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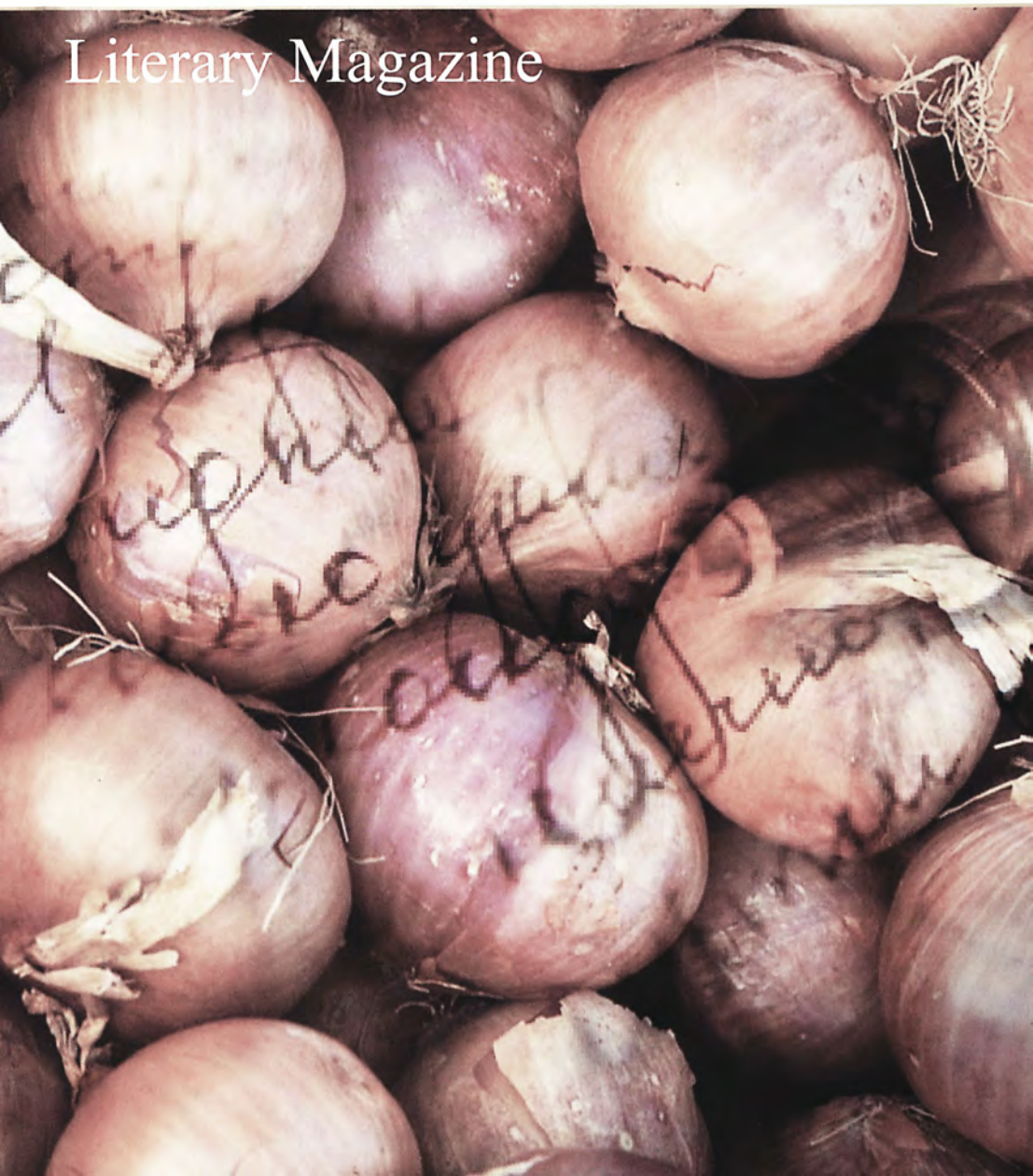
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2012

Onion

Literary Magazine





Photo/ Jason Ku

Words from Douglas

Hong Kong is often stereotyped as a place without much culture—all hard-eyed pragmatic bankers, no artists—but that has not been my experience. This is a place surging with creativity, and with a drive to find artistic expression, in words and other media. The stereotype may even have the effect of dampening some potential writers' enthusiasm for creative expression, but not in the English Department at Lingnan University, and, my impression is, not at other Hong Kong universities either. We have waves of students who come to us already loving to write—in English, which for most is a second language—and still more waves who come to us not entirely predisposed to hate writing, and who, when they more or less by chance end up in a writing class, surprise themselves by being really good at it, and loving it.

Not only that: we have a handful of students who love not only to write, but to edit other people's writing! This volume, like its predecessors in years past (?? in 2008, *Deja Vu* in 2010), was edited and compiled by undergraduate majors in the Bachelor of Arts in Contemporary English Studies (Hons.) at Lingnan University. They had the gentle and encouraging guidance and the contagious enthusiasm of our Writer-in-Residence in term 2 (2011-2012), Jennifer Wong, a Hong Kong-born and (usually) UK-based poet who is already beginning to draw attention with her poetry collections; we among the academic staff in the department have loved having Jenny with us this spring, and are sad to see her go, but my guess is that her loyal devotees among the students will miss her most of all.

Enjoy!

Douglas Robinson
Tong Tin Sun Chair Professor of English
Head, English Department

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Words from Mike Ingham On creative writing

Creativity has become a buzz-word in global education, but, I would argue, it is a concept that is poorly understood. People seek to apply it to various aspects of education that actually involve minimal genuine creative flair. Ironically, the aesthetic form of creativity has often been undervalued and even neglected in mainstream higher education.



Photo/ Winona Cheung

Fortunately, things have changed in many cultural contexts, and creative writing is beginning to be seen as a desirable addition for language and literature departments. Even here in conservative Hong Kong, genuine creativity is gradually creeping into university curricula, admittedly via the back door in many cases.

Now creativity in spoken language, especially in the form of drama, and creativity in writing, both fictional/imaginative and non-fictional genres, are assuming increased significance. For this reason we need the inspiration and guidance that artists- and writers-in-residence can offer us. I am delighted that our 3 writers-in-residence to date, Xu Xi, Justin Hill (both novelists) and, in the current academic year, poet Jenny Wong have all given our creative writing venture such a boost by spending a semester working with our students on various aspects of creative writing. Their dedicated and knowledgeable input over the last 4 years in the form of workshops, class teaching, editing work and editorial leadership on the Department's creative writing magazine has helped to make a difference and inspired all who those who value creative writing here at Lingnan.

Indeed, it matters little whether the creativity is in English or in Chinese. A good story is a good story, and a good poem is a good poem, irrespective of the original text language. What really matters is the impulse to express oneself imaginatively, to complement the critical and analytical writing required for most academic courses. I would argue strongly that in order to appreciate good quality writing, whether the factual/expository type or imaginative poetry, fiction or creative non-fiction, one needs to have a go oneself, and in the process discover how exciting, but also incredibly demanding, lucid and compelling written communication can be. So, a big 'thank you' to all who have written and edited for 'Onion'. Without your creative flair and effort there would be no magazine. 'Onion' is the 7th English Dept. magazine to date. We look forward to seeing the 8th in due course.

Enjoy!

Mike Ingham

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Publicity

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Amy Mingkung Lee

We would especially like to thank Michael Ingham, Douglas Robinson, Wendy Mak and Joyce for their staunch support in making this magazine happen!



Onion (translated by Martha Cheung)

P. K. Leung

First published in *Foodscape*, Original Photograph Club Limited (1997)

They say
What's so great about
an onion? Serves it right
to be criticized so very often lately
It's got homely clothes on, all right
but its name sounds suspiciously alien
and its background is no good, strip off one layer
there is yet another layer, with nothing much inside
nothing the people will call substance, mere formalist!
In the end they use some harsh words, and do away with this
simpleton good-for-nothing. I, who spend all my time cooking,
peel off one layer after another, different shapes, with no clear aims
absent-minded I got my hands stained with sourness, not wanting just
to speak with metaphors. My eyes were a little itchy, not because
of grand and sublime feelings. One layer on top of another, not
all ordinary things are the same. Sometimes thin, sometimes
thick, sometimes light, sometimes heavy, the slightest
change slips out of habit models, daily life needs
attention too. You and I indeed are different
The process of peeling has also touched me
That pungence that sweetness so sharp so
mixed. I look for new words to explain
it but they keep saying it's too easy
to bare yourself for all to see
They, in robes, sipping tea,
talk about refined trivia
solve lantern riddles
I go after other
Words

Chair Professor of Comparative Literature at Lingnan, P. K. Leung (also known as Ye Si (也斯)) is a leading poet in Hong Kong, and has published more than ten volumes of poems. His latest book is his selected poems Amblings (2010) published by ASM. He was writer-in-residence in Berlin in 1998 and his work is also translated into German and French. He is also a fiction writer, and a scholar and teacher of creative writing, literature and film studies at Lingnan University, and has written books on Hong Kong culture, literature and cinema.



Lustrous Stars

Lustrous Stars

Nicole Chan & Winona Cheung

High up in the sky,
Golden, bright and dazzling:
Splendid but short life.

Fireworks are appealing and way too dazzling: shaking my heart, banging in my ears and illuminating my eyes. Sometimes, people come across this situation when they search for fame. Fame is even more dazzling, which distracts people. No matter how splendid it is, it neither lasts long nor brings eternal happiness.

When you wish upon the stars, it doesn't matter who you are...

Strangers in the library

Rashida Leung

I.

You sweat and breathe and fix your tie.
 Pinstripe suit. I guess you are presenting in five.
 Pale cheek. High pitch.
 Wide-eyed. Lip bites. These signs, they do hint a stage fright.
 Have you noticed me who sit by your side?
 Deep breaths, handsome. I know you'll be fine.

II.

I hate to say but you do look familiar.
 A modest nod. You're like my sister.
 Short fringe. Fair-skinned. And eyes like stars.
 Well, not like stars. But meeting you is really a pleasure.
 No wonder, your escort seems an equal treasure.

III.

To show how smart he is,
 I'll break it down into three.
 No aid he needs, he is a calculator-free.
 He doesn't write much, each answer so brief.
Introduction to Economics -- Exam Kit
 he handles with ease.
 Despite all that,
 one may say he is a geek.

This room, per day, a hundred comes and goes.
 Today, by fate, you and I happen to show.

A world with 7 billion.
 No way it is a coincidence.
 Let there be no wall as in Frost's poem.
 Without overdoing it,
 shall we talk a little,
 establish some communion?



Rashida Leung is a student who majors in English studies.

The Inimitable Orange

Roger Berry

All you social commentators
And linguistic legislators
I'd like to make you see that it's a crime
How some words are underused
Under-rated and abused
Because they have no partner in rhyme

Every sparrow has his marrow
And a skate has many a mate
Enough to form a whole society
But some others aren't as lucky
Take the squirrel, who, though plucky
Is sentenced to a rhyming Coventry

For even selfish SELF
Can come down from its shelf
If ever it's in need of company
And solitary KELP
Will never lack for help
As long as there are fishes in the sea

You can try to cheat with PYGMY
If you make it rhyme with 'dig me'
But that would be a breach of etiquette
And inimitable ORANGE
Has no partner like a FLORRIDGE
To join him in a lyrical duet

While out there on the stage
Clichés are all the rage
It's DAY, AWAY, and SAY that have the fun
But don't you think it's wrong
Every time you hear a song
Where LOVE, ABOVE and DOVE are overdone?

It's no token of their worth
Just an accident of birth
That takes away their chance of lasting fame
So let's put them in the limelight
There's no need to get the rhyme right
Let's honour the inimitable ORANGE

Roger Berry is an applied linguist teaching at the English Department including courses in An Introduction to English Grammar, Language as Play and English in Education. His main interests are in terminology and metalanguage. His books and monographs include English Grammar (Routledge, 2011), Terminology in English Language Teaching (Peter Lang Verlag, 2010), Collins Cobuild English Guides 7: Determiners and Quantifiers (HarperCollins, 1997) and Collins Cobuild English Guides 3: Articles (HarperCollins, 1993).



I Hate Homophones

Roger Berry

Eye hate homophones, don't ewe two?
Like eye hate to weight inn along cue
Eye hate homophones've every hew
've read and blew, eye do

4 inn the mane
There such a pane
Just like the rein on the plane in Spain
If U complain
It's awl inn vein
There always right, rite, wright
and write again

Aye hate homophones, don't U to?
Like aye hate to weight inn along Q
Aye hate homophones've every Hugh
've read and blew aye do

Their every ware
Both hear and their...
... the reason I'm losing awl my hare
I do declare
It isn't fare
And it's becoming more than icon bare

Eye hate homophones, don't yew 2?
Like eye hate to weight inner long cue
Eye hate homophones like IOU
When cash is over dew

Watt R they fore?
Know won is shore
Butt they should really bee against the lore
4 they R moor
Than just a boar
They better stop ore else I'm going to wore

Aye hate homophones, don't ewe two?
Like eye hate to weight inn along Q
Aye hate homophones like IOU
When cash is over dew

Butt waiter mow
Fore if ewe no
Then homophones can make yew lots've doe
Ewes dinner name
They'll bring yew fame
And that's Y pop groups like to ewes
them sow

Wee like homophones like U2
Like we like to have a barber queue
Wee like homophones've every hew
've read and blew, wee do

Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Caterpillar
Angel Law

Inspired by Wallace Stevens'
Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird

I

Among the vast green sea of leaves
The only moving creature
Was the caterpillar.

II

I was wearing a peculiar dress
Like the caterpillar,
Never the centre of attraction.

III

The caterpillar dragged slowly on the maple leaves
It was its natural coverage, green.

IV

Beauty and the Beast
Are one.
Beauty and the Beast and the caterpillar
Are one.

V

As if the ugly duckling who was once
Being laughed at could turn into
A beautiful swan
The caterpillar was wrapping herself
Into a glamorous silken white dress.

VI

The wind rustled the maple leaves
With its soft adventurous breeze.
The caterpillar barely grabbed the branches,
Moving to and fro.
Survival
Was the strength in her mind:
An unbreakable thread.

VII

O Cinderella
Why do you imagine yourself the princess?
Do you not see how the caterpillar
Transform herself
Into a new you?

VIII

I know the dangers
Of the forest;
But I know, too
That the caterpillar is not
The weakest.

IX

When the caterpillar put on her new clothes,
It marked the cycle
Of one of her metamorphoses.

X

The vivid scene of the caterpillar
Sleeping in a warm mattress,
Relaxng herself in a hot bathtub
Reaching tranquility.

XI

Fear, anxiety shook us
In our intimate puberty
But we were never defeated.
In that we learned
Our characteristics strengthened
Like the caterpillar.

XII

The wind is whirling.
The caterpillar must be waiting.

XIII

It was breaking dawn.
It was the first beam of sunlight
And it was penetrating its pupa
The caterpillar opened its long-closed eyes
And turned into a beautiful butterfly.



Angel Law studies English and started writing poems 3 years ago. She loves reading and writing poetry. Her favourite poet is Robert Frost, who inspires her to write in forms. She reads Shakespearean poetry and is interested in writing sonnets.

The Yellow Wallpaper

by Charlotte Perkins Gilman. Adapted by Mike Ingham and Jessica Yeung
(Excerpt from a script performed in Hong Kong and Singapore in 2008. This piece demonstrates a new approach towards creative writing)

Performer: Jessica Yeung

Musician/ soundscaper: Ben Robinson

Prelude – public lecture

GILMAN – older woman with pince-nez, shawl, dark, nondescript full length dress of indeterminate period/ fashion. Comes to the lectern and after addressing the audience, reads from her papers

GILMAN: Good evening and welcome to this public lecture. My name is Charlotte Perkins Gilman, and the topic of our lecture today goes back to the very beginning of my writing career. My first story has proved my most popular, and has been reprinted in anthologies to this day. Indeed for over a hundred years it has never been out of print. However it was also my most controversial. Many a reader has asked, “Why did you write *The Yellow Wallpaper*?” Finally it is my intention to tell you why. Shortly after my story appeared in 1891 one male commentator writing under the heading *Perilous Stuff* asserted, and I quote, ‘such a story ought not to be written; it was enough to drive anyone mad to read it.’ He was a physician. Another physician wrote that it was the best description of incipient insanity he had ever seen, and – begging my pardon – had I been there? Now the story of the story is this:

House Lights down

VOICE-OVER: *Gilman’s voice reading from the opening of the story ‘Through this’ – with soft background music.*

‘The dawn colours creep up my bedroom wall, softly, slowly. Darkness, dim gray, dull blue, soft lavender, clear pink, pale yellow, warm gold – sunlight.

A new day.

With the great sunrise great thoughts come.

I rise with the world. I live, I can help. Here, close at hand lie the sweet home duties through which my life shall touch the others. Through this man made happier and stronger by my living; through these rosy babies sleeping here in the growing light; through this small sweet well-ordered home, whose restful influence shall touch all comers; through me too, perhaps....

Through this dear work, well done, I shall reach, I shall help – but I must get the dishes done and not dream.

There, I forgot the eggs, I can make these go, I guess. Now to soak the tapioca. Now the beets on, they take so long. I’ll bake the potatoes – they don’t go in yet. Now babykins must have her bath and nap.

There, I forgot the eggs, I can make these go, I guess. Now to soak the tapioca. Now the beets on, they take so long. I'll bake the potatoes – they don't go in yet. Now babykins must have her bath and nap.

I must write to mother today.

There! I meant to have swept the bed-room this morning so as to have more time tomorrow. Then tomorrow I can practice my singing and perhaps do some writing. I'll just put the potatoes in.

That was a good dinner. I like to cook. I think housework is noble if you do it in a right spirit, if you also have time for other things.

I need to do some shopping tomorrow. There, I mustn't forget my list, I always hurry so. Thread, elastic, buttons; what was that other thing? Maybe I'll think of it.

Why the milk hasn't come, and John's got to go out early tonight.

I'm sorry, dear, but the milk was so late I couldn't make it.

Hush, hush, baby! Papa's talking.

Good night, dear, don't be too late. I'll put the baby to bed.

It's no use, I can't write the letter tonight. I'm too tired. I'll try to get up early tomorrow and get the sweeping done. How loud the crickets are! The evening shades creep down my bedroom wall – softly – slowly.

Warm gold – pale yellow – clear pink – soft lavender – dull blue – dim gray – darkness.

Music continues, as voice fades

LIGHTS UP ON:

A rather bare room with a table/desk and stool downstage centre. Pale yellow light on cyclorama. Brass bed to rear of right-hand centre stage. Sheets of music on the table. One or two scattered on floor. Pale yellow light floods the backdrop and a rather florid musical notation design is evident in the wallpaper.

PHASE ONE

Sound of singing: 'Caro Mio Ben' or another song. Lights come up on WOMAN standing near the table D.S. centre singing at a point roughly half way through first verse. Wistful style of singing. Quite charming and mellifluous. Sudden pause as she breaks off at an arbitrary point. Looks towards audience but doesn't fully acknowledge their presence. It's as if she's talking to someone who may or may not be there..

WOMAN: John doesn't believe I'm sick. Perhaps that's the reason I don't get well faster.

You see (*apparently to the audience, but in fact over their heads*) John is a doctor. My brother is also a doctor, and they both say the same thing. I need rest and no distraction or excitement.

Personally I believe that congenial work with excitement and change would do me good. But...what is one to do. I want to do my singing lessons and get out to meet people. Of course I sing in spite of them, but having to be so sly about it....well, it makes me tired.

You see, I fancy that in my condition if only I had more stimulus...but John says the worst thing I can do is think about my condition....I confess, it always makes me feel bad.

I must admit I get unreasonably angry about John sometimes. I'm sure I never used to be so sensitive. I think it's due to my nervous condition. I do take pains to control myself...before him, at least....which of course ends up making me more tired.

(Coming closer to audience, and sitting on her stool)

Mind you, he is very careful and loving and always takes all cares from me, so I feel basely ungrateful not to value it more. After all we came here solely on my account. I am to have perfect rest and all the air I can get. That's why John chose this big nursery as our bedroom. There's only one thing about it I don't like - the windows are barred...for safety, I suppose.

Oh, and of course, the wallpaper. *(Becoming more animated in manner)* The colour is perfectly repulsive, don't you agree. Look, it's dull and faded in some places and a sort of lurid orange in others. Why it's even got a sort of sickly, sulphurous tint down there *(pointing)*. Shhh....here comes John. I mustn't let him find us like this...he hates me to get over-excited. *(Hastily tidies sheet music and conceals it as*

Lights fade.

PHASE TWO

Lights up. The woman is discovered in the same position as before but the sheet music is once more strewn on the floor - only a little more of it than before. The yellow backdrop has increased in intensity although there are also faded patches.

WOMAN: We've been here two weeks now, and I haven't really felt like singing or doing very much...not since that first day. John is away all the time - sometimes nights too, if his cases are serious.....I'm glad my case isn't serious.

(Pause)

But my nervous trouble is dreadfully depressing, you know. *(To audience)* Still, I feel sure that you understand. You see, John doesn't see any reason for it. I mean to be a help to John - a real rest and comfort to him, and here I am a burden

already. It's lucky his sister is so good with the baby - such a dear baby...and yet I can't be with him. It makes me nervous.

(Reflective pause)

I suppose John was never nervous once in his whole life. He laughs at me when I tell him about this awful wallpaper. He said he meant to re-paper the room, but later on her said I was letting it get the better of me, and that nothing was worse for a nervous patient than to give way to such fancies.

(Laughs rather shrilly. Imitates 'John')

'You know this place is doing you good' he said, and then took me in his arms and called me his dear little goose.

Actually, I'm growing to be quite fond of this room - all except that horrid wallpaper, of course. I think sometimes that if I were only well enough to see people and take my singing lessons, it would release the pressure of my thoughts and feelings a bit, and then I'd be able to rest...

(Sings a few notes without much energy)

But, you see, when I try to sing, well, it just exhausts me... I wish I could get well faster.

(Sits on bed)

Light fades

PHASE THREE

Woman is discovered on bed closely examining the wallpaper. It looks more patchy and the florid pattern, which resembles musical notation appears more exaggerated. The pattern also seems more uneven than before, with looping notes flying off at oblique angles. The musical stave on the horizontal appears more crooked and the notes on the vertical are lopsided and exaggerated. There are darker patches and still some pale and faded sections. She spends some time looking at it before turning to the audience.

WOMAN: You know, this paper looks to me as if it actually knows what a vicious influence it has on me. *(Angrily, getting off the bed and pacing up and down)*

The impertinence of it, it makes me positively angry to see how it goes on for ever, *(rather exaggeratedly, even manically)* up and down, sideways and down, then up and down, down and up and sideways *(singing this as a refrain several times before coming to a sudden halt).*

(Conspiratorially to audience) Just look at it! That pattern looks like a row of broken necks with their bulbous eyes all staring at you endlessly....

(Going to bed and jumping on it). Then there's this heavy bed which was here before we came. It's so old-fashioned. I don't mind it a bit - only the paper...*(shouting at the paper)* ONLY THE PAPER. *(Echo).*

Now, what I *do* like about this room is the splendid view it commands from the windows. *(Looking out from different points of the stage. Pointing out to the audience.)* Look, there's John's sister down in the garden - such a dear girl... and so careful of me. Only, she mustn't hear me practising my singing. John says it's only for his ears, when he comes home at night. Of course that was why he wouldn't let me go to the conservatory.. Not good for my condition, he said. Still, I'm sure he was right. I do get so tired....

Of course, from up here, I can always see her from a long way away when she's coming back with the shopping. She looks so tiny from here. Such a perfect housekeeper...and hopes for no better profession...*(Turns suddenly as if she has seen or heard something strange).*

(Conspiratorially to audience) You know, this wallpaper is so *(violently loud)* IRRITATING. I don't know what I'm going to do with it.

Just look at those bloated curves and flourishes, running off sideways in waves of optic horror. Why, they look like a lot of wallowing seaweed. It gives me delirium tremens just to look at it. And yet, it's quite remarkable - all that wonderful confusion.

But, you see in a certain light, you can just make out a strange, provoking sort of shape skulking behind that silly, conspicuous design. There... *(she moves towards the backdrop)* do you see it too?
Pause

(Conspiratorial whisper again) There are things in that wallpaper that nobody knows but me, nor ever will. Actually, the shapes behind that paper get clearer day by day. And it's always the same shape - just like a woman stooping down and creeping about *(she imitates the actions her words have described. Breaks off and detaches herself)* I don't like it a bit. I wish John would take me away from here.....

Lights fade

[...]

Dream Well
Douglas Robinson

Joseph is dreaming at the bottom of the well where his brothers have thrown him, except it's not really a well, it's not a cistern, there's no water down here, it's more just a pit dug deep in the clay. Used as a kind of makeshift prison, or dungeon, for various offenders. There are lots of these pits in Canaan. Lots of offenders, perhaps.

Joseph fades in and out of consciousness, sliding into and swimming back up out of fugue states in which he seems to be awake but is probably only dreaming that he is awake, or else is awake and imagining that he's dreaming, or both, somehow. He may be dreaming that he's wide awake but imagining in that waking state that it's all but a dream.

He's only seventeen.

It feels to him at times that his thoughts are clear and his eyes are open, and that he is seeing the scenes of his dreams projected in technicolor against the dark clay wall of the pit only two cubits in front of his face, the dream images large, larger than life, and semitransparent, blurry, flickering.

The interpretations come to him as fuzzily as do the dreams.

The words for the dreams and the interpretations are mine. He is almost totally unaware of them, the words, and probably wouldn't understand them even if he could hear them, or see them written on this page before you.

He's in bed with a naked woman, and at first it seems to him that she is Bilhah and he is Reuben, or that he is himself Joseph in Reuben's place, only this is not Reuben's place, it is his father's, and the dream fills him with dread, and he is afraid to touch the woman; he shrinks back from her, tries to avert his eyes from her nakedness. But then it seems there is an Egyptian named Potiphera involved here: the woman is Potiphera's wife or daughter, and there has been a wedding, and in his dream he can see the bride quite clearly, and she is his bride or she is Potiphera's, he can't tell. He squints through the mists and tries to determine where this Potiphera is standing, how close to the woman, whose name now may be Asenath, but he can't tell. Potiphera addresses him by the strange name of Zaphnath-Paaneah, and when he asks for an explanation of this name Potiphera says it means yo-Zaphnath who is called Ip-ankh. He understands from this that yo-Zaph is a twisting of Joseph, but can make none of the rest of it out. Two small black-haired boys stand in the wedding train. Their names, he knows, are Manasseh and Ephraim.

Interpretation of the First Dream

The first part of this dream is a memory image. His oldest brother Reuben did have sexual congress with his father's concubine Bilhah, which was a sin in the eyes of God. As punishment for this transgression Jacob took Reuben's birthright as the oldest son away from him and gave it to Joseph, the eleventh in line but the older son of Rachel, his favorite wife. So in that way Joseph replaced Reuben, which replacement is represented in the dream by his becoming Reuben in bed with Bilhah. His extreme anxiety about finding himself in bed with his mother's maid, his father's concubine, the overwhelming feeling of dread he has, comes from the taboo against uncovering the nakedness of your father's wife. He doesn't want to touch the woman. He doesn't even want to see her bare body. He tries to avert his eyes.

The rest of the dream is prophetic. Some time in the near future he will serve an Egyptian named Potiphera, or Potiphar, and will find himself in bed with Potiphera's wife Zuleika. He will feel the same dread, the same desire to avoid touching or gazing upon her body. She will, he realizes, be trying to seduce him; his refusal to be seduced by her the wife of his master will anger her and something terrible will happen to him as a result. That will be resolved somehow, and as a reward for whatever he does to reverse his unfortunate fate he will be given a woman named Asenath to wife. Asenath's father will also be named Potiphera: hence the dream's vacillation over whether this woman is Potiphera's wife or Joseph's wife, Potiphera's wife or Potiphera's daughter. Two different Potipharas in his future. The boys at the wedding, which is his wedding, are the sons he will have with Asenath. From them, he knows as he wakes from this dream, will spring two great tribes of Israel. There will be no tribe of Joseph; there will be tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim, which together will be known as the house of Joseph.

The future of which he dreams prophetically seems unmistakably to be in Egypt. Potiphera is an Egyptian name. Asenath is an Egyptian name. The name people call him by in this future, Zaphnath-Paaneah, is an Egyptian name. The Egyptians are descendants of Ham. They speak a Hamitic language.

The dread he feels at being in bed with a naked Bilhah or a naked Zuleika does not dissipate as he reconsiders the woman as his future wife Asenath. There is the strong but for him forever inchoate possibility that his anxiety around a naked woman is driven less by taboo and more by personal preference. It is very possible that he just doesn't like women. In his oneiric mind he associates women with disorder, with dark mysterious forces, with the chaos of night and dark water and the teeming masses. The siren call of woman for him is to oblivion, to forgetting, to the collapse of differentiation. To surrender to woman would be to surrender to sexual passion, to the subterranean world of wild animals and magic and drunken abandon. Joseph

dreams of order, of power, of hierarchical mastery. Joseph will only feel at home in his skin when he is in control. That's why he has always curried favor with his father, and told on his brothers when they transgress.

Second Dream

He's in a sack, and the sack is bouncing as if being carried on a cart, or on an ass, and he's jingling, somehow, as if he were coins. His mouth is full of grain. He gags on it, and can't speak: tries to cry out to whoever is carrying him that he's trapped inside the sack, but no sound comes out of his mouth. It soon becomes clear to him that he is in a coffin, wrapped up in a sack, being transported overland, probably on a cart, with coins in his mouth. That is what has been jingling: the coins. It isn't grain after all. He has been embalmed, mummified; the sack is not a sack but his wrappings. And it is clear to him that he is his father, Jacob, also known as Israel. Outside the coffin he can hear his brothers' voices.

Interpretation of the Second Dream

His brothers will sell him into slavery. They have thrown him into this well of dreams in preparation for killing him, but a caravan of Ishmaelites will pass by here today, or tomorrow, or the next day, and his brothers will offer to sell them a slave for twenty shekels. The coins must be what is jingling.

But as the dream unfolds it becomes clear to him that it is presaging events in his more distant future as well. He will be in a position to give or sell his brothers grain. They will come to him to buy it and he will sell it to them, but will secrete the bags of coins which they give him in payment back into the bags of grain, so that they will not find the money until they arrive home. In fact in a deeper and more spiritual sense he is the grain. The grain is in his mouth because the grain he sells them is in some deeply symbolic sense his own body. They will sell him into slavery and buy him back from himself in the form of grain. Selling them grain will be an allegorical enactment of him giving them back himself, but in disguised form: disguised as grain when he is actually their brother; disguised as something that they have to buy when it is actually free of charge, a gift of love. The money he gives them back, like the brother he gives them back, is their own.

The dream thus disguises the truth, but also reveals what is disguised. He will receive his brothers in disguise, too. In Egypt, when they come to buy grain. He will wait till their second visit to reveal himself to them.

The coffin represents his death, of course. His symbolic death first, perhaps: when his brothers sell him into slavery they will kill a goat and smear the animal's blood on his coat and tell their father that he was devoured by a wild animal. In the end his actual death, at the ideal age of one hundred and ten. In the middle part of the dream the body in the coffin is his father's. His father will die in Egypt, he realizes, and make him cup Israel's testicles (those ballsy witnesses) with his right hand and solemnly swear to cart him back

to Canaan to be buried in the cave of the field of Mach-pelah, to the east of Mamre, which Abraham bought from Ephron the Hittite as a burying place. Jacob will be embalmed in the Egyptian style, mummified, and then taken back to the land of his fathers to be interred. He Joseph too will be mummified, but will be carted a much shorter distance to the cemetery in the Egyptian capital city Ithet-Tawy, in Memphis, where he will have lived nearly all his life. Seven years short of a century he will have lived there: one ten minus his age in the well of dreams equals ninety-three years in Egypt plus the crucial seven years of famine that will have given his life definition will make an even century. $110-17=93=100-7$, the numerological equation of his life.

Third Dream

He's in prison, and somehow he's Benjamin, his youngest brother, and his older brother Simeon is brought in and exchanged for him, but in the moment of the exchange it isn't clear who's being exchanged for whom, because he Joseph is somehow both Benjamin and Simeon, and also the Egyptian Pharaoh's (or Potiphera's) butler, or baker, who sits across the cell from him and tells him a dream and asks him to interpret it. In the dream, which somehow becomes his own, there is a vine before him, with three branches. As he watches, the vine pushes out buds and then instantly blossoms, and the clusters ripen into grapes. And he squeezes the grapes into wine and pours it into a silver cup, and hands it to Pharaoh. At this moment birds land on the vine and peck at the grapes, and it seems that he is the baker about to bake these birds into a cake.

Interpretation of the Third Dream

Prison, it now becomes clear, will be the punishment meted out to him for resisting the sexual advances made by Potiphera's wife Zuleika. Spurned, she will claim that Joseph tried to rape her. There is an ideological tightening in Joseph's gut as he realizes this. A hardening of his resolve against the fairer sex. For him the treacherous sex.

Later he will himself be in a position to put his brothers in prison as they have now imprisoned him in this well, in this desert dungeon. He will release them and fill their bags with grain to send back to their father but will keep back Simeon, in prison, as his hostage, promising to release him too when his brothers bring back his younger brother Benjamin, his mother Rachel's only other son, who will have remained home with their father and mother. In the dream the identity of the imprisoned hostage is unclear: it is Joseph, it is Benjamin, and it is Simeon. This confusion prophetically signals the repeated imprisonments that will punctuate his life, and the shifting roles they will play in his life's most critical events.

His function in Potiphera's household, the first one, the one who will buy him from the Ishmaelites, will be as butler. When he is thrown into prison for allegedly attempting to rape his master's wife, he will meet Pharaoh's butler there. Also Pharaoh's baker. They

will have been thrown into prison for an unspecified length of time for some unnamed infraction. They will tell him their dreams, which will be similar but slightly divergent. He will predict, foretells the three days until his release. The part of the dream about squeezing the grapes into wine and pouring it into Pharaoh's silver cup signals his return to Pharaoh's favor. The part about the birds pecking the grapes and then being baked into a cake will signal the imminent hanging of the baker.

Because the butler will be released and restored to favor, and because Joseph too will have been a butler before his unjust imprisonment, the dream will signal his release as well, through the agency of Pharaoh's butler. When the butler's dream comes true and Pharaoh instructs the guards to release him, Joseph will ask him to make mention of him to Pharaoh, and get him out of prison. But the butler will forget for two years, and then suddenly remember, and thus become the agent of Joseph's release as predicted.

The silver cup also points ahead prophetically to another incident related to the exchange of hostages with his brothers. When his brothers bring Benjamin to greet him in Egypt, upon their departure for Canaan Joseph will have his steward plant a silver cup in Benjamin's grain sack and then follow them out of town and stop them, arrest them for theft. They will protest their innocence, saying, "If you find the cup in our things, let he who has it be put to death, and the rest of us will be your lord's slaves." The steward will agree, open their sacks, and find the silver cup in Benjamin's. Thus will Benjamin and his brothers be falsely accused of theft by him who was falsely accused of rape; unjustly imprisoned by him who was unjustly imprisoned; cruelly enslaved by him whom they cruelly sold into slavery; sentenced to death by him who was presumed dead. But these will not be true threats; they will be no more than Joseph's exercise of power, his display of power before the brothers who treated him shabbily. Before he will be able to forgive them, and reveal himself to them, he will need to enlist their bodies in a graphic demonstration of the infinite degree to which he controls their fate.

Fourth Dream

He is one of the *hartummim* or magicians in the Egyptian Pharaoh's court, and is asked to interpret the Pharaoh's dream, which is somehow also his own dream. He is standing in the room as himself, as Joseph, but somehow across the room from himself as magician. The dream involves a tall building in a city of tall buildings. This particular building looms high above all the others. It is made up of fourteen towers, seven strong, vibrant ones and seven weak, crumbling ones. As he watches, the seven weak towers borrow strength from the seven strong ones, and while the whole building seems to sag, it remains standing, while eleven other buildings around it collapse into dust. The tallest building is adorned with rainbow-colored poppies, as if for some festive occasion.

Interpretation of the Fourth Dream

The Pharaoh Jannas, fourth in succession of the Hyksos ("shepherd") kings of the middle kingdom, will have a dream that he will ask his hartummim to interpret. They will fail. The Hyksos are a Semitic race that will rule Egypt for five centuries. They have learned Egyptian and adopted Egyptian customs, but they are still far more likely to appoint fellow Semites to high government posts than the pure Egyptians who ruled the country before them and will rule it again after them. The hartummin whom Jannas will call upon to interpret his dream will be Egyptians; when they fail, Pharaoh's butler will suddenly recall his promise to Joseph in prison, that he would remember his prophetic insight in interpreting his own dream of the vine and the grapes and the cup.

"I remember my faults today," he will say to Pharaoh. "When Pharaoh was angry with his servants, and put me and the chief baker in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, we dreamed on the same night, he and I, each having a dream with its own meaning. A young Hebrew was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard; and when we told him, he interpreted our dreams to us, giving an interpretation to each man according to his dream. And as he interpreted to us, so it came to pass; I was restored to my office, and the baker was hanged."

So Pharaoh will call for Joseph to be brought up out of the dungeon. In accordance with Egyptian custom, he will be bathed and shaved completely bald, and dressed in fine linen. Only so attired will he be allowed to enter the presence of the pharaoh.

And Pharaoh will say to him: "I have had a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it; and I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it."

"It's not in me," Joseph will answer him. "God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer."

"Which god?" Pharaoh will ask.

Jannas, like all the Hyksos kings, is a worshipper of the god Set.

"Yahweh," Joseph will answer. "God of Israel."

"Is he a powerful god?"

"Yes, Pharaoh. Very powerful. What he ordains will come to pass."

"Very well. Use your power. Interpret the dream."

And Joseph will tell Pharaoh of seven years of famine: for this, he knows in his dream in the well near Shechem, where his brothers are pasturing their sheep, is the meaning of the seven weak towers. And he will tell Pharaoh of seven years of plenty that will precede the famine years, signalled by the seven full strong towers. The weak towers borrowing strength from the strong towers signals the storage of grain during the seven fat years to come so that the people will not starve during the seven famine years to follow. What is stored during the time of plenty will be consumed during the time of famine, and the tall building--Egypt itself, and Pharaoh, and Joseph--will not collapse.

"Now therefore," Joseph will conclude, in the seat of power now, knowing that he has Pharaoh right where he wants him, knowing that there is but a single man Pharaoh can now appoint to do the job he is predicting, and that is the man who is predicting it, "let Pharaoh select a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt. Let Pharaoh proceed to appoint overseers over the land, and take the fifth part of the produce of the land of Egypt during the seven plentiful years. And let them gather all the food of these good years that are coming, and lay up grain under the authority of Pharaoh for food in the cities, and let them keep it. That food shall be a reserve for the land against the seven years of famine which are to befall the land of Egypt, so that the land may not perish through the famine."

As Joseph has and will have foreseen, his plan will seem so sensible and wise to Pharaoh that he will appoint Joseph his minister of agriculture, answerable directly to him the pharaoh, and empower him to implement his own prophetic plan. And Joseph will manage Egyptian agriculture with an iron hand, and squeeze out of the Egyptian farmers more grain than they have ever produced before, and store it more efficiently than it has ever been stored before, and distribute it during the famine years more ruthlessly than it has ever been distributed before.

For the people will come to Joseph, saying "Sell us grain," and he will sell it to them.

And a little while later, they will come to him, saying "Give us grain, for we have no money to buy it with, and we are starving," and he will take all their livestock in return for grain.

Still later, they will come to him again, saying "Give us more grain, for we have no money to buy it with, and no livestock to earn it with, and we are still starving," and he will take all their land in return for grain.

As a result of these policies, by the end of the seven years of famine the Egyptian pharaoh will own all the land in Egypt, and will allow the people to farm it for him in return for a one-fifth share of the crop. In this clever fashion Joseph will have instituted a feudal form of share-cropping in Egypt.

And Joseph's fantasies of absolute control will have come true. He will be the most powerful man in Egypt, excepting only Pharaoh. In fact some will say that he is even more powerful than Pharaoh: that he wields power in actuality and Pharaoh in name only.

He will, obviously, be in an excellent position to turn the tables on his brothers, who have now imprisoned him and will soon sell him into slavery. He will save them from starvation by bringing them to Egypt, where they and their descendants will live in virtual slavery for four hundred years. He will be a Hebrew disguised as an Egyptian who will bring Israel under Egyptian rule; four centuries hence, he sees in his oneiric mind, another Hebrew disguised as an Egyptian will arise to liberate them from that rule.

The city represented by the tall buildings is the City of the Future, the New Jerusalem, future avatar of the Old Jerusalem founded by Noah's son Shem and sacked by God's son David, the holy city of all three Abrahamic religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam; the New Jerusalem will be Hong Kong, founded by English opium traders (hence the poppies in Joseph's dream) Jardine Matheson & Co., and the holy city of banking and finance, city of origin of one of the world's five largest banks, the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC). In the historical interpretation of Joseph's dream the conquest of Canaan by Israel, begun by Moses (the second Hebrew disguised as an Egyptian) as liberator and continued by a series of Israelite rulers from Joshua to David, is the conquest of China by England, begun by the opium traders as liberators and continued by a series of British governors and Chinese CEOs as the capitalist new face of Chinese Communism.

That new face of the City of the Future is also the lidless face of Nuiwo, the rainbow serpent that made us all, symbolized by the rainbow colors of the poppies.

Before any of this happens, however, there in Pharaoh's court, as he bestows upon Joseph the signet and gold chain of his office, Pharaoh Jannas will ask him one last question.

"What," he will ask, "of the eleven shorter buildings, which crumble to dust?"

And Joseph will blink three times in sudden confusion. For he will know, he knows now, already, in his dream, deep in his prophetic vision, that Pharaoh will never ask him this question, for the simple reason that the eleven buildings crumbling to dust will not be in Pharaoh's dream. They are in his dream, now, in the dream well, here in Canaan, near Shechem, very near the place in fact where Simeon and Levi's sister Dinah was raped a few years ago; in retribution the boys made the Hivites whose prince raped her and wanted to marry her get circumcised and then killed them all in their weakened state. The eleven shorter buildings are, of course, his brothers Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, and Benjamin. This part of the dream is a memory image from earlier this very day, or yesterday, whenever it was he was last on the surface of the earth.

The crumbling of the buildings is from the future, the near-collapse of the House of Israel during the famine years to come.

He is, it appears, disoriented about the sequence of events in time, and cause and effect, and prediction and fulfillment; for as he feels himself opening his mouth to answer Pharaoh, opening his mouth to reply to a question that he knows Pharaoh will never ask, as he and Pharaoh are about to step into the glass lift that will take them to the top of the atrium in the HSBC headquarters building in Central Hong Kong, the vision vanishes and the end of a rope takes its place, dangling right in front of his nose.

“Take hold of the end of the rope, Joseph!” Simeon cries. “We’re going to pull you up!”

And Joseph, knowing what is to come, but still not entirely sure in what sequence it will occur, takes the end of the rope and lets himself be hoisted back up to the surface.

*Douglas Robinson is Tong Tin Sun Chair Professor of English and Head of the English Department at Lingnan. He came to Lingnan in 2010 from the University of Mississippi, where he was Professor of English (for 21 years) and Director of First-Year Writing (for 3 years). In addition to his many books and articles on language, literature, and translation, he is author of the 2007 novel *Pentinpeijaiset* (“Pentti’s Wake”), a fictionalized biography of Finland’s most famous modernist writer (poet, novelist, memoirist, and translator), Pentti Saarikoski (1937-1983), which he wrote in English and published in Finnish translation.*



Retirement
Kim Moore

Published in If We Could Speak Like Wolves
(Smith/Doorstop, 2012)

The poet has cut his hair
and bought a flat in the city.

At night he talks to the sky
but doesn't write it down.

When he hears a pigeon call,
he doesn't compare it to anything,

even in his head. Each night
from the window all he sees

are buildings. He ignores
how the silver in the roof tiles

looks like stars, how the shadow
of a cat appears big as a tiger

with the moon behind it.
He's given his poems away,

left them on bus seats,
scattered the pages

of his unfinished collection
on the rails of the tube.

Sometimes he imagines
the footprints of the tube mice,

sooty on his words,
the swirl of pages,

showing off
in the backdraught of a train.

Kim Moore was awarded an Eric Gregory Award and the Geoffrey Dearmer Prize in 2011. In 2012 she won The Poetry Business Pamphlet Competition, judged by Carol Ann Duffy, and her first pamphlet If We Could Speak Like Wolves was published in May 2012 by The Poetry Business. Her poems and reviews have appeared in The TLS, Poetry Review, The Rialto, Ambit, Magma and The North.



Sign

Jennifer Wong

'The swordlike building is to blame,'
he looks out from our apartment window,
revolves the geomagnetic compass,
tapping for good energies.

'Your bed must face the south.
Take down the beaded curtain
and by the bed place a small stone Buddha.'

We remove framed photographs on the wall.
We change the colour of the rug
and keep a bowl of small turtles.

With each piece of furniture moved
in the way it should
our house now looks
uncomfortably new.

All day long I sit here, waiting for a sign.

Writer-in-residence at Lingnan, Jennifer's works have appeared in journals such as Frogmore Papers, Orbis, TATE ETC, Aesthetica, Warwick Review, Asian Literary Review, Quarterly Literary Review Singapore, Dim Sum, Cha, Mascara Review, UCity Review, Iota Poetry and New Writer. Her poetry collection, Summer Cicadas, was published by Chameleon Press. She graduated from Oxford with an English degree and did an MA in creative writing at the University of East Anglia. Her second collection is forthcoming from Salmon Poetry. She also writes short stories and blogs at jenniferinlondon.wordpress.com.



Wolves in Every Guise

Liz-Ann Tan

'Little girls, this seems to say
Never stop upon your way
Never trust a stranger friend
No one knows how it will end
As you're pretty, so be wise
Wolves may lurk in every guise
Now as then 'tis simple truth
Sweetest tongue has sharpest tooth'

The Company of Wolves (1984)

It is the start of a new school year once again; Red Hood is now in her form 3 which means she is finally 14 years old – a real teenager. Being 13 is awkward for her for she cannot accept the fact that she is already a teenager. She thinks she is still a child transitioning to become a teenager. But now that she has a year of “experience” under her belt, she can finally say that she is a full-blown teenager. Red Hood is quite popular in her school, she is attractively beautiful and most of all fearless. She is not afraid of anything and if she wants something, she will get it. She is every boy's crush and every girl's envy, but she lets everyone think that she doesn't care though secretly she loves the attention.

She is thrilled to see her friends again and can't wait to hear all the gossips she has missed during the summer. She spends her summer with her grandma touring around China and so she misses a lot of “gossip time” with the girls. She and her grandma are like two peas in a pod. When they are together, they are inseparable. Red adores her grandma so much and Red goes by her grandma's almost every day. Her parents, by now, are used to Red dropping in and out at her grandma's. They are not worried. They know they really can't stop her from doing what she wants. She is stubborn that way.

During recess, after much gossip and news, she finds out that her friends are really into facebook. Knowing that all her friends have facebook accounts, she feels it no longer “cool”. She hates being in the out-group so that night she decides to sign up for facebook.

“Let's see. First name... RED. Last name... HOOD. Email... red.hood@cyberspace.com . Re-enter email... red.hood@cyberspace.com . New password... let's see... hhhmmm... ah! iloveflowers'. There, I'm all set.”

She looks for her friends online and adds them all. She updates her profile, puts up a picture and writes on her wall. She is feeling facebook and she can't wait to talk to her friends about it. She is so happy to be a part of the "cool" club again that she can't wait to let all her friends know that she is now on facebook.

Wolfe Black adds you as a friend. Accept. Ignore.

"Who is Wolfe Black? Oh well, the more friends the better. Accept." says Red out loud.

Wolfe Black: Hi there! Thanks for accepting my friend request.

Red Hood: Oh Hi! Sure no problem. Where do you go to school?

Wolfe Black: You look really good on your profile pic. I love your smile and that Red hoody looks great on you. Is that a recent photo?

Red Hood: Thanks. Yeah, it was taken while I was in China with my grandma.

Wolfe Black: So you're 14. Well, I hope you still want to be friends with me even though I'm older than you.

Red Hood: Oh yeah? How old are you?

Wolfe Black: 17. Or maybe older... like 30. LOL! Just kidding.

Red Hood: Really you're 30? Show me your picture then.

Wolfe Black: I was just kidding. Here's a picture of me.

Red Hood: That's better. I thought you really were 30. Anyway, catch you online soon. Bye.

Wolfe Black: Bye.

Red Hood is offline.

The next day, Red tells her friends all about Wolfe Black. She looks at his profile and pictures last night even though they aren't really clear; Red is very much interested in him. He seems to be a nice guy. She is very much impressed by him. However, there is something about his profile that is somewhat mysterious but she is intrigued and can't wait to get to know him more. For two weeks, Red and Wolfe chat every night and for three nights or so, Wolfe keeps asking Red if she would like to meet him. Red, by now, trusts him completely for she no longer considers him a stranger. He sounds like a real nice guy and he always compliments her whenever she puts up a new picture on facebook. Therefore she agrees to meet him on Friday.

Wolfe Black is online.

Wolfe Black: Hey, I was thinking maybe I should wear a red and black checkered shirt on Friday so that you can recognize me. I'm not sure if you can. My pictures on facebook are not that clear, you know.

Red Hood: Oh. No problem. I think that's better actually. There isn't a picture you posted on facebook that is clear enough for me to recognize you actually.

Wolfe Black: Great! Then I'll see you Friday. It's a date.

Red Hood: Yeah. See you Friday.

Wolfe Black is offline.

She really can't wait to tell her friends that she and Wolfe are going on a date on Friday. She will be her friends' envy once again for how can a 14 year-old score a date with a 17-year-old? It's highly unusual. However, little did Red knew that her friends are actually suspicious of Wolfe. It seems like he can't be trusted at all. Her friends warn her not to see him too soon and to allow a few more weeks to pass before she were to meet with him. But Red is stubborn as a mule, she just won't listen.

However when Friday came, her grandma is ill. Grandma asks Red to come to her place and requests Red to bake her famous muffins. Red is disappointed that she won't get to meet Wolfe. But even though Red is very excited to meet Wolfe, she can't ignore her grandma's request, for her grandma always comes first. She is about to message Wolfe on facebook when...

Wolfe Black is online.

Wolfe Black: Hey. Are you getting ready? I'll be at the café in an hour. I can't wait to see you.

Red Hood: Hey Wolfe. I have something to tell you...

Wolfe Black: What is it?

Red Hood: I can't meet you today. Grandma's sick and I'm going to her place this late afternoon. Rain check?

Wolfe Black: Oh, that's a pity.

Wolfe is disappointed when he reads Red's message. His whole plan will be ruined. He has played this game long enough and it's time to bring it to the next level. He has to see her or he will explode. He has waited long enough for this.

Wolfe types...

Wolfe Black: Why won't I come with you and meet your grandma instead? It feels like I know her already from you stories about her.

Red Hood: I'm not sure if that is a good idea.

Wolfe Black: Come on, what's the worst thing that can happen meeting your grandma? Besides, we can grab coffee after that.

Red Hood: Hhhmm... that's actually a good idea. Alright. You can come. But I'm still making my muffins. Maybe you can wait for me at grandma's?

Wolfe Black: Sure. What's the address, I'll meet you there.

Red Hood: 21 Des Voeux Road. Ring for the bell and tell her you're a friend of mine. She'll let you in.

Wolfe Black: Great!! See you soon!

Wolfe Black is now offline.

When Wolfe arrives at grandma's place, grandma won't let him in. Grandma isn't a fool. She knows he is up to something. Wolfe can't afford for his plan to fall through so he forces the door open just before grandma fully closes her door. Grandma panicks and runs to her bedroom to grab the phone, where she has left it earlier when she calls Red, to call the police. But Wolfe is too quick for her. Wolfe grabs a letter opener by the bedside table and stabs grandma to death. He plans to hide grandma in the closet so that Red will not suspect anything. But before hiding grandma, he writes a note and sticks it on the front door.

Five minutes later, Red arrives carrying a basket of her freshly-baked muffins. Red is at her grandma's door. She is about to ring the bell when she finds a note from Wolfe.

Don't ring the bell. Grandma is sleeping. Just walk right in, the door is unlocked. - Wolfe.

Red opens the front door. Wolfe hears her come in and he hurries to put the body in the closet but it's too late. Red may be in the bedroom any second. As soon as Red enters the apartment, she has a feeling that something is not right. But she ignores it. She hears a thud from her grandma's bedroom, but she ignores it – maybe Wolfe or grandma has dropped a book. She hurries to the kitchen and places the basket on the counter. She wants to see grandma and to check how she is doing. Something doesn't feel right but she can't put a finger on it. She continues on to her grandma's bedroom and finally she reaches her grandma's door. She opens it. The lights are out.

'That is strange. Grandma sleeps with the lights on.' Red thinks to herself.

"Grandma, are you sleeping?" whispers Red.

There is no answer.

"Wolfe, are you in here?" Red whispers.

There is no answer.

By now, Red is starting to get really nervous. She walks in further to the bedroom and tries to look for the phone, but she can't find it. It is too dark to see anything. She feels somebody moving close to her and the warm air on her nape. She turns and sees Wolfe up close for the first time. He is not a teenager at all. He looks like he's nearing 50! Red doesn't run, she just stands there – too shocked to move. Her eyes are glued to what he is carrying. Wolfe grabs her by the neck, lifts his other hand and whacks her so hard she faints.

The next day.

14-year-old raped and killed, killer on the loose.

A squirrel's nuts

Agnes Lam

A squirrel gathers its nuts,
stores them in the crevices of trees
for food in winter.
For fear of theft,
the squirrel moves its nuts
from one hole to another,
taking care not to drop
any in a move.

The economy is bad.
Interest rates are at half per cent.
If you make a fixed deposit,
the rate is worse.
If you move your money
into stocks or bonds,
you may lose even more
in a market crash.

Does the squirrel ever worry about
the tree crashing down
sending its nuts in the tree-hole
flying through the air?

Agnes Lam is a Professor at the University of Hong Kong and has published two collections: Woman to Woman and Other Poems (1997) and Water Wood Pure Splendor (2001). In 2008, she was awarded the Nosside International Poetry Prize (Special Mention) and was made Honorary Fellow in Writing by the University of Iowa. Her current project on Asian poetry in English, funded by the Hong Kong Research Grants Council (2009-2012) took her to several Asian cities from Macao to Delhi.



A Promise
Nicole Chan

When you see cows working laboriously for the farmers just for a bite of grass, do you ever wonder why they are willing to do so? And do you know that cows are actually one of the laziest creatures in the world, until 'he' met 'her'.

Once upon a time a group of lazy cows lived in an unknown village. They spent most of their time sleeping and eating. Luckily enough, they never needed to worry about food, as they did not need much food to survive. From time to time, there would be some reckless 'silly little food' delivered to the cows accidentally by breaking into the cows' territory.

In the village next to the cows' territory, there lived a pretty, well-brought-up and thoughtful little girl. People in that village all liked her and they called her 'Little Red Riding Hood' because she loved wearing a red hood that her grandmother knitted for her.

It was a strange year. The harvest was extremely poor. People starved to death and the cows experienced the same situation. It was so heart-breaking for Little Red Riding Hood to know that her grandmother could no longer run her farm because of her age and poor weather. She did not know what could she do to help, so she went to visit her grandmother regularly, hoping to share her grandmother's heavy workload.

It had been five days since the cows had last eaten anything. Most of the cows died of hunger. The leader of the cows finally walked out of their zone and went into the wood nearby in search for food. He hoped to bring whatever back home to feed his wife and son. When he was out in the wood, he felt so hopeless that he was tempted to give up searching. But then he saw Little Red Riding Hood in front of him, she was heading to the opposite village. She did not know that he was following her.

"What a lovely day!" Little Red Riding Hood thought to herself, "grandmother would be pleased if I get her some pretty flowers!"

She sang light-heartedly and picked some flowers for grandmother.

"What a lovely little girl." the cow murmured himself, "but I have no choice."

The cow wanted to eat the girl right away, yet he hesitated because though he was extremely lazy, he was not cruel enough to hurt that little girl. However, he knew he needed to be responsible for his family and they were waiting for his return with some food. While he was still struggling, Little Red Riding Hood had already arrived at her grandmother's house.

"Grandmother! Grandmother! I've arrived. Are you inside?" said Little Red Riding Hood when she knocked the door. But there was no reply.

"She must be working on the farm now. Never mind, I will get in first and wait for her." She opened the door with the key her grandmother gave her.

At this point, the cow ran into the house, following Little Red Riding Hood.

"Oh mama! Who are you? What are you doing here?" Little Red Riding Hood was startled to see the cow following her.

"I have not eaten anything for five days already! I need to feed my family! I am sorry!" apologized the cow and then gobbled her up.

Feeling hopeless and knowing no one would be able to save her this time. Little Red Riding Hood made a deal with the cow. She was extraordinarily calm.

"I know you are too hungry and you do not have a choice. I can see in your eyes that you do not mean to hurt me. You are a good and kind-hearted cow. So I will help you, but I need your help as well. Can you promise me to do what I tell you later?"

He was so grateful and he cried, "Yes, I will do whatever you say. I must! I promise. Thank you."

"My grandmother is too old and too weak to work on the farm anymore. Please do help her with it. The farm is her life. It is the only thing my grandfather left her. She treasures it so much. Help her and listen to her orders. There is a spacious field next to the farm with plenty of high quality grass you and your family can live on. And promise me do not eat anyone anymore. I do not want any other victims..." said Little Red Riding Hood.

"I promise you I will do as you told me. I will keep my promise! I swear!" said the cow.

"I trust you then." Little Red Riding Hood closed her eyes with a smile on her face and the cow swallowed her.

That night, grandmother came back from work. The group of cows were sitting under the tree, waiting for her.

Defiance

Elizabeth Hau

Darkness. Darkness was the first word that crept into my mind as my eyelids fluttered open and my surroundings gradually came into focus. A faint beam of light escaped across the ceiling through a slight gap on the wall. The only window. I struggled to reach more around me, only then found that I am all tightly strapped to the floor. Hardly able to move at all. My breathing quickened as fear was instilled and my body languished as it strangled the thick ropes. My mouth opened to scream yet no sound was able to come out. Terror. Panic. Though the cell seemed bare, I was most sure there was a series of surveillance system installed to record every action I take, every sound I make.

I fumbled with my memory, seeking what came before this tiny space. It is 2099. When I was born seventeen years ago, they implanted a microchip within my vocal cords, complied by the Rules which stated that women should not speak. My father and sister were both killed in the chaos as I was being towed away. But I so wanted to speak. This only Gale knows.

That was when I heard a cry. Distant but familiar. A cry replete with pain and agony, along with convulsive gasping and the sound of beating against raw flesh. Gale. I tried to yell out his name, yet something withholds it, something that nearly suffocated me. No, I moan. *Not Gale. Stop.* But it did not. Until he let out a soft groan which was followed by a thud on the ground. The Dictator made sure I heard him torturing Gale, to hurt me even more than I have experienced, by hurting all I have left. Even if they may be miles away, he made sure I heard them.

The Dictator's voice rang, masculine, clear, not loud yet full of authority. "She has awakened." Gale howled desperately, "No, not her, please!" As soon as two men appeared next to me from nowhere, I understood his plead was insufficient.

They were both identically appareled in black tight suits made from a material which I doubt any kind of bullet could pass through. I fidgeted as they pushed a button to release the ropes, but their muscular arms gripped on mine to prevent my escape attempts. They handcuffed and blindfolded me and dragged me along numerous corridors, finally ending up in an elevator. It zoomed down in the speed of lightening, so fast a chill crept down my spine. However, I had no strength left to struggle, because I am too weak, too frail and I have had too much. All I was able to do was slump against the cool wall of the metal box, waiting for my cruel fate to come down on me.

I heard the doors open at last; the two guards shoved me out and let me see. It was a grey dim circular dungeon, and Gale was there, shackled to the wall by his wrists. He was on his knees, barely conscious, with his flesh whipped, beaten, cut so ensanguined I could face, tears were prickling my eyes, and I bit my lip to fight them back.

At my touch, his brown eyes found mine; they had no remorse, just longing and a tinge of pain. When his chapped lips formed my name, I could no longer hold tears at bay and they streamed down my cheeks uncontrollably.

The Dictator spoke again, "You have asked for freedom," he added with a sneer, "of speech." Short, simple, and underlying was ruthlessness. I looked up to him, my tear-stained face blank, yet I could not speak. I had no right to. I could not speak.

"It is only fair to have a transfer of right." He gestured to Gale. *He wants to kill him!* My mind yelled in lunacy at me. *Cease him!* I opened my mouth but no sound came out. I could not even say Gale's name. Beside me, however, Gale smiled at me and nodded. Weakly, but reassuringly. *It's not worth it!* I yearned to tell him, as I shook my head as furiously as I could. *Don't hear him justifying himself!*

Gale whispered, "At least we could break the Rules once. At least we could stop being a chess piece in this patriarchal society for once, before we....." He swallowed.

We both knew our doom fate was sealed subsequent to defiance, and there was no turning back. We knew beforehand, and no sentiment of regret was permitted anymore. This was the sacrifice to regain abridged freedom. This was what the Dictator called "fairness".

The Torturers unshackled Gale to haul his limp body before the Dictator. He seized the chance to wrap me in his arms and buried his face in my hair, where he murmured his last words, "Don't look." And I closed my eyes when the Dictator slit his throat.

Clenching my teeth to restrain myself from beyond the verge of insanity, I collapsed. The Dictator shot me a mocking jeer, "Congratulations to be the first woman able to speak." My vision was blurred, my heart ached. Gazing up in the haze of mist, I opened my mouth once more. A shrill shriek slashed the air and echoed in the hollow dungeon, a shriek of hatred and anguish.

A Hong Kong-born student studying at Maryknoll Convent School, Elizabeth's recent essay on the role of a library has won the 4.23 World Book Day Creative Competition 2012. Her greatest desire is to complete her first novel in the near future. She has participated in the creative writing workshop during Lingnan's Arts Festival 2012.



sheltering from snow

P K Leung

Published in *Amblings* (ASM, 2010)

避雪

灰白的

瓦簷

老人的髮

冷

魚躲在池底

金色

埋在重濁的水下

石庭

黑石間

點點白石

你髮間

霜雪

我們走到廊下

把半關的門

推開一點

看屏風上的彩虹

grey

tile rooftop

old man's hair

cold

fish hides at the pool's bottom

golden

buried in the murky water

stone pavilion

among black rocks

juttings of white rock

in your hair

frost snow

we come down the corridor

gently push open

the half closed door

to see the rainbow on the screen.

You Are My Air and Wine

Celeste Cheng

I need both air and wine.
Air to breathe
And wine to intoxicate myself.
Like how light bends
And pierces through the wine glass,
Wrong enlargements provide weird
Sensation that twist to a numb stand.
It is when pain becomes more bearable
And laughter sheds its uneasy edges
I become drunken and more awake in my feelings.
My inner eyes are polished.
The left corner of my lips is raised.
Muscles and ease,
Like animals caged finally freed,
Fling themselves into a mad dance
And seasonal rave
Even when I think about you,
The drunken air I am addicted to still
Can never get enough.

A 100% Hongkonger, Celeste started writing short stories when she was around 11 years old but she only started writing poems less than a year ago. She enjoys being a drifter and writing allows her to drift with her thoughts and emotion which at times lead her to her own utopia. Apart from creative writing, she is also interested in painting. She enjoys discussions about metaphysics and intends to develop her academic career by specializing in socio-historical analysis of literature.



Dust

Adam Radford

Dust

They will not let your dust rest
Though you'd have it settle
For all your labours you will
Be shaken up by drills at your temples.

The teeth's grind will catch
The jack hammer rhythm,
And jerk into action; chomping up quiet
Like whorls of asphalt.

The heart loses itself in the disco
And head-bangs out-of-tempo;
Before long you empty yourself
Of organs and cogitation.

The bones drum themselves loose
And beat their skeletal xylophone.
Bone-dry they tonk at the city walls
In unison, just to stay awake.

Dreams are of the sea-bed, of still silt.
Of the moon's valleys pale powder
Of stones, unbroken and quarries untapped
Of metal imprisoned deep underground.

Adam Radford is currently completing his MPhil at Lingnan where he studies the anglophone ballad. He grew up in Hong Kong and received his degree in literature and religion from the University of Chicester. His poems are typically experiments with form and aesthetic, the aim being to conceal the form in the performance of the piece.

Heart-to-heart talk with Cheri, the best-selling author Liz-Ann Tan

In the fall of 1991, I remembered being on our roof trying to hide from all the commotion that was going on downstairs. Mom and dad seemed to be arguing again. They had been arguing for so long that I couldn't even remember why it started. The roof was the place where I felt safe, a place where I could be whoever I wanted to be and be in my own world. On that roof, I used to lie down, look at the stars and wish on each of them until I fell asleep and dad would pick me up and put me to bed. I used to pretend to be a doctor, an astronaut, a stewardess, a writer and a whole bunch of things. But on that particular night, I remembered pretending to be a famous writer and I remembered telling myself that I would be a famous writer someday...

Camera lights flashing and the security on alert, Cheri waved at her fans as she headed for the table where she was expected to sign as many books as she could. Her fans were clutching her new book, *Elevated*, as if it was the most precious thing in the world and waiting in line to meet Cheri. Reporters were everywhere and were followed by cameras documenting every detail of the event. As soon as it was over, I mustered all the strength I had and squeezed my way through Cheri's army of fans and approached her. I didn't know why I had to approach her but my gut was telling me that I had to. As I reluctantly walked toward her, I felt the jitters overpowering me and I had a sudden hesitation to not do it. But when she spotted me, she smiled and the nervousness I was feeling subsided a little and whatever my gut was trying to make me do, I followed it.

"Cheri, Jane Chan. SunStar Daily. If you are available, would it be possible to spare a few minutes of your time?" I extended my hand for salutations, hoping I didn't look too nervous.

"Sure! I don't mind, I'm sure I can spare a few minutes for you." She replied in an instant. I tried my best to hide my smile and hoped she didn't notice my being over-excited.

"Great! If you can follow me through this door..." trying to maintain composure, I led her to a private room. As she sat across the room, I couldn't help notice that there was something familiar about her. But I put that thought away. It was impossible that I could know so famous a person as her.

As soon as we both settled down, she looked at me and waited for me to fire my questions away. She didn't look impatient as if saying "get on with it". She didn't have that air of impatience you normally get from famous people. There was just something about her that made me feel relaxed. Then and there I knew, what my instincts were making me do would be a good idea. Without a thought, my mouth suddenly blurted out a question.

"I'm sure you'll think this is silly to ask of me, but from the town I'm from, my readers and a friend of mine are big fans of yours and they are curious, especially my friend, how you became a famous writer. I mean has being a famous writer been your dream?" I inquired. I didn't have the slightest clue what I was talking about, it was as if someone had just taken over me and made it do whatever they pleased. I couldn't really believe I just asked her that. Sure, I had big dreams but I wouldn't normally march head on and take a plunge. I was even more perplexed when she didn't take my questions as an insult. Instead of throwing me out, she smiled and answered,

"Well, I haven't heard of that question in a long time." She looked at me with amazement in her eyes.

"Truthfully Jane," she began, "I didn't have any idea of what I would become when I was young. Although I dreamed about a lot of things, I never really chose one. I always thought I'd follow wherever the roads take me."

That was strange, she sounded just like me. I always told people the same line. I looked at her and I had this strangest feeling that I had seen her before, I just didn't know where or how.

She went on. "I've always had the talent, so people say, to write. I started writing when I was in high school and I had never stopped writing. But I only thought of writing as a hobby and not as a potential career, or maybe because it wasn't where the road was taking me. At some point, a road was paved for me to becoming a doctor and I mindlessly followed without taking into consideration that I wasn't cut out to be a doctor. After that, a nurse's road appeared before me and I followed that road as well."

The more she talked about her life the more I could feel that she was talking about me, although I wasn't sure why. I did understand her about following roads; I did that all the time. I thought I understood her; maybe she was afraid to walk by herself so she followed the roads that were presented to her. I felt a certain connection with her. I couldn't believe how alike we were. It was as if we were separated at birth or something. I was perplexed; if she didn't think she wanted to be a writer and was following roads, how did she become a writer? I was intrigued so I pressed her to go on.

"I've been on a lot of roads, but I stopped walking and chose one to walk on when I met a guy who used to tell me that I inspired him a lot and that every word I wrote had a big impact on him. It was funny because if I inspired him, he inspired me more. For a while, we created great pieces. I was so inspired that for the first time I noticed the Writer's Road, it had always been there and I just didn't take notice of it. He made me realize that I had to take charge and walk on the road where I could be truly happy.

"After that, I took courses – creative writing, memoir writing... you name it, I took them all. There was this course I took in the fall of 2010, that course in a way was a stepping stone for me for the professor taught me how to mix creativity with critical thinking together, I didn't even think it was even possible. That course was a stepping stone for me – a way that would lead me further and nearer to my dream – be a writer."

I was speechless, maybe my mouth was even slightly opened while I was listening to her talk. Out of nowhere, I just blurted out:

"Cheri, a...y have a confession to make. I'm not really a reporter, but my name is Jane Chan. I'm not even sure why I'm here. For some reason, I was brought here and I don't know why I have this urgency to find and talk to you. I don't even know why I was asking you all those questions in the first place. Also, that friend I told you about earlier, well she's actually me. I am the one who want to know how you become a famous writer. But I don't know why I want to know that. Like I said I don't know why I am here, but I can deduce that I have to learn something from you." I sat from across her and was on the edge, ready to be thrown out by security or something. I knew I made a big mistake confessing everything to her. I shouldn't have done that; I should have kept my mouth shut. To my surprise, she laughed.

"What?!", I thought to myself.

"I knew you weren't a reporter. I knew it even before you opened your mouth. Do you know why you have that urgency to talk to me and why you are having strange feelings about this whole interview? Why do you feel like you knew me?"

"How did she know that?" I thought to myself, feeling absolutely bewildered by what she just said. 'What's going on?'

"Okay, you look really puzzled now, maybe I should explain." She shifted and leaned towards me.

"I'm you!", she blurted out.

I really thought I was being mocked. I was waiting for Ashton Kutcher or anyone to say "You've been punk'd!" But no one did. I leaned back on the chair and thought to myself: *Okay, I give up. I don't understand any of this.*

She laughed again. "I know what you're thinking, literally. Don't worry, you'll understand soon enough. Yes, you are right. You are here for a reason. But I won't tell you why, you will have to find that out for yourself. Now, let me finish what I was supposed to tell you before you interrupted me. Taking charge and choosing which road to pursue can be very scary. It's worse when you're chasing your dream.

"I've come to a point where I wanted to give up and be done with the chasing. I was writing my soon-to-be-first-bestseller then when I thought it was getting harder, especially when I had run out of cash. And every time I had to write a new book, I was always really tempted to quit and tell my editor that I give up. Having a talent for writing isn't the only thing you need to be a writer you know, you have to have the persistence and willingness to endure all the hardships. Do you know who stopped me from giving up every time I had thought of it? You! I know you won't understand it now, but someday you will and when that happens, I'm sure you'll be grateful that you met me."

"That doesn't make any sense." I told her, eyebrows meeting each other and head hurting from trying to figure out what she just told me.

"It will." She looked at me with a smile, stood up and walked out the door.

"Honey, what are you still doing out here?" I looked around and I realized I was back on the roof.

"Mom, I just had a very weird dream..." said I.

"What was it about honey?" mom asked.

"I don't understand most of it, but I know I'm going to be a famous writer someday."

"I know you will be honey," said mom as she kissed me on the forehead.

Years after... I smiled in front of all my fans at my book launch when I saw her. She looked so nervous and so I smiled at her. She walked toward me and said, "Cheri, Jane Chan, SunStar Daily. If you are available, will it be possible to spare a few minutes of your time?"

Breakfast Niki Chung

A sharp knife on my toast
Slices it into two. No longer whole,
It bothers my soul.

Like washing without gloves,
Tinted water floods:
Overflowing, like his love,
Sadly never reaches my blood.

He spreads jam and peanut butter:
The two flavours do not seem to match.
Putting the toast in my mouth, I fret.
He and I are still detached.

I doubt if jam and peanut butter can complement?
With love and care, what can we overcome?
And I wonder how he can tolerate.
With efforts made, no one is amazed.

The only words that he said: *not to haste*.
So much I want to repay
If only I can appreciate
The breakfast he prepares.

Like dissolving sugar in my hot coffee,
He blends into my family.
With proper stirring and temperature,
Will the most stubborn grain gradually melt?

My name is Niki, a third year student from the English department at Lingnan. I am very excited for the publication of the English Literature Magazine, Onion, since it is the first time I have ever submitted my work for others to read. To me, writing is a very personal activity. I love writing because I can express my secret feelings while others might love it because they can share their unique views and thoughts with others. I am not sure whether you will like them or not but hope that you will enjoy reading them.

Tears a part
Winona Cheung

The strong smell of Dettol awakes my senses
The long corridor is way too long to be a fence

Push open the door.
the only thing ahead
is the moaning of fragile hearts.
Pills can't help to kill the fear,
Pillows can't make things softer,
Self-will can't make tomorrow better.

To ask "are you alright?"
will cause haemorrhage.
Take a deep breath,
"I'm alright..."

Pull open the door,
no mask, no more hold-ups,
stay there for as long as you may.
Believe as you pray.

The clock is ticking.
Cherish every second you own.
Don't turn your life into a loan.

Winona is a final year student from the English Department. She has a wealth of interests but she is particularly interested in exploring different cultures. After spending the whole summer in Walt Disney World, she is addicted to travel ever since. Writing poems has long been a know-how that she desires to taste, yet she doesn't know how. How to start and write an abstract art? She realizes that she simply has to pick up a pen, take a deep breath, go forward, and stop asking why.



Courage Came Knocking on My Door

Betty Chiu

Courage came knocking on my door
And Honesty wrapped me in his arm
As I made the long call home
Anxiety decided to tag along

The ringing wore my Patience thin
But Hope had told me to hold my chin
And Persistence finally worn out
Until the daunting voice sprouted

Father picked up the phone
And Fear had suddenly gained hold
'Where is Mother?' I had asked
And the tone of flat and pine changed hands

Practicing on Mother first,
Because also she must know
I never said I'm oh so sorry
But hoped she heard it nonetheless

Had I planned it in advance
Or resented less subconsciously
I would not have strayed so far and long
And further down the road I'll be

Had I done so earlier
I could help relieve the stress
or kill your worries completely...
'Maybe I should talk to Dad?'

Stalling took his sweet slow time
But the voice had changed eventually
Nervousness had grabbed my hand
As Resolve recited them offhand

A chuckle from me, a grunt from him
The phone call ended and Pride filled to
the brim
Relief gave my back a great big pat
And Dread had quiet down at last

Love had watched me fight my war
When Courage came knocking on my door



Betty is currently a third year university student majoring in English Studies. She went to school in Beijing, Shanghai, and Windsor, Ontario for middle school, high school, and university (first year) respectively before finally settling down at Lingnan University. In her leisure time, she likes to read (and day-dream) and is an offline RPG gamer. Fights demons of demotivation full time.



Nicholas Ooi was born in Malaysia and he is currently a Visiting Service-Learning Tutor in the Office of Service-Learning. Photography is definitely one of his passions. Often, he will grab his camera and do random outdoor shooting. His main focus is on scenery and sunsets.



From the wife who has stopped waiting

Caroline Kam

Stories must always begin with "Once upon a time" or we will forget that they are not actually REAL.

It has been a year since I began this habit of mine of writing three letters to you everyday. Now I'm pretty much used to the world without you in it. Sometimes, when night falls and all the lights slowly fade away, I whisper to the Moon (- now that you're gone, The Moon is all that I've got). Do you still remember I told you about the Moon-Man who fishes for three little dreams and is still looking for lost little baby stars slid from the slippery sky? I tell him I'm always looking for the lost too, but I don't quite know what I'm looking for, actually. He always smiles sadly when he listens and I would really love to put him in my drawer. He sometimes gets shy, and hides behind the clouds and fog and I can only catch a glimpse of him winking at me. Do you think he must be so very lonely, stuck in the sky forever?

I'm now living in a world without you in it. That makes me feel glum, stuck deep in the frenetic ocean. And sometimes I feel like the Ballerina stuck inside my wooden music box you gave me. Something is always happening here. Something great and beautiful. And sometimes, terrible. I only catch snippets of conversations behind the corner, like someone with scissors has cut them into tiny pieces so I cannot understand. Fear creeps into people's voices and steals who they really are. Sometimes, though fear finds the real person way down deep inside.

But I'm afraid I haven't been terribly brave. All my letters I wrote you these four months are now stuffed into the drawer, locked. The key is still in the keyhole so no one can peek in. I know I must sound so very selfish, but I promise I don't mean to be. Sometimes, all those letters make me feel as though I've forgotten how to write. Papa says that if I ever feel this way, I must write and write and write until I realize that I haven't forgotten how to write. I am only feeling so many feelings all at once that I don't know which feelings I'm feeling.

I love my home village, which lets me escape from the uproarious modern city and embrace nature. The rural lifestyle, which is healthful and quiet, is a dream for one who is fatigued by the hustle and bustle of city life. However, my hometown is changing. There are motorcycles and cars on the roads, compared with only bicycles ten years ago. It may bring convenience but we all know the cost of modernization is pollution. Next time I come, will I still be able to smell the grass in the morning?

Dear, I'm feeling cold tonight. My toes are frozen even with thick, wool socks pulled up to my knees. (Forever forgetting my slippers. They always disappear and you are always the one that summons them up to me.) My locket that carries the thought of you is tucked beneath my jumper and the gold metal is warm against my skin. It feels a little like being loved, being real, which is a feeling that I haven't been quite aware of for some time. And I hold on tightly to my happy thought. Never will I let it go.

It's too late for Earl Grey now, as Papa has just told me. So I drink a cup of warm milk and sugar to make me sleep. In my dreams, the Moon-Man tells me secrets about sailors. It feels like yesterday, when you told me you wanted to leave and be a sailor. Yesterday, when the summer air was warm, the tide was like a lullaby and the only light was from lighthouse every thirty seconds. (We counted.)

Once upon a time, you told me you wanted to be a sailor.



Photo/ Jennifer Wong

To the sailor husband from the wife who waits

Caroline Kam

Why hadn't you written? I'd written you three letters every day for the past eight months. One when I woke up, the second at noontime as I was drinking my Earl Grey, and the third when it's all dark and silent in the house and I had to tiptoe to the rooftop so that I wouldn't wake up the kids from their dreams. There were seven hundred and twenty one letters, all sealed with memories and tears.

People said you were shipwrecked, and are now sleeping beneath the waves. I never listened to what they said, because it felt like you were still somewhere out there, drifting, sailing along a moonbeam, sparkling like diamonds. I even imagined that you had found a portal through time. Perhaps you had just got lost in the fog after dusk and docked your boat near a little seaside town from hundreds of years ago. I thought to myself, how do you send letters through time?

I went to our beach every morning before the willow warblers began to sing. I wanted to see if any bottles were washed up to the shore. Just a month ago, I found one. But when I took the letter out, I realized that it was actually the one I sent you a couple of weeks before.

Love, why did I never receive your letters? It felt romantic to be with a sailor, but now you were also a time traveler, and I was all mixed up.

People never believed it when I said I heard thunders close by, or that the rain had kept me up at night because it tapped on the rooftop. They asked, why? There wasn't a cloud in the sky for weeks. They just didn't understand. There's a rainstorm in my heart and bones. I felt the thunders tear through my veins and then I woke up gasping for air. I was worried, all nerved up – what if the rainstorms inside me were inside you too? Are they real to you – not just some metaphorical ones like mine?

The anxiety was growing more and more intense as I thought of your little boat with one little mast and two sails whipping around in a tempest.

Caroline said: "I trip more than anyone else I know and only my ankle knows why. If my resume could be filled with tripping experiences, I would be set for life. World-class disaster - I seriously, helplessly am. 'Such an embarrassment, Caroline.' A friend with relatively normal walking patterns once said with an awkward smile. It's quite alright though. I trip, over and over again - but I do what anyone in my shoes would do - pick myself up, laugh it off and walk away. And so it goes on."



The Hand of Red Judgment

Betty Chiu

The only thing
Between the hand of red judgment
And I
In the cramped storage room,
Was the kitchen door
And the delicate body of the woman who
gave birth to me.

Every shot of accusation, blame, and
threat
She intercepted;
Every attempted discipline for the ill-
behaved,
Hit her instead.

One...Two...Four...Six.....

The eyes
Were mesmerized
By the burning images
Of repetitive collision between hand and
arm.

And I
Could not help but
To commit to memory,
The phantom flame that scorches
Skin wrinkled and aged by passage of
time;
Skin I loved, skin not mine.

Strike after strike
Rained – heavy and pounding,
For all unwilling participants
Or this penalty game;

Drowning
In the echoes of deafening discord.
Hurting:
the hurt and to be hurt are all the same.

The body remained defiant as it shook
And shivered,
crying and tearing,
Against the owner's will
And I retrieved deeper into the make-shift
hole
The storage wall and Mother created for me.

Legs mobile as rigid porcelain

The anxiety was growing more and more
intense as I was thinking of your little boat
with one little mast and two sails whipping
around in a tempest.

And arms rose up a defected shield
The defenses were futile;
For it could not deflect anyone from the
hurt, the pain.

Had it been worthwhile –
This sweet taste of disobedience,
The ghostly touches of satisfaction,
The disillusion of false freedom?

The Judge's hand has struck,
And the Keeper has intervened,
The Child unharmed.

But they have all suffered,
Just the same.

Pain,
And perhaps frightful discipline,
Is the hand of angry judgment
Slowly painted red.

When I Was in the US (Excerpt)

Kiwi Chan

5th August, 2003

Sunny

On 3rd August, 2003, I was heading for the Hong Kong airport with a super heavy suitcase. My elder sister said I must have stuffed my whole closet into the luggage while she was pulling it out of the taxi. I told her my heart was even heavier, and mom looked at me for seconds, and she started to nag me.

'My girl. Be careful of your belongings, take care of yourself. Don't wander at night alone. It's not Hong Kong! And the medical fee is not cheap in the US...'

Tears began to fill her eyes before she finished her words. My friends all looked at me, and I couldn't help but spill my tears too. Where were you? Were you hiding at a corner looking at me or immersing yourself in Math at home? I should not expect you to come as we are not even friends after you said you liked me at the MTR station in front of my friends.

I appreciated your courage, and I did like you too. The pity was that you never know my friends have been teasing me.

'C'mon, dun tell me you like this bookworm?!'

Under the peers' pressure I had to lie, 'I have a bf.'

My words hurt you deeper than swords, but to deny loving you was easier than to admit it. How come you were so smart yet unable to read my mind?

Finally I arrived at Litchfield after 23 hours. It was a long journey. My mom was certainly anxious, so the priority thing was to pick up a phone and call home.

Accidentally I dialed your number, luckily you didn't answer. How silly I was.

1st October, 2003

Cloudy

September was a letdown month because you didn't send me a congratulation message on my birthday?

On the 27th my host mom prepared a chocolate cake with marshmallow toppings for me. She also invited my classmates to come and celebrate my big day. I was glad to be the only Asian in Litchfield. Everybody in high school knew me, and I made new friends. It really helped to relieve my homesickness. Tia and Tatiana brought

their dogs too! They knew I loved dogs. Tatiana was always inquisitive, but it was a wrong question to ask me how to say 'dog' in Chinese.

'gou2.' I spoke in Cantonese.

'gou1.' She repeated it with a wrong tone, which became a foul language.

'Tatiana, wrong tone... 'gou1' means the THING boys have.'

I burst into laughter, and she laughed too.

The following day I had my 'karma' in class. I mispronounced 'pens' as 'pants'. 'Sir, I forget to bring my pens, may I get them from my locker?' I made my request aloud. The teacher rolled his eyes to my pants, and my face turned as red as a tomato. Afterwards, I decided to think twice before uttering any word.

The above was not the worst language joke. One evening I asked Janelle (my host mom) if she had a rubber the other day, and her sons immediately gave a curious look at me, and Janelle gently took me to a corner.

'Rubbers mean condoms in the States.' She whispered.

You should have received my emails about my funny experience, didn't you? Why didn't you reply me?

31st October, 2003

Snowy

If I were in a dungeon in September, I was in a hell in October because I saw ghosts. Happy Halloween! My little bag was half full of candies. I just sent you two pictures by email. Sigh! I should have got more but I wasn't good at tongue twisters in my mother tongue, let alone English. I spoke like a 5-year-old kid, but it was so much fun! I wished you were with me to share my joy.

My ambition of learning foreign languages was not defeated. I had been taking Español as my fourth language. 'Te quiero!' It is a phrase which should be said two months ago.

Snow came in November. It was freezing! Your face continuously appeared in my

brain. I gazed at the tiny white pieces slowly falling from the sky, and I had to remove my sight. Appreciating the beauty of snow was bitter with you absent.

'Kiwi, does it snow in Hong Kong?' Janelle asked.

At the time the phrase 'Hong Kong' entered my ears, tears rolled down involuntarily as if they were running water from a tap.

'What's the matter?' Janelle was worried so were Tanner and Tyler, my little host brothers. They were 8 and 10 years old only. I doubted if they understood how I felt. So I lied.

'I...I miss Bobby, my puppy at home.'

They gave me a warm hug. Snow also reminded me of dating my first love when I was about 13. He held my hand ice-skiing in Tsuen Wan, but immature love wouldn't last long. Since I rejected to lend him homework for copying, we were done. How about you and me? Perhaps it wasn't love but merely passion.

30th December, 2003 Snowy

Christmas is my favorite festival. Nevertheless, my homesickness conquered me. The smell of fried food annoyed me. It triggered my remembrance of our 'study tour' at McDonalds in a corner lest the staff should urge us to leave, or our common friends should see us? At one moment, the thought of coming back for you flashed through my mind. Everything seems flawed and wrong.

[...]

A third year student studying English, Kiwi is fascinated by the process of life-writing. She finds it a very feminine experience, it being a product of one's feelings, memories and sometimes imaginations. Even if somebody may find one's writings distasteful, it is important to continue writing what one wants to write about.





Artwork / Jessie Cheung

A Letter to Thomas
Crystal Chan

Dear Thomas,

I know you will be the first one to discover my body, for you have always been my dear friend. Thank you for being a sincere companion of mine for all these years, and I cannot tell you how much I appreciate your loyalty. Now that I am gone, can you help me to take care of Anna? I am sorry that I have been hiding this experiment with Anna from you, but I cannot afford to take any risks.

Anna is the girl that I wrote to since winter 1814, when I first started my experiment to uncover the secrets of human language. I was studying linguistics and reports of wild children for five years by then, and I could not stop myself from wondering what would happen if these children did not spend their period of isolation in the wild, but in a controlled setting, with absolutely no socialization with other living creatures. Recounts had shown that these wild children acted and even looked like wild animals, for they behaved like them. These children must have imitated animals' behavior to survive in the wild, which meant that they are influenced, and such behavior might not be natural to humans. There were so many questions and doubts in my head that I could not bear to leave them unanswered. I have to prove my theory by carrying out a language deprivation experiment.

I have kept any information about this experiment from my family, friends, and my colleagues at the university, for fear that they will stop me from pursuing truth and knowledge. I am possessed with the desire to discover human nature that I do not even think about the consequences of doing such an experiment. My heart beat fast and I cannot rest until I have started my experiment.

It is not easy for me to get hold of a suitable baby to be my 'isolated child', my friend. I visited many orphanages, but the children there were too old and too socialized for me to even start isolating them. So I had to look in other places, and hospitals seemed like a reasonable choice. I went to those located near the poor districts, and approached couples who looked desperate for money. Finally I was able to buy a baby girl from a blacksmith, and this was how Anna came into my hands.

Anna was about two months old at that time, and any language she had contact with prior to my custody would have had a minimal effect on her and my experiment. I was very excited when I held her in my arms, but had to suppress my emotion from anyone to avoid questions. After I brought her home, I placed her in the attic, where nothing other than a bed was placed, and the attic became her world since that day. I fulfilled her physical needs, and observed her from a small window outside the door to take note of her progress. After a few days, I found out that what Anna wanted was much more than an appetite for food, but something that could comfort her emotions.

This problem troubled me a lot. If I continue to let her stay in isolation, she might die due to the lack of stimulation, maybe not physically, but I believe that idleness could dumb one's mind. But if I were to take care of her like a mother would, what difference would this make to a normal child? I thought about it over and over again, and then finally I decided to give her some soft toys to play with to stimulate her mind. To my delight, Anna responded actively towards the new company, and played with them day and night.

Before I gave her these toys, Anna did nothing more than lying around during the time that she was awake. After I placed these toys around her, she started to grab them and fling them around, like she was very excited to have some new friends. And soon after that, Anna started to babble at her new toys, like she was making friends with them. This was a huge step in constructing her social skills, and I was amazed by her fast development. These soft toys have remained with her ever since, and as Anna grew, she treated them like a part of herself, and would not put them down.

I have always assumed that the concept of family was natural to humans, and that Anna would treat her companions as family members, to love and take care of them. Instead, what I found was that she recognized these toys as an inseparable part of herself, and seemed to know her power over them. This behavior indicated that Anna has developed a sense of possession over these toys.

Possession is always an important part of human society, to own means to have power, and wars in human history are often the result of a struggle over ownership. I never thought that growing in such an isolated state would allow Anna to develop a trait that was the centre of human civilization. However, Anna proved me wrong. At first I was confused about my discovery, and wondered if I had done something wrong in the course of my experiment. Later when I saw my guard dog fighting with my neighbour's dog over their territory, it all became clear to me. The sense of possession was natural in the animal world, and for all this time I was so possessed with Anna that I overlooked the fact that humans and animals sometimes do share some similar behaviour.

Watching Anna grow gave me great pleasure. Every day I could discover something new about her, and like a father, I was proud of all these changes. I took note of what she did during the day, and review it every night before I go to bed. Gradually, I felt like what I was doing was no longer an experiment, but a project of returning mankind to its beautiful nature. Without knowing any other human soul or language, there was no way that Anna would understand about human wickedness. And she would not have to follow any social rules because she knew of none, and could be a free soul.

Since the day I brought her here, I tried to make myself as invisible as possible, fearing that any direct contact with her would ruin her natural development. Every night when I sneaked into the attic, I had to restrain myself from the desire to hold Anna in my arms, while at the same time hoping that she would wake up and see me so that I wouldn't have to hide anymore.

Although I only went into the attic when Anna was asleep, she seemed to know there was something else beyond her world. When she was about sixteen months old, she started to gaze around, and often set her eyes on the small window that I used to observe her. Looking her in the eyes was inexplicable. When our eyes met, I could not move my gaze away from her, like there was some strong force in between us, pulling us together. Every time I pulled myself away from her, and was scared about what would happen if she knew I was there.

For the following months, Anna kept trying to figure out what was going on outside her room, then one day she slowly climbed to the door and hit her fist on it. *Bang, bang.* It was a soft noise, but it sounded like a bomb exploding in my heart. That was the first time Anna ever made contact with the outside world, and with me. This soft bang almost made me rush inside to put an end to this experiment, but reason has stopped me. I could not take the risk all my work would be in vain. I could not make Anna face the cruel reality of her world. I locked myself in the study for the remainder of the day, and reminded myself again and again that not showing myself was the best for both Anna and me.

To know more about her thoughts, I placed some crayons and papers in the attic that night, hoping that Anna would know how to use them. The next day, when I looked through the window, Anna was doing all kinds of things with the crayons, like waving them in the air, putting them in her mouth to chew, and finally making some marks on the floor. A few days later, she seemed to know what to do with the crayons finally. She began to draw lines on the floor, and occasionally used her saliva to rub some away. Being able to use these crayons on her own was an exceptional ability, and it made me even more eager to look at her drawings and try to decode her thoughts from them.

Up till now I had stored five boxes of Anna's drawings, and they are arranged chronologically. These are valuable treasures to human development and I would like you to look over them. What I saw in these pictures was the maturation of my little girl. As she grew with age, what she drew became more complex, from the messages embedded in the drawings. I could tell that she was curious about the outside world, but at the same time satisfied with her present condition. From time to time, she would draw a dark figure behind the walls, which I thought was me in her imagination. Warmth filled my heart whenever I found myself in her drawings because they made me feel important, and loved. Anna used to make strange sounds to catch my attention or possibly to make me reveal myself, but she stopped doing that a few years ago. I think it is because she started to feel comfortable and content with this life, and knew that I was her caretaker, so she had nothing to worry about.

Time passed, and this was our twelfth year together. I was diagnosed with pneumonia two weeks ago, and I know there was little time left. The first thing that came into my mind was not the fear for dying, but it was Anna. What would happen to my dear girl? Who would take care of her? These uncertainties troubled me day and night, but I could not tell anyone before I leave this world, not even you my friend, for I believed that you would put an end to this without a doubt. I wanted to spend every living moment alone with her, undisturbed. That is why I wrote this letter to you, so that you would know about what happened to Anna.

Yesterday was Anna's twelfth birthday, and it was the first time I ever gave her a birthday cake to celebrate. I did not do anything to mark the passing years. But this time it is different. I soon have to leave this world, and I am sure that you will not have the heart to leave Anna in the attic like I did, and you might even try to teach her to talk as Jean Itard did with Victor of Aveyron. I know you too well, my friend, and I won't blame you for putting an end to Anna's isolation, because no one in the world could turn away from such beauty and innocence. Now, I only want Anna to be safe, I believe you are the only one who can look after her.

Since Anna will be taken out of the attic soon, I don't have to worry about showing myself anymore. So last night, I opened the door into the attic while Anna was wide awake. She seemed shocked at first, but soon became calm and walked slowly towards me. The excitement was so great that I could not bear it. I fell on my knees and held Anna tightly in my arms, and cried for a long time. All the while Anna remained quiet, and used her fingers to touch my face, my shoulder and finally took my hand. That was the moment I had been waiting for twelve years. I have been suppressing my desire to end this experiment since the very beginning, and now before I die, I could finally hug my dear Anna. We spent hours together, just looking

at each other. I did not say a word to her, because what I wanted to tell her cannot be expressed in any language. Those were the sweetest hours I had had in my life, but everything had its end. I could tell that I was dying already and I didn't want to die beside Anna. So I left the attic as soon as she fell asleep, and finished this letter.

I spent all these years distancing myself from Anna, but in the end, we were more connected than anyone else could ever imagine. I now realized that it was not language that unites us, but love. I loved her dearly, and I did not regret not letting Anna have contact with human language, or other human beings, for I truly believed that she would be better off this way.

My dear friend, may I urge you to respect my work and Anna's uniqueness, and not to treat her like another wild child who needs to be 'civilized'.

Yours,
Robert Harvey,
28 October, 1826

A final-year student majoring in English, Crystal has recently found her interest in writing. She is particularly drawn to stream of consciousness writing, which she believes is most effective in drawing readers deep into the minds of her protagonists. This piece of creative writing is extracted from her undergraduate dissertation which focuses on the study of feral children and how people in different times view and judge the isolated.



The Good Old Times with a Pervert

Franziska Cheng

In the room sat a man and a woman. He sent the cup of expresso to his thin lips. He was closing his eyes while sipping the coffee. It was not difficult to trace the fine lines along the outer corners of his eyes. Putting down the cup and raising his head, his blue eyes looked into the windows of this woman's soul. No matter how severely she resisted, she could not deny that he drew her attention and grasped her breath. His blonde hair, with a bit of grayness at the tip, complimented his sky blue irises.

And the sky was cloudy.

The comfortable environment was overwhelmed with stuffiness and silence, or, maybe this was a horrible prison cell decorated with cozy sofa. The former or the latter one, or the difference between the two, this man could not tell. But he was certain that it did not matter. Well, probably.

She opened her lips trying to ask her first question, yet his voice covered hers.

"I am Morpheus Edward," very gently but plainly he started, "and I am a monster."

The woman put on her glasses, and started scribbling on her notebook.

He continued, "I have a disgraceful desire over my daughter. To start with I just peeked at her while she put on pajamas at home. And then I did it while she was showering. And later on I had to sniff her panties and rub them on my cock until I cum. I cum a lot, a lot, more than ever. But now I still found it not enough." He halted, held the coffee cup real tight. Then he kept bringing the cup to his mouth. Something in him wanted to retreat and defend. She encouraged him to continue.

He put down the cup, leaving a trace of expresso on his thin upper lip. With his lips shaking gently he started to whisper, "I want to rape her."

Before he finished the sentence, he hid his face behind his two giant palms. His back crooked and his whole body started to shake. He was sobbing -- but out of guilt, fear or excitement she did not know. She handed him some tissues.

"Thanks," he said. "You are a nice person. You don't despise me, do you. Are all Chinese women like this? Probably this is the reason why I want her so much."

"Is she Chinese?" She raised her left brow.

"Oh yes, she's adopted." He said bluntly. "And I could not look away from her black eyes, you know. They are like black holes, restlessly drawing me into the darkness of sin... A fairy. You must know it, right? That 'sin' is 'fairy' in Cantonese."

"Well, yes, of course I do. I am local." XiaoXiang nodded, and gave him a very brief smile.

"So did she." Suddenly he smiled cheerfully, as if a child talking about his new toy. The bizarre feeling of triumph, out of pride of his Chinese doll. "She is a fairy. Dark hair, black eyes, long legs, and a slim body. Titties, well, not big but cute. I like them the way they are. She is my petite pussycat. And I taught her all the sacred knowledge."

"The sacred knowledge?" She asked, and hoped this man was not going to tell her that he believed in God. Her patients list was long enough to count in the hypocrites. The woman was not certain if she wanted more.

"Drama. Opera. Poetry. And the English language of course."

"Oh," she nodded, and slowly jotted down the word "arrogant" on her black little notebook. But after a second, she went back putting down a strikethrough on it. And then wrote, R-A-C-I-S-T. Racist.

"I am a writer, did I tell you?" He raised the question. "Shakespeare. Ben Jonson. Lord Byron. They are all my cups of tea. And of course I am a mad, bad and dangerous man to know."

He winked at her with a subtle smile. She started to suspect that he might not have an adopted daughter with Asian ethnicity but simply wanted to pay for the intimate time between the two of them, so that he could flirt with her. Who knows, this man was probably making up stories. And yes, intimacy, this was the word, between the psychologist and the analysand. How could they not be intimate when she was attempting to understand his mind and lead him out of the darkness? In the rest of the one hour session, XiaoXiang, as a Chinese young lady, played her traditional role well by staying quiet most of the time, allowing this Englishman who speaks "chicken's intestine" to be the Imperial Master who kept on revealing, and bragging on, his almost uncontrollable sexual desire over his poor Chinese kitty. XiaoXiang never asked, yet she often secretly wondered if these were facts or fiction. Those disgusting dirty details made the story sound real, but simultaneously it was the unbelievably careful details which triggered the audience to question its authenticity. The man seemed to be able to read her mind that he left her such a last sentence when he left her office: "There is no difference between facts and fiction."

According to the schedule he visited her every Thursday evening, and at the end of his session, every time, she offered him strawberry cheesecake ice-cream. After all, her office was small but big enough for a mini-fridge. Instead of saying thanks, he always nodded and gave her a wink before he closed her office door. Although this might seem bizarre, XiaoXiang did enjoy talking to him. Or, put it this way, the more she listened to him, the more she liked him.

Out of XiaoXiang's expectation, this British man was more complicated than she thought. He was not, as he himself described or presumed, a pervert. He was very far from that. Rather, he was a neurotic who dreamt of himself as a pervert. He fantasized himself as a cruel, manipulative and destructive Imperial Master, yet he was the exact opposite of what he thought he was. True, no doubt that he desired the Chinese little dolly, but at the same time this was the exact reason why the little girl was and would always be safe. Neurotics were clever; they would prefer to defer the satisfaction eternally in order to sustain a desire or a fantasy. And this was the same for this Englishman who dreamt.

It has been a few years now since his first visit to her clinic, and she has got used to these Thursday evening sessions. Although XiaoXiang knew the exact problem of Morpheus and was confident in completely curing him, she started to feel that she did not want to. She would rather have him visiting her once in a week, looking into his blue eyes. She sometimes felt like she had to keep him confused, so that she could always hand him tissues and seek the chance to touch his very warm palm. Politically incorrect, but she would not want him to realize the truth and then moved on to someone else. She might, after all, be insane.

The last day that this British man appeared in XiaoXiang's clinic was the first day in July of 1997. It was a red noisy day with celebration: cheerful smiles and happy faces everywhere on televisions and newspapers, but for what she did not know. Her only attention laid on this man.

"Thanks very much for listening to me all these years, doctor. I know I'm a horrible patient. A monster that everyone despises and hates. Yes I'm such a disgrace. I know I have to put an end to this, I have to. I've made an effort and spent a few pennies to find her biological parents, it turns out that they're now doing great. A big wealthy family. The rise in these few years, I bet. So, I've decided to pass her back to them, and they agreed. They were so glad to hear that they are having her back. I told them every single details about her, like her preference in food and her living style, and I've particularly reminded them not to forget her favorite strawberry cheesecake flavor ice-cream. Oh, yes, she loves it. She needs it every week, or else she would scream at me and cry! Oh, such a lovely girl." Again, he put on a very gentle smile when he talked about his little fairy. Silently XiaoXiang noticed a tear dropping from the outer corner of his left eye, which ran down along his cheek. The glistening path of the tear, so innocent, complimented his blonde and grey hair.

"Why?" she asked.

"Because I raped her," very softly he replied.

A dead silence.

She could hear her fierce heartbeat, literally, so fast, so violent. She was so mad,

"That's impossible. You wouldn't."

"I did."

She could not breathe.

"You couldn't have."

"But I did. I'm a manipulative master!"

Her head started to hurt.

"You didn't!"

"I DID, I DID, and I didn't give a DAMN if she cried or not! I just DID!" He shouted.

She shouted back.

She stuttered.

She shed a tear.

She slapped the desk.

She screamed.

Her scream, so high-pitched and so loud, made it impossible for anyone in the room to hear anything. It was headache and earache and dizziness and a rough silence. The silence of her scream. Her scream of silence.

"No, you couldn't have. You DIDN'T. If you are manipulative why didn't you do it when you sneaked into MY bedroom? I knew it DADDY, I knew it. I didn't fall asleep, I just pretended that I did. I felt you running your hand down my panties, and I felt you pressing

your stiff cock over my face, but why just wouldn't you do it with me? I opened my eyes and I saw you pressing your body against me, and I begged you to fuck me, but why just wouldn't you thrust your hard dick in my pussy? You knew I always desired you, and you knew that I wanted you to tie my arms on the bedposts and fucked me hard, why you just, just, just wouldn't? Isn't it because I am a filthy Chinese who is not worth your precious cum?"

The strawberry ice-cream in her mini-fridge had long melted. Like all good dreams, they never stayed long. Jasmine Edward, but now Xiang Gang, was handed over by her dearly British adoptive father to her Chinese parents in July 1997. On that day her biological parents were so happy that they probably shed a tear. Or maybe it was Jasmine whose vision was blocked by tears. Her parents were nice to her, but Jasmine, or XiaoXiang, couldn't really integrate into this traditional Chinese family. To start with they thought they just needed some time for both parties, but after 15 years of frustrating attempt, they realized that their cultural difference was, probably, too big. She didn't hate her "real" parents nor did they hate her, yet they just shared diverse beliefs and values which made them very difficult to understand and live with each other. They thought of her as rebellious, she thought of them as totalitarian. And she missed her British daddy dear.

Maybe it was never him but her who was a pervert. She desired him, and more than once she seduced him. And he let her down, he left her alone to her Chinese parents and vanished. She wrote him letters but he never replied. Now when she had grown up, as a therapist, she heard that he passed away and this triggered all the reminiscence. She never knew if the news of his death was true or not, but it probably did not matter. As he has taught her while she was a child, that there's no difference between facts and fiction. The fact was that he did not come back to rescue her, for whatever reason that she did not care.

It might be that he was a good daddy only because he lived in Jasmine's memories, or it might be that she only chose to remember the good times in the old days. She didn't know. After all it has been 15 years and it was very difficult to recall the details. Maybe her Imperial Master was such a good man, only because he lived in her fantasy.

Maybe it was Jasmine's sheer fantasy, her psychological hence fictional construction, rather than his.

And maybe he did slap her.

And maybe he did rape her.

And maybe she enjoyed it.

She never knew. She couldn't. Nevertheless, staring at the melted ice-cream she remembered that it was daddy's flavor. He was her Imperial Master.

Fantasy or not, she did not care. He was probably just a fantasy. But she still loved him nonetheless, as she loved fantasies.

Yes she loved him, as always.

My Imperial Master.

A second year M.Phil student with the English Department, Franziska completed her degree (1st Hon) in Contemporary English Studies in 2010. Her research interests lie on psychoanalysis and contemporary fiction, especially feminist writing. She believes that there is an exquisite relation between sex and death, and to investigate the nature of life and our existence as a subject, we must go through language, as a form of art, and themes like birth, sex, trauma or death, for deep understanding of life only stems from strong emotions.



Bulexia

By Liz-Ann Tan

She enters the room and locks the door.
This will be, she swears,
the last time and no more.

She removes her shoes,
steps on a scale, but there is no use,
she sees the number and then refuse.

She turns toward the sink.
No. She doesn't think.
She is resolved - she doesn't need to blink.

No. Her judgment isn't clouded.
Yes. She sticks a finger into her mouth.
All contents in her stomach – forced out.

She's been doing this for a long long time;
what's once or twice now turns to worse from fine
and the problem now has reached its prime.

In the mirror a different girl she sees;
as beautiful and determined to be
as those girls she sees on TV.

Emaciated before the mirror really stand;
so clouded her mind, she doesn't understand.
She is supposed to see herself: gorgeous and grand.

And so it must be, she swears
this is the last time and no more,
yet until her next meal, she'd do it again for sure.

The only Filipino-Chinese in Lingnan University, Liz-Ann Tan started writing poems when she was 16 and has never stopped ever since. She is now exploring other styles and/or forms of poetry and she also writes short stories. She likes to describe her writing, and more especially her poetry, as thoughts that need to be written down on paper. She is curious and enjoys questioning the world around her.



My Home Village Ronnie Yim

I returned to my home village last February. The environment was slowly but surely changing while the picturesque scenery was still fascinating.

In the morning, I woke up with the song of nature composed of the humming of birds and the crow of roosters. The clean and pure air in the countryside revived me; the fresh and sweet smell of grass stimulated me. All my sombre passions were driven away by the loving caress of the morning breeze.

The clutches of winter loosened their hold as spring budged its way onto the grounds of the village, greening the grass, budding the trees, and warming the air. (P, M, PS) Nothing is more relaxing than wandering along the path to feast my eyes on the beauty of the suburbs (M), watching the busy bees buzzing through the bud of wild flowers, clumsy cows roaming on the cultivated lands, and frisky fish swimming freely in the pond which was as smooth as a mirror.

At sunset the sky became a kaleidoscope of colours, suffused with the bright pink, light purple and reddish orange. As the sun sank down the skyline, people stopped their farm work and went home one after another, which gave way to the misty air of a peaceful evening.

The curtain of night had fallen after supper and I went out for a walk. It was dark and only one or two little subdued lights lit my way. The panoply of stars was immense and brilliant as if there were thousands of tiny light bulbs hanging in the air. Everything was sunken into silken silence, peaceful like a dreamland.

I loved my home village, which lets me escape from the uproarious modern city and embrace nature. The rural lifestyle, healthful and quiet, was a dream for one fatigued by the hustle and bustle of city life. However, my hometown was changing. There were motorcycles and cars on the roads, compared with only bicycles ten years ago. It might bring convenience but we all knew the cost of modernization was pollution. Next time when I return, will I still be able to smell the grass in the morning?

A major in Translation, Ronnie Yim finds writing amusing though she confesses she is sometimes too lazy to write down she thinks. She is filled with interesting ideas.



Man from Blue
Amy Mingkung Lee

History is just one bloody thing after another
True
War Disaster Conquest Politics Massacre

Whenever I look up the blue sky
I think of a missed man
Who used to be very mysterious
Never shows up himself
But I believe somewhere he exists

His story all distorted, rumored
I realize better be suspicious sometimes
Be a person of my own principle
Who can define his story
When You don't know about him?

What's beyond it?
Power rules history
Money rules history
And there is no history
Shop truth buy justice

An exchange student from Korea, Amy enjoys her experience in the city and has met new friends in this period. To her, she cannot imagine a life of concrete blocks if there are no poems. Poetry classes for her are an awakening of long-forgotten memories.



Default Home

Xu Xi

First published in *Platte Valley Review*, Fall 2011

You must live somewhere. So that is home for now, you say. Wherever you lay your head. Wherever an intimacy of persons, places or possessions compels.

Home sweet home, if only for a few nights of a business trip or other command appearance (family; friends; fearless adventure; f-f-f u I don't care I have to be there, wherever there is come hell or high watermark, waterline, water being still a source of life). A contract to work and live as far away as you never anticipated from the place that used to be home. A war zone or Chinese economic miracle zone perhaps, or, less melodramatically, the city where Mother still lives and grows older, alone in her Alzheimer's home, and even you who are neither the most loving nor filial child could deny a need so negatively culpable that the only course of action was to say, yes I'll "go home." You are the flexible one, after all and the siblings, the only "we," agree. Those intimate persons of the spirit of home.

To live "at home." For now (or for as long as it takes because life is bracketed now, forcibly placed between two curvaceous pillars of an aside). There used to be a home you lived in on the other side of the Pacific across a vast and empty land. In the Adirondacks. The comfortable home with no mortgage that stores your lifetime's possessions, the one that is the wrong color (but not so obnoxiously wrong you couldn't wait a year or two to repaint. Or five or forever and then, time to sell, the market rises up after a long slump and you will not have lived there for, oh(!) maybe so long you set off the alarm because you accidentally punch the wrong code). The home that is becoming merely a house. For who knows how long now that the space called home is a comfortless, barren, rooftop squat in an upwardly cramped city?

Not the space but home as life. Is it imperative to call some space home whether a cardboard box on a hospitable city street where a warm enough climate prevails or this raised ranch on an inhospitable but gorgeous country road where autumn is season of mellow fruitfulness and the wardrobe changes for trees on project runway?

Blink and another year passes.

So here, "at home" in Hong Kong when you thought you lived in New York. The City. The State. Okay, both, but only a train ride or puddle jump apart. On TVB Pearl a giant panda puppet repeatedly squeaks "who is Benjameenn?" in a Chinese-English voice, this Zoo of Talking Pandas a brand image for a "National Treasures" program. Pandas are precious in our Motherland-home, although there were no pandas in your Hong Kong childhood. Nor

was there land occupied by persons, places, possessions where once there was only water in that deep, deep harbor Charles Elliot considered strategic and thus conquered this city for England, my England, when Colony was Queen (but today the repeatable squeak is Content is King for media content that is just believable or desirable enough to regularly consume despite the distraction of ursine speech or animated brands sauntering across the laptop, tablet, berry, cell of whatever connection is the home that blinds).

Is home “home” only by default, almost defunct? You stare at the harbor from a treadmill at your gym, counting four-plus minutes for the ferry to traverse from Kowloon to the island. The journey used to take ten – a mile across – when Hong Kong really felt like home back in '66 (19 not 10 as accidental history does not a home make despite our once-upon-a-British-colonial-time) and the harbor was your yard, the vista from a seventeenth floor flat. When water was clean enough to buoy swimmers for an annual cross-harbor race. Who would swim the cesspool now of this disappearing sea? Would Elliot cringe at this cultivation or was this his vision too, that the barren rock would, like Chinese Monkey, burst into life, to become home for millions (seven and counting) stacked higher and higher on land stolen from the sea, raising Atlantis to the heavens for, oh(!) a blink of the eye, until we sink from the weight of too many persons, places, possessions, and return to our native home, a barren rock again?

<http://www.plattevalleyreview.org/Webpages/2011%20start/Creative%20non%20fiction%20L-Z/Xi.html>

Xu Xi (xuxiwriter.com) is the author of nine books of fiction and essays. Her most recent titles are Access: Thirteen Tales (Signal 8 Press, 2011) and the novel Habit of a Foreign Sky (Haven Books, 2010), shortlisted for the Man Asian Literary Prize. Other titles include an essay collection Evanescence: From My City-Village (Hong Kong University Press, 2008) and Overleaf Hong Kong: Stories and Essays from the Chinese, Overseas (Chameleon Press, 2006). She is currently writer-in-residence at the Department of English, City University of Hong Kong where she directs the first low-residency Masters of Fine Art in Creative Writing in Asia, and the only one that specialises in Asian writing in English.

'A Song of Sunset' sung by Anita Mui

Translated by Tam Ka Ling

As dawn breaks what beauty the sky can('t) hold on
 withered with the sun
 what's meant to go on we can't keep for long
 time freezes and drifts
 my life goes ups and downs
 gathering and apart weariness shadows my face
 long long way and those years are away
 laughters are brief then fade away
 who could tell I want my life a simple way
 how many times thunders and storms
 strike in my life weave my dreams
 how many times your open arms
 are there for me in hard times
 gaze and chase though I'm fed up
 with all twists and turns that fill my way
 When I wanna turn away the daylight fades
 (sigh)... am I destined to be all alone
 I cry I laugh I trip and I pace
 one day I think of goin' home it's too late

*Tam Ka-ling is a student majoring in
 translation studies at Lingnan.*



Night at Sai Yeung Choi Street
Alex Cheung Tin Lik

Ten o'clock at night,
I am sitting on my bed thinking
about how to relate home and culture,
but my mind isn't working,
so I stop, then look out of the window.

The sky is bright,
Illuminated by the neon light,
Red, green, yellow, blue and white.
When it reaches my bedroom window,
It's too strong for a good dream. But like my pillow,
I can't sleep without it now.

The street is bustling,
with people all around.
They chat, they laugh, the saunter.
"clog clog clog", "da da da", "bla bla bla"
Like the delightful music from my CD player.

Food stalls are selling
typical street delicacies,
spicy fried pig intestine, curried fishball, stinky tofu,
the reek of them fill my room.
I look down to the diffuser on my nightstand,
both of them make me a calmer man.

Suddenly I realize,
what I feel here and now
actually gives me the answer.

An English Major from the Lingnan Universtiy, who is interested in literature stuff, has been taking his first poetry course of his life. Inspired by his fellow students and professor in the class, he starts to write some beginners level poems.



Matthew Kolomaya (Rainbow Flowering)
Hung Sheng

your silhouette
 is all I have
 deep in somewhere for that summer

sunset shore on the native house
 orange, yellow and nicotine
 laid in dialogues with strangers

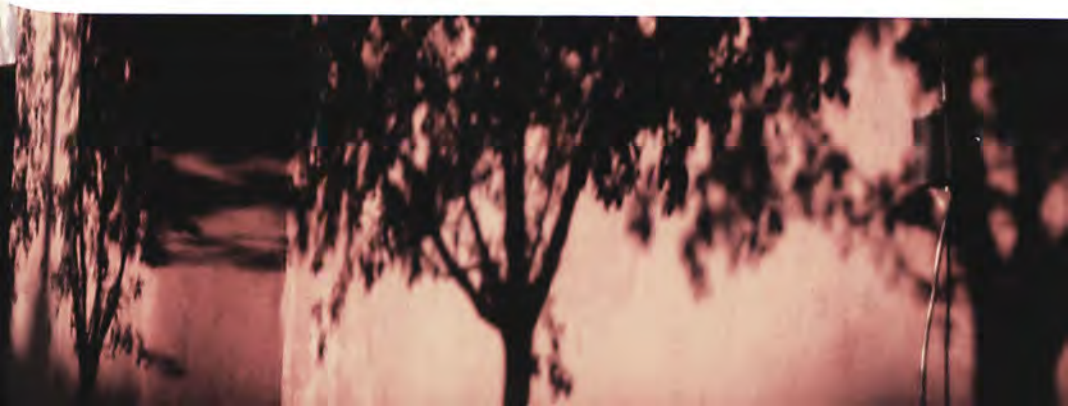
with no traceable reasons
 that became routine
 slid into our life in such a whim

under the starry night with shadowy walls
 your poems read along
 unfold your stories bit by bit
 texture of romance silently lit

all the way on Amtrak
 your smell
 your voice
 your breath
 merged with the spectacular landscape depth
 all I have is your silhouette

gentle breeze and yellow leaves
 bring me back
 to the chilly nights in the desert view

Hung Sheng loves art, nature and travel. She failed at compositions and was very bad at sentence making in primary school. Writing poetry always seems far away for her until she met Matthew Kolomaya in 2010. This poem is dedicated to their encounter in Santa Fe, New Mexico, written in response to Matthew's poem entitled 'Rainbow Flowering'.



The Metropolitan Pantoum
Thomas Deng

I am no migrant in Shenzhen
Yet this city has no room for me to stand
As I join millions of troops underground
To ride Shenzhen Metro to the Civic Center

Yet this city has no room for me to stand
Squeezed by passengers while I am
Trying to ride the metro to the Civic Center
Right from Window of the World Station

Squeezed by passengers while I am
Breathing stuffy air in the speedy train
Right from Window of the World Station
Millions of minds meander in the news

Breathing stuffy air in the speedy train
I fight to balance against all pressures
Millions of minds meander in the news
Of the Universiade held this summer

I fight to balance against all pressures
Of vanity in millions of brains, who
Care about the Universiade this summer
Sweat of fear falls on assembly lines

Such vanity in millions of brains
Fail to wear a genuine smile at work
Sweat of fear falls on assembly lines
Exposed on the TV and the Internet

Unable to wear a genuine smile at work
Well, your stony face of the metropolis
Exposed on the TV and in the newspaper
Your metropolitan image is everywhere

How your stony face of the metropolis
Entices restless workers!
Your metropolitan image is everywhere
For the vain glory of urbanization

Tempting restless workers
to, Oh no, overloaded spirits of the fatigue
For the vain glory of urbanization
They exhale their last dose of youth

Oh no, overloaded sprits of the fatigue
From PwC to technological Huawei
They exhale their last dose of youth
Just for another nil in their deposits

From PwC to technological Huawei
How many lives end from overwork?
How the restive pursuit for survival
Secures the grave of the suicidal?

How many lives sleep at office?
Well, mathematical figures in Excel
Secure the grave of the suicidal
Who's overworked day after night

How mathematical figures in Excel
Perform their ways to the subway!
Talents still labor day after night –
Striving to become citizens of Shenzhen

*Thomas Deng is a student currently studying
MFA in Creative Writing at the City University
of Hong Kong. He has participated in the
creative writing workshop at Lingnan during
Arts Festival 2012.*

A Lesser Degree by Science (Excerpt)

Austin Price

For the first time in his extensive career Dr. McCoores found himself staring down the awful, soul-shattering truth: for all of his zeal, he had no way of effectively combating his arch foe, the dreaded sleeping sickness. At first his medicine, cultivated on pigeon's feathers and mixed with his sweat, had been effective enough treatment. With time passing the strain of this virus had evolved to combat it and other more drastic treatments until becoming at last entirely impervious. Now the most he could do was slap his patients around, give them a pep-talk about accepting pseudo-zombification and leave them with a number of pigeon eggs compliments of the boarder under his hat.

The blow, though a long time in coming, had been delayed often enough through sheer delusion and self-deception. Until, that is, the most recent of his charges undeniably sealed the nail in his professional coffin. Glazed eyes, mouth dripping spittle, response times more in line with the dead and fungal growth in the patient's hair left no doubt: the curse had crawled so far down as to penetrate even the relatively invulnerable immune systems of the sewer folk. Unsurprisingly, his treatments proved ineffectual, his most drastic measures gaining no more ground than the original formula, the one that had been intended for handling the breakout in its early phases. That time had passed years ago. Those solutions as of yet untested generated only bi-products that the doctor both laughed and scowled in response to. Distilled tears and rat brains ground into a fine, powdery substance generated only convulsions in this final patient, the shot of pure heroin only widened his pupils. Even that most potent of his creations, a panacea he had only managed to duplicate once, saved over years ago in case of such a fatal emergency, garnered sneezes only. Like so many other, this young man had been seized in the prime of his refuse-devouring life by the most horrible of predators, one without compare. Soon, Dr. McCoores feared, knew, would too the world.

"Freak mutant evolution world of my god, how to stay such? When in what way shape can it be tackled through and with modern contrivances that even all loving super-science but I'm confused? To beat it maybe I have in the physical but, ah, in the mental I rub them against my own wits, self-battle. I, no mental waif, given over to and from and by myself the godhead granted thereof as a DOCTOR, am I not?! The question problems, hence, further investigation." More than just a reminder to himself, this verbal signal gave warning to the denizens of the sewer, devoid as they were of eye-sight, to stay well away, unless they so desired to arouse the ire of a doctor in his grievance. They knew, by all teachings, that to place themselves in such a man's way was tantamount to abandoning their lease on life.

Clambering forth from subterranean passage into the crowded, noisy and stupefyingly bright world of the city dwellers, Dr. McCoores found his own mind under

attack. Something violent and yet subtle, lazy was assaulting his senses, interrupting his train of thought; unheard of, his being of infinite momentum. It was a something not unknown to him; no, it smacked readily of an identity he knew quite well. Undoubtedly his very nemesis had come to claim him in his vulnerability!

"Lord of bees not here in this moment!" shrieked the doctor as he took to fleeing through the metropolis' over-packed streets and alleys. Every few feet a yuppie or two grabbed for him, naively, stupidly fancying that perhaps they might help him or find him some such assistance in this delicate time of strife, but he who knew more than any the danger of risking an epidemic by exposure, knew he had to keep from physical contact less he betray his entire mission. Oh irony! Too cruel your whims!

"Off with your hands and eyes to all of you that stop by me with the stares, the gawkery! I am a DOCTOR, damn you all as you might! A DOCTOR, here to cure you all of viral agency, yet which returns unto me even so that I myself no sign of a gracious saving grace may give you world sorts."

Though as he ran further on ever deeper into the city the accosting pleas to stop ceased, the noise became no more subdued. Indeed it only increased ten fold as the crowds following him picked up surrounding bystanders dazzled by the sideshow sensibility of it all. The sight of a man going mad was a rare one in this particular district of the city, as was the sight of a character such as the doctor, despite how common his sort might seem in the lower quarters. The two together proved more than their attention could resist. And so the caravan grew as it moved, picking up at first further such working class pedestrians walking by, then a number of those driving, and so forth and so on until at last even the police threw their assignments aside in favor of joining in this modern day display of witch hunting, with only a bit less derision and judgmental will....

A recent graduate of Centenary College of Louisiana with a degree in English Literature, and a Visiting Tutor at Lingnan University, Austin Price divides his time between writing for the webcomic Garage Raja, reading voraciously, and walking aimlessly through the backwoods of Hong Kong.



Down Greenfield Lane
Chris Astwood

On gusts of fall, Hilda
 of the billowing sun frock,

my grandmother perched
 on her bird legs
 among the avocados,

calls me in kiskadee cries,

Chris-to-pher, and the yellowbirds
 swooping between casuarinas
 echo and answer, scouring

her fields for my small red shirt
 and sun-bleached hair

but I cannot hear them:

my shirt has become baggy,
 my hair darkened by work,

and her long house and avocados -
 fenced off
 with signs that bark,

"TRESPASSERS BEWARE,"

and I have trespassed
 against her enough
 to be devoured by whatever

monsters lurk behind the trunks
 of trees I used to climb by heart.

Chris Astwood is a Bermudian poet currently working towards a PhD in creative and critical writing at the University of East Anglia. His poetry appears in print journals and online. He has read his poetry to Lingnan students via a virtual poetry sharing session.



Heloise (excerpt)

Peter Ho Yat-kwan

Then we went into a shopping mall right behind the campus. If you were with a girl, and you didn't want to chat with her in the lousy college canteen, then you would take her to a nice cafe in the shopping mall where you could buy her coffee and cream soup. Girls are always happy and willing to share with you lots of gossips after they have had some coffee.

So we entered the cafe and chose our seats in a relatively quiet corner where we can relax and chat without interruption. Heloise was very attractive with her smooth white face, fresh like an orchid after the rain.

"Why do you keep staring at me? You're weird." Heloise broke the silence first.

"Well, you are charming." I replied. Then a middle-aged waitress came and we ordered our meals. I thanked the waitress, who looked quite like my auntie, and she smiled politely as she took our orders. Then I glanced at Heloise's Ingrid-Bergman-like hair again.

"Seems girls quite like you. Tough Boy." Heloise said with a foxy smile.

"Well, girls are quite insane about me," I replied. "I have been popular since my kindergarten years."

"Wor. So you studied romance in kindergarten?"

"My major in kindergarten was Shakespeare. In primary school I took Dickens."

"Seems like you're born a genius. I read Oliver Twist in junior high."

"I read Great Expectations in high school. Then I mainly focused on virgin detection."

"You villain." Heloise replied, and slightly knocked my head with her right fist playfully. She was even more charming when she smiled.

Then the waitress served us our coffee. She smiled to me again. There were three loud women chatting loudly at the opposite table and I felt them annoying so I asked the waitress to shut them up and the waitress said yes and went to their table. The waitress spoke something to the bitches, which I couldn't hear, and then those girls paid and left. The waitress looked embarrassed.

"Peter Boy, you were so hard on the waitress." Heloise said, then drank her coffee.

Genectorem sant quae con consequas adit essum quia sitibus eatur seque plitium hil es sum, que nihillupta alit, omnis rerrum harum quis conectem velestiberum vendus ea verspercias acerit volum et liae porior aut alibusam raesci coribus doloribus aute laut ullore quodit dit lam

"Her job was to tell the clients not to be noisy." I replied, stirring my coffee with a small spoon, and stared at the traces of lipstick Heloise left on her cup.

"Yeah, but that's not her fault. You know these people always behave badly." Heloise replied, adding sugar into her coffee, stirring it again.

"It's too sweet for you, Ingrid Bergman." I said in a soft voice.

"Well, I love the aroma of coffee, but not its bitterness. You don't like putting sugar into your coffee?"

"I'm a tough guy and bitterness is good for me."

"Don't pretend to be tough, Peter Boy."

"Being tough as Humphrey Bogart doesn't mean being temperate to barbarians."

"Well, that's true. Very few people can be tolerant." Heloise replied. Then the waitress came and gave us what we had ordered. The waitress smiled to me again before leaving.

"You're really good with women." Heloise said.

"That's why you're having lunch with me now." I replied. Then I picked up the French bread from the basket, cut it into half, buttered them both and handed a piece to Heloise. She chewed her piece politely while I dipped my piece into my cream soup. The bread soaked in soup tasted good.

"Very few people eat their breads the way you do." Heloise said, after finishing off her bread.

I finished my soup and replied. "When I was small my dad had to work very hard to earn a month's living, and my mom wanted to save money. So what she always did was to buy some long French baguettes at the bakery near my home - you know during the good old colonial days things were cheap. You could buy two big pieces of bread for less than ten bucks - yeah, then my mom would buy some Campbell's Cream Soup - those concentrated soups. Back in those days you could buy four cans for ten bucks. So my mom would bring it to a boil and the whole family would have soup with bread. Everything has skyrocketed now."

"Stop. You make me miss the good old colonial days again."

Then we stopped chatting. We emerged from nostalgia and turned to finish our lunch until Heloise broke the silence.

"My family was pretty similar to yours," Heloise said, combing her brown hair with her right hand. "Middle-class families, yours and mine. My daddy didn't earn much, but enough for the whole family to live comfortably."

I stared at her brown hair, picturing her in my mind how she would look like in a wedding dress.

After reading The Old Man and the Sea at the age of five, Ho has been working hard to follow the example of Ernest Hemingway- though he is not very successful. Other than reading and writing, he also enjoys boxing and drinking. He focuses on even small matters from daily life can become great contents for writing. He believes life itself is the perfect content and a writer must firstly live a good life. He misses the old days with a pretty girl Heloise who loves Chivas Regal and Frank Sinatra.



Christmas for Idiots

Betty Chiu

A girl, filled with White Christmas fantasies, knocked on the door of her childhood friend and long-time crush, and learns that Christmas could be just as romantic without the snow, given that the other component – the boy – reciprocated her feelings, and had at least a bit of tact.

The door bell rang Jingle Bell chimes, and Carol waited, absently noting the coincidental appropriateness of such a tune.

There was silence after that, which was within expectation, so she took the time to fix her hair and attire as an attempt to occupy herself, among other things. Winter draft blew through the window at the end of the hallway, and she clumsily pulled her sleeves further down and wrapped her arms around the paper bag with mistletoe patterns.

Moments later, she could hear thumping from within, echoed only by the beating of her heart. She stood a little straighter. *Breathe.*

The inner door creaked open, and through the bars of the security screen door, the pair of childhood friends and neighbors stared at each other. And stared; surprise versus feigned innocence. He was wearing a white T-shirt and grey baggy pants, barefooted, while she wore an emerald green cardigan over little white snowmen on red pajamas, completed with a matching pair of fluffy slippers.

"Rol? What is it?" He asked like usual, slightly bewildered.

"To celebrate Christmas with you?" *Smile.*

A blink. "At this hour? Wait—" looking back briefly, he quickly corrected, "It's not even Christmas yet."

"Same difference, it's only fifteen more minutes," she waved it aside and said with a little puff, "it's kind of cold outside, you going to open the door or what?"

Exasperated, he complied and stepped aside, feigned annoyance.

She caught the glimmer in his eyes though, so she – being the mature one *as usual* – stuck out her tongue; there was no way he could mask his smirk then. They shared a laugh.

Eyes connecting, they stopped and stared. Again.

Thump. Thump.

I could see myself in them...

“I’ll- ah... make some hot chocolate...?”

She nodded rigidly and he padded away, hesitant... both looked a little flushed... *from the laugh. Has to be from the laugh. So awkward.*

Thump. Thump. Thump...

Little marshmallows floated in their chocolate seas, and Carol found herself playing with the melting marshmallows with a spoon. Together the two childhood friends sat, side-by-side drinking hot chocolate, and she was awfully reminded of when they were kids, doing exactly the same thing; it was loads of fun then.

A skip of a beat and a warm feeling not at all about the chocolate and all about just being so close to him and Carol knew there was a difference between then and now; now and then. They were best of buddies, well, as close as a boy and a girl could be when they were little kids; now ten or so years later, did he still see her as ‘one of the guys’? Did he know she liked him now more than she liked him then?

Does he know how I feel?

She turned to look at him, longing to let it all out. Eagerness, debate, conflicts... there was too much power in just three words; so much could change, and she did not know how it was going to turn out in the end.

Will they stay the same, regardless?

He felt the gaze and returned the look, curious.

"Feeling lonely because your parents have gone on a honeymoon and left you *all alone*?" She quickly teased, holding the gaze.

"Heh. Look who's talking," he flung back at her, "coming to a guy's place in the middle of the night.

To celebrate Christmas with him, she bit her lip to stopper the words.

"You'd think it's her parents who have gone on a honeymoon and left *her* all alone at home." He threw his trademark smirk – the one she hated, the one she loved – into the mix and she had to look away. *Too much*.

"It's only next door; they know I'm here."

She broke eye contact, but she could still feel him looking at her, which was starting to get annoying – *she was trying to be the childhood friend here, damn it!*

"Chris, you're staring."

"Because I'm trying to figure you out,"

Could it be-

"You're acting weird; like usual, I suppose."

"Hey! Am not!" She placed the cup down on the coffee table and crossed her arms.

A raised eyebrow and a moment later, Chris – short for '*because my parents were being particularly religious*' – replied, full of mirth, "Am I suppose to say, 'Am too'?" At the gaping look on Carol's face, Chris snickered, "*You are so childish, Miss Snowman.*"

Huffing and puffing because he was always making fun of her when she was only doing things for him, *like today*, Carol argued.

"Why do you always have to be such a jerk, you stupid religion-for-a-name! I came all this way-"

"Which is just next door-"

"-just to celebrate Christmas with you because I knew you'd be lonely-"

"Me? Lonely? Now that's just funn--"

"And you have the decency of being such a jerk!" Ignoring all his attempted interruptions, she finally made her point, "see if I am going to celebrate anything with you next year!"

Silence rang loudly across the room, and Carol couldn't help but to shiver; why does it feel so cold? *It's supposed to be Christmas soon, and this was supposed to be a warm, happy moment, just the two of us.*

Why did it turned out this way?

Chris looked Carol over for a brief moment before sighing for the second – or third or fourth – time ever since she came in. Standing up, he went and closed the windows Carol failed to notice was open behind the curtains. Returning to sit on the sofa, he then reached out to a basket at the foot of the sofa, and pulled the content out of the basket: a cotton blanket. Throwing it over Carol's shoulder, he wrapped the blanket gently around her.

The moment was royally ruined though when he opened his mouth.

"But you still have to celebrate Christmas with me *this year*," he flashed her a smile that could kill – kill *her* at the very least, "besides, wasn't that what you said last year too? You ought to learn how to keep your promises."

Then he ruffled her head softly with one hand and had the other arm flung around her shoulder so casually it almost seemed like it was *meant* to be there.

"*The lights are off*", she noticed for the first time. There were lit candles with peppermint fragrance that she recognized as a gift from her in previous years. He also left the curtains open after closing the window; the moon was out tonight. Here they were, a pair of childhood friends sitting in the dark waiting for Christmas, in a room with no Christmas decorations whatsoever, *close enough to cuddle...*

"Merry Christmas, 'Rol."

"Me? Lonely? Now that's just funn--"

What is going on?

Anxious and utterly confused, Carol blurted out the one thing she had wanted to say all along; something she dared not say, if it was not for this sweet yet mystifying moment in the dark, on Christmas.

"I like you, Chris."

The calm that followed scared Carol, and she feared for the worst. Maybe she should be leaving now, instead of getting comfortable in Chris's arms. She should be leaving, before she falls even deeper and can't get out.

Then she felt him shaking, looking away, and trying really hard but failing not to..... laugh?

"Wahaha... Oh, 'Rol, I know,"

"Huh?" She voiced it out.

"It was dead *obvious* - haha... f-from the way you kept coming over to b-borrow... heh... sugar."

"I do not just borrow sugar! Besides, none of the other guys around here were willing to lend me anything anymore, and the girls would just say it was best they'd rather not... and I just can't figure out why-"

...And when Chris smirked, looking away, something clicked.

"Wait, don't tell me, you-"

"Oh, I'm sure they just realized how annoying dealing with you can be." His eyes caught the moonlight, and he was now grinning.

"Why you-"

"Shh. Just be quiet and wait for the snow with me." He whispered, looking out into the world.

Snow? In Hong Kong?!

In spite of her confused look, Chris continued, "I'm sure it's going to snow tonight, just like you've always wanted, a White Christmas.

"You can go back when it's done snowing."

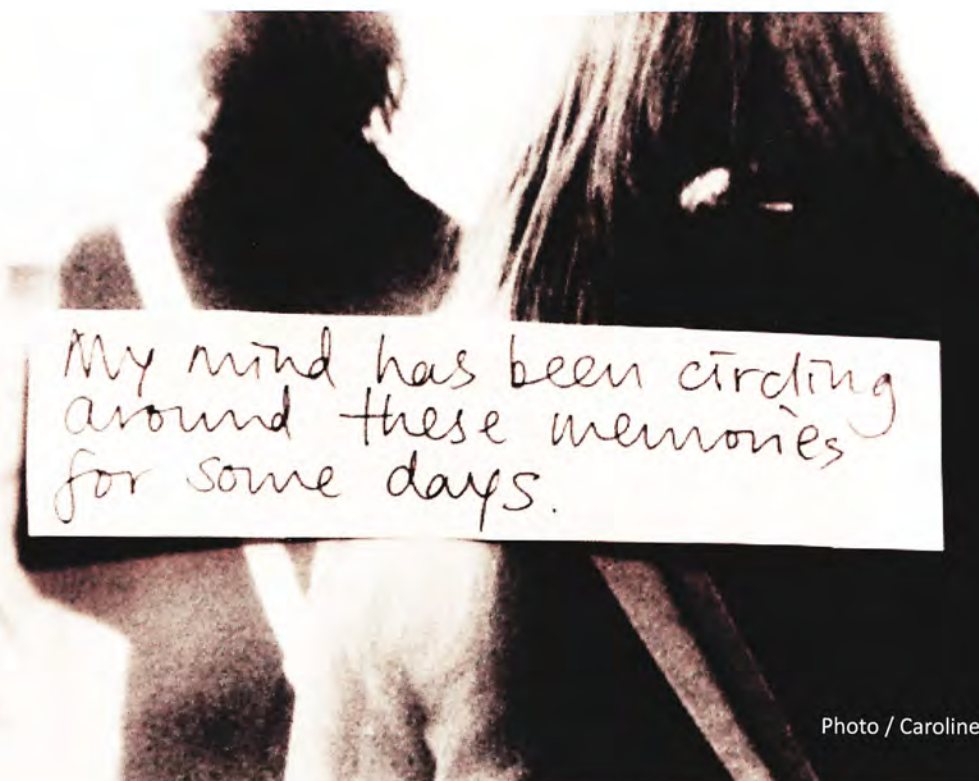
Thump, thump.

*You can go back...
...when it's done snowing*

It took her awhile, but Carol slowly understood that this may have been Chris's way of telling her not to go. Maybe, just maybe, he had felt the same way all along too, but had just been waiting for her to make the move. *Warmth, Joy... Idiot.*

"Merry Christmas, Chris."

"Yeah," and by the tightening of his arm, Carol heard that which was unspoken. Carol snuggled against Chris's chest and proceeded to forget about the world, Christmas presents and whatnot.



My mind has been circling
around these memories
for some days.

Photo / Caroline Kam

AAMNNT

Nicole Chan

With the birth of my little sister
Our family's finally joined together
Four children in a house
There's not a moment for my mum to pause

Dad, the Superman
Everything is done with his own hands
Our breadwinner, driver and big chef
I wonder how he handles that

We four never fought
Except in watergun fighting
Knit tightly even when we had fever
I thought we would stay forever

Until my sister flew to New York
Then my brother off to Melbourne
Seeing little sister's plan for Shanghai
Family trip again went bust, can't deny

No longer staying at home as such
Yet we are linked so much
As shown in mum's account name (AAMNNT), the code game
There's no underscore between our names

Graduating as an English major, Nicole enjoys trying out new things, travelling and of course, reading and writing. She likes the randomness of life and is full of imagination. She enjoys reading biographies and especially The Diary of Anne Frank. She never wrote poetry until recently and having experimented with it, she is keen to keep writing them as a hobby.



Highland Cathedral

Ricardo A Iriarte V

When Bruce and Wallace set our people free
And forced the invaders to retreat and flee,
Everyone knew that we would never be
Subjects to none but those of Scotland. (2)

Since that day we have stood our ground,
We've fought in the green glens, the grey lochs and mounds.
When the pipes called us to face Death
'Took dirk, targe and claymore, and swore:

"My soul and my cold bones will not enjoy rest
If I'm not laid on earth facing the West
In the Highland Cathedral, country's best,
Heart of the nation, pride of Scotland."

Since that day...
"My soul and my cold bones...
When Bruce and Wallace...

*Inspired by bagpipe tune by German musicians Ulrich Roever
(R.I.P.) and Michael Korb., available on Youtube*

A Japanese Girl Falls From Her Big Shoes Tim Wells

No London Bridge
 tumblin' down,
 still it rocked me.
 Not every fall from grace
 need be humbling,
 rise from your
 pika pika precipitation
 Princess Phoenix,
 flash your pii-su sign,
 flaming cheeks and smile.
 Is knowing innocence,
 truly innocent?
 I know not.
 Manga eyed suprise,
 judder and plummet:
 metaphor divine.
 Japanese girls;
 laughter mine,
 the world thine.

(after Yukio Mishima's 'the Sailor Moon Who Fell From Grace With Her Heels')

As founding editor of the poetry magazine Rising, Tim Wells has published the work of writers such as Sean O'Brien, Roddy Lumsden, August Kleinzahler, Annie Freud, John Stammers and Matthew Sweeney. His work as a poet and performer has seen him touring the U.S., translated into German and Chinese, and Boys' Night Out in the Afternoon (Donut Press) was shortlisted for the Forward Prize for Best First Collection in 2006. His most recent publication is Rougher Yet (Donut Press, 2009). He shared his poetry with students at Lingnan in a virtual poetry reading session.



Savannah
Justin Hill

this Connemara morning
through the dawn chill
I spotted horned heads
in the rushes
like wildebeest
that morning in Kenya
when we found
a pride of lions
on a kill.

It was still and cold,
just like that morning.
Not a breath of wind
not a sound
and for a moment
I wondered if the cattle
also dreamt of Africa
and imagined themselves
back on the savannah

Born in Freeport, Grand Bahama Island in 1971 and brought up in York, Justin's work has thrice been nominated for the Man Booker Prize. His latest book is Shieldwall, which chronicles historical events that surround the Battle of Hastings in 1066 and the fall of Anglo Saxons. Justin's poetry has been published in numerous magazines. He is currently teaching on the MFA at the City University of Hong Kong. While not writing, Justin ran marathons.



My Starfruit Tree

Angel Law

In summer days when sun was burning bright.
I stayed beneath the sea of greenish leaves
And listened to the wind's rustling delight,
Leaning against my little tree.

At times, I climbed the branches to the top
Where fruit looked sweet and juicy at the core.
I greedily picked the yellow ripened crop
Until I couldn't eat anymore.

But one day my father wanted to cut
This tree down for an extension of our house.
I saw its twinkling eyes shut forever.
No one besides me would recall it now

I knew I'd never see the same shining stars
And that my precious childhood had left me far.

Why I'm (mostly) a Vegetarian

Roberta Raine

I remember the first time that, as a child, I made the connection that meat on the dinner table had once been a living, breathing animal. It was lamb; chewy, dark. I didn't like it and asked my mom what it was. I'd seen lambs in zoos and couldn't imagine how one had ended up on my plate. Later, I learned the grisly truth.

All children have this moment in their lives. They learn the truth of where their food comes from, and then—depending on their culture and their inclinations—become more or less habituated to the fact that animals must die for their daily needs. In most cases, this fact is simply accepted and not questioned. In other cases, like my own, it becomes a subtle but never-ending reminder of the suffering of life itself; but also, of the choices that we all have in alleviating and reducing that suffering.

My decision to be a vegetarian is based on the very basic truth that all beings—from the tiniest ant to the greatest elephant and everything in between—want to be happy and do not want to suffer. Have you ever watched ants in your kitchen? They are amazing creatures, working together, communicating, carrying weight a hundred times their body sizes...all in order to be happy, to have food and build their little ant community. If you try to harm them, they run away, just like all creatures. They are no different from us, so why do we feel it's perfectly fine to kill them or, in the case of other animals, eat them?

It's long been known in the scientific world that it's not necessary to eat meat to be healthy. In fact, many studies have shown that being a vegetarian is much better for one's health than eating meat. Recently, the US government even warned people against eating beef because it was found to contain a substance called "pink slime" that is made of animal parts that are usually only used in dog food. So what is stopping people from eating less or no meat? This is the question I often ask myself, but as yet I have no answer.

My decision to do my best not to eat meat began after I left home at 18, when I first had control over my choice of food. It was not particularly difficult in the US, where I grew up, to be a vegetarian, and as time went by, it even became quite popular. When I came to Asia in 1986, I was concerned that it would be more of a challenge, and indeed, in my first year in China as a volunteer English teacher, it was very difficult. I lived mainly on peanuts, noodles and cabbage, but from my room on campus at the university where I was teaching, I could hear the squeal of pigs being slaughtered in the early mornings, and when I went to the market I saw dead dogs being sold for their meat. These things strengthened my desire to not play any part in such butchery.

Happily, a year later when I went to Taiwan, I felt like I'd gone to veggie heaven. So many kinds of tofu cooked in so many ways! For four wonderful years, I never had any reason to not be a complete vegetarian. On every street corner, it seemed, there was a vegetarian self-serve restaurant, with ever-changing buffets that kept us always satisfied. Then, in 1991, I came to Hong Kong. If Taiwan is veggie heaven, then Hong Kong, I'm sad to say, is a kind of hell for non-meat eaters. The difference between Hong Kong and Taiwan is like night and day. Here, vegetarian restaurants are rare, and when I go out to banquets or gatherings, often the only "vegetarian" option available is fish! Thus, I sometimes find myself in situations where I have little choice but to eat fish, but I'd rather not.

I should confess at this point, I suppose, that I happen to be a Buddhist, and Buddhist values have certainly influenced—or more correctly, affirmed—my eating habits. But even if I hadn't become a Buddhist some 20 years ago, my choice would still be the same: to do everything I can not to harm others. If each of us tried our best to live in this way—for example, when going to a seafood restaurant on Lamma Island, instead of asking the waiters to kill a live fish just for you, having tofu and noodles instead—there would be one more creature who wasn't harmed; at least, not by you. Sometimes, even simple and small acts of kindness such as this can have unexpectedly great rewards.

Each of us has a choice, and each choice matters.

Roberta Raine is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Translation. She has been at Lingnan since 2007 and has a Ph.D. in Translation from City University of Hong Kong.
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"In-between"
Celeste Cheng

"The next train to Airport will depart from platform two," a voice announces my departure from Sunderland. The next second, the train arrives with wind piercing through the stream of humans pushing and being pushed forward. I stand up and barely blend myself in the stream marching onboard. I feel like I'm reduced to a spot, a yellow spot on a white wall—a stain. Then, I get trapped at the crack—my luggage is stuck at the tiny crack between the platform and the train. It falls at the crack between two worlds—an immovable platform and a train in motion, like me. There I am, stuck at the crack, fighting the mysterious force which sucks my luggage rooted in the wrong place. "Come on, I'm leaving," I whisper to myself. And be it force or mere luck, something lifts my luggage up the crack right before the doors try to close again and again. And so I'm on my way leaving England for Hong Kong.

On board the plane at the familiar Newcastle airport, the hours are shortened as they drone with the engine pushing the plane to the East from the West. I'm flying to Hong Kong, the "motherland" my grandparents ask me not to forget. "Maybe this is the right place," I think. Then somewhere inside of me, a voice sings "Oh East is East, and West is West". The ballad captures the plight of my life between and within two different cultures, two different dimensions. Well—I guess I'm used to this "in-betweenness". I'm my grandparents' "Chinese doll" and my friends' "Asian" living in England. I was born in the West with "Oriental" blood flowing in me and the "Eastern" features carved on my face. "You can never forget your 'motherland'," my Hong Kong-Chinese grandparents always tell me. And the others call me "Asian girl". I'm never truly English but not simply Chinese either. I am exhausted, puzzled and suffocating. I don't want to waste my time trying to blend in here for they always see me as different from their fellow "English". I'm sick of speaking the language, the only language that I can speak—English. A scream will stick at my throat every time I speak. Having to speak in English drives me insane because it contradicts with how people perceive me and bars me from sticking to my biological root as a Chinese, or not a Chinese but a "Hongkonger" as Hong Kong is obviously different from how the world thinks of "China". Well—at least as far as I know, Hong Kong is not a communist state. Or do I not know Hong Kong? Where do I really belong to, and why and how? As I sink more and more into my mind, I find thinking about these only makes me more confused. Perhaps I should sleep.

After more than twelve hours on flight, Hong Kong greets me with hot and wet air which seems unusual to me. I race through the rushing crowd living in a different pace to take a taxi only to get off ten minutes later. Shrouded by frustration, I escape

from the car over-heated by the sub-tropical sun of Hong Kong and a driver who, despite his greatest effort to speak English, cannot communicate with me. Knowing I have not reached a destination as I fail to point out to the taxi driver where exactly I'm heading to since I speak a language different from his, I get out from the car. I run away from a vehicle which may take me to where I should be going. The communication has been too difficult. And so I give up. The languages, the people, the weather and the pace of life change and I have to struggle again, trying to keep up with everything. But I'm so tired. The real world makes no sense at all here and there. It always changes and I'm always different from the rest. I forever remain an outsider. I cannot fit in. Can I find peace within me? Then I recognize that I am trapped again, this time, in thoughts—why do I still feel foreign here? Why is there a need to run away from the taxi? Who am I? As my consciousness flows in and out from my mind and the "reality"—the outside world, I sense a mind-forged manacle forming within and around me.

On an unknown path glancing at this beautiful city, I suddenly feel free, free from having to rush to a destination and free from the brain-racking communication which constantly fails here and there. Holding no map on my hand, I keep my chin up in the air. Without a clue and without directions, I merely follow the drift of my body. I should panic or at least feel the tiny sting in the head caused by nervousness for I'm wandering around in not only a country that I have never been to, but also a piece of a stranger land whose people, despite the similar facial features, speak a different language and live a different life. Yet an odd calmness crawls into me as I walk purposelessly. It emerges to shape a bluish aura around me, giving me a necessary pretence of peace and confidence as if I can make sense of everything around me. The quiet walk without a destination or a need to locate a destination allows me to distance from the place and my thoughts—the thirst to locate the self for a while.

Summer monsoon breeze brushes against my face as I walk at the waterfront. I don't know where I am. But wandering around casually creates a limbo and consciousness-free state which makes me thoughtless. It helps wipe away all the differences between cities, cultures as well as between people because walking without a destination makes the world around and within me a "nowhere" that I want to be.

My Names

Bao-mei Cheng

I do not know why,
I've faced this problem since I was five.
People could not call my name right.

Precious (Bao) and pretty (Mei),
wonderful sounds the meaning,
I guess my dad thinks the name is nice.

Thanks to my name, I always remember
this Chinese pronunciation rules:
Both words are in the third tone,
so change the first word into the second tone.
Now, read it out loud...

Mei Bao Cheng! A girl shouted,
so long ago in the kindergarten.
I was frozen there for a second,
when I was just about to bite my bun,
amazed by the total change of my name.

Cheng Mei Bao... My headmaster wrote
on the gift before I left the school.
Probably, this also sounds good.

I do not know why,
people could not call my name right.
Mei Bao, Bao Mei,
whichever you call,
still I know it's me you want to find,
for after all these times,
these names have totally felt like mine.

Coming to Hong Kong last year, Bao Mei is now a year two student in Department of Contemporary English Studies. Writing to her is not only a kind of experiment of combining the language, forms, and ideas, but also a way to understand herself and the connection between her and the outer world.



Dawn
Vivien Leung

Dawn had arrived by the time I finished reading a novel in the canteen. I left the unfinished lemon tea and walked out of the canteen. The view there was like an early barbecue blaze, best to go with a few bottles of Cabernet Sauvignon. If only there were some grilled beef and pork dishes! A handful of students who had gathered around for a group project discussion left right after I walked through the automatic doors of the canteen. I could tell their sense of fulfillment from the way they stretched their limbs and accelerated in scissors' direction. Some walked towards their hostels, the others towards the exit of the school —

I was one of those who headed back to the hostels. On the way, my flip-flops slapped against the floor in a relaxing pace. I took a left turn, and then I saw a sea of colorful school bags and cardigans in the stairway. More students had finished their lessons in the community college. I stopped for a moment and mused over the old days, the days when I was in my associate degree. I climbed up the stairs and strolled into the New Academic Building. I noticed that nothing has changed much since I graduated, except that people who were walking by appeared so much younger.

I sat on a green chair by its table. There were at least three sets of them. The table zone was my favorite spot to read in the college back then. I took out my undergraduate readings and put them on the table as if I were still a student.

When I recalled everything that happened three years ago, it was like an easy interlude, one with high long notes and lingering sounds. Puberty and liberty intertwined like a large piece of purple silk and echoed like an interlude forever in my head. As I cleared my head of the past, I walked on and purchased a can of beverage from the vending machine and felt the contrast between the present heat and a cool sip of a lovely lychee drink, and let my mind stroll away again. I missed this place.

A final year student majoring in translation, Vivien is keen on reading and writing. She loves the natural environment and floral scents, especially lilac, strawberries and rose. She enjoys dining, adventures and taking up new challenges.

I turned around and decided to head back to my hostel through the back of this building. There was a narrow path leading to the hostel. On the way, I saw a small, quiet and serene chapel that was almost hidden. I loved seeing the colorful stained glass windows of the chapel. They looked like oil paintings that could draw me out of reality. I have always enjoyed visiting the chapel.

Refreshed by the short break from reality, I glimpsed at the surroundings with sensitive eyes. I peeped into the overgrown bushes nearby to see if I could find anything familiar. Then, I spotted a white butterfly making her entrance to the paradise by spreading her wings, swaying her princess dress as if she was on stage and swiveling for applause as if she were in a beauty pageant. I stood still, lifting my face up so I could see the university gym. It was a spectacular scene with a clear orange sky.





Photo: Nicolas Ooi

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