



voices

an art and literary magazine
produced by the asian community at tufts

spring 2002

Editors' note

the work

speaks

for its

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Thank you:

~Thanks to ACT for your support and funding of this magazine.

~Thanks to Tanya Santos for her printing press.

~To the contributors:

I thank you for your voices: thank you: Your most sweet voices.

William Shakespeare (1564–1616)

~Thank you to everyone who has helped us put this together:

Uyen- Thanks, Andy
Andy- Thanks, Uyen

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It turns (I shifted uneasily in your bed)

They form a tight circle around the
Baggage claim carousel
Awakened,
it comes to life
Fueled by their undivided attention.
(My body exuberated with radiance
powered by
His eyes. His fingers. His lips)

One closed community formed by the same point
of origin
(like us, brought together by our mutual attraction)
But there is no love in this bond. Only
Selfishness. Locate what you want
Take it. And leave.
(you picked me out from the packed crowd at
the party and took me upstairs.
Took it. And left)

The carousel moves and the crowd grows excited.
It turns (I shifted uneasily in your bed).
The carousel goes on and on
(The movements stopped,
you became ice and I
Nothing)

Momentary glory, the baggage claim carousel
is labeled by its indifference
Bulky. Thin. Old. New. Fragile.
All the same; it turns with them all.
(I've been marked as easy
Age. Appearance. Character.
You think I'd follow them all upstairs.)

*Sylvia Wu



Alone
*Kohn Liu

Our generation will always remember what we were doing when the WTC fell. Studying abroad in Hong Kong during the incident changed the way I saw myself. It shocked me to read student writings on bulletin boards claiming America deserved what happened to her. I found myself questioning my identity. Everywhere I went I saw people who looked Chinese like me, but didn't think the way I did. It's ironic how I've never felt more American than when I was in China. I couldn't even watch reruns of "Friends" without feeling a tug in my heart as the New York skyline flashed by with the towers still standing.

Our generation has everything that the ones before us never thought were possible. Computers, movies, television, the Internet, video games, cell phones, air conditioning, contact lenses, deodorant, post-it notes, credit cards, rollerblades, pearl milk-tea, instant noodles, ice cream, M&Ms, Disney, The Simpsons, MTV, pizza delivery, plastic surgery, abortion, Civil Rights, just to name a few are dreams come true in the pass hundred years.

Think for a moment what you would do without these things...

Our generation takes too much for granted. I made this drawing to make up for not being where I wanted to be at

the moment – home. I want to dedicate this to every life lost, every moment spent, every second together, every memory forgotten, and every lesson learned. Not all is lost. I've learned to look outside the box from this experience. I'm grateful I've seen the Twin Towers when they were standing. I'm thankful you are reading this.

*Helen Tong

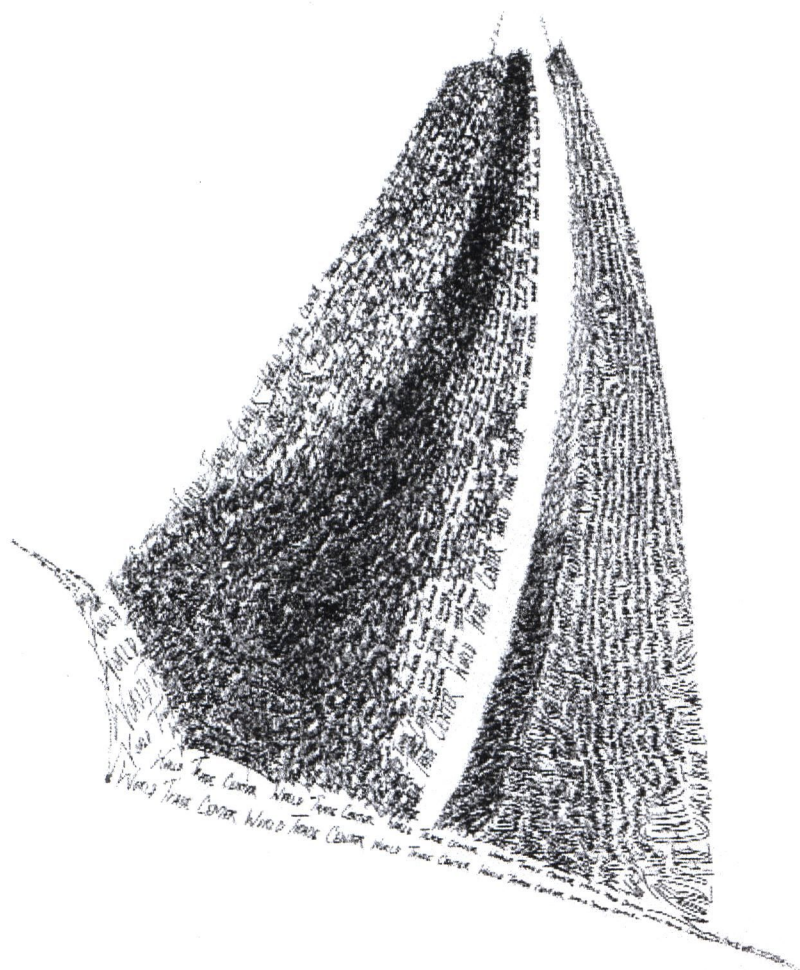
Opposite Page

Original size: 16 x 23

Medium: Ink Pen

Dated: September 19, 2001

*Helen Tong



[Small, illegible handwritten text]



*Jacob Silberberg

Lilies float in a basin, showing how tranquil the courtyard is in a mosque in Xi'an, China. One of China's oldest and most historic cities, Xi'an is home to a sizeable Muslim population who are allowed to practice their religion.



* Jacob Silberberg

A pedestrian descends the stairs at the Macau Museum of Art, on Macau Island. Less than an hour away from Hong Kong by ferry, the former Portuguese colony is riddled with corruption and violence, lacking prestige compared to its British equivalent.

Smile

I can feel myself shooting through the bends, rocketing up and plummeting down. I can feel myself zigzagging and flipping. I can feel myself going crazy.

It's like being on a rollercoaster ride. A moment high, a moment low, a moment somewhere I don't even know how to describe. Sometimes I'm even hanging mid-air, but half the time it feels like I'm flying across the sky and not knowing where I am. Everything is just a blur, even the shrieks and screams around me. Everything is just in the background.

Amidst this haze, I realized that whenever I thought of her I'd feel like I had myself become beautiful¹. I tried to ignore thoughts of her, but my effort proved to be futile and she kept coming back. That was when it all hit me – my life has been set to spin indefinitely with one girl, that same girl.

Ever since, I've been reminiscing. All the happiness, the sweet memories (yes, even the mentally created ones), everything just encircled my eyes. I felt joyful, but I had to remind myself that I couldn't live in a world of dreams

¹ Soseki, Natsume. *Kokoro*. Trans. Edwin McClellan. Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, Inc. 2000. p.

155.

forever. I felt my eyes dart continuously between reality and all the memories, making everything else a blur. The things and the people around me became molded gradually into the background and all that was left on stage was me and the one element that made me feel the closest I've ever gotten to the one reality that I wanted to be in – my memories with/of her. Anything beyond the spotlights was just a gray mass.

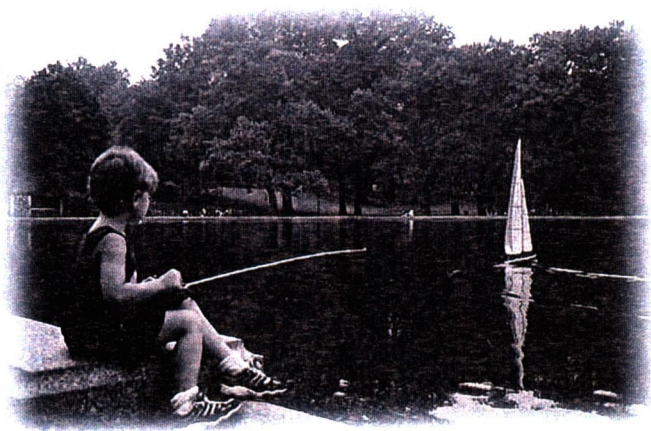
People have been talking to me, smiling at me, but even amidst that I'd find myself wandering off into distant worlds. I'd feel like I wasn't there, and then all of a sudden snap back into the real world around me and miss half the things they were telling me.

I don't know how long the ride will be, but it's still going round and round. It's not frightening, nor is it upsetting. I won't throw up, or get dizzy. I'll just be dazed and feel like I'm in a trance. It's like living in a world blanketed with a white dreamy haze.

The ride is all about reliving the past. Reliving the joy, the fun, and the love. It's about reminiscing and a sad smile.

But, if you think about it, a sad smile is still a smile.

*Kevin Tu



Sailing
* Wilma Chan

Taken away: My homeland my freedom and me

Until then we are still children fighting imaginary battles in front of news headlines of Chinese officials humiliating Taiwan. Our mouths are our weapons and we execute mass destruction, charging at full force at the satellite images before our eyes.

Until then our self-identification is the fuel, creating lines of fire among people who held different political views; views that were left to seed because there was no tolerance. No dictator. No Big Brothers trying to mold you all into one black sea of heads.

Until then the smell of rotten eggs exploded in the air and we all inhaled the crude simplicity of freedom. The freedom that empowers us. The freedom that secures us like air ensuring our survival: invisible, essential, but easily negligible.

Until then we pause *Fatal Attraction* after Michael Douglas says, "Made in Taiwan" and rip the film into flesh and bones like two paranoid film critics.

Until then the evening news is our imaginary battlefield. Our mouths are our weapons, charging with full force at the satellite images on TV.

Until then the boys learn about war through PS2 games and never make the link before how they might easily turn the games of virtual combat into the reality

Handwritten text in cursive script (caoshu) covering the page. The characters are dense and overlapping, typical of a calligraphic composition. The text is written vertically from right to left.



Until then red reminds me of sun-burnt faces, cherry-flavored lollipop, tropical fish and Scarlet O'Hara's burgundy dress in *Gone with the Wind*.

Until then you and I can still stand by the shore, our arms wide-open, our feet wrapped in sand, our hair flirting with the unbending wind.

Until then we can stand there and scream. Shout out all the nasty names we can think of to the other end. Roll our eyes and spit into the water.

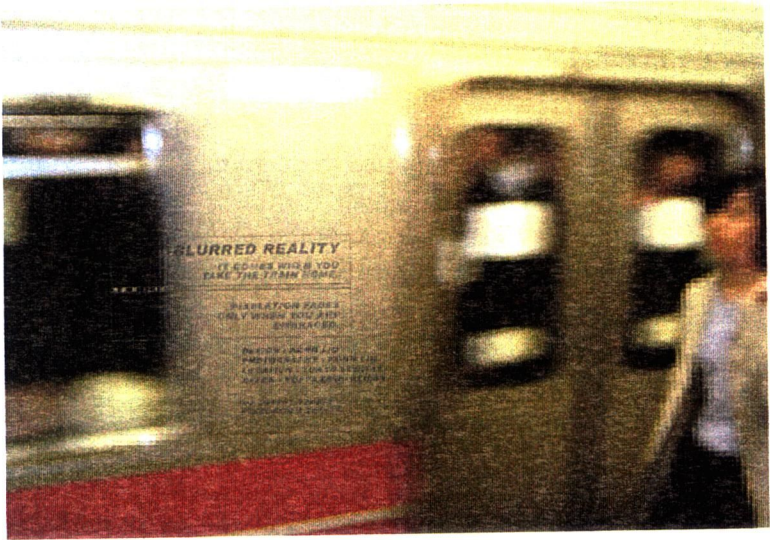
Until then the adults on the highway along the coastline would just shake their heads, their lips curving slightly upward.

Until then I am a sea urchin and my nationality the spikes, readily on defense.

Until then my world is divided in two: there is your country and there is my homeland.

Until then I can still call it my homeland.

*Sylvia Wu



Blurred Reality

*Kohn Liu

Dusk to Dawn (excerpts)

“Baby, you will soon be going to America, no?” You were frying battered onions in mustard oil, and you had to raise your voice to be heard over the sizzling.

“Yeah, I’m leaving in three days.” I leaned against the sink with the faucet that constantly dripped, watching your hands flip golden-brown fritters.

“How happy you must be to be going back. You must miss your Baba and Ma very much.”

I shrugged. “I see them at home all the time anyway.”

You spread some fritters over a paper-towel-lined steel plate. “It was nice to have a young person here with laughter and talk. Yes, it will be sad here without you—just a big empty house with only your Nani and myself.”

“And the washerwoman.” My eyes moved from your hands to your face.

“Yes, and the washerwoman when she comes.”

“I’m going to miss this place. I’m going to miss Nani.”

You nodded. “Hmm.”

“Do you know what it is like to miss someone?”

You laughed. “Baby, all of my life, I have been missing, so I do not anymore know what it feels like. So many friends I have made—the sweeper at the Delhi mansion where my Dada and I worked, the man at the banana stall in Goriahut Market, the little son of the driver in Bhagalpur. There are so many that I do not even remember anymore. None of them I see anymore. That is what ends up of life, Baby. You meet people, you stay, you leave, you remember, you forget.”

What I remember the most about your body is how hairy it was. Raven streams flowed from the fountainhead of your scalp; your arms and legs were matted with black coarse threads; your cheeks darkened with stubble in the afternoon. I stared at your cheeks and thought they would feel rough and smooth at the same time, like velvet rubbed the wrong way.

“When you lose someone, you miss them. It’s the sadness of losing them.”

You looked at me with shining eyes and grinned. “Then what do I have to worry about? No one in my life now, no one to miss, no one to lose.” You threw more oil into the pan and it sputtered out. It almost burned you.

Did I ever tell you what dusk is like in America? We used to paint picture for each other with words. Your tableaux were of the Delhi mansion, or the village by Durgapur where you grew up, moving from assistant-duster to bathroom-cleaner to grocery-buyer and then to assistant-cook when the budget was tightened. You worked in the same house as your elder brother, and the both of you used to spy on the house across the street where your parents still worked.

Your tableaux were of rural villages, clusters of mud huts with floors so clean you could eat off them. Your tableaux were of afternoons spent hastily locking windows and watching dust storms from inside. Your tableaux were of fires built near the ocean where workers roasted their dinner and sang hymns and film hits loudly and lustily.

And what is it that I could have painted for you? What of America would linger in your thoughts, in your memories, as

you wandered from house to house, village to city, bestowing
your services on grandmothers and wives and brothers?

I would take you driving with me, in this dusk, along
the meandering road to the library three townships away,
extending what could be a five-minute drive to a fifty-minute
one. I would take you on this highway, the newly-paved
smoothness silent under the wheels of Baba's Lexus.

Today, the dusk is like one of your dust storms frozen
and distilled through miles of emptiness. It is white and gray,
layered and filtered through each other. It is the dim yellow of
headlights intersecting above the ground. It is a long metallic
chain of traffic with red brake lights like beads. It is silence and
anticipation. When I accelerate, I can feel the ground slipping
beneath my feet quickly, so quickly.

I check the rearview mirror, and it's a businessman on a
cell phone or a female executive reapplying lipstick behind me.
Each time, I am checking for you. You're driving me past the
Victoria Memorial and its bordering river where beggars bathe.
The stench of trash and the blaring of horns awaken me. Nani
is still snoring. You watch me through the rearview mirror and
you offer a small smile. I watch your eyes, hard and shining and
deep. They are brown, so brown, like the river that flows
beyond us.

*Aditi Banerjee



*Jacob Silberberg

Elderly people rest on a bench inside the school's courtyard in their small village outside Xi'an, China. This small village is among a growing number that hold elections for their local leaders.

Breath

Shadows began to blanket above me and darkness convened the sky. And from ashore, I saw her coming, and she was coming for me. The intensity of her blue gave off a painful air. She started slowly as if trying to creep up from behind me. She moved pervasively and smoothly as if she were dancing to the rhythm of her own hum. I was scared—frightened for myself, and frightened for everyone around me—when I realized then, as I looked around the beach that I was all alone.

And in no time, I too felt the beat from the earth and the sound from her bellow. She gained momentum at the speed of light, and with my eyes fixed on her, and her's seemingly fixed on mine, I clenched my wrist and showed myself as if I were ready for a fight. But in me, my heart thumped and I knew I was bracing for an attack. Aside from the drops of sweat that fell from my forehead, I remained in a motionless state.

The sound quickly turned into a tremble and the bellow became a roar. There was no need for bullying or teasing, just cut to the chase. I rolled my eyes upward without moving my head, and saw that she towered high beyond me. And in a flash of second, she came crashing down. I felt the most excruciating pain as I was hurled from the ground and thrown into her wrath.

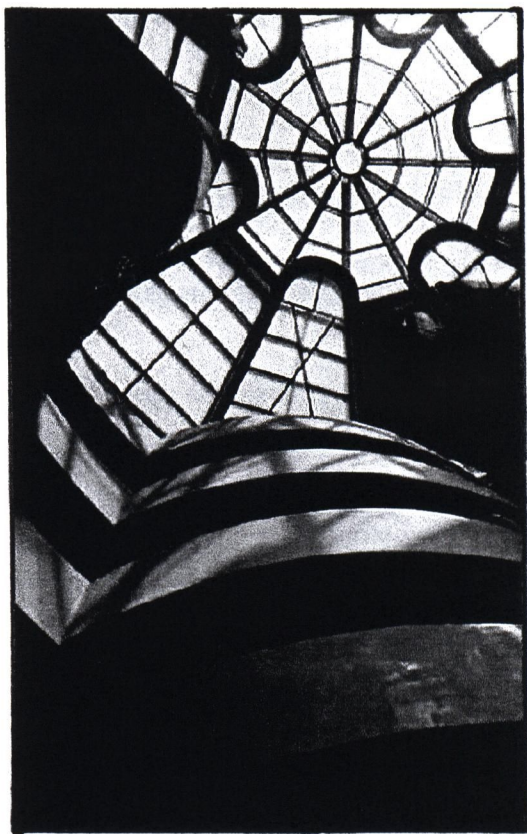
I was dragged so far from the land that I could barely make it out on the horizon. I let out a voiceless cry that was

immediately drowned by the thunder of her roar. It is then that I realized that I am but a pebble in this vast ocean. Tossed and turned, and thrown left and right under the ocean, I lost orientation—where is up and where is down—instinct told me to find air to breath. I fervently struggled to swim upward, or what I thought was upward but panicked when I couldn't find light. I quickly shifted my body and paddled in the opposite direction.

I feel like I am sinking into a bottomless sea.

The ocean is where I find myself at ease. But today, it was my enemy.

*Walter Chan



The Gugg

* Wilma Chan

My Taipei through Childhood Lenses

I used to be a sun-chaser. A fearless warrior squinting her eyes against the angry glares of the fireball locating and relocating as it disappeared, again and again behind the skyscrapers the apartments, the columns of tinted windows and rows of power lines.

The sky was not always clear blue then and I had never seen a silver moon. Nothing but an occasional round dish in the sky radiating The same shade as every other streetlight. I still do not dare point to it today, Because it would come get me in the night. Bite off my ears like my mother had to me so.

And the sky composed of clouds and grayness and figures of half-naked, middle-aged men, in their boxers, standing on their balconies, smoking cigarettes. The rolls of fat they wear like swimming tubes around their bellies, keep them afloat if they chose to jump through the thickness to rediscover their youths.

The first time I had seen a rainbow
I hit my head hard against the window.

And can still feel the dent on my forehead
every time someone says that word.
Until then its colors were but a reflection
of oil from gasoline on the streets
After a late-afternoon thunderstorm.

Taipei is drowning in smog and smoke.
From a bird's eye view it must look like blocks
A child had carelessly poured honey over.

I picked them up and licked the syrup.
Swallow the memories in whole.

*Sylvia Wu



*Jacob Silberberg

Human Leë Justin carries an umbrella in the Kwun Tong neighborhood of Hong Kong. Hong Kong is prone to sudden downpours during the summer, drenching pedestrians in a matter of moments, only to end minutes later.



Pink Bunny
* Wilma Chan

Evolution

I was told that evolution is fiction
I have heard that true love awaits ahead
Never weeps behind

Catch me,
But my mind flies like a butterfly
Higher it goes, weaker it gets

I want to define virtue
They have already predestined our plight
And now, where do I really stand?

I want to seize the moment
Somebody special to be there
Right there waiting, never leaving
Ever

Foolish laughters
Disguised many hearts
Happiness revealed in a glimpse

Multiple identities
Orange solo
Blended in lukewarm latteccino

Too soon a departure
A heart wishing to remain
You, it is because of you

All the same
Yet all changed
The origin of my linear progression

*Kohn Liu



