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EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

RAVI SHANKAR:

2015 CELEBRATES the 50th anniversary of Singaporean independence and the 15th anniversary of *Drunken Boat*, two occasions patently divergent, given that one is a city state and island country in Southeast Asia with a population two-thirds less than that of New York City, while the other is one of the world's oldest electronic journal of the arts founded in New York City, out of a self-selective subculture devoted to the arts. Yet looking closer, one finds threads of commonality related to innovation, globalism, technology, humanism and collective vision that this anthology hopes to explore. 250 years, let alone 50 years, in the life of a nation is still a period of relative infancy, just as the 15 years that *Drunken Boat* has been in existence, roughly mirroring the ascendancy of the internet in displacing and supplementing print-based technologies, is the inception of a Gutenberg-like paradigm shift whose effects are far away from being fully seen or experienced. An anniversary event presents us with the perfect occasion both to celebrate and to look backward, but also for a moment, to pause and to deliberate a vantage point from which to consider the vista. Take the work in this collection, then, as a literary field guide.

Singapore, much like America (although recent legislation in Arizona and Texas has highlighted how much we fear the very premise), is a diverse, polyglot society – yet it is seemingly much more at ease with its many tongues than, say, a middle American is with a Spanish-speaking Mexican immigrant. To showcase the literature of Singapore is to delve into works in the country's four main languages—English, Mandarin Chinese, Malay and Tamil—each with its own historical trajectory, discrete enough that they might well be considered distinctive sub-literatures. The English language in particular—incepted with British colonialism in the 19th Century and taken up as the formal lingua franca by independent Singapore since the 1960s—has given expression to a growing and eclectic body of literature that must be reckoned with when we discuss global canon formation.

The work of colonial-era authors such as W. Somerset Maugham and Joseph Conrad are probably the more familiar among literary perspectives on Singapore, but some argue the first notable work of English literature written by a Singaporean was the book-length poem *F.M.S.R.*, a pastiche of T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* published in London in 1937, decades before Singapore's political independence would be won. The author, Francis P. Ng, turns out to have been the pseudonym of writer Teo Poh Leng who disappeared during World War II. The letters in the poem's title are an acronym for the Federated Malay States Railways that connected Singapore with the Malayan Peninsula of which it was the southernmost point and key port. Already evident were the ways in which the British colonial and industrial heritage was shaping the landscape of the imagination in this part of the world. Notably ahead of its time, *F.M.S.R* anticipates a moment later in the 20th century when collage and the cut up would colour poetics and literary experimentation. And to paraphrase Singapore's dedicated librarians whose tireless work have preserved this and other gems: there's lots more where this came from.

When Alvin Pang and I were discussing putting this ambitious collection together, one that spans continents while excavating a secret shared history of literary connections and confluences, he suggested to me that Singaporeans were becoming a “post-blurb” society: the public's publishing appetite, which is considerable—Singaporean poets can move print runs up to the thousands in a city of five million—had begun to find the work itself sufficient and not in need of additional back-cover marketing, however well-meaning or bombastic. That small detail, certainly a divergence from the current climate of the American publishing industry, where celebrity trumps all, echoed back to me some of what I have come to feel about Singapore's place in world literature: a thoughtful, creative, sophisticated, unorthodox curiosity from which American letters can learn a thing or two, a proposition that tacitly acknowledges how much Singaporean literature has already learned from the West and elsewhere. This book is meant to get at these unities.

For *Drunken Boat's* part, just the fact that a decade and a half into our mission we would be publishing a book, that the physical artifact that we were overtly working against when we first began (because we are interested in publishing works online that could not exist in print—web art, digital media, hypertext, sound, video, interactive fiction), shows

选自《太极诗谱》

(不按顺序)

(一) 击掌问佛

自丹田
徐徐地
呼出一部似懂非懂的
易经

一举掌
那朵洁白的莲
竟不选季节
吐蕊了

弟子在下
何谓阴何谓阳
何谓虚何谓实
何谓柔何谓刚
又何谓太极之初

(二) 揽雀尾

曲膝
迈步
如猫行
轻轻地
揽住
欲从我发丛
飞出的
雀

(三) 单鞭

手执软鞭
任胯下的黑驹
朝东
踢起
一路
风景

(四) 白鹤晾翅

刚自湖泊中
醒来的白鹤
在阳光下
一只脚
撑起两翼
慵懶

(五) 搂膝拗步

既往
现在
未来
的欲望
被柔柔的掌风
送到
谷底

(八) 抱虎归山

一声虎啸
惊起
枯井里的
茯苓
及
尘埃

我的足根
是圆圆的车轴
一路滚上
西方的野岭

(九) 肘底捶

请听着
我把破庙
最后一尊佛
献上前
必须
化掌为拳

(十二) 左右提手

南有敌人
北有仇家
我如何以双掌
劈开
三百六十度内
刀光和剑影
然后屈一膝
跪在神龛前
自焚

(二十) 风摆荷叶

三杯下肚
一翻掌
居然将湖中
团团荷叶
劈成
许多姿态 如此
风情万种地
摇曳着

(三十) 金鸡独立

我的最终目的
只是为了寻找
禾堆里
零零落落
被遗忘的稻粒
并无意
蓄劲在胸
把你踹踏成
大千世界中
一芥微尘

excerpt from **Poems of Taiji**

(extracted from a 40-poem sequence)

I. Questioning the Buddha

From my carmine heart
slowly
I drew out the *Book of*
Changes
which is simple, yet hard to read.

Raising my hand
the pure and white lotus plants
forget the season
and start flowering.

I am your disciple.
What is Yin and what is Yang?
What is Emptiness and what substance?

What is softness and what hardness?
Again, what is the meaning of Taiji or the Supreme Ultimate?

II. Grasping the Bird's Tail

Bending my knee
and striding forward,
like a cat prowling –
softly,
I grasp the bird
which is flying out
of the bush of my hair.

III. A Whip

With whip in hand,
I gallop my black horse
towards the East,
kicking up
the scenery
along the road.

this commodity cranium cupboard, petrified dream catcher, sun-ruined basketball I
 haul—rotten gray along the seams—perpetual missed shot,
 this insomnia podium, little bowl in a big fish, brain amphitheater, girl in the moon,
 this 3 a.m. war bell tolling, tolling, *duende* vision prison, jar of fading stars,
 this single scoop vanilla head rush, thunder head, fast ball, lightning rod,
 this mad scientist in a white lab helmet, atom bomb mushroom cloud, ghost of
 Smoking Mirror,
 this hot air balloon, forgetful chandelier, *casa de relámpago*,
 this coyote beacon, calcium corral of hot Perlino ponies, night blooming cereus,
 gourd gone rattle, bankrupt factory of tears,
 this Halloween crown, hat rack, worry contraption, Rimbaud's drunken boat afloat
 in the wine dark belly of my personal Monstruo,
 this coliseum *venatio*: Borges's other tiger licking the empty shell of Lorca's white
tortuga,
 this underdressed godhead, forever-hatching egg, this mug again and again at my
 lips,
 and all this because tonight I imagined you sleeping with her
 the way we once slept—as intimate as a jaw, maxilla and mandible hot,

 in the skin—in love, our heads almost touching.

Ode to Color

A man in a red GEORGIA baseball cap wearing
 a sweatshirt with a red bulldog over his heart,
 sitting in a subway car, the smell of his poverty much too strong

 but I stay out of weakness and pity:
 his dark skin has gone through fire
 and his hands and arms and who knows how much more of him

 wear the ropy scars: I watch him not wanting to stare
 as he draws out of a pocket dangling from a long rope at his waist
 a red-plastic compact that he opens;

 the mercury pool he dips and dips his face towards
 as though to stanch the fire (who knows what he sees)
 he shuts it opens it shuts it then like a black Narcissus he has to re-open

 and stares. Maybe it solidifies him, all I know is steeped
 in my own pool, I keep seeing this portrait in red.

*

What's he trying to say
 with *Red on Maroon* or
Purple, White and Red?

Has Rothko taken away
 saying, *pulverized*
the identity of things so we lean

 back on an imaginary grassy mat
 gazing at these stacked heavens—
 or has he broken in on our silence

 so you and I can breathe and stretch
 our arms again?

Rachel Blau DuPlessis

Six Pieces

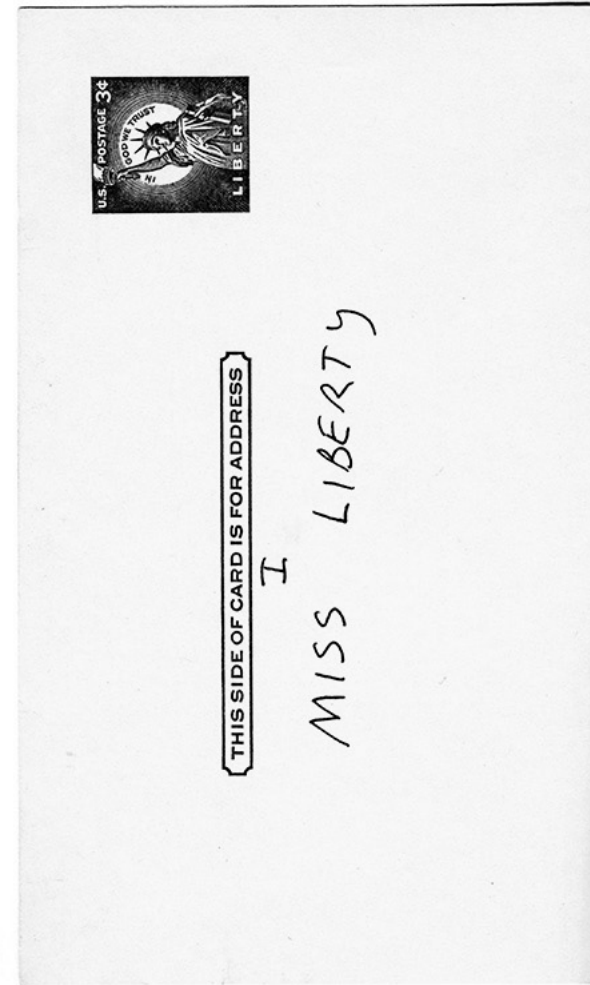


Can a woman
ever relax?

weigh
measure

judging - too heavy too light

This is ridiculous
Why the anxiety!



17f605

Poem with Twelve One-Line Stanzas

The end of the world may be near.
Some say there is no turning back.
In certain instances, love is a mitigating factor.
Sex definitely is, although there are complications.
Keats died young and unhappy, but Pound was old,
and even more unhappy.
Children continue to play in schoolyards, even
those who have just had chickenpox.
In Venice, while there are fewer gondoliers, there
are more glassblowers.
The end of the novel is clearly at hand.
Ditto the theatre.
But the nectarines this year were delicious.
Most nights I sleep very soundly.
Most mornings the paper is delivered on time.

About Music For Bone And Membrane
Instrument = =

chords unfurling in arpeggio, that fragrance
we called Storm the Stage, Fan, Eventail, Ogi, This Girl

Who Collected All Things Japanese.
How she got me into it. Into all-night sessions
that made us late for school.
We'd paint the leaf, the paper part, then fold
the tissue back onto itself
in anticipation of a moment that came down
to open = close. To this girl
who used bitchin wicked boss or tough
as praise saying isn't it
ek-skwiz-it
stroking the thing with her tone, wanting me
to agree, no, not agree, feel
what she felt, succumb to her taste her
fatuation – beautifully pierced, outlined with guilt
– and I'd run

one finger down that
interrupted nocturne, the crevice between
sharps, touching substrates and binding sites that
dilate into color and design. Into extremity

pink folds and pleats,
handheld compressions, corrogations of
recluse, release,

身影

雨后，抄公园的小径回家。在草丛处踩到一只独角仙的甲虫，“嗞”的一声，来不及闪避，那黑色的犄角好像是被压断了。

回到家，妈在做例常的晚祷。都过了晚餐时间，老爸灵位前的香坛有蠕动的影子。我趋前一看，竟然是一只沾满了香灰的独角仙，丢失了坚硬的角。

“它前晚就来啦！”妈半睁着眼：“下午被我赶了出去，怎么，又飞回来啦？”

“哦——。”那用力挣扎的熟悉身影，如童年某次的雨天，老爸撑伞来接我回家，不小心滑倒却努力爬起来的样子。

—2010年12月

Shadow

AFTER THE rain, I took an old path home through the neighbourhood park. A frantic buzz underfoot made me realize that I had stepped on a rhinoceros beetle by accident, among the tall grasses. There was no avoiding it: I had broken its horn.

It was long past dinnertime when I arrived, and Mom was doing her routine prayers. In front of Dad's altar I noticed a strange quivering shadow. It was none other than a rhinoceros beetle, mottled with ash of joss-sticks, which had somehow lost its tell-tale tusk.

“It's already been two nights!” Mom half-opened her eyes. “I chased it out this afternoon – don't tell me it's back again?”

Tongue-tied, I watched the now-familiar shadow struggle manfully, the way Dad would rise again after slipping on the wet pavement, years ago, when he used to wait for me with an umbrella in the pouring rain.

—December 2010

Translated from Chinese by Theophilus Kwek

布拉岗马地

呵呵，回去，回去。

我说老家那儿要建房屋时，老爸高兴得睡不着觉：“可以回去啦？我早就说过不要搬走，那些地方多清凉，多自由——。”

是我说要到城里去的。那年，一个满脑子理想与梦的年轻人，说什么也不肯蛰居在这偏僻落后的小地方。

接着，又建议把临海的木屋卖掉，全家搬到高耸的组屋去。

那年，土地征用法令完成了我的心愿。

临走前的一段日子，老爸每晚都爬到地势偏高的小山坡，抽着烟，喃喃自语。

三哥与我偶尔上去看他，也许他会这么感叹道：“……日本占领时期，凸角那边的海湾，杀死了不少人——。”或者他指着那个堆有大秃石的小岛，十分无奈地摇头：“以前英军的大炮舰，曾经撞到上面去！……”

最后一夜，还记得他心事重重，望着远方：“看到对岸吗？以前就叫做龙牙门……”

朦胧中我们不知道他指的是何处，好像是灯火突明突暗的码头。

那年，我们就搬到城里去了……

回去。呵呵，回去。多年以后老爸躺在床上想回老家去。

我说圣淘沙要建造不少的房屋，他说：“什么？”

我说布拉岗马地要建不少的房屋，他十分兴奋。

“可以回去啦？我早就说过不要搬走，那地方——”

好好，回去。我说。虽然那些房屋是建给游客住的，虽然医生说他过不了这个中秋。

中秋后七天，我与三哥，五弟，小妹及几个小侄一同陪老爸去圣淘沙。

忘了替他买船票，进出码头时，我们围聚在一起，遮遮挡挡的，总算过了矣。