home, even just for a few minutes. Seeing Father leaning

on the wall dosing off, I crept to the source of that sweet warm smell. I saw a hub where the smell was rafting from. The smell was getting stronger and my heartbeat started to race. Home! Finally! I quickened my pace and now I was running towards the hub. I ran so fast that I even hit on the door. I stretched my hand to the door knob. I felt a sudden grip on my arm and that force pulled me away from the door abruptly. I turned my head grumpily towards that force.

And that was Father.

“What now? I can’t even go back?” I spitted out the words in fury.

“That is a trap.” Calmly he said. He walked away from the hub, for a moment or two, I thought he was going to leave me for good. But I was wrong. He returned with a piece of rock and a wooden stick, then he opened the door and threw the rock inside the hub. The rock landed on the surface of the hub silently. Then I saw what the interior of the hub was like. There was nothing but a brown mat on the floor. Father then used the stick to poke the rock. However, the rock did not move no matter how hard he tried to poke at it. The rock was indeed stuck on the mat, and in fact, it was sinking. Now I could well imagine how I would have ended up if I had gone into the hub. Strangely, it did not surprise me at all, I felt so predictable about Father saving me from my mess again. Out of nowhere, there was a wave of fierce anger going to explode inside me.

“So this whole journey is all about you saving my ass every time? So that I know how brilliant you are and how dumb I am?” I couldn’t help but yelled out.

He walked away. “No, this trip is not about that. You can’t get the answer from me, you have to get it by yourself.” He replied without turning his head.

I did not say anything. In fact, I did not know what to say. I followed

him, speechless. I just hated him saying that. What if I could not get it? Could anyone guarantee that everything would be crystal-clear at some point?

We carried on with almost no conversation of any kind. I tried to avoid any sort of interaction with him. We crossed rivers, we passed woods. I almost died when we were crossing the rivers. The flood was so rapid that we were almost washed away by the stream. Father saved me, as usual.

We kept walking and we saw twelve sunrises and sunsets before we finally see a stone wall. And yes, we are now only a few steps away from our destination. Seeing the wall wakes me up from all the nightmares that we have gone through in our journey.

“This is the border. We are only a few steps away from the realm of the nobles.” Father says.

I look at the wall with a mixed feeling of hope and despise. Can it really give me an answer? How can it justify me going through all this? Why me? Maybe I will know, maybe I won't.

Phrumpppppp!

A huge white pillar stumps down and crushes on Father's body. I hear myself scream. Father freezes. Everything seems to stop moving and the clock must have stopped. Nothing ever moves and I do not breathe, then loudly and slowly, Father starts gasping as if he would die if he pauses. He tells me, this must be a punishment by the noble tribe for intruding their territory. Then, suddenly as if he is suffocated, he opens his mouth and stops breathing. I know that he is leaving me, and his mouth would not shut and resume breathing. He leaves me. He leaves without even giving me the answer. I am sure that I could never find out why I have to go onto this journey. There is not going to be any kind of epiphany.

Just as I am about to sit down beside Father's body to rest, a stream

of vigorous mist is sprayed on me.

I feel numb suddenly, I cannot move my limbs. My mind is getting weaker and weaker and gradually I feel very sleepy, as if I have gone through a whole day of hard work, and I think, that is true, maybe it's time for me to take a nap, I don't even know any place to go ... As I am getting more unconscious, someone breaks the tranquility.

“See? I've told you! You have to use insecticide for these nasty creatures! Don't ever use your feet again! That's gross!”

Oh, that must be the tribesman of the noble tribe. As I try to speak and explain our tribe means no harm to them, I find that I can no longer move, and my mind is getting blurry as if in dreams ...



Let's have some fun

Poem Writing ABC

Connie Wong

Pick your pen

Open a notebook

Ease your shoulders

Make a start:

Write seven lines

Rhyme six words

Include five images

Tighten four phrases

Insert three sounds

Name two places

Give a title.

Symphony #2807

Ro Lee

An aged
washing
machine
whines
about
flatulence
— boomer
rumbler

Dust dances in air - s' n-e-e

A plate
struck
the floor
hard
headlong
— clank
clash

A breeze
outside
window
kissed the
bonsai — shl
shl

An antiquated
clock murmurs
his covert love
affair —
tickety click

A stuttering tap weeps
over her loneliness —
drip:drop

An electric
boiler yells
for task
accomplish
ed — b beep
bleep

Economics

Jennifer Lan

Economics I: The Demand Curve

X-axis: Age

Y-axis: Attractive

ness

The downward

-sloping curve

reveals men's

desire for women

against age.

Start from

twenty-one,

you've left scars

on my breasts

as you bite me.

Will you still

kiss them when

there are more

and more ugly

love bites?

Economics II: The Concept of Supply

With their age

Their sperm runs out

Women! That's the thing I'm sure.

How much can the surface tell? Women think

A combination of cars, shares and apartments make

Men appreciate with the number of wrinkles on their face.

The reverse of kid's slides, stairs, right-triangles and everything!

Reverse everything! The kid's slides, the stairs and the right-triangles.

Men appreciate with the number of wrinkles on their face,

Which is a combination of cars, shares and apartments,

Women think. How much can the surface tell?

Women! One thing I'm sure,

Their sperm runs out

With their age.

Economics III: Market Economy

I am a student	I am an artist
in Hong Kong	in Japan who
who like shopping.	like travelling.
Arranged by fate,	Coincidentally,
our paths have	
somehow crossed.	
Every moment	
Is memorable.	
We belong to	I am lucky
different markets,	to know you,
we're not supposed	we're destined
to appear in the	to be a pair.
same demand	Love's beyond
and supply graph.	regional boundary!

8

Felix Law

8 is the number loved by businessmen, because it sounds like the word “fortune.”

8 is the number of years of Uncle Tung’s rule.

8 is the symbol printed on the card for transport and other petty expenses.

8 is the adjective for curious people who care about trivial things of others all the time.

8 is the number of the Route that connects the Airport with west Kowloon and Shatin.

8 is the number of the stock that has hurt many people (mentally, and financially.)

8 is the number of characters in the code that determines your life in Chinese zodiac.

8 is the number hated by businessmen, because it means a sudden day-off and loss of business on a windy day.

Playing Poker

Kelly Kwong

Cracks into halves,
a brittle yellow nail. One clings; another

r

i

g

h

t a n g l e s

with tears and frowns, and a string of crimson droplets dripping down.



“遠近”

Chan Suet Yi, Year 3 student
Department of Fine Arts
The Chinese University of Hong Kong

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Ling CHEUNG

Felix LAW

Lydia NG



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