



The Tiger Moth Review

ISSUE 1, 2019



The Tiger Moth Review

A journal of art + literature that engages with nature, culture, the environment and ecology

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The Tiger Moth Review is a journal based in Singapore that publishes art and literature in English, and works translated into English. The journal prioritises work from Singapore that engages with the themes of nature, culture, the environment and ecology.

Editor-in-chief: Esther Vincent Xueming

Issue 1, 2019
ISSN: 2661314X

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Cover image © Lydia Kwa

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Editor's Preface

The Tiger Moth Review was founded with a mission to feature art + literature that is conscious of humanity's interactions with and impact on the environment. I wanted to devote the journal to publishing work that is cognisant of how we humans relate to and engage with nature, culture, the environment and ecology, despite (or due to) the fact that some of us might find this way of seeing the world unfamiliar or strange, remote from our lived experiences or day-to-day existences. More than ever today however, I believe that artists and writers need to question, challenge and examine how humanity continues to devour, deplete and destroy the earth's bounty in its quest for modernity and progress. How can we human beings co-exist with the rest of the world in a dignified, respectful and sustainable way? How can we live more responsibly and commit to making more environmentally ethical life choices? Why should we care? These are ambitious questions that I hope we as citizens of the world can discuss, debate and problematise through the art + literature featured in the journal.

Before founding ***The Tiger Moth Review***, I did some research and found a lack of art + literature journals in Singapore dedicated to environmental issues. I decided not to let this thwart my spirits. Instead, I thought, why not start my own journal then? This way, I could be proactive in a process and purpose that I found meaningful and vital. I would create and sustain an independent platform for artists and writers in Singapore especially to have such conversations through their art, photography, poetry or prose, and allow for greater discourse across borders with regional and international work that would be published alongside works from Singapore. As I set out on this pioneering journey with a dream and vision, I found myself heartened. I was met with warmth, generosity and compassion from friends, acquaintances and strangers alike, who applauded my efforts, encouraged me and posted social media shout-outs to promote the journal's call for submissions. I found that not only had I founded a journal, I had found renewed belief and faith in a community of artists and writers within and beyond Singapore who were willing to give. I saw this as a sign of humanity's potential to nurture, sustain and create, which is at the very heart of ***The Tiger Moth Review's*** ethos.

And so it is with great joy and anticipation that I share with you the inaugural issue of ***The Tiger Moth Review***, made possible only through the support, love and belief of its contributors and readers. The works here have been selected because they resonate with the spirit of the journal. From **Aaron Lee's** tribute pantun to Maori artists "Tanga Tangan", **Khairani Barokka's** "Flood Season, Jakarta", **Lydia Kwa's** *tree shaman* which meditates upon a cut down diseased birch tree to **Juan Eduardo Páez Cañas' Bogotá Feathers** which celebrates the beauty of trampled feathers, every piece promises to reveal to any willing reader something extraordinary. While work from Singapore is prioritised as is the aim of this journal, this issue features art + literature from Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines, India, Australia, Canada, Columbia, Ireland and the United States of America as well. May you find a piece from this issue that speaks to you, and may we always have a heart of gratitude towards the earth for her providence.

Esther Vincent Xueming

Editor-in-chief and Founder
The Tiger Moth Review

Tanga Tangan

A tribute poem for Maori artists

Aaron Lee

He wāhine, he whenua, ka ngaro te tangata.

(Without women and without land, humanity is lost.) – Maori proverb

1.

It is almost evening. Wind-woven birds call
over the fields, the sky turns a gentle grey--
Mother's voice a low melody, her footfall
on the chalky steps speaks of the fleeting day...

2.

Sad and barefaced in the moonlight you stand
like the flame-haired tree seen through our window.
Sister, the same hand that last clutched your hand
gave me this letter to place under your pillow.

3.

Woman-Wife-Warrior: stark and unknowing,
my hands still work without rest. All winter long
each fugitive day sees my belly growing.
Here I am planted, here I become strong.

4.

Your tiny hand opens, receives the bright world
of an unknowable future. The earth formed you
my Daughter, and heaven calls you. Our tears unfold
life-breath, blood-pulse, soul-cry, all things made new.

This pantun (a traditional Malay poetic form, originally oral) is respectfully dedicated to the women artists of the Mata Aho Collective, Aotearoa. It is a meditation on the installation art work Kaokao #1. The title of the pantun is a portmanteau of the Maori word tangata and the Malay word tangan, meaning "hand".

Reprinted with permission.

First published on the Laniakea Culture Collective website (2018).

Redgate

Robert Wood

i.

We laid the chillies out,
put the haul by handful into bags,
spoke of that time with turtles
and dugongs, sea celery and rafts.

As the day mellowed, the honeyeaters
sang out and we braided a future
from stalks, knowing, once more,
that endless summer brought cold comfort.

ii.

We heard of the planes
bombing them
doing the work of ravens.

On our shore, plastic
washed up and the whales
in the distance swam with grace.

iii.

We listened to the shallow
praise of bureaucrats,
took soup from their bowls,
mud from their ears.

The hundred joints, the ten thousand nails
and the uncounted organs
of our forms bound this way,
to the granted security of apple seeds.

Introduction to *tree shaman* series

Lydia Kwa

This project revolved around sixteen instant film images I shot on 24th August 2015, of parts of a birch tree that had been cut down after succumbing to disease following a dry spell in Vancouver. Images were taken with an old Polaroid camera, using film from the Impossible Project.

Eight images were shot in the morning; then another eight in the late afternoon.

The image reproduced here is the third one in the morning series, and the poetic lines reprinted accompany the sixteen images in the chapbook *tree shaman* (Lydia Kwa Books, 2018). Proceeds from sale of the chapbook will be donated to Pacific Wild Alliance. To order the chapbook, email lydia@lydiakwa.com



tree shaman #3 © Lydia Kwa

The scanned image of *tree shaman #3* was produced by Robert Marks from The Lab, Vancouver, BC.

tree shaman
(poetic lines to accompany sixteen images)
Lydia Kwa

morning

cut/scar
resonant wound
place/displaced
mundane reality veils
magic
eavesdrop on murmurs
spectate the unspectacular
or misperceive as ordinary
sighs in subtle rippling

late afternoon

symbol for a cut
light enters dying
dusk parses
material
to immaterial
truth exists elsewhere
long past the sound of chainsaw
a code of exile
form's dissolution
weight
of this loss

Reprinted with permission.

Flood Season, Jakarta

Khairani Barokka

When the brown tongue of water
rises up to meet us here,
the house will be gone.
While inside the minds of islanders—
cushioned on the hills
of this sinking spectacle
of cardboard, blood, roads
twisting on each other like yarn
and neon, the flash of a
smile for the cameras,
journeys for food,
immune to eviction,
the rasping grey of the air—
we will be none.
Specks of paper floating
and mooring to the curb,
collecting under a tent
and against the grate.
While inside us,
we will never have felt
more present in the world
nor deadened, alive to the whims
of rivers and the sea, and bare.
Meaning bolts itself to hunger,
like the promise of fleshy
endless layers in a rice grain,
soft, half-fermenting, caught
under the folds of a nail.
Into our dreams will seep slowly,
until soaked with them,
paddy fields withered with drought,
or heavy and drowned; pebbles and glass
under trucks rushing manic to the capital,
bringing and wresting, oil drums, men,
boxes of ginger candy, forests of logs,
chairs made of water hyacinths.

Reprinted with permission.

Published in *Rope* (Nine Arches Press, 2017), first published in *The Poetry Review*.

Crystal Tears

Angelina Bong

White petals fall on wet ground,
the view is clear up high
with transparent umbrella dotted
with pearl glass raindrops. Buds
sprouting everywhere, like children ready
to make their way into the world.

Teenagers these days
are given eye jobs as Christmas gifts,
more common now than ever.

Would you tell a lily
to be a rafflesia or a magpie
to be a hornbill? If cherry blossoms
despise their fair meekness and long
to exude the sexiness of a red rose,
we will lose more than a nation.

Drizzles slow down, but crystal tears
continue hanging on every branch,
crying for every soul under the knife.

Written during a writing residency in Toji Cultural Foundation, South Korea, April 2018.

Two Poems by Ashwani Kumar

Remains of a new ecological order

Cafes, cinema halls, bookstores, medical shops, bars,
washing machines, refrigerators, televisions.
They all look the same here.
He skims through the garbage—

broken bottles, discarded syringes,
sanitary napkins, polythene bags,
hacked and twisted together.
They all taste the same.

Novels, short stories, poems,
films, songs, paintings,
speaking in various tongues.
They all sound the same.

Desires, fears, surprises, illusions
chop-chop-chop
sold for rupee, dollar or pound.
They all cost the same.

Is this a new shopping experience or
do we live in the slums of new languages?

Pythons, Rabbits, Caterpillars, Ants

After thousand years of uninterrupted
sleep, I wake up and see pythons
chasing lion-sized rabbits in my living room.

There are open temples.
There are closed temples.
But there are no Gods anywhere.
Only handsome headless caterpillar
priests telling stories of the murder
of four hundred aging ants.

I know it sounds ridiculous to suggest
that the forest can only be a forest
with trees, animals, birds and insects of all kinds.

Conflicted

Glen Ang Xun Zhe

My art aims to explore the theme of nature through the process of investigating different characteristics of a material. By experimenting with differing combinations and possibilities that each material presents, my works offer the audience possible narratives and ways in which to look at and think about the relationship between man and nature.

Amass (2018)

Paraffin Wax, Twine, Rope
Dimensions Varied

This work seeks to explore the characteristics of wax as a material through the motif of leaves. Through the subject matter of leaves and the mode of presentation, it presents a deeper narrative of the human nature of selfishness and constant yearning for power, which has taken the form of the amassing of leaves.



Amass © Glen Ang Xun Zhe

Manipulation (2018)

Leaves on Acrylic Board

60.96 x 91.44cm (24 x 36in)

This work engages more deeply with the idea of human selfishness, conveyed through the material of leaves. At the surface level, the leaves are enclosed within the acrylic board and can be seen as objects of beauty, due to the assortment of colours and markings unique to each leaf. At a deeper level, the work symbolises the manipulative and controlling nature of humans through its presentation in terms of shape, the use of rows and columns, and the impending decay of each individual leaf fragment.



Manipulation © Glen Ang Xun Zhe

Decay (2018)

Paraffin Wax, Wire, Plaster, Wick, Epoxy, Acrylic Paint, Pot, Rocks, Soil
54 x 32 x 52cm

This work examines the destructive and overt nature of man towards the environment. Drawing inspiration from Buddhist ideologies of the Bonsai being the tree of love, balance and harmony, I contrast this against the man-made material of wax and wicks to further highlight the impending loss of balance and harmony that is brought about by human interference with the environment.



Decay © Glen Ang Xun Zhe

The Birdwatcher's Corkboard

Ann Ang

Dead wings or living feathers,
he counts them in flight
against skies wrung with pastels
and traffic babble. Black-naped orioles
are yellow pips in tree-stubble.

The butterflies he finds in the grass
or on the cement path, winking
slow defiant colour:
flightless scales weightless
in the carriage of his palm.

Liking or not liking does not come into
the careful placing of pins. They hold
this slow-stirring tropical palette
breathing, under office air-conditioning,

with remembrance as old as
the building is new. The birdwatcher sits,
eyeing this refrigerated spring,
knowing that for some,
trees are seen only through windows.

Wheatfield with Mynahs

After Van Gogh

Crispin Rodrigues

The birds are conspiring again.
An open field means an open agenda,
collusion with the sky. The mynahs, boldest,
dominate the discussion, the sparrows comply.
Somewhere out there a kite awaits,
the tremors in its claws reaching out
to prey. The sight of the predator throws
the scene into a kerfuffle – impasto of velvet
feathers, while the hunted engage in aerial swirls,
smearing screeches across the canvas. The grass
hides the dead, preserving leftover conversations
for cats prowling in pitches after dark.

Straight-laced?

Gerard Sarnat

Singapore intimidated me what with long-declared dogma that any personages caught chewing gum—which was banned after vandals had mucked up sidewalks and keyholes and mailboxes and railway doors—would (as the rumour goes) be fined, even jailed.

But what got to me about this island was not The Lion City's G.D.P. rising to eighth in the world after it'd separated from Malaysia, rather the straightforward way people queued so orderly in clean buses at those southern stations down to the tip reaching the Straits, whereas stuff became lots more disorderly and filthier to the north of the former country's border.

Two Poems by Maureen Yeo

Invasive Species

We called him Cubbie
Because he was found in a cupboard
in my in-laws' driveway.

Where did he come from?
How long had he been there?
How did he survive?

Wikipedia had some answers.
At home, he would brumate in winter.
Brumation is staying for weeks

At the bottom of a lake or river,
without eating. He was native
to the Americas.

"This one is an ang moh turtle, ah?"
"This one is a red-eared slider. Ang ear not ang moh.
This one is a tough survivor."

I built a tank with rocks for basking.
"This is no way for him to live," the husband said.
"We should set him free."

"We can't set him free.
He is an invasive species. He outcompetes
the locals. And he's our responsibility now."

"But you see them everywhere,"
The husband protested. "What is one more out there?"
"It is one more too many."

How many local tortoises do you see?"
I asked the husband, who had no answer.
"Exactly. We can't set him free."

But I felt bad for Cubbie.
It was not his fault he was an invasive species.
This was no way for him to live.

You can't shut a living thing away.
He shouldn't have been here, but now that he was,
We couldn't put him back in the cupboard.

I brought him downstairs to bask
because our flat doesn't get much natural light.
One day, he escaped.

"Did you try and find him?"
The husband was concerned.
"Yes of course I did, but he's gone."

"I hope he will survive."
"He will definitely survive. He is tougher than our local species,"
I said, but my feelings were mixed.

I hoped he would survive.
An animal should live free and he was now free.
But he was an invasive species.

So we said goodbye to Cubbie.
He's somewhere out there, natural yet unnatural.
A part of our country.

We carried on with our lives,
Working, eating, commuting. Some days, I ask the husband,
"How many locals do you see?"

Riddle

The Chinese say, 不是猛龙不过江.

If it's not a fierce dragon, it won't cross the river.

I am a fierce dragon.

I crossed the sea.

My ancestors ruled the world.

My bloodline is ancient and proud.

I am master of my domain.

I am biggest in this small pond.

I love my children tenderly,

But I eat my own kind.

I kill in cold blood,

But sometimes I weep.

Who am I?

Garden State Palimpsest

Zen Teh

Garden State Palimpsest explores Singapore's constantly changing landscape and its residents' relationship with the land. I carried out interviews with previous kampong dwellers that become a starting point to reconstruct memories as images. These imaginings of nature in their various modes of presentation—as sculptural photographic images, videos and narratives—are complex layers of encounters that probe at ideals, nostalgia and desires with regard to our lived environments.

Garden State Palimpsest #01 (2017)

Ink on found luxury stone

70 x 21 x 299 mm (left), 72 x 21 x 242 mm (right)



Garden State Palimpsest #03 (2017)

Ink on found luxury stone



Garden State Palimpsest #05 (2017)

Ink on found luxury stone

59 x 21 x 104 mm



To Chiang Mai
For Phitsinee Jitprasert
Wong Wen Pu

I have known many great rivers in this world. I have known the Tigris and the Euphrates, fallopian cradle to human civilisation. I have traversed the vertiginous lengths of the Iguazu and the Parana, as they discharge the untamed heart of South America into frigid waste seas at the end of the world. With open palms I have scooped the iridescent waters of sacred Ganga, that familiar river of life and death, samsara and continuity, ohm and shantih, into my dust-clad hair and onto my browned pilgrim's back. Standing atop the bare pinnacle of the Alps, I have witnessed the singular destruction to life wrought by the Vajont. And my father's people continue to live along the banks of Pearl River, from which stupefying flora vapours of opium from the last century still rise, in voluminous violet plumes, by night. These rivers I have known are as ancient as the world and older than the flow of human blood in human veins.

But I am not here to tell you about these rivers millennials rich in romance and history and memories. This time, I want to tell you a story about the Chao Phraya and the River Ping. The most practical amongst rivers, they ply not in myth or lore, but oil and spermatozoa and waterborne diseases.

*

Tiratep was a boy who had, until recently, lived in a raised hut by a khlong in the district of Thonburi, Bangkok. For a living, Tiratep offered tourists rides along the Khlong Bangkok Noi in his motorised longboat. He would find them at Wat Arun in the morning, and ferry them to the various attractions nestled along Thonburi's intricate waterways: the colourful floating market of Taling Chan, Orchid Garden, Snake Farm. On the days when business was slow, he would take them out to a floating restaurant on the Tha Chin, where white dolphins, drawn by food scraps swept into the river, could occasionally be seen. At the end of each tour, Tiratep would drop his charges off at the Wang Lang pier, where they could visit the nearby forensic museum or evening railway market. It was good business, and the tips were often generous.

But when the rain had started falling, and continued to fall interminably for several months, the tourists stopped coming. They were unable to come, as flights into the city were cancelled, following the subsiding of Don Mueang and Suvarnabhumi's runways into the surrounding marshlands. And neither did they want to: Thermae Bar had closed for good after the water overran its basement premises, fresh food was increasingly scarce, and fighting between the Avalanche militants and the Royal Thai Army had spilled into the full length of Sukhumvit Road. One morning, Tiratep had taken his boat around to Wat Arun, only to find many other boat-tour operators like himself milling about the sacred grounds, some eating their breakfast of steamed bananas and sunflower seeds, others engaged in desultory conversations about the rain, but no tourist anywhere in sight. After several days without work, he had stopped making the morning trip to the temple. Instead, he stayed home and fished, casting his lines and fishing pots into the khlong behind his house in the morning, and sitting by them as they dangled limply in the brackish water all day. While waiting, he would lie under the slow ceiling fan in his hut and follow the languid turns of the blades, or watch ripples wrought by rain unmade by the river's flow. Rarely would his lines snare any fish; when he hauled in his fishing

pots in the evenings, however, they would be swarming with bloated riverbed scavengers: sapphire-blue prawns, marble-white shrimps, and the occasional golden crab.

*

At the beginning of fall, the rains flooded the power plants in the southern provinces, and the city's critical infrastructure began to fail. Streetlights no longer worked, hospitals evicted their patients, and fires from electrical short circuits broke out sporadically in parts of the city. The day after the city's grid was crippled, the men from Tiratep's village had watched, from the mouth of the Khlong Mon, the golden spirals of the Grand Palace burning across the black waters. The streets were dark by late evening. On the first night the power had went out, Tiratep had laid on the corrugated metal roof of his hut, transfixed by the stars, visible even through the rain clouds for the first time in centuries.

The military government had then abandoned the city and moved its headquarters and garrisons to the cities in the hilly north, taking with them the royal family and the Emerald Buddha. In the following days, the victorious Avalanches overran the Shinra Sarthon Unique Tower. They shot the vagrants loitering about the building's dry areas and draped a tarpaulin banner bearing their symbol, a black and white panda, over the old Coca-Cola advertisement. They then started a perpetual conflagration at the summit of the tower in angry defiance of the ceaseless rain. Snipers, stationed on the higher floors, opened fire indiscriminately at people who approached the tower.

It was when the water rose past the silts to begin lapping at the wooden floorboards of their raised huts, and the rain showing no sign of letting up, that Tiratep's village headman decided it was time for the villagers to move to higher grounds. Plans for the evacuation were drawn up, and there was a flurry of activity in the village in the following days, as everyone loaded their boats with dried food and replenished the fuel tank of their rickety engines. Tiratep had finished his preparations early, and went around the village helping his neighbours mend canvas roofs and chase fowls into floating pens. When all the preparations were completed, they set off in good cheer, sortieing orderly, longboats on longboats, like the royal barge procession Tiratep had seen during the coronation of Rama XIII, onto the Chao Phraya. However, the angry storm on the second day scuttled many of the boats in their convoy. Tiratep had narrowly avoided being swept downstream in the river surge, but he was separated from the other villagers. When the storm abated, he found himself having to make the long journey north alone.

*

In the following days, Tiratep made brisk pace chugging along the river, till the engine ran out of diesel. He had then retrieved the oars from beneath the thwarts and began rowing. He would sit on the stern of the boat in the light rain, pushing against the current with the weight of his body. At first, Tiratep ached deeply, his body unused to the physical exertion. But he soon grew accustomed to the dull throbbing in his arms and chest and back.

When he had rowed past the militant monastic enclave of Ayutthaya, glowing embers were flaring skywards within the walls of the city, drenching the night sky vermillion. Gone were the saffron-clad monks, chanting Buddhist suttas on the walls at daybreak, gone were the men

who visited to whisper secret loves to the city's weathered rocks. The granite prangs of the ancient temples had all toppled over. The cool breeze bore the acrid tang of burning sulphur. Tiratep quickly put Ayutthaya behind him.

Further upstream in Chai Nat, where the river arched and bowed like a green dragon, he rowed past the pangasius farms, cultivated for export to all over the world. These farms, like most bankside dwellings he had come across, were abandoned; the iridescent-scaled fishes had all drowned in the freshwater surge and were rotting by the thousands in their enclosures. Tiratep again quickly put Chai Nat behind him.

*

In the early days he met many other refugees like himself. Entire villages, plagued by the rain and malarial mosquitoes, had set out in droves for the hilly provinces of Chiang Mai or Chiang Rai. These floating affairs always had the festive spirit of a Bangkok weekend market. Chang Beer poured noisily from tin drums, bananas and river prawns grilled on racks of glowing charcoal, pans of sticky rice were passed from stern to stern of the longboats. They would share the news with him: Pattaya was burning and all of Bangkok, only five feet above sea level, was now swamped with half a meter of rain and polar melt. The Victory Monument was now a fountain sculpture, and Memorial Bridge had been bombed into the Chao Phraya by the Avalanche terrorists in the night. Whenever he encountered these other refugees, Tiratep was comforted by a sense of normalcy, as if the world they all lived in had not entirely fallen apart. However, after each meeting, each celebration, they always left him behind.

The last time he was abandoned, Tiratep had spent a particularly raucous evening with one such mobile carnival, singing last summer's pop songs and trading stories late into the night. This group from the southern district of Bang Nam had been displaced by the fighting between the militants and the government forces, and were rowing towards the ancient city of Zanarkand, not too far from Chiang Mai. When Tiratep learnt of their destination, he had tentatively expressed hopes of making part of his journey with them, and they had cheerfully, drunkenly, agreed. However, the movable feast had disengaged his boat from their convoy some time during the night, and quietly departed while he was asleep. By the time he awoke the next morning, his unmoored boat had drifted some distance downriver, and he was alone again. Tiratep missed the company of people for the next few days.

His loneliness was cured out of an encounter with the Avalanche militants one quiet afternoon. A well-supplied convoy of motorised lifeboats had sped by, panda insignia pennants flapping violently in the slipstream. *Stay away*, the men aboard had roared at him through battery-powered loudhailers. They strafed him with their mounted machine-guns without waiting for his reply. Tiratep had hurled himself onto the bilge as the screeching bullets tore through the blue and red tarp of the canopy and punctured the wooden hull of the boat. There he laid for a long time, arms wrapped about his head and neck, blood shaking his heart. When he eventually picked himself up, hours later, the lifeboats were no longer in sight. He spent the remainder of the day moored against the riverbank, mending the leaking holes in his boat with wax, and afterwards discovered that he no longer craved the company of others.

*

In the past, all that drifted past his hut by the khlong were spent condoms, plastic Coke bottles, and diseased tilapias. Now, it was corpses that would float by his boat amidst the debris of driftwood and broken clumps of water hyacinth. The freshly deceased would pass face-down, their trailing arms and legs making soft wimples in the water. The longer dead, convulsed into deep knots by putrefaction, would bob along more reluctantly. In the day, Tiratep would steer the boat away from them when he could, and nudge them aside with his oar when he couldn't. Night-time, when he tossed sleeplessly on the waxy-paper lined floor of the boat, he would feel the occasional body bump scrape gently against the boat's hull, right next to him, as it continued on its long journey towards the Gulf of Thailand.

One afternoon, he encountered a familiar longboat snagged against liana in the river. He had immediately recognised the weathered garuda figurehead on the prow of the boat. Not so long ago, tourists had posed for photos against its gaudy grimace as the headman plowed his longboat noisily through the quiet khlongs on his way to Taling Chan or Orchard Garden or Snake Farm. Now, as his longboat drew closer, Tiratep could see into the other boat's dim interior. The headman and his two sons, slumped heavily against the lacquered hull, the wife, sprawled face down across the small gilded buddhist altar. Their faces were black from malarial fever. Tiratep pressed his palms together and offered a quick *wai* and prayer, then rowed on.

*

Now that the rain was lighter, the wind fairer, Tiratep fashioned a mast and sail for the longboat. When the sail filled with wind, the boat skimmed lightly over the waters. Tiratep would perch at the stern of the boat and feel the autumnal wind stream gently through the long furrows of his hair.

Towards the last days of fall, Tiratep found himself in the heart of Siam. The alluvial plains of old, famed for its silvery rice paddies and windswept fields of red sorghum, had turned into floodplains, as the river spilled over into the land: a vast expanse of wastewater, golden-red and shimmering when the sun set. When the wind blew lightly across the surface of the water, ripples scattered molten light in every direction. Here, when Tiratep strayed from the deep natural course of the river into the flooded fields, he would quickly find his oars scraping against the shallows. Here, too, he noticed that everything had become very quiet. There was no chirping of birds or buzzing of insects. Only the sound of waves lapping against his boat, the sound of his oar meeting the water, the sound of his own deep breathing. It was as if all other noise has been sucked out of the world, and that he was the only thing still living, the only heart still beating.

In Nakhon Sawan, a thousand kilometres upriver from Bangkok, the churning Chao Phraya diverged into the green Ping and the red Nan. Follow the jade serpent, Tiratep had as a child heard his people say, would lead to the city of the first Siamese kings. So he had beat on against the placid current of the Ping, past the ruined gray ramparts of Bhumibol Dam, past the limpid blue waters of Lake Doi Tao, past the washed-out, ochre slopes of Doi Inthanon, till Doi Suthep, with its still-green hillside, still dotted with white ceramic pagodas, came into view. And in the last month of the lunar year, as Tiratep arrived in Chiang Mai, the weather turned cold. That night, the moon was supposed to be at its fullest, but the rain clouds had blotted it entirely from the sky. When Tiratep rowed past the line of whitestone cairns that marked the

water boundary to the ancient capital, he rowed into the heart of an inky night. His frail candle, muted by its shade of thin rice paper, was the only weak light on the black river.

*

The Thai people are a people of water. Venice of the East, their ancient dynasties prospered on trade with the Dutch and Chinese and Burmese on the rivers of Indochina. During the Songkran, they would throw water and rice at each other, for luck and health in the coming year. Their markets were floating, as were their gardens, and their lives pulsed to the rhythm of their riverine hearts.

In a previous age, not too long ago, the Thais would give thanks to Phra Mae Khongkha for the gift of water during the Loi Krathong. Young lovers, hand in hand, would set candlelit krathongs into the Ping River, as they prayed for shared felicity in this life and the next. If you stood by the riverside with your feet in the water, you would see these krathongs lingering serenely above the moonlit water, like fireflies, as they slowly begin their long journey into the night.

But that was the world of a happier time, a happier age. A world irrevocably lost, never to be regained. Somewhere deep in the mysterious mountains, an aquifer springs forth, to join streams and tributaries and rain, and wipe clean the slate of this late world.

How to talk about love at a time like this

After George Oppen and conversation with a friend
Jason Harris

Stopped at a red light after class; we see Lake Erie.
All the life it holds trembling in its dark, still palm:
the yellow perch, the walleye. The brown trout,

algae bloom. On the radio Trump says *We are putting*
America first. The lake says *No thank you, America.*
No thank you. In deference to our wishes it recedes.

The best of my generation are drowning. Everyone
I know knows bodies belong on land unless the body
is aquatic. Everything is vulnerable when touched

by something other than itself. We don't know, any-
more, what to expect from our government. The lake,
on the other hand, expects more from us. Expects to be

touched by cleaner hands. I remember the poem
about Lake Superior. The one in which you annotated
in black. The hearts you drew around the metaphors.

The exclamations. I remember the moon orbiting the red
polish of your nail beds as we surveyed the undertow
of streets before us. I remember our promise to be one

little rift upon the lake. To be one little image inside
the poem. To be a basic need: an element, a tributary,
a runoff. Eventually the water will come and we

will be left defenseless in its rise. *Radical Democrats*
want to turn back time Trump says. His crowd cheers
static into the radio. The lake is exhausted. Anxious.

Is waiting for us to write ourselves out of history.
What would you do if you had more time? I ask.
We swim our way through bright manufactured

lights of the city. *I don't know if I have the time,*
you say, to think about that right now. Please,
just keep driving. Accelerating through a yellow

light, I contemplate what we would do if we could
stand at the mouth of Lake Erie? Contemplate how
it would feel if we let the water wash over our feet,

let what remained in the tide batter our shins.
Shiver at the thought of the battering changing us.
But the floorboard was a floorboard, not a lakefront.

Andaman Winds

Thirupurani Gunasekaran

Moving past wild trees, feet covered in wet mud, every now and then she looks up to the sky, following the rays of the sun, praying she is not lost. Blinded by massive white clouds, she shuts her eyes and listens, losing track of time. Not far off, gentle waves sweeping against the shore reach her ears, inviting the forest girl to play.

Wandering off the path, she hurries impatiently, the song of the ocean guiding her steps. White sand on an empty beach.

She settles down for a much awaited conversation—the sea and the girl, lost in themselves.

Loved

Zjayanhi (Nicholas) Kang

i.

I want a love that burns the skies
but all you want is to dive deeper
into the ocean.

ii.

The tree offers us her shade, her wood
and expects nothing.

The river offers us her water, her calm
and awaits no similar kindness.

The sun offers us her light, her hope
and expects no gratitude.

What can we offer these beings
when our lives depend on them?
Depend on them, destroy them?

iii.

I want to yell, to roar from every building
to anybody who can listen to my passions,
my sorrows, my successes, my mistakes.

But only the trees and the mynahs reply.
They accept me, and that's all I can ask for.

Bogotá Feathers

Juan Eduardo Pérez Cañas

The trampled feathers found in any city street around the world are a metaphor, or a trace of the beauty and the life that turns grey beneath our feet because we are so used to walking through the same streets every day that we become oblivious or desensitized to what is around us. These fallen, filthy feathers, although not entirely pleasant to examine, allow us moments of stillness and contemplation.

With each plume, my objective was to find a type of unique linear form, like a signature, amongst the mess and dirt they hold. The technique I used was graphite pencil with watercolor, and my intention was to represent these found objects, the feathers of the Columba Livia or urban pigeons, as closely to reality as possible.

Visit the artist's website: <http://caudapodo.blogspot.com/>



A feather that turns like a tornado to the floor
© Juan Eduardo Páez Cañas



A feather that breaks like paper on the floor
© Juan Eduardo Páez Cañas



A feather that looks like a capital letter
© Juan Eduardo Páez Cañas

Two Poems by Joyce Butler

All Earth

I wait until all earth is quiet
and land falls away,
one side a map
outshining blue light,
red deserts now
where we fall
one by one,
under a killing sun.

Our voices remain
under the sea,
calling out like dolphins
remembering
where our lives
should be.

Submerged now.
Yes, destroyed.

My Own Sakura

I kiss your face with cherry
blossoms as you sleep,
My own Sakura of Spring;
they see me weep.

From south to north
my blossom follows all
of your footprints.
In fourteen days I open,
a carpet at your feet.

Is my awakening
my red-crowned crane of
Okinawa? Archipelago
of warm water currents.

Hanami.
Let us hold hands
and go.
Hanami.

Plum Blossom.
Two flowers opening
a pink river, blooming.

Remembering Summer

Karen Cristhel Frialde Dupale

Gasan, Marinduque, Philippines



Days of Halcyon © Karen Cristhel Frialde Dupale

Orani, Bataan, Philippines

In memory of the late Emiliana N. Dupale



Wisps of Hope © Karen Cristhel Frialde Dupale

In This Hour

M. J. Iuppa

Even in rain's stinging wind, I
can see a wave of leaves swell

& tumble, like the tide coming in-
to shore with its bits of glamor—

shells & stones, and I try to empty
myself of the agony of meeting

you like this. I am not ready to be
angelic, or swift in my shadow's

departure. I want a share in this
hour's slow breath—its cattle-

breathing-steam, pressing
foreheads in sleep's tight

huddle, and my cold body
wanting to be warm, like

them—more than anything.

Al Falah

Abdul Ghani Hamid

Here, I feel the earthly space
'God is Great' reverberating through the mihrab
caressing the wanderer's solitude,
my mind and muscles
are empty and dust-like
wandering a distance, carving out desires.

Al-Falah has long been embedded in speech
along Orchard Road and Angullia Park
and this morning this space is not silent
no emptiness or dust flying around
the longing has been nursed
asking for peace from Him.

Kissing the incessantly subdued yearning
permeating the silence since morning,
I place my forehead
on the earth, with gratitude.

Translated into English by Annaliza Bakri

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First published in *Sikit-Sikit Lama-Lama Jadi Bukit* (Math Paper Press, 2017).

Contributors



Ann Ang's poetry has appeared in the *Quarterly Literary Review Singapore (QLRS)*, the *California Quarterly* and the *Jakarta Post*. She is also the author of *Bang My Car* (Math Paper Press, 2012), a Singlish-English collection of short stories, which has received complaints for being excessively funny. Ann is pursuing a DPhil in English at Oxford.



Glen Ang Xun Zhe is a patron of the arts who graduated from the School of the Arts Singapore in 2018. His works aim to explore the theme of man and nature, and often take the form of ephemeral, three-dimensional sculptural works. In the process, he exploits the differing characteristics of materials to create unpredictable effects and combinations.

Abdul Ghani Abdul Hamid (b. 13 April 1933, Singapore—d. 13 April 2014, Singapore) was an award-winning writer, poet and artist. Writing primarily in Malay, A. Ghani Hamid, as he was commonly known, had hundreds of poems, short stories, essays, newspaper articles and plays to his name. As a painter, he had participated in more than 60 exhibitions since 1950. He was a founding member of Angkatan Pelukis Aneka Daya (APAD, or Artists of Various Resources) and the recipient of three prestigious literary awards: Anugerah Tun Seri Lanang (1998), Southeast Asia Write Award for Malay Poetry (1998) and the Cultural Medallion (1999).

Source: http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_427_2008-11-18.html



Photo credit: Alvin Pang

Annaliza Bakri is an educator and translator. She believes that literary works could be the subliminal voice that cultivates greater understanding, awareness and consciousness of the past, present and future. An ardent advocate of works that are beautifully penned in Singapore's national language, she strongly believes in the divine art of translation where shared heritage and mutual discovery promotes humanity. Her translations of Malay poems have been published by *Prairie Schooner*, *Brooklyn Rail*, *Transnational Literature* and Singapore's *Text in the City*. Adding 'storyteller' to her many personas, she

performed her translation of an award-winning novel, *Batas Langit*, written by Mohamed Latiff Mohamed, at the Singapore International Storytelling Festival 2014. In 2017, she edited and translated a bilingual poetry anthology featuring places by some of the best Singapore Malay poets titled *Sikit-Sikit Lama-Lama Jadi Bukit*.



Photo credit: Wasi Daniju

Khairani Barokka is a writer, poet, and artist, who has presented work extensively in thirteen countries, and has received six residencies and multiple grants. Among her honours, she was an NYU Tisch Fellow, and is a UNFPA Indonesian Young Leader Driving Social Change. Okka is creator of shows such as *Eve and Mary Are Having Coffee*, and most recently co-editor of *Stairs and Whispers: D/deaf and Disabled Poets Write Back* (Nine Arches), author-illustrator of *Indigenous Species* (Tilted Axis), and author of poetry collection *Rope* (Nine Arches). She is a Visual Cultures PhD Researcher at Goldsmiths and can be found at <http://www.khairanibarokka.com/>



Photo credit: Jee Photography

Angelina Bong is a Malaysian poet and visual artist with a background in Fashion. She has read and performed in South Korea, Malaysia, South Africa, Botswana, UK, Australia, India and Egypt. Some of her poems have been translated into Korean, Malayalam, Japanese, French, Arabic and Malay. She is published online and in print including several poetry festival anthologies. Her first solo Art & Poetry exhibition abroad was held after completing a 7 weeks writing-art residency in Toji Cultural Foundation, South Korea in April 2018. She chirps on Twitter and Instagram at @swakgel



Joyce Butler lives and works in her hometown of Waterford, Ireland. She is married with two children. She has been shortlisted twice by the Atlantic Short Story Contest: *The Lone Wolf* (2015) and *Spring Rain is a Different Entity* (2017). She writes poetry that is inspired by nature and her previous experiences of severe depression from which she is now fully recovered. Her poems have been published in *Deise Voices* and *Inside The Bell Jar* online magazine. She has also completed the third draft of a historical fiction novel, receiving mentorship from novelist Carolyn Jess Cooke through the Mslexia website.



Karen Cristhel Frialde Dupale is an alumna of the University of the Philippines Baguio with a degree in BA Language and Literature. Currently, she works at the Newton Study Center as an English reviewer and tutor. A literary nomad, she enjoys reading works by Lualhati Bautista, Ricky Lee and Arlene J. Chai. She writes movie critiques and loves journaling. As a wanderer, she fancies travelling the mountains of the Philippines. Her name means 'pure' in Greek.



Thirupurani Gunasekaran was born in Singapore, however her ancestral roots often pulls her back to India. Being a mountain and nature lover, these elements can be found in her writing. She is currently exploring a health-based initiative and social work for children welfare.



Jason Harris is a poet and NEOMFA candidate. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Winter Tangerine*, *TRACK//FOUR*, *OCCULUM*, *Longleaf Review*, *Wildness Journal*, *Peach Magazine*, *Cosmonauts Avenue*, *The Gordon Square Review*, and others. He is the Co-Editor-in-Chief of *BARNHOUSE Journal*, a contributor for *Watermelanin Magazine*, and lives in Cleveland, OH. He can be found on social media @j_harriswrites



M.J. Iuppa is the Director of the Visual and Performing Arts Minor Program, and Lecturer in Creative Writing at St. John Fisher College. Since 2000 to present, she is a part-time lecturer in Creative Writing at The College at Brockport. Since 1986, she has been a teaching artist, working with K-12 students in Rochester, NY, and the surrounding area. Most recently, she was awarded the New York State Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Adjunct Teaching, 2017. She has four full length poetry collections, *This Thirst* (Kelsay Books, 2017), *Small Worlds Floating* (Cherry Grove Collections, 2016) *Within Reach* (Cherry Grove Collections, 2010) and *Night Traveler* (Foothills Publishing, 2003), and 5 chapbooks. She lives on a small farm in Hamlin, NY.

Zjayanhi (Nicholas) Kang is a 17-year-old non-binary teenager currently waiting for his O-level results. He lives with his parents and two cats whom he loves very much. He writes poems and stories about romance and fantasy as if they were completely opposite concepts. He also delves into thrillers about murder and mystery, and of course fanfiction. He adores video games and reading, lives on coffee and naps a little too much but always manages a page or two in his journal, in which he rambles about life in conservative Singapore.



Ashwani Kumar is a Mumbai-based poet, writer and professor at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences. His anthologies *My Grandfather's Imaginary Typewriter* and *Banaras and the Other* have been published by Yeti Books and Poetrywala respectively. His poems, translated in Indian languages and Hungarian, are noted for their "lyrical celebration" of garbled voices of memory and subversive "whimsy" quality. He is co-founder of Indian Novels Collective which brings classic novels of Indian Literature to English readers. His other major scholarly contributions include *Community Warriors* (Anthem Press), *Power Shifts and Global Governance* (Anthem Press), *Global Civil Society: Poverty and Activism* (Sage International) and *Migration and Mobility* (forthcoming, Routledge). He also writes for *Financial Express*, *The Print*, *Business Standard*, *The Hindu*, *Indian Express*, *DNA*, *Open Democracy*, amongst others.



Photo credit: Ronnie Hill
Photography

Lydia Kwa has published four novels and two books of poetry. Her writing spans various times and spaces in the Asia-Pacific region and imagination. She lives and works in Vancouver as a writer and psychologist. Her recent art show *tree shaman* featured images of a cut-down birch tree.



Aaron Lee is a pilgrim poet, writing mentor, community organiser and ethics lawyer. He is acknowledged to have played a key part in the late 1990s renaissance of Singapore poetry. His three books of poetry (including *COASTLANDS* published in 2014) are critically acclaimed. He also edited several books including the best-selling anthology *No Other City: the Ethos Anthology of Urban Poetry*. Lee was international writer-in-residence at the Toji Cultural Centre in 2016. He and his wife, the national artist Namiko Chan Takahashi, are co-founders of the Laniakea Collective, an intercultural art practice.



Juan Eduardo Páez Cañas was born in Palmira, Colombia, in 1973 and specialises in scientific and children's illustration. With an M.A. in Semiotics from the Tadeo University, Bogotá, he teaches drawing and visual appreciation at the district university in Bogotá, where he lives and bases much of his work. His work is faithful to the traditional notion of graphic drawing, but with a flexible style that is often inspired by the natural world and organic forms.



Crispin Rodrigues is a poet and essayist. His first collection of poetry, *Pantomime*, was published by Math Paper Press in 2018. His poems, short stories and creative non-fiction has been featured in *Kepulauan* (2014), *A Luxury We Must Afford* (2016) and *Eunoia Review*, among others. He is currently working on his second collection of poetry, slated for publication in 2019.



Gerard Sarnat won the Poetry in the Arts First Place Award and the Dorfman Prize, has been nominated for Pushcarts and Best of the Net Awards, authored *HOMELESS CHRONICLES* (2010), *Disputes* (2012), *17s* (2014) and *Melting The Ice King* (2016). He is widely published by Oberlin, Brown, Columbia, Virginia Commonwealth, Wesleyan, Johns Hopkins, Gargoyle, Margie, Main Street Rag, New Delta Review, Brooklyn Review, Los Angeles Review of Books and San Francisco Magazine.



Zen Teh is an artist and educator interested in man's relationship with the natural world. Teh's art practice is shaped by her proficiency in photography and painting, alongside her continual investigation into interdisciplinary studies of the works of nature and human behaviour. Her works have been showcased in numerous group and solo exhibitions in Singapore, including the National Museum of Singapore, Singapore Art Museum and Art Science Museum. She has also exhibited regionally in Thailand, Indonesia, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and China, and has been invited as a guest speaker at regional environmental conferences such as ASEAN Powershift 2015 and Hanoi Innovation Week 2016. Teh was recently awarded the winning title for the 7th France+Singapore Photographic Arts Award.



Wong Wen Pu is a Taiwanese pilgrim. He is presently artist-in-residence in an Argentinean lighthouse.



Robert Wood is interested in place, relationships and ecology. He is the author of *History and the Poet*, and *Concerning A Farm*. Robert is the Chair of PEN Perth in Western Australia and has family in Singapore and South India. Find out more at: www.robertdwood.net



After media-related stints in Los Angeles, London, Hong Kong and Singapore, **Maureen Yeo** now teaches English, Literature and life skills by introducing her students to Roald Dahl's great principle: "A little nonsense now and then is relished by the wisest men". She has done freelance travel journalism for TODAY and has been published in periodicals by Math Paper Press. Her children's book, *The Great Singapore Poo Sale and Other Beastly Business*, about the animals of Singapore uniting to protect their homes from humans, was published by Epigram in 2018.