

yeng pway ngon

英培安

POEMS 5
[Other Thoughts]

translated by
judith huang & goh beng choo



the literary centre

For Koon Yoke, my sister

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YENG PWAY NGON: A SHORT INTRODUCTION

Born in 1947, Yeng Pway Ngon is a poet, novelist, playwright and critic who has published 24 volumes of poetry, essays, fiction, plays and literary criticism in the Chinese language. He has been translated into English, Malay and Dutch.

A recipient of Singapore's 2003 Cultural Medallion for Literature, Yeng was one of the signature modern poets of Malaya in the 1960s, and was editor and publisher of two literary magazines, *Teahouse* in the 1980s and *Encounter* in the 1990s. In 2000 he was a Fellow of the Taipei International Writers-in-Residence program organised by the Cultural Bureau of Taipei. His novel *A Man Like Me* won a National Book Development's Book Award in 1988. He continued to work quietly away from the spotlight for more than a decade but emerged again with a novel *Tumult* which won the Singapore Literature Prize in 2004. His latest novel *Trivialities About Me and Myself* was named by *Yazhou Zhoukan* [Asiaweek magazine] as one of the Ten Best Chinese Novels in the World for 2006; it also received the Singapore Literature Prize in 2008.

ABOUT THIS CHAPBOOK

Poems 5 [Other Thoughts] is a selection of Yeng Pway Ngon's works published between 1967 and 2003. Dealing with more public themes including repression, societal injustice or national tragedies such as the SARS crisis, the poems in this collection are covertly and overtly political. At times sardonic, at others outright polemical, they are trademark Yeng in their sincerity, social consciousness and inventiveness.

This is the fifth and final volume in a series of chapbooks featuring new English translations which explore the range of Yeng's poetry from the 1960s to the present.

ABOUT THIS SERIES IN TRANSLATION

Published from 2010, the titles in this series include:

- Poems 1 [Rebellion]
- Poems 2 [Personal Notes]
- Poems 3 [Self-exile]
- Poems 4 [Resurgence]
- Poems 5 [Other Thoughts]

习惯

如果你习惯这精致贞洁的剧场，习惯
编导给你的性高潮
与华丽的乳房；习惯无梦
习惯明亮的黑夜一如习惯
永远不落的太阳
你就会看见
头顶上有一大片抒情的蓝天

如果子曰
三十而知天命，四十而耳顺
五十你竟
勃起，这是很不道德的
尤其一群更年期的少年
(他们从心所欲，不逾矩)
正衷心地赞美天使的魔术
(他轻易地把翩翩的蝴蝶变成
一块冷冰的钢铁；把所有粗糙的麻绳
变成温柔的彩带)

如果你不习惯镜中沉醉的容颜
你的记忆是你最深的伤痕
你的伤痕是你最大的虚幻

HABIT

if you've grown accustomed to this chaste and intricate
theatre, accustomed to
the choreographed orgasms
to the magnificent breasts; accustomed to dreamlessness
accustomed to blinding nights
like the way you've grown accustomed to
the eternally un-setting sun
only then will you see, overhead
the wide, bright, blue, lyrical sky

if Confucius said
know heaven's will by thirty, obey it by forty
yet at fifty you have an erection,
how terribly unvirtuous
especially when a bunch of menopausal teenagers
(doing whatever they desire, but always within the lines)
praises the angel's magic
(how effortlessly he morphs that delicate butterfly
into an icy shard of steel; how deftly he pulls rough ropes
into supple ribbons)

if you haven't grown accustomed to the boozed-up face in
the mirror
then memory wounds you
and your wound deludes you

如果你在一锅逐渐加温的水中
不能快乐地游泳
你的虚妄是你沸腾的热血
你的热血
是你最大的
哀伤

1999年6月11日

if you can't swim blissfully
in the simmering pot
then your slow-boiling blood is your delusion
yes, your boiling blood
will plague you

11 June 1999