

前言 / 何福仁



這書是從西西近年的新作中選出，以動物為母題，包括羊駝、猛獁象、猩猩、長臂猿、北極熊，等等，彷彿各種動物在自由園裏舉行嘉年華，是奇書《縫熊志》、《猿猴志》之後，另一種用詩的形式抒寫動物。

詩共23首，難得的是27位繪者參加盛會，有的屬專業，也有的為素人，真是少長咸集，大家平起平坐，為每首詩配以一幅以至多幅繪畫，不拘一格，多元異質。看西西的詩，看畫者的詮釋，加上讀者自己的想像與理解，眾聲複調，文學藝術合該這般如此。

西西向以小說著名，論者認為其特色是變化瑰奇，往往一篇一貌。她的詩，其實也別樹一幟，且是最早結緣。她在中學時代的作品是詩；她也曾任報刊的詩頁編輯，因為太多晦澀的來稿，她自稱看不懂而離任。換言之，早在上世紀六十年代，那是臺港現代詩最晦澀的時期，她對詩已有自己的看法，有自己的詩觀，並且半世紀以來一以貫之，她並不侈言什麼生活化，她的詩根本就是生活的反映，明朗、親切、幽默，不雕詞琢句，不尚虛玄。博爾赫斯曾在《另一個、同一樣》中的序言自剖：

作家的際遇很奇特。開初是巴羅克式，矯飾的巴羅克式，許多年後，要是星運亨通的話，成就的不是簡練，簡練不算什麼，而是適度而含蓄的複雜性。

大可借來說西西，只不過她似乎從未經歷巴羅克式文風。她的詩，沖淡而雋永，言語樸實，卻又充滿奇思妙想。本書23首詩，分別創作，合而觀之，可是互相呼應，既自省人這動物與其他動物的關係，又為弱者發聲，體現一種民胞物與之情，溫暖、關懷，跟異類通靈。

至於美術，我們知道這是她的另一鍾愛，她最初發表的新詩，往往附上自己的繪畫或者木刻，後來在報上連載小說，例如《我城》、《飛氈》，也自行插圖。多年來她一直想出一本繪本，當她知道這次有二三十位畫家主動跟她合作，替她的詩繪畫，她非常高興，說比自己一個人繪畫「更好」。

這書中英對照，感謝費正華的翻譯，她曾譯西西的詩集，名為*Not Written Words*（《不是文字》），曾因此得翻譯獎。也感謝香港中文大學出版社願意承擔這麼漂亮的一本書，其中彭騰女士費神編務，不勝銘感。

Preface to *Carnival of Animals* / Ho Fuk-yan

This book showcases a selection of Xi Xi's new works written during the past few years that feature animals as their subject matter, including alpacas, mammoths, orangutans, gibbons, and polar bears—it's as though various animals are holding a carnival in Freedom Park. Following in the footsteps of her unique books *The Teddy Bear Chronicles* and *Chronicles of Apes and Monkeys*, this collection demonstrates another way of describing animals, this time using poetry.

There are twenty-three poems in total. In a rare feat, twenty-seven illustrators have participated in this endeavour; some are professional artists, and some are novices, encompassing a range of experiences and ages, coming together on equal footing, each poem accompanied by at least one illustration, not limited to any form, presenting multiple heterogeneities. Reading Xi Xi's poetry and seeing the artists' interpretations, coupled with the reader's own imagination and understanding, results in a polyphony of various voices—this is how literature and art should be.

Xi Xi is renowned for her fiction, which critics say is characterised by its magnificent variations, with each piece having its own distinct style and



form. In fact, her poetry is also in a class of its own, and poetry was her first affinity. Her creative output during secondary school was poetry; she also served as the editor of the poetry page of a periodical. After receiving too many obscure contributions that she claims she couldn't understand, she left this position. In other words, as early as the 1960s, when modern poetry in Taiwan and Hong Kong was at its most obscure, she'd already developed her own opinions and views on poetry, which have remained consistent for half a century. She doesn't spout off grandiose claims about everydayness; her poems are simply reflections of life—bright and cheerful, approachable, and humourous, not made up of flowery sentences and phrases, not prizing the illusory and abstruse. In his prologue to *The Other, The Same*, Borges dissects himself as such:

The fate of the writer is peculiar. At first, the writer is baroque, vainly baroque, and after many years can achieve, if the stars are favourable, not simplicity, which is nothing, but instead a modest and secret complexity.

Applying this idea to Xi Xi, she never seems to have dabbled in the baroque. Her poems are light but meaningful, written in plain language yet full of whimsical ideas. The twenty-three poems in this book were written separately, but when viewed together, they resonate with each other, not only inwardly examining the relationship between human animals and other animals, but also giving voice to the weak, embodying the sentiment of “all humans are siblings, and all things are companions,” brimming with warmth and compassion, channelling other species.

As for art, we know it's another passion of hers. Her first published poems were often accompanied by her own drawings or woodcuts. Later, her novels that were serialised in newspapers, such as *My City* and *Flying Carpet*, also included her own illustrations. For several years, she'd been thinking of putting out a picture book, and upon learning that more than twenty artists

had offered to collaborate with her on an illustrated poetry book, she was delighted, saying it was “better” than her doing the illustrations alone.

This is a bilingual book in both Chinese and English. Thank you to Jennifer Feeley for her English translation. She won a literary translation prize for her previous translated collection of Xi Xi's poetry, *Not Written Words*. I would also like to thank the Chinese University of Hong Kong Press for being willing to put forth the effort to produce such a beautiful book. In particular, I am deeply grateful to Ms. Rachel Pang for taking such great pains in editing it.



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