

City at the End of Time

Poems by Leung Ping-kwan

形象香港

梁秉鈞詩選

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Introduction to the New Edition

New Ends in a City of Transition

Esther M. K. Cheung

Calendar time advances in a linear, progressive manner, whereas poetic time moves in somewhat circular patterns. An ending spawns another beginning. An old epoch comes to an end but that old epoch has not ceased to exist. A new era has begun but the new is still struggling to forget the old.¹

Old Ends, New Ends

In naming his volume of poetry *City at the End of Time* when it was first published in 1992, Leung Ping-kwan, more often known as Ye Si in Chinese literary circles, was subtly suggesting that his own poetic contemplations had emerged from a perpetual state of transition, one in which it was impossible to clearly demarcate temporality. In the 1990s, readers, who were by then anticipating the approach of the 1997 handover, greeted this timely book with great interest. It raised a series of questions about history, language, identity, and cultural translation, questions which were pertinent to Hong Kong at that critical moment of political transition. 1997 became, in fact, the prism through which these poems were read. Somehow that moment had itself become “the End of Time.”² This volume was in that sense a “document” of a momentous passage through time. In fact, some poems in this collection were written before the 1980s, before the handover discussions had even started.

This new introduction looks back at that “End.” At the poet’s invitation, I will consider the meaning of the collection in the new circumstances of our contemporary world, both within and beyond the local context. This volume originally came out of the Department of Comparative Literature at the University of Hong Kong at a time when

the idea of Hong Kong Cultural Studies was still embryonic.³ Almost two decades later, the poetry in this collection takes on a new significance. It sheds light on how poetry about common culture has contributed to a “felt change of consciousness.”⁴

A Poetics of the Everyday

Leung’s poems, with their casual and often humorous tone, capture the space of everyday life in Hong Kong. Their very ordinariness and lack of grandiloquence unveil the city’s hidden contradictions. From local mundane streets to ordinary objects and everyday life in China, Europe, and the United States, the poet reflects upon problems of cultural identity and postcoloniality, musing on the passing of time and addressing broad political and cultural issues. He crosses geographical borders just as he traverses spaces between literary and cultural genres. His poetic imagination, which is meditative and inconclusive, explores the relationship between poetry and other genres and media: prose, film, and painting.

This ensemble of forty poems demonstrates a unique “poetics of quotidianism,” of the everyday. It raises questions as to how we should consider the uniqueness of singular objects, situations, and people. It achieves this through the exploration of an ordinary world, using an uncontrived and unsensational language. Owen Barfield in his discussion of the “felt change of consciousness” emphasizes the strangeness in poetry. Leung, however, depends less on surprising shocks and techniques of defamiliarization and more on his own intimate interaction with ordinary objects, people, and places.⁵ His poetics constitutes itself through the social, cultural, economic, and political aspects of the city, engaging in a process of self-invention through an ongoing interaction with them. He grapples with threat and disintegration in the here and now, thereby confirming the power and synthesizing capacity of poetry in a society that constantly diminishes poetry’s significance. In so doing, Leung has gained for poetry an indispensable role in Hong Kong’s public culture.⁶

What should one write about? What are the emergent problems of his time? Can someone trained to read both classical Chinese poetry and Western modernist literature succeed in inventing a poetic language

with which to renew, if not critique, tradition? These questions, and others, were the great challenge for Leung when he was a young poet in the 1970s, as he searched for a language to depict the here and now in Hong Kong. Which would be more effective—metaphor or synecdoche? Modernist symbolism or realist revolutionary poetics? Did this kind of self-invention enable one to have a dialogue with other cultures? How should one write about one's locality in the midst of momentous changes caused by events such as the Tiananmen Incident of 1989 and the 1997 handover? How should one respond to cultural representations, for example those imposed from the outside? How best to challenge stock images and stereotypes? How best to reflect upon one's own culture when away from home? These were the questions that confronted the poet as he explored issues of cultural identity in the 1980s and 90s, as he was weaving his way between Hong Kong, other cities in Greater China, and cities across the world, developing his poetic visions.

To deal with these challenges, Leung has developed a unique mode of writing about everyday objects and ordinary spaces. On the one hand, he demonstrates a remarkable ability to articulate what is most local, mundane, and familiar, in the knowledge that the very same thing may become different and unrecognizable when seen in the light of colonialism and capitalism. To this postcolonial sensibility, enhanced by a keen eye for the observation of the ordinary, must be added a cosmopolitan outlook, a constant willingness to interact and communicate with other people and other cultures.

It is interesting to note that in earlier times critics described this mode of writing very differently. In his idiosyncratic way, Ackbar Abbas saw “non-objective indices of disappearance” in Leung's poetry because the poet was dealing with the violence of coloniality and capitalist modernity in a non-aggressive, quiet but postmodern, deconstructive style.⁷ Rey Chow emphasized the quotidian aspects of Leung's poetry, and sought out within his work an alternative way of turning coloniality into a “condition of possibility.”⁸ Common to both these scholars is their affirmation of the historical and evaluative quality of Leung's poetics of the everyday.

An Historical Optic

The everyday space in Leung's poetry, filled as it is with ordinary objects, familiar images and mundane urban sites, functions like an "historical optic," as Harry Harootunian puts it.⁹ Throughout the forty poems in the four sections of the collection, there are many examples illustrating this historical optic. Taking a walk through the streets of Hong Kong, for example, the poet allows us to grapple with and reflect upon larger social and political changes. In "At the North Point Car Ferry" and "In Ap-liu Street," he leads his readers to explore common urban problems such as congestion and consumption. "Lucky Draw" is a humorous depiction of a city's materialistic and hedonistic lifestyle. "In Fabric Alley" articulates in a provocative manner allegorical and historical meditations on Hong Kong's political identity in the wake of 1997. But these serious reflections arise out of an ordinary street, Fabric Alley. In a similar way, "Images of Hong Kong" and the Lotus Leaves Poem series inspire us to consider seriously the violence of cultural representations, the problem of center-periphery opposition, and the possibility of dialogue. The subtle references to the Tiananmen Incident of 1989 in "In the Great Square," "Broken Home," and "Refurnishing" deepen the poet's critique of this epochal event.

"Postcards from Prague," a travel poem in the collection's last section, "Journeys," is particularly interesting. The poem begins with an ordinary moment in everyday life, when the poet receives a postcard from a friend in Prague. The tone of the poetic persona is casual and friendly as if he is replying to his friend's postcard, evoking a sense of everyday familiarity. It is a banal moment, a repeatable event, like all trivial happenings in everyday life:

Your cards began arriving once again,
so I see you're training around, rambling.
Are you finding humor in bitterness?

Upon receiving the postcard, the poet visualizes his distant friend visiting familiar, known sites in Prague. He may be "in Chopin Park, / listening to a viola," crossing the Charles Bridge, or spending time in the famous

Wenceslaus Square. He may be “wearing surely a checkered, flannel cap made in Prague,” or “silver bracelets from Warsaw.” While this ordinary moment of the present repeats an earlier similar time, it is more like a “durational present” which can be freshened with new insights.¹⁰ It opens up our visions to a wider political world, as in a kind of historical optic.

Your cards greeted my return; what a coincidence;
I'd been there at almost the same time. That old world
was shifting, to a market economy, to multi-party politics.
People's lives were riddled with uncertainties and changes.
Who knows? . . .

In this undramatic moment, the banal is repeated. And yet from 1989 onwards we witness world-wide and unprecedented changes, as communism gives way to capitalism. While the poet is focusing on the revolutionary changes in Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1990, he sees how destinies are joined when he subtly refers to what happened in China the year before. The coincidental encounter in Wenceslaus Square or the Charles Bridge might not have been recognized, but the sense of uncertainty experienced through these tumultuous changes is deeply shared. This does not always give rise to a harmonious consensus:

. . . One evening a few years ago
we argued into the night about poetry and politics,
about dignity and freedom, with similar beliefs but opposing conclusions.

This acknowledgment of differences reminds us that there is no simple solution for emergent problems. It also warns us to guard against the danger of romanticizing the sense of sharedness.

As Space of Transvaluation: Dialogism and Poetic Personae

Without adhering to the expressive and mimetic functions of poetry, Leung adopts a dialogic mode to make the process of transvaluation possible. In “Postcards from Prague,” the poet often speaks in a conversational tone and unrhetorical style. This is true both of his odes to objects and things, his “thing-poems,” known in Chinese as *yongwu shi*, and of his travel poems, *you shi*. In poems such as “The Flame Tree”

and “Bittermelon,” ordinary objects have been given life to engage in a dialogue with the poet. And yet his things remain quiet and unexaggerated. They gently invite the reader to meditate on them. Unlike certain animate objects that shock their perceivers, the bittermelon and the flame tree patiently await the reader’s reading. In an object as unattractive as a bittermelon, one discovers the fundamental difference between the superficial, flamboyant heroics practiced by some writers, and Leung’s low-key sustained individualism which affects the world slowly. As the poet remarks,

The loudest song’s not necessarily passionate;
the bitterest pain stays in the heart.

...

In the rows of flowery, tiresome singing
you persist in your own key.
You’d like to heal this bad fever of a world.

Similarly, the flame tree’s commonplace quality acquires a special power, one that enchants and inspires the poet. Symbols, he remarks, have their limitations. Their meanings are predetermined by politics and culture.

Eventually I will learn your secret name,
that is born every year out of the common ground.

How does something simply change colors?
Must green always mean tolerance? Red
revolution? No. Symbols
are mostly limitations. I must avoid categorizing.

What is central to Leung’s poetics is the construction of a persona willing to engage in dialogue. This persona (in both the thing-poems and the travel-poems) belongs more to the world of classical Chinese poetry. Leung himself admits that he likes the “non-aggressive” attitude of the classical Chinese poet, an attitude which “opens up space for others to come into.” He urges us to look at the landscape, to go into it and enjoy being with it. He once described this as a kind of “discovery poetics.” Similarly we can have a lot to do with “things” as long as we are willing

to discover their ordinary quality.¹¹ He once painted the following self-portrait in conversation with his translator Gordon T. Osing:

A poet in Hong Kong is by the very nature of things distanced from all that grandiose and heroic voice. He is writing like a clown speaking on television, like a cab driver speaking in the front seat, or someone speaking directly to the inner life, or intimately to his friends.¹²

This secularized persona can be likened to the poetic persona in Charles Baudelaire's prose poem "Loss of a Halo" (« Perte d'auréole », 1869). The comic Baudelairian poet accidentally drops his halo while crossing the busy Parisian traffic. But in the end, Leung's easygoing attitude is more analogous to the lifestyle of a classical Chinese poet such as Su Dongpo.

In this regard, it is perhaps more pertinent to situate Leung within the postcolonial landscape of Hong Kong.¹³ He shares a common impulse with other Hong Kong writers such as Xi Xi, Dung Kai-cheung, Lok Fung, Yip Fai—this is by no means an exhaustive list. All these writers are exploring a common culture for Hong Kong. Leung was a pioneer in the poetics of the ordinary, and his work has inspired many younger Hong Kong writers. More recently they have found this whole approach relevant to the way they relate to their city. In the new millennium, in the wake of the Hong Kong government's 2006–07 decisions to demolish the old Star Ferry Pier and the Queen's Pier, the younger generation, commonly known as the "post-80s," have begun asking questions. How can they hope to construct their collective memories through the preservation of such long-standing local icons and landmarks? These so-called "nativist" struggles are part of a broader movement of protest at Hong Kong's real-estate-led urban planning policy; they are part of a tidal wave of cultural criticism, of a publicly expressed discontent with the constant demolition and destruction that have degraded the city's community spirit and erased people's memories. The call for improved historical preservation has gained greater momentum. It is interesting to note the convergence of interest in Hong Kong's urban topography between creative writers on the one hand, and advocates of the new social movement on the other. New publications also include re-readings of Leung's old poems such as "At the North Point Car Ferry" and the

Tiananmen poem series, in the changing context of the city in the new millennium.¹⁴

The Singular in the Ephemeral

The “discovery poetics” found in the “thing-poems” is as prominent in the poems of travel and urban topography. In “Cloud Travel,” “The Moon in La Jolla,” and “Morning in a Foreign Land,” there is no attempt to exoticize local or foreign places. These have instead become spaces of meditation, of conversation and discovery. In “Morning in a Foreign Land,” the traveler meditates on the meaning of transition when he is on the road. The violent change in weather becomes a departure point. When away from home, he sets out to explore the challenge of encountering different cultures.

Changeable weather has cancelled
the new age we all created only yesterday.
How shall we proceed with today's stories?
Nothing's the same; the center people brought from mainland
has joined everything else in the periphery, some heavy luggage
having become inexplicably light, that old life
fragmented, mingling now with accents and dialects
circling some Babel suddenly there in the mist.

This is a succinct evocation of the poet's transitional time and space. When one is away from one's own comfort zone, what was once taken for granted is challenged and transformed by the new environment. In this travel poem, the traditional symbolist poetics of classical Chinese journey poetry are absent. In place of the overwhelming sentiment of exilic melancholia is an urgency to reflect on one's relationship with others, to rethink the meaning of center and periphery.¹⁵

In “Images of Hong Kong,” one of Leung's most-quoted poems, the expansive scope of this transitional time and space is ruminated upon, as the city is seen to be approaching the end of time:

I need a new angle
for strictly visual matters.
...

History, too, is a montage of images,
of paper, collectibles, plastic, fibres,
laser discs, buttons. We find ourselves looking up
at the distant moon; tonight's moon —
does it come at the beginning or the end of time?

This transitional moment is also a movement between sites:

We need a fresh angle,
nothing added, nothing taken away,
always at the edge of things and between places.

In many poems in this collection, time lengthens as the old meets the new. Each situation is apprehended as a singularity. In the poem “At the North Point Car Ferry,” the ferry as a means of physical transportation has vanished, but the images preserve a bygone urban landscape, as it existed before the construction of the Mass Transit Railway. They also fashion an urban topography with a unique Hong Kong collective memory associated with the harbor. The famous junk, which decoratively illuminates the tale of Hong Kong as an economic miracle, is not to be found in this harbor. What has taken center stage is the mundane challenge of living in a city of pollution and disintegration.

We came through cold daylight to get here,
following a trail of broken glass.
The last roadsigns pointed to rusty drums,
everything smelling of smoke and burned rubber,
though we couldn't see fire anywhere.
In the narrow shelter of the flyover,
cars and their people waited a turn to go over.

The final moment in the poem, noted by many readers, far from closing off time and space, gives rise to a “new end,” one in which cars and people are in perpetual transition. Each new end is a singularity, a unique case to explore and ruminate upon. The materialistic abundance in an ordinary Hong Kong street—Fabric Alley, for example—is another singular case to reflect upon. History is presented as a profound set of palimpsests, composed of objects as mundane as fabrics:

All these stock images, the layers
of colors superimposed to make old patterns,
their many lyrics gone sour, also their erotic suggestions:
can we really see ourselves remade in any of these?

On one level, fabrics inspire us to explore how personal identity is defined by materials, through self denial and obsession. On another level, the poem points to a singular case in history, that of Hong Kong searching (again) for its identity in the wake of 1997. It is now more than a decade since the handover. Does the poem's last question—"Can we really see ourselves remade in any of these?"—still pose a challenge to the people of Hong Kong?

The Challenge of the Everyday: Translation as Creative Interaction

If this collection has presented readers now and then with different challenges, different notions of reception aesthetics and poetics, what kinds of challenge has it posed to its translator? As a bilingual volume, it sheds interesting light on the intimate relationship between translation and cross-cultural communication in the global and postcolonial context. It first appeared in the early 1990s when critical reflections on postcoloniality were only just gaining momentum. If the fundamental aims of postcolonialism are to combat the residual effects of colonialism as well as to inspire us to learn to respect each other, then what role does the English language play? Outside and beyond the critique of English as a colonial and neo-colonial instrument, what other possibilities can be discovered in a project of co-translation? If postcolonialism does not merely announce "the End of Time," does the afterlife of colonialism produce new ends, in such phenomena as the practice of translation? After all, translation "issues from the original—not so much from its life as from its afterlife," as Walter Benjamin reflected more than a century ago.¹⁶

Leung's effort to translate his own poems in collaboration with Osing, an American poet visiting the University of Hong Kong as a Fulbright Scholar, was a landmark event in the development of Comparative Literature as well as Postcolonial and Cross-cultural Studies in Hong

Kong. Leung puts things succinctly in his conversation with Osing. “It is when one reflects upon one’s own culture by means of another that one eventually develops ‘bicultural’ awareness.”¹⁷ Osing was an American poet interested in classical Chinese poetry, but he was unable to read Chinese and had to rely entirely on Leung to explain the meaning of the poems to him. Nonetheless, in the ensuing creative process the intensity of cross-cultural communication became more important than any strict issues of fidelity. The process of co-translation was a dynamic process of exchange, as Leung told me in an email:

And yes, the translation process was full of give and take, usually with me preparing an oral or written line-for-line translation that we went over with a glass of wine to get an initial version by our collaboration, then I’d challenge, or Osing would have second thought, and then we went on and on, to and fro, like ping-pong, all the way.¹⁸

This “give-and-take” process also posed challenges to the poet whenever he found himself sticking to “a certain base line,” to what he wanted to insist on as the author.¹⁹ Some bilingual readers have found Osing’s translations very different in tone and style from Leung’s original, and they are concerned about what is being lost. Others say that the English translation augments the Chinese original, aiding their understanding of Leung’s poems.²⁰

Let us turn to an example in the collection to illustrate this creative interaction. In “The Clogs,” the poet depicts an enchanting moment on a Hong Kong street where the persistence of memory is fascinating but precarious. The poem was originally written for a performance by the dancer Mui Cheuk-yin. This later became an episode in a television program made by Radio Television Hong Kong, in which the dancer performed on Ladder Street with a pair of wooden clogs. This is one example of how Leung has often explored a dynamic relationship between poetry, place, and other genres and media such as dance, painting, and film. Ladder Street consists completely of stone steps, and is situated in the Sheung Wan district where some of the oldest Hong Kong buildings are to be found. Close to it are an old Chinese temple on Hollywood Road and the Tung Wah Hospital, one of the oldest in Hong Kong. On this street, the

poetic persona and his shadow are wearing clogs and walking through Ladder Street, time-traveling into the past. The sense of pastness of the clogs resonates with other ordinary objects (bamboo sticks for clothing), with everyday experiences (traditional children's games), and with classical Chinese poems (which are invoked in the poem). With great subtlety, it suggests that the preservation of memory is fundamental to identity in the changing space of Hong Kong. But to achieve this sense of identity is as precarious a business as walking with clogs up and down the stone steps of Ladder Street.

Doubtless much is lost in the translation.²¹ The local flavor and the casual everyday ambience are not easy to capture, especially when the concise poetic diction is mediated by English. It is, for example, difficult (in fact impossible) for English readers to recognize the two direct citations from Chinese classical poetry, both of which (from the Tang poet Li Bai) are included in parentheses in the original. As translated, they become simply "birds disappearing in thin air" and "storm clouds rolled," merging seamlessly with the descriptions of the present situation at Ladder Street. While the English translation depicts past and present as a continuum, in the Chinese the idea of embedded history is retained with the preservation of the two classical lines in parentheses. Both English and Chinese versions portray the catastrophic effect caused by the loss of memory, and in both versions this effect is heightened and concretized. It gains a sense of immediacy, from the images of the flight of birds and the rolling clouds. But by virtue of the allusion the impact on Chinese readers is quite different.

Expressions such as "Get your clothes poles here!" and "Knives to sharpen?" embody elements in the ordinary lifestyle of the past, which are no longer to be found in Hong Kong today. It was a time when life was slower, and when people could make a living by selling bamboo poles or sharpening kitchen knives. This kind of local historical knowledge is not readily available to English readers, and is even unfamiliar to the younger Chinese generation in Hong Kong. All of this resonance may be lost, even though the Chinese expressions are faithfully translated.

At the same time, in Osing's fine English rendition something has undoubtedly been gained. This is how the poem begins in its English translation:

It got to be magic, old clogs in Ladder Street,
my shadow and I scraping along, down, clacking back into the years,

In the second stanza, the narrator laments:

Right here in Ladder Street I almost lost them;
I slipped out of my clogs and I slipped from the spell.

Words such as "magic" and "spell," while absent in the Chinese, convey rather effectively the translator's interpretation of this precarious situation, the magical, almost miraculous preservation of memory. To him, this unusual moment of clacking with one's clogs along Ladder Street is indeed magical. The clogs are animated, even enchanted, objects which have taken on an even more central position in the poem than the people wearing them. The sense of fascination in the Chinese original is overwhelmed in the English by a mood of melancholy, a lamenting of the loss of past experiences. The sentence translated by Osing as "I slipped out of my clogs and I slipped from the spell" could be literally translated as "I slipped out of my clogs, I lost everything." In fact, in the previous line, the persona of the Chinese original experiences total loss ("I lost them"), whereas the added English word "almost" in the translation retains the possibility of maintaining a precarious balance. One may debate whether what is added in the translation has spoiled the subtlety of the poem, or enhanced it. What is more interesting in this case is that the translation can be read as an expression of the translator's own fascination with Leung's way of enlivening memory, of recollecting bygone. There is certainly a distance between the source text and the translation, and it is a distance that stems from Osing's own creativity, quietly inserting an additional layer of meaning. As a reader of the bilingual edition, my mind's eye sees the translator conjuring up an image of himself as an enchanted reader, fascinated by an alien situation in a foreign culture. It is an intense moment of cross-cultural communication. Osing has given the poem an afterlife through his own subjective rendering, expressing

his admiration for Hong Kong local history and for everyday experiences which were once not known to him. In another instance, he remarked rather explicitly his appreciation of this volume of poetry:

[It is about] the wisdom literature of a former age, for all its power/elite centrism, [how it] gives way one more time to the evidences of life lived by actual persons out there in the body politic.²²

Although his fascination is accompanied by an inevitable cultural gap, this bilingual volume testifies nonetheless to the rich gain achieved when one cultural horizon interacts with another. Like Leung's readers, the translator has experienced the "felt change in consciousness" mediated by this ensemble of forty poems.

Epilogue: A Passing Moment in an Old Colonial Building

With the new edition of this anthology, Leung's "An Old Colonial Building" will have entered into a new passing moment. Despite its anonymity in the poem, readers in Hong Kong will easily identify it as the Main Building of the University of Hong Kong—the oldest structure of the oldest university in Hong Kong. Built in 1912, the building was (to quote the university website) "conceived in the Edwardian Baroque style which employed giant (2-storeyed) Ionic orders and Serliana windows in the then prevalent red brick and granite construction."²³ Originally used as classrooms for Medicine and Engineering, it currently houses most of the departments in the Faculty of Arts. Ever since 1984, the old building has been a declared monument in Hong Kong because of its imposing architecture and historical value. The arts departments are now scheduled for relocation to the newly constructed Western Campus of the university in 2012.

Because of its photogenic façade, well-known film-makers such as Ang Lee, Ann Hui, and Mabel Cheung have used the building as a backdrop for their films.²⁴ For those studying and working in this building, it has become almost a routine experience to see newly-weds or curious tourists taking pictures in the corridors. Instead of dealing with the building as an exotic, iconic site, Leung's poem captures a passing

moment in this anonymous building. The poet's persona is in the midst of mundane tasks such as photocopying ("I go to xerox"). What insight can one derive from this ordinary moment, now that this declared monument is being refurbished?

Through sunlight and shadow dust swirls,
through the scaffolding raised-up around
the colonial edifice, over the wooden planks
men live on to tear it brick by brick, the imperial
image of it persisting right down, sometimes,
to the bitter soil in the foundation, sometimes finding, too,
the noble height of a rotunda, the wide, hollow corridors
leading sometimes to blocked places, which, sometimes,
knocked open, are stairs down to ordinary streets.

The poet does not climb the structure to possess a panoramic view. Instead he turns the building into a lived reality. The post-Renaissance iconic features of the building are easily noticed, the bricks, the noble rotunda, the wide corridors. The round windows are not necessarily fixated on their origins in colonial history, be those origins victorious or treacherous. The poet does not condemn, but nor does he glorify. He is curious about the open, outside everyday spaces that this old academic building may lead to. This may also be the reason why he has sought his inspirations from the "moving signs" reflected upon the circular ponds in the courtyards.

So what's left are these fragmentary, unrepresentative words,
not uttered amidst the buildings of chrome and glass, but beside
a circular pond riddled with patterns of moving signs.

The drifting duckweed, the blooms, the "naive" goldfish, and rippling reflections are as attractive as the imposing colonial structure. In our present, singular, ephemeral moment of refurbishment, Leung's ruminations on the meaning of history have become provocative. Previously critics have asked about the meaning of coloniality.²⁵ Now, after two decades, in the midst of a newly emergent cultural discourse relating to historical preservation, should we not be considering new questions: What does cultural heritage preserve? When the "old" is refurbished

and refurbished to look “old,” what is in truth beneath its nostalgic façade? How can one establish a sense of place through the ornamental, the material, and the stylized? Between money and power, to what other pathways does this old building lead? The poet does not give us definite answers to these questions. But in his inimitable style, he ends the poem with a fortuitous encounter with a friend, with a moment in which mutual illumination and shared conviction may still be possible. Contingency, in his view, can be a gift:

Might all the pieces of ruins put together present
yet another architecture? Ridiculous the great heads on money,
laughable the straight faces running things. We pass in this corridor
in the changing surface of the pond by chance
our reflections rippling a little. We'd rather not bend;
neither of us is in love with flags or fireworks.

Can this old anonymous building once again ignite new inspiration? Can it allow us “to participate in a dream” where a nostalgic and euphoric quest is transmuted into an adventure in search of “site and intelligence?”²⁶ Can we derive a rationale for this quest from these “fragmentary, unrepresentative words,” reading Leung’s “circular pond riddled with patterns of moving signs”? Can this contingent moment be a new “end,” one upon which we can all meditate, in our own ephemeral present, in this city of transition that is ours?

Acknowledgment

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Notes

1. See Paul de Man, “Literary History and Literary Modernity,” *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism* (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 157; Friedrich Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

2. See Rey Chow, "Things, Common/Places, Passages of the Port City: On Hong Kong and Hong Kong Author Leung Ping-kwan," *Ethics after Idealism: Theory-Culture-Ethnicity-Reading* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998), 168–88.
3. It was the third title in the Cultural Studies Series published jointly by Twilight Book Company and the Department of Comparative Literature. The other two titles are Anthony Tatlow's *Repression and Figuration from Totem to Utopia* (1990) and *The Provocation of Jean Baudrillard* (1990) edited by Ackbar Abbas.
4. See Owen Barfield's *Poetic Diction: A Study in Meaning* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1973).
5. In Barfield's discussion, the "felt change of consciousness" refers to "the momentary apprehension of the poetic by the rational, into which the former is forever transmuting itself" (178).
6. In many examples of world literature, any such "felt change" results from the process of social change rather than merely subjective, spontaneous expressions emanating from the people who write them, as William Wordsworth famously put it in "Preface to Lyrical Ballads," *Poetry and Cultural Studies*, ed. Maria Damon and Ira Livingston (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 22.
7. Ackbar Abbas, "The Last Emporium: Verse and Cultural Space," in this new edition, 43–59. The essay was originally published in the 1992 edition, 3–19.
8. Chow, "Things, Common/Places, Passages of the Port City," 185–86.
9. See Harry Harootunian, *History's Disquiet: Modernity, Cultural Practice, and the Question of Everyday Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000). In his historical analysis of Japan, he asserts that "[e]veryday life refers to the experience of the lived reality that marks the appearance and expansion of industrial capitalism and its propensity to install similar conditions everywhere it is established" (54).
10. Harootunian, 55. Harootunian borrows the idea "durational present" from Peter Osborne to refer to a lived moment of everyday life when a repeated cycle is experienced with fresh insights. See also Peter Osborne, *The Politics of Time: Modernity and Avant-garde* (London: Verso, 1995).
11. Gordon T. Osing, "An Interview with Leung Ping-kwan," in this new edition, 197–226. It was originally published in the 1992 edition, 159–85.
12. "An Interview with Leung Ping-kwan," 225.
13. In the context of Chinese literary history, Leung's poetry can be analyzed in great contrast with three strands of national poetics. He is skeptical of

- the didactic and propagandistic nature of revolutionary poetics advocated by the League of the Left Wing Writers of the 1930s and the generation of mainland poets thereafter. While he may share the diasporic sentiments borne by Taiwanese exiled writers such as Yu Guangzhong or southbound poets in Hong Kong such as Li Kuang, he is more interested in exploring Hong Kong as a locality than imagining a distant homeland elsewhere.
14. See The Centre for Humanities Research, Lingnan University, ed., *Writing Hong Kong@Literature Stories* (in Chinese) (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Educational Publishing, 2008); Leung Ping-kwan, Amanda Hsu, and Lee Hoi-lam, eds., *Hong Kong Urban Culture and Urban Literature* (bilingual) (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Story Association, 2009); and Tang Siu Wa and Leung Nga Woon, eds., *Nights and Dawns: June 4th Poetry from Hong Kong* (in Chinese) (Hong Kong: Spicy Fish Cultural Production Limited, 2011).
 15. This idea is close to the challenge of creative understanding that Paul Willemen poses when he considers the relation between self and other: "... [C]reative understanding requires a thorough knowledge of at least two cultural spheres. It is not simply a matter of engaging in a 'dialogue' with some other culture's products, but of using one's understanding of another cultural practice to re-perceive and rethink one's own cultural constellation at the same time," *Looks and Frictions: Essays in Cultural Studies and Film Theory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 214.
 16. Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections* (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 71.
 17. "An Interview with Leung Ping-kwan," 200.
 18. This is quoted from a personal email of July 8, 2011 regarding the translation process, from Leung to the author of the new introduction.
 19. See Editorial Group of Cultural Criticism, "Cross-cultural Discussion: Images of Hong Kong: Conversation with Leung Ping-kwan" [Chinese], in this new edition, 227–36. It was originally published in *Cultural Criticism* 1 (Feb. 1993): 50–61.
 20. Eliza Lau's comment in "Cross-cultural Discussion," 231–32.
 21. In the academic discourses on world literature, translation has also been identified as a key feature which marks the way literature moves through the world. David Damrosch argues famously in his well-known book, *What is World Literature?*, that "world literature is writing that gains in translation." When texts travel through translation, their tonality, style, and frame of reference may also change. This kind of transformation is often called "lost in translation." Nonetheless, what is lost and what is gained may in fact be two sides of the same coin. Damrosch rightly emphasizes the hermeneutical

- role of translation, describing it as an enabling process which brings about “a heightening of the naturally creative interaction between reader and text” (292). See David Damrosch, *What is World Literature?* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003).
22. See “An Interview with Leung Ping-kwan,” 205.
 23. See <http://daaosys.hku.hk/hkutour/MainBuilding.action>.
 24. The building has been chosen as the setting in Ann Hui’s *Starry is the Night* (1988), Mabel Cheung’s *City of Glass* (1998), and Ang Lee’s *Lust, Caution* (2007), among others.
 25. See Ackbar Abbas and Rey Chow’s discussions.
 26. Roland Barthes, “The Eiffel Tower,” *A Barthes Reader*, ed. and introduced by Susan Sontag (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), 240.

再版序言

寫給過渡城市的詩¹

張美君

翻譯：郭麗容、張美君

時間，可以是客觀標準，像牆上的日曆，日復一日，不回頭以線性往前走，也可以是感性的、詩想的，一直迴還往復。舊時代走到盡頭，孕育新的紀元；新時代的帷幕已被掀起，但是舊世界的痕跡無法抹去。²

延續不斷的終結

梁秉鈞，筆名也斯，生於斯長於斯的香港作家，1992年出版中英對照詩集《形象香港》，英文書名 *City at the End of Time*，集內的詩作，含蓄暗示時代的過渡漫無邊際，各個時期無法逐一劃分清楚。詩集出版正值香港過渡往1997年主權移交，當年對回歸中國浮想聯翩的讀者，這本詩集正合時宜。詩作探討歷史、語言、身份及文化等問題，以1997為穿時越空的中心，這年份可說是「時間的終端」。³《形象香港》可視為見證時代變遷的文獻，事實上，部分詩作成於80年代以前，當時香港主權移交問題還未浮上水面。

筆者有幸為《形象香港》再版執筆序言，除回顧1997「時間的終端」、思考詩集如何對應當下的時局，並以超越本土的視野去閱讀。《形象香港》在90年代初由香港大學比較文學系出版，⁴斯時文化研究這門學科，在香港仍在萌芽階段，二十多年後，詩集的內蘊思緒，仍然給不同文化背景的讀者亮起一盞光，一起閱讀、翻譯、相互溝通，從詩歌中體會「情牽智動的意識醒覺」（“felt change of consciousness”）。⁵

日常生活的詩學

梁秉鈞以入世的態度作詩，捕捉日常生活的浮光掠影，筆觸富幽默感。詩人以平常語言，揭示城市內蘊的矛盾，從本地的尋常里巷、街頭景象，到遊歷內地、歐洲與美國的因緣際會。詩人或探討文化身份認同與後殖民性、或追憶逝去年華、或思索政治與文化議題。詩人足跡跨越地域的邊界，同時超越不同的文化藝術創作類型。他的詩意想象，既富深思默想，亦屬靈活開放，在詩與散文、電影與繪畫等不同媒介，迸發燦然的光芒。

《形象香港》輯錄的四十首詩，展示獨特的日常生活的詩意美學，詩人如何觀察日常物件、處境和人物的心情，以詩想折射出來。詩集跟大論述的理論大相逕庭，旨在捕捉平常人置身的俗世，以自然和淡然的語氣，感受現實世界的微妙變化，與學者歐文·巴菲爾 (Owen Barfield) 談論的「意識醒覺」異曲同工，也如上述是「情牽智動的意識醒覺」。不過，巴菲爾強調詩作要令讀者有新穎驚奇的感覺，梁氏則撿拾日常細節，把本土的社會、文化、經濟、政治題材入詩，實現自我與社會不同層面互相交織。⁶ 詩人抓緊此時此地的種種危機，在香港這被外地文人視為「文化沙漠」的地方，梁氏無視現實的匱乏，肯定詩歌的力量，具無可估量的價值，在本地公共文化舉足輕重。⁷

以甚麼題材入詩？現世的當務之急又是甚麼？怎樣挑戰成見和偏見？一位兼具中國古典詩詞及西方現代文學修養的詩人，可否開創一種詩意的語言，破舊立新？1970年代，梁氏還年輕，他心存不凡的使命，要尋找一種語言描畫現世的香港：比喻或提喻，現代主義象徵或寫實革命詩學，到底孰優孰劣？詩人怎樣體現自我，找到與世界文化溝通的路徑？詩人置身於「八九天安門事件」及「九七回歸」這些時代轉折，如何書寫生於斯長於斯的家園？本土文化被他人誤解甚至扭曲時，如何應對？詩人在別鄉遊學的日子，如何反思自身的文化根源？這些問題，梁氏思考香港人文化身份時，都曾一一探究，那是1980、90年代，詩人不時往來香港、內地以及其他城市，登高望遠，要寫作意義深遠的詩歌。

面對這些問題，梁氏以獨特的手法書寫日常生活、事物及空間，他勾勒最本地風味、最平淡卻被忽視的事物，並突顯殖民主義、資本主義的問題。詩人採用後現代主義的觀點，筆觸感性，描繪大都會的特質，與不同地方的人物與文化互動、對話，呈現現實的混雜性。

早年的評論人，對梁氏的藝術手法有不一樣的見解。阿克巴·阿巴斯 (Ackbar Abbas) 論〈給苦瓜的頌詩〉，指詩人面對殖民主義及資本主義的暴力時，「以一種靜態的堅持，給予我們一種真正的、非客觀性的、『(不)呈現』的指標。」⁸ 周蕾則注視梁詩的日常層面，將殖民性從一種被壓制的桎梏化成轉機，成為現實生活中一種可行的選擇。⁹ 論者切入不同角度，遂有不同的結論，兩位學者都肯定梁氏的日常詩學具深刻的時代歷史意義。

歷史觀照

梁詩所描繪的平常事物、熟悉的城市形象、市井生活，是學者哈利·哈若圖寧 (Harry Harootunian) 認為含有歷史觀照 (historical optic) 的日常空間。¹⁰ 《形象香港》詩四十首，包含歷史縱深觀點的，不勝枚舉。詩人書寫他走過香港的市井街道，令讀者注意社會、政治民生的變化。例如〈北角汽車渡海碼頭〉和〈鴨寮街〉，探討城市的空間擁擠、沒完沒了的消費；〈抽獎〉以幽默的方式，調侃了物質至上的享樂生活；〈花布街〉以寓言和歷史的角度切入，喚起「九七」陰影下香港人身份危機；〈形象香港〉和「蓮葉」詩，提醒讀者文化再現帶來的暴力、邊緣與中心的對抗，並渴望可以重新對話；〈廣場〉、〈家破〉及〈家具〉則含蓄談及1989年「天安門事件」，向不合時宜的成見挑戰。

〈布拉格的明信片〉屬於「游詩」，詩的開首，敘述收到一張來自布拉格的明信片的情景，語調隨意，直如回覆友人明信片的口吻，那是淡如開水，日復一日的時光：

過了一段時間又收到你的明信片
知道你繼續乘着火車到處流浪

追尋苦澀的幽默、貧瘠裏的奢華？

看着明信片，詩人想象遠方友人在布拉格的美景流連，可能「在蕭邦公園／聽中提琴演奏」，可能穿着「布拉格的花格絨帽」，戴着「華沙的銀手鐲」。這些重複的日常瑣事，並非浮思亂想，詩人要從俗套中發現嶄新的觀點，近乎哈若圖寧所謂「漫長的當下」(durational present)，¹¹ 他是想藉此打開一扇門，讀者可以進入更寬闊的政治世界，謂之歷史的觀照。

回來就收到你這些明信片，真湊巧
當時我也在那地方，古老的世界
正步向市場經濟，多元的政治
生活裏充滿各種各樣的動盪和變化
也許……

情景平平無奇，毫無戲劇性，讀者卻像目擊了1989年共產主義崩潰的世界現象。詩人注視柏林圍牆倒下後東歐各國的劇變，將西方社會的政治變革與中國人民同中有異的命運聯繫起來，維撒斯廣場和查理斯橋瞥見彼此的影子，有類似洞見的人並不多見，但詩人從激烈動盪中感受到人世變幻，卻深深地觸動讀者。從國際性的歷史事件，相互感通，然而，要達到共識從來不易：

……許多年前的一個晚上
我們曾經爭辯不休，關於詩與政治，
尊嚴與自由，有共同的信仰但又更多分歧……

詩人提醒讀者，單憑善意，無法解決人間的爭端，也不宜浪漫化人際間的無私共享的精神。

價值取向：對話與擬人化

梁氏詩作不限於「表達」及「模擬」的寫作手法，他一直以「對話」的方式重新道出價值取向。〈布拉格的明信片〉一詩，詩人以與朋友閑談的語調敘述，毫無矯飾之情。他的詠物詩及游詩常見此手法。〈給苦瓜的頌詩〉及〈鳳凰木〉，敘述者把詠物對象

苦瓜、鳳凰木，看作「你」，彷彿在與一個活生生的人物對話，詠物對象卻往往默不作聲，靜待讀者解讀回應。〈給苦瓜的頌詩〉中，苦瓜貌不驚人，有別於一般作者歌頌英雄的手法，詩人著墨於植物低調的個人特性，沉默間影響世界：

不一定高歌才是慷慨
把苦澀藏在心中
……
在田畦甜膩的合唱裏
堅持另一種口味
你想為人間消除邪熱
解脫勞乏，你的言語是晦澀的

鳳凰木的平凡特質，在詩人眼中充滿魅力，給他靈感寫成〈鳳凰木〉。詩人對以「象徵」喻物有所保留，他認為「象徵」有先天的政治和文化意義局限，反之，他視鳳凰木與他平起平坐：

逐漸記得你獨特的名字
年年在平常的事物上重生

顏色是如何逐漸轉變的？
綠色是容忍的溫婉？紅色
革命的暴力？都不對。比喻
只是限制。我不想把彼此分類

梁氏的日常生活詩學，要訣是角色的創造，並與之對話。他在詠物詩和游詩創造的角色，貼近中國古典詩的精神。梁氏表示欣賞中國詩人的「從容」處世哲學，並包容各方的思想。他要求讀者不要當旁觀者，一同踏進詩中世界，樂在其中，他視之為「發現詩學」的一種。只要讀者能與詩人一起發掘事物的尋常特質，將會得到更多互動的新發現。¹² 梁氏曾向詩集的合譯者歌頓·奧城 (Gordon T. Osing) 表示：

香港的詩人，要遠離一切冠冕堂皇的宏大論述。他的寫作方式，像小丑在電視節目裏向大眾表演，像的士司機與乘客侃侃而談，也像掏心掏肺與友人剪燭長談。¹³

梁氏的詩人角色，近似波特萊爾（Charles Baudelaire）〈丟失的光環〉（« Perte d'auréole », 1869）那位家傳戶曉的詩人，在車水馬龍的巴黎街頭遺落了他的光環。兩位詩人相距百餘年，同樣沉醉於市井的平常生活，然而，梁氏的光環沒丟失於泥路上，可以說，他的性情，近乎宋朝詩人蘇東坡的隨和、曠達。

將梁秉鈞的詩作放在後殖民時期的文藝環境來討論，會更清楚其特質，¹⁴ 他與文友如西西、董啟章、洛楓、葉輝等等，都在孜孜不倦探索香港人共通的文化特徵。梁氏是日常生活詩學的先鋒，影響不少年輕的香港作者，近年他們的寫作路線，更趨向與此城息息相關、同呼同吸。千禧年以後，政府於2006至2007年清拆中環天星及皇后碼頭期間，香港「八十後」的年輕人開始叩問如何保育本土的地標，以確認保存屬於他們的集體記憶。這些土生土長的青年，對以地產發展為經濟主導的社會，不滿的情緒越來越強烈，一個接一個的舊社區消失，就是小市民的文化與回憶的消失。他們以保育社區為主題，發表文化批評或藝術創作，同時參與保育市區的工作，城市保育的聲勢因而日益壯大。香港文學作者與社會運動者都一樣着緊此城，發現更多共同關注的議題。梁秉鈞不少詩作，包括〈北角汽車渡海碼頭〉及天安門系列，在千禧年後轉變中的香港，都重新出版了。¹⁵

獨特的過渡時空

梁氏的游詩，書寫旅遊及城市景觀的，也有「發現詩學」的趣味，例如〈雲游〉、〈樂海崖的月亮〉，異地在詩人筆下不帶一絲獵奇的眼光，他在遠方沉思，與不同文化對話，發現新的風景。〈異鄉的早晨〉一詩，遊子在旅途中思考過渡的意義，天氣的變幻莫測，令他決心離開，迎向不同文化的挑戰：

變化的天氣隔絕了
昨天眾人創出的那個今天
怎樣去說今天的故事呢？
不一樣了，攜來的中心失去了

相對的邊緣，沉重的行囊
變得難以言說的輕。昨天
變成碎片，混雜了不同口音的怨曲
圍繞着從迷霧中顯現的高塔

詩作言簡意賅，是詩人對時間與空間的幻變的召喚，遊子離開安逸的家園，面對不可知的外界衝擊。此詩有別於中國古典游詩的象徵手法，放下有家歸不得的鬱悶，着重個人與他人的關係，同時思索何謂中心、何謂邊緣。¹⁶

〈形象香港〉是梁秉鈞廣受引述的一首詩，字裏行間的時空，令人想象城市在過渡當中，邁向時間的終結：

我在尋找一個不同的角度
去看視覺的問題。
……
歷史是一連串形象
塑造的材料可以是紙箔、塑膠、纖維
鐳射影碟的按鈕……我們抬頭
眺望月亮，今夜的月亮
在時間的盡頭還是開端？

時間在過渡，空間也在轉變：

我們在尋找一個不同的角度
不增添也不刪減
永遠在邊緣永遠在過渡

《形象香港》輯錄的詩作，不少觸及舊與新的相遇，然而每個情景，都是獨一無二的。以〈北角汽車渡海碼頭〉為例，在地下鐵路通車以前，渡海碼頭曾經是城市的景觀，與維多利亞港共同組成本土集體回憶。此詩摒棄漁港帆船形象，以及歌頌香港經濟奇蹟的濫調，詩人要說的是，我們要如何在一個污染和潰敗的環境中生存。

沿碎玻璃的痕跡
走一段冷陽的路來到這裏
路牌指向鏽色的空油罐
只有煙和焦膠的氣味

看不見熊熊的火
逼窄的天橋的庇蔭下
來自各方的車在這裏待渡

「來自各方的車在這裏待渡」——詩人所感受的時空是開放的，他為碼頭寫下另一個結局，另一個「時間的終端」，人和車都在永恆的過渡中，亦各有各的時間終結，意味深長。詩人筆下的〈花布街〉是另一獨特的地方，滿街滿目盡是令人眼花繚亂的花布，於詩人而言，花布上世俗的圖案，正是香港歷史的手抄複寫本：

唉，盡是陳舊的意象
層層疊印了別人圖案的花布
那麼多酸澀的抒情性愛的
暗示，你要不要披在身上？

讀〈花布街〉，可有兩個層面，一是字面所描述的花布，我們的身份可否以物質去自我界定或否定。一是香港的歷史，九七香港主權移交之際，香港人沒完沒了追尋自己身份的問題。十四年過去了，〈花布街〉裏的提問「你要不要披在身上？」，當下的香港市民，又是否心中有數？

書寫日常之難：是翻譯，也是創作

品味《形象香港》字裏行間的讀者，自然會思索各種問題，包括美學和詩學的，而英譯者奧城從中又得到怎樣的啟迪？在全球化和後現代的時代，這本雙語詩集在翻譯及跨文化溝通幾方面，尤其意義特殊。初版在1990年代初面世，斯時學人對後殖民的反思，僅屬萌芽草創。後殖民主義的思想本質，除了抵抗陰魂不散的殖民主義，還要包容不同觀點，互相平等看待，那《形象香港》的「英語」翻譯又有何作用？「英語」一向被視為殖民及新殖民主義的手段，這詩集由文化背景各異的詩人合作英譯，又會有怎樣的效果？假如後殖民主義的出現，不僅是宣布一個時間的終結，那殖民主義會否在英文翻譯中輪迴再生，再創一番新局面？畢竟一百年

前華特·班雅明 (Walter Benjamin) 已指出，翻譯能另創新境，使原文輪迴再生。¹⁷

美國詩人奧城訪問香港大學期間，梁秉鈞與他合作英譯成書，是比較文學、後殖民理論、跨文化研究等學科的劃時代里程碑。梁氏在與奧城的對談中直言：「我、你都是以外來文化互為對照，內省自己的文化，最後意識到自身文化的雙重背景。」¹⁸ 奧城喜愛中國古詩，但他不諳中文，要梁氏解釋才能了解其中意思，然後着手翻譯，如此別開生面的「跨文化溝通」，遠比一板一眼的忠實詮釋更有意義。梁秉鈞曾向筆者道出他們如何交流：

對，翻譯過程中有很多協調。通常我們去喝酒，我已有個腹稿，我會對他口述，或寫下給他，我們邊喝邊談，一行一行的斟酌，於是得出初稿。我會向他提問，奧城又會得出新的想法，來來回回，像打乒乓球，球來球往。¹⁹

作者與譯者合作無間，二人「球來球往」，但一如梁氏強調，原作者也不能放棄他的「底線」。²⁰ 翻譯的文本周遊列國，原文的色調、風格、以至作品參照的架構，都與原作分割。文學作品因翻譯「變形」，筆者曾戲稱為「迷失翻譯中」。大衛·達姆羅什 (David Damrosch) 在名作《怎樣閱讀世界文學》(*What is World Literature?*, 2003) 提出，譯者的思考過程，能自然提升讀者與文本之間的創意互動，使文學能在世界不同文化間流傳。²¹ 不少《形象香港》讀者認為奧城的英文翻譯，有別梁氏的語調及風格，失去原作的味道；但也有讀者認為，英譯有助他們更深入了解梁氏的原文。²²

筆者以詩集的〈木屐〉，說明兩位詩人在翻譯過程如何你來我往、互通有無。〈木屐〉寫樓梯街，要捕足香港街道的迷人剎那，並非易事，更何況是古老的街道。詩作原為舞蹈家梅卓燕的一場表演而寫，後來被拍攝成香港電台一齣電視劇，舞者腳踏一雙木屐在樓梯街起舞。梁氏慣常探討詩歌與空間，以至舞蹈、繪畫、電影等不同體裁及媒體之間的火花，〈木屐〉是一個好例子。上環的樓梯街，以石級建成，附近有香港開埠以來最古老的

建築，有荷李活道的文武廟、東華醫院等等。梁氏的樓梯街，詩中人與他的影子，腳踏木屐走過石級回到逝去的歲月。木屐喚起的老日子，與過去的日用品（衣裳竹）、街角遊戲（跳飛機）、以及中國古詩（詩內引用）產生迴響與共鳴。詩作含蓄暗示，香港是瞬息幻變之城，市民要保留記憶確認身份，有如踏着厚底木屐走過樓梯街，險象橫生。

翻譯詩歌，很難保留原作的本土味道和生活氛圍，簡練的中國詩意，英譯更難。例如英語讀者不能意會，詩人引用兩首李白作品的意義，一是〈敬亭獨坐〉的首句「眾鳥高飛盡」，一是〈聽蜀僧浚彈琴〉的尾句「秋雲暗幾重」。前一句英譯為“like birds disappearing in thin air”（中文可直譯「像鳥兒在天空消失」），後一句英譯“storm clouds rolled”（中文直譯「風起雲捲」）。英譯描述的樓梯街，將過去與現在混而為一，反觀原作直接引述兩句李白古詩，並以括號明確標示，現在與過去拼貼一起，但還是涇渭分明。原作與譯作同樣以高空的鳥群遠飛及陰雲密佈的意象，都令讀者強烈感受失去記憶的悲哀，而了解中國古詩典故的中文讀者，感受當更為深刻。

〈木屐〉裏有香港舊日的行業、舊日的生活，「衣——裳——竹！」「磨鉸剪鏟刀！」，可惜早已消失。那時的生活緩緩靜靜，市民還能在街頭賣衣裳竹、替人磨鉸剪維生，這些本土歷史，不要說英語讀者，甚至香港年輕一代都思之茫然。即使英譯詩句忠於原作，這些老街坊的氣息，很難喚起今人共鳴。

奧城的英譯，亦不乏出人意表的佳句。如開首兩行詩句：

It got to be magic, old clogs in Ladder Street, (穿着木屐穿過樓梯街)
my shadow and I scraping along, down, clacking back into the years,
(我和影子穿着木屐穿過歲月)

第二節首兩行，敘事者吟誦：

Right here in Ladder Street I almost lost them; (穿過樓梯街我穿的木屐掉了)
I slipped out of my clogs and I slipped from the spell. (失去了一雙木屐一切便都失去了)

英譯加入字眼 magic(魔法)、spell(咒語)，譯者或有感想，在個人身份和歷史記憶分崩離析的時代，盼以「魔法」保留過去的記憶，此意象為原作所無。木屐在樓梯街往來，嘩剝嘩剝，一如動畫的奇幻異境，大異於原文哀悼記憶消逝的感傷之情。“I slipped out of my clogs and I slipped from the spell” 這句可被解讀為 “I slipped out of my clogs, I lost everything”。事實上，在原作此行詩的上一句，敘事者是失去所有（「一切便都失去了」），沒有回頭的餘地，但英譯加上 almost（幾乎）一字（“I almost lost them”），尚有從失序中重返常軌的機會。奧城的英譯或有增或有減原作的韻味，是他主觀閱讀梁秉鈞追憶、捕捉過去詩句的成果。他的譯文大大有別於原作，那是他對原詩的創意見解，因此也有多一重意義。筆者諳熟中英語文，逐行細讀英譯，眼前活現一位來自美國的譯者，如何着迷於香港這異國的獨特文化，這是跨文化溝通得來的意外收穫。奧城的異鄉人角度，熱愛香港本土文化歷史及日常生趣，使原詩輪迴再生。他坦言對詩集心存感激之情：

這詩集是從舊時代文學沉澱得來的智慧，詩歌去蕪存菁，擺脫詭歌權力與精英的觀點，讓有血有肉的真人實事再一次發聲。²³

即使奧城的想法不無附會之處，此雙語詩集，對擴展中西文化交流而言，成果豐碩。奧城是《形象香港》英譯者，他與詩集讀者無異，一同閱讀梁秉鈞這四十首詩，一起體驗「情牽智動的意識醒覺」。

餘音：老建築在稍縱即逝中

新版《形象香港》面世之日，梁秉鈞〈老殖民地建築〉描述的大樓已進入另一個時代。詩人並沒明說老殖民地建築所指為何，但本地讀者不難猜到那是香港大學的本部大樓。本部大樓建於1912年，是香港大學最古老的建築物，愛德華巴洛克的風格，兩層高的巨型愛奧尼柱式及舍利安那式拱窗，以紅磚和花崗岩建成。²⁴

大樓最初用作醫學和工程系的課室，現作文學院的課室及辦公大樓。早於1984年，大樓已被政府列為香港法定古蹟。2012年，文學院的辦公室會遷往新建的西翼大樓。

港大本部大樓，別致美觀，電影導演李安、許鞍華、張婉婷都曾來取景，²⁵ 也是新婚夫婦拍攝婚紗照片、遊客流連忘返的勝地。梁秉鈞筆下的本部大樓，並非一棟異國情調的殖民建築，詩人在捕捉當下大學生活的時光，師生如常工作學習，記下瑣碎事如影印論文，敘述者恍如在長廊緩緩走過。現今大樓在修繕翻新，讀者唸到這些詩人筆下的日常事，會得到甚麼啟示？

詩人並不是高高站在建築物上俯瞰，而是走進建築的空間，欣賞其後文藝復興的獨特風格，目光游視內裏繽紛的地磚、神氣的圓頂、寬敞的走廊。詩中的圓形窗戶，敘事者並不一定在緬懷殖民地的歷史，是光榮或是耻辱也好，他沒有歌頌或譴責殖民者，他沉思本部大樓的開放空間，欣賞荷花池水在流動：

我給你文字破碎不自稱寫實
不是高樓圍繞的中心只是一池
鄰鄰的水聚散着游動的符號

飄蕩的浮萍、綻放的荷花、「天真」的金魚、盪漾的倒影，一如老殖民建築的迷人。當下本部大樓正在進行短暫的翻新工程，詩人對歷史的沉思，當會給讀者新的啟示。二十年前，文化評論人爭論殖民性的意義，²⁶ 今日熱門本土文化論題則是歷史保育。我們要提出新的問題：文化遺產保育目的為何？翻新文化遺產，矯裝成「舊」的面貌，就可安放我們戀舊的心情？能令我們對此城更有歸屬感的建築物，是怎樣的風格、材料、外觀？殖民建築往往建築於金錢及權力之上，除此以外，還要將我們領往何方？詩人沒有肯定的答案，詩作以重遇好友作結。人際間的互相感通，恰似天賜的恩緣。

把廢墟的意象重新組合可否
併成新的建築頭像是荒謬的
權力總那麼可笑相遇在走廊
偶然看一眼荷花池在變化中

思考不避波動也不隨風輕折
我知你不信旗幟或滿天煙花

這座無名的老建築物，今日還能賜我們新的靈感？老建築物可如羅蘭·巴特（Roland Barthes）筆下的巴黎鐵塔，我們可與之一同尋找夢想？追尋懷舊歡欣的心情可蛻變為探索景觀與智慧之旅？²⁷ 唸着「一池／粼粼的水聚散着游動的符號」，我們能從「破碎不自稱寫實」的文字找到理由探索？在這恆常過渡的城市，在詩中描畫的動人時刻，我們再一次思考何謂新的時間「終端」。

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註釋

1. 本文翻譯自張美君為本詩集《形象香港》再版寫的英文序文，英文題目為“New Ends in a City of Transition”。
2. 見 Paul de Man, “Literary History and Literary Modernity,” *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism* (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 157; Friedrich Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983)。
3. 見 Rey Chow, “Things, Common/Places, Passages of the Port City: On Hong Kong and Hong Kong Author Leung Ping-kwan,” *Ethics after Idealism: Theory-Culture-Ethnicity-Reading* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998), 168–88。
4. 本書由比較文學系與曙光圖書公司合作出版，屬「文化研究系列」第三作。同系列還有 Anthony Tatlow 的 *Repression and Figuration from Totem to Utopia* (1990)，及 Ackbar Abbas 編輯的 *The Provocation of Jean Baudrillard* (1990)。
5. 見 Owen Barfield’s *Poetic Diction: A Study in Meaning* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1973)。
6. 巴菲爾認為「情牽智動的意識醒覺」是「以理智參透詩意的美感，在瞬間感受理解詩意不可預測的變化」，見 *Poetic Diction*, 178。

7. 世界文學有數不盡的例子，說明「情牽智動的意識醒覺」往往在社會動盪時期誕生，而非僅僅是作者主觀、隨意抒發的個人感受，一如威廉·華茲華斯 (William Wordsworth) 的說法，見 “Preface to Lyrical Ballads,” *Poetry and Cultural Studies*, ed. Maria Damon and Ira Livingston (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 22。
8. 見阿克巴·阿巴斯著，劉敏儀譯，〈最後的「貿易王國」——詩與文化空間〉，《形象香港》再版，本書頁61–76。
9. 見 Rey Chow, “Things, Common/Places, Passages of the Port City,” 185–86。
10. 參考 Harry Harootunian, *History’s Disquiet: Modernity, Cultural Practice, and the Question of Everyday Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000)。哈若圖寧分析日本的歷史時，認為「日常生活就是活生生的現實，記下工業資本主義的出現及擴張，而處處也留下相似的印記」，頁54。
11. 見 Harootunian, *History’s Disquiet*, 55。Harootunian 從 Peter Osborne 借用了「持續當下」(durational present) 的概念，指從日復一日的日常生活，找到新觀點。並參考 Peter Osborne, *The Politics of Time: Modernity and Avant-garde* (London: Verso, 1995)。
12. 參看梁秉鈞與奧城的對話，本書頁197–226。
13. 參看梁秉鈞與奧城的對話，本書頁225。
14. 在中國文學史而言，梁詩大異於一般定義的民族詩歌。梁秉鈞並不服膺1930年代左聯說教、宣傳意味的革命詩歌，他比較親近游離的台灣流放詩人例如余光中，以至香港的南來詩人力匡，不過，與其憑空想象遙遠的中國，梁氏更有興趣探討香港文化的本土性。
15. 參考《書寫香港@文學故事》(香港嶺南大學人文學科研究中心·香港文學研究小組編，香港教育圖書公司出版，2008年)、《香港都市文化與都市文學》(梁秉鈞、許旭筠、李凱琳編，香港故事協會出版，2009年)及《一般的黑夜一樣黎明：香港六四詩選》(鄧小樺、梁雅媛編，水煮魚文化製作有限公司出版，2011年)。
16. 此說類似保羅·威爾曼 (Paul Willeman) 談個人與他人的關係：「要達成創意溝通，至少要深入了解兩種文化圈，不只與其他文化『對話』，還要充分應用，以個人對其他文化的了解，反思自己的文化位置。」見 *Looks and Frictions: Essays in Cultural Studies and Film Theory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 214。
17. 見 Walter Benjamin, “The Task of the Translator,” *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections* (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 71。
18. 參看梁秉鈞與奧城的對話，本書頁200。
19. 引自2011年7月8日梁秉鈞給筆者的電郵，談及詩集翻譯的過程。
20. 參看文化評論編輯組〈座談跨文化——形象香港：與梁秉鈞對

- 談》，本書頁227-36。該文最初發表於《文化評論》（1993年2月號），頁50-61。
21. 見 David Damrosch, *What is World Literature?*, 295。
 22. 見劉敏儀於〈座談跨文化〉的見解，本書頁231-32。
 23. 參看梁秉鈞與奧城的對話，本書頁205。
 24. 見網頁 <http://daaosys.hku.hk/hkutour/MainBuilding.action>。
 25. 許鞍華《今夜星光燦爛》（1988）、張婉婷《玻璃之城》（1998）、李安《色，戒》（2007）均於本部大樓取景。
 26. 參考阿巴斯與周蕾的討論。
 27. 見 Roland Barthes, “The Eiffel Tower,” *A Barthes Reader*, ed. and introduced by Susan Sontag (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), 240。

染葉

茶太苦了，我撈起茶包隨手放在旁邊的餐巾上。再低頭時，只見白色的雪地緩緩滲染了一片棕色葉子，逐漸擴大像一個無可阻擋的黃昏，像流瀉的音樂和燈色，逐漸淹沒窗外眼睛可見的冬天

再沒法還原為一張白紙了，自從寫下字寄出去，壓斂成為岩層，撕裂成為山丘，更破碎也更豐富，寄出的信走過迂迴的小巷尋找地址，信上的字畫畫的人把它顛倒在鏡上，跳舞的人

把它反映在牆上，染滿了剝落和花影收到時不再是原來的字了，自由飄浮在一片水上，沾滿了波光的動盪和激盪是瓶中的稿給你拾起，當你徐徐展讀我不免帶着在場的尷尬，不知如何期待

你凝視前面，不知在想甚麼，垂下頭又抬起來，好像笑過也好像哭過好像不明紙紋縱橫又像懂得茶的苦澀手擱在駕駛盤上，眼看前邊又似回顧彷彿帶着我的心情，你默默地離去

1986

Stainings

The tea is bitter; I remove the bag casually
to the napkin by my cup, and soon enough find its white field, too,
staining steadily as a browning edge of leaf, spreading
like the inevitable twilight, like an awareness of music,
like the lamp light that is drowning in the known winter outside.

A blank page gets ruined like this, soon as words are put down
and sealed, pressed into layers, or torn carefully
into shapes fragmentary and suggestive. Or say a letter does
pass through winding alleys to a secret address, where the words
are reversed in a painter's mirror, in the shadow of a dance

that is the silhouette of flowers on a peeling wall.
Delivered so, they are no longer the same words; they drift
on an expanse of water, held in the surges and ripples of waves.
Like a note in a bottle, my words are found and unraveled
right in front of my eyes and I'm all but undone.

You stare out, then down, recalling—what?
When you look up at me, your eyes both laugh and cry.
You haven't seen between my lines but read easily the bitterness in the tea.
Hands on the wheel and looking straight ahead in the mirror,
you take the past born between us and in silence drive off.

1986

風的故事

——懷念伊文思

在風車下長大的孩子
說有一天要到中國去
九十歲了這白髮老人
坐在世界的屋脊等風

年輕時帶着攝影機乘風來
捕捉一個國家年輕的光彩
多年輾轉如今迎風又當前
哮喘老人面對哮喘的大地

曾經不斷翻新自己的山脈
更新沙的紋理稻河和麥浪
現今官僚的路障令人蹇步
鏡頭無法擁抱民間的藝術

污漬窒塞如何可以再舒展
小孩伸手摸索老人的脈搏
眼光越過喧囂叫賣的市場
寬厚呼吸把蜈蚣吹送上天

逝去了但總與我們同吐納
個人氣息牽動民族的經脈
銀白的髮絲挽住山川同待
大塊噫氣終會把腐葉吹散

1990

The Wind's Story

— in memory of Joris Ivens

This boy who grew up around windmills
vowed someday he'd see China; once again
at ninety, white-haired, in the Gobi,
in "the roof of the world," he waited.

The winds of his youth carried his camera here
to get this nation's stormy beginnings;
a mere lifetime later storms filled his face again,
filled an old man's asthmatic breathing in an asthmatic land.

How freshened were his camera and the ancient hills.
How renewed the rivers of rice waving over the flow of the land!
Now the functionaries in the provinces raise roadblocks,
and the camera is forbidden to capture the people's arts.

Shaken, prevented, manhandled is the camera's field
where a child grabs on a pulsing old man's wrists.
The camera catches the hectic market scene,
and the breathing that takes their centipede kite sky-high.

You're gone but your breath is with us still,
a *qi* that joins us one river of living.
I see your silver head arm in arm with our mountains,
waiting for earth's breathing to harvest the rotting leaves.

1990

安石榴

晶瑩的紅色

一點一點

勻圓

破碎了

美麗

濺出了

哀愁

安石榴有嫣紅的臉

咬一口

肌膚上留下痕跡

沿着薄薄的果皮剝開

看進艷紅的內裏

晶瑩的

是哀愁的種子嗎？

安石榴柔和的臉

默默滲出了血

魚在水裏擺尾

煙升入了三月的早晨

輕輕的，樹葉逐漸轉變顏色

黃昏時，天空一片紅霞

溫柔的俯下來溫柔的包容你

安石榴

易感的臉孔

脆弱的胸懷

怎樣可以打開你而不傷害你？

一點一點

你輾轉

破碎

時間的咬嚙

每一次打開

是一次撕裂

為了接觸

那隱埋的核心

一點一點

你輾轉

人世的傷痛

晶瑩如寶石

Pomegranate

Glistening reds —
one, two—countless,
perfectly round,
 breaking open to the air.
How lovely
 spilling
 one's sorrow.
Pomegranate's pretty, reddened face
a mouthful —
 the flesh shows the wound.
Behind the delicate skin?
See the rich red inside,
the glistening red.
 What? Sorrow's seeds?
Pomegranate's soft face
seeps casual blood.

Out in the river a fish swirls;

smoke curls in the March morning branches;

the leaves steadily alter in color.

In twilight a whole sky-full of rosy clouds
descends softly and embraces you.

Pomegranate,
with the sweetest of faces
and the tenderest of hearts,

how to uncloset you and not hurt you?

One, two—countless.
 Where all you've been
 broken open to the air.
Time eats you either way.
Every time you are revealed
 you are split open the same way,
to be got at
 your hidden core.
One, two—countless.
 Where all you've been,
all the pain of the human world
glistening like jewels

在燈下閃光
又破碎
濺出月光的邊緣

你不在氣候裏呻吟
沉默把甘美收藏
表皮堅韌抵擋
世界的灰塵和荊棘
你退開

閃避
躲藏
勻圓的安石榴
人間多是傷害
讓我給你抹去灰塵
舒放你
深埋的愁怨
我知你的晶瑩
你隱入辛酸
我尋認那甘美

是經歷了甚麼
令你心中蘊藏那麼多紅色的淚水？

世界在轉動
有游魚被油污傷害
有花朵虛擲在塵埃裏
這些事情令你辛酸？
這世界的果實
放在後巷的籬筐中
浪費了

在陰影和殘羹
竊匪和野貓的低鳴間
敗壞了

所以緊緊封閉自己
在傾側的世界裏
警覺地戒備
逐日消失了柔和
不再信任鳥和蝶的接觸
把雨水的滲染
當作是酸蝕？

不要對一雙手過敏吧
或憤慨於果盤與刀剪的構圖
不要長留在陰影裏
或纏陷於執拗的鬱結

shining in lamplight,
 broken open yet again,
spilling beyond the edge of moonlight.

Passing from season to season without a sound,
storing up sweetness in fact
inside skins grown tight
to keep out the dust and thistles and thorns,
you demur,

 avoid,
 hide
your circular needs, my pomegranate.
Our human world is not always friendly.
Let me wipe away the dust
and release your
 deep, hidden grief.
I understand your glistening;
 where you hide in bitterness
I look for the incredibly sweet.

What in the world have you been through
that makes your heart hide such red tears?

The world goes on turning.
That fish swims through trash;
most flowers end up tossed in the dust.
Does all this make one bitter?
A lot of this world's fruit
ends up in cans in back alleys
 utterly wasted.

Among the shadows and the trash
stray cats thief and wail all night,
 all of it rotting.

Is it for this you close yourself off
in a world that is crooked at the core,
sensing too much, everything
gradually giving up the soft contour,
distrusting even the touch of birds and butterflies,
regarding even the gentle rains
as acid?

Please don't be afraid also of these hands;
don't hate the knife, the fruit tray, the random arrangement.
One can't live shaded in oneself forever either,
all tangled-up in knots of melancholy.

不要因為燈光把移近的影子放大
把手的顫慄擴張為攻擊
受驚了

安石榴

粉紅色的臉

微笑

打開你的胸懷

會逐漸康復的

在陽光下

流露清新的氣味

魚游入煙霧

彎腰的楊柳輕拂船蓬

沿岸有人洗衣服，你看

背後的小屋升起每日的炊煙

一個女子踏在巨大的腳印上

生出春日的感動

粉紅色的果子

到太陽底下去

Things

My shadow is not the terrible giant of my lamp.
My hands are not shaking with malice
to terrorize you.

Pomegranate, dear pretty, pink face,
smile,

 open your heart;
everything that comes and goes
under the sun
has its own fresh smell.

A fish swims in the mists;

the willow, bowed to the earth, scrapes the dock.

People wash their clothes in the river
and smoke rises as usual from kitchen chimneys.

Again, a young girl steps into the Spring god's footprint
and gives birth to all the urges of Spring.

Crimson shadow,
come out into the sun.

1979

異鄉的早晨

雲層洶湧地向這邊捲過來
好似顯示天空深處更大的變幻
展現在廣闊的水面上，掩去黎明的顏色
黑壓壓的雲裏有許多揮舞的手勢
要把天地重新安排
翻開沉聚多年的抑鬱
裏面盡是無聲而雄辯的言語

一下子，一切模糊了
灰色的豪雨泯滅了邊界，天變了
怎樣分辨兇悍與溫柔？恐懼或是安慰？
荒蕪的心中只見白蛇一樣的閃電
從最高處竄下深淵
四周都是一片同樣的顏色
模糊了，不知是在故土還是異鄉
房間裏來自各處的中國人聚首，恍如
隔世的言語說出來變了意義

變化的天氣隔絕了
昨天眾人創出的那個今天
怎樣去說今天的故事呢？
不一樣了，攜來的中心失去了
相對的邊緣，沉重的行囊
變得難以言說的輕。昨天
變成碎片，混雜了不同口音的怨曲
圍繞着從迷霧中顯現的高塔

我從豪雨中醒來，看見變化的天地
迷濛中似有逝去的人在向我說話
又再隱入霧中。想起我們認識的人
散落在各處，經歷暴雨凌虐
默默看雨後簷滴，破碎的話噙在嘴角
混雜在別的聲音中學說成新的話語
澄藍的天空中，撕裂了的片片白雲
散落在異國的高樓旁邊

1991年7月，芝加哥

Morning in a Foreign Land

Clouds rolling like waves toward me, summoning
at every moment whole changes in the depth of the sky,
erase the reds and pinks and mauves of dawn —
clouds flailing dark arms, too,
laboring to change heaven and earth,
as if to call out into the open fears secure in gloom,
revealed as merely a silent debate of languages.

This scene blurs into gray, things lose their shapes
as the front moves in to cancel what's out there on the edges.
Is this, too, violence? Mercy? Fear or consolation?
In a heart made desolate white snakes of lightening
jump from some on-high into the abyss of earth.
The same colorless color is everywhere,
all a bruise, one doesn't know a native from a foreign land.
In my room we Chinese all gather from all over
but our former life's language, spoken, has altered meanings.

Changeable weather has cancelled
the new age we all created only yesterday.
How shall we proceed with today's stories?
Nothing's the same; the center people brought from mainland
has joined everything else in the periphery, some heavy luggage
having become inexplicably light, that old life
fragmented, mingling now with accents and dialects
circling some Babel suddenly there in the mist.

I wake to find heaven and earth indeed changed.
In my half-living in the mists the gone ones speak
and return to mist. I think of the ones we know
scattered about in the world, enduring storms.
A broken-off aftermath of words lingers at the edge of the mouth,
mixes with the new world's sounds to make yet another language.
In a blue, clearing sky the torn clouds
scatter around the skyscrapers of this foreign land.

July 1991, Chicago