

THE KALEIDOSCOPE CHRONICLE



Under a
Hong Kong Moon —
Chronicles of
the Unseen

ISSUE
2



Department of English
The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

THE KALEIDOSCOPE CHRONICLE



Under a Hong Kong Moon



Chronicles of the Unseen

THE KALEIDOSCOPE
CHRONICLE ISSUE 2

i Initiated in 2025, *The Kaleidoscope Chronicle* celebrates the remarkable talents of the English Department students and the wider Hang Seng University of Hong Kong community. It focuses on literature, language, culture and creative humanities. Edited and produced by faculty members of the Department of English, it aims to showcase the students’ diverse interests and achievements.

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PREFACE

Dr. Anna Tso, Associate Professor
Department of English

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What does the moon see when it looks upon Hong Kong?

This question guided us as we gathered the works for *The Kaleidoscope Chronicle*'s second issue. The answers arrived in many forms: Shakespeare's inconstant moon refracted through student essays, original poems that speak across languages and centuries, short stories where celestial light falls on the everyday, and artworks that capture what words cannot.

"Under a Hong Kong Moon—Chronicles of the Unseen" invites readers to consider the moon not merely as a symbol, but as a witness. To the unrecorded moments that shape us, to the madness and clarity it inspires, to the connections it illuminates between strangers, between generations, between ourselves and the person we are becoming.

I am deeply grateful to our Guest Editor, Dr. Belle Ling, whose careful attention has shaped this issue with precision and care. My sincere thanks to Prof. Kwok-kan Tam too, whose wise counsel and kind encouragement have guided this editorial team from the very beginning. Most of all, I thank our contributors for trusting us with their visions, our editorial team for their unseen labour, and you, dear reader, for holding these pages under whatever phase of the moon finds you now.

Anna Tso
April 2026

GUEST EDITOR'S NOTE

Dr. Belle Ling, Lecturer
Department of English

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The moon has been a predominant image in different cultures. More than one thousand two hundred years ago, Li Po imagined the moon and his shadow as his drinking companions. For John Keats, the moon is a symbol of perfection and transcendence. In one of the poems by Emily Dickinson, "The Moon was but a Chin of Gold", the moon's identity shifts from body part to flower to weathervane, indicating the cosmic indifference to the capriciousness of phenomena, as if echoing Su Shi's apprehension, expressed in his classical poem "Prelude to Water Melody", about the ceaseless waxing and waning of the moon. The otherworldliness embodied by the moon often encapsulates our projection of desires, dreams, homesickness, alienation, melancholy, and mystery.

In this Second Issue of *The Kaleidoscope Chronicle*, we would like to explore the undertones of the moon in this contemporary era with the theme "Under a Hong Kong Moon—Chronicles of the Unseen". There has been so much that is underexplored and very rich in texture in this adventure with the moon, and you can see how the writers in this issue shape and reshape the texture of the moon in this city. You can read poems which anchor memories from childhood prayers to a mother "somewhere near the moon", and a fable of a monster who chooses devotion over survival under the moon's warning gaze. There are short stories about a clock tower speaking directly to the moon as the sole witness to its lost purpose, a daughter recounting her mother's exacting lessons about womanhood with Chang'e surfacing as the mother's solitary divinity, and a young witch



The Moon Between Branches

Sonny Zheng
2025

whose uncontrolled magic under the moon leads to her abandonment but somehow Hogwarts promises her a space where she no longer feels like dust. You can also taste in the creative non-fiction pieces how the moon is experienced as a steady, undemanding presence which witnesses fleeting friendships, or how the moon revolves at its own pace, mirroring a journey toward self-acceptance.

I sincerely hope that in this issue you will also find your own unseen chronicle. Whether the moon appears to you as a witness, a mirror, or a quiet companion, may its light illuminate something long felt but never named.

Belle Ling
April 2026



Veil of Mist, Lunar Revelation

William Cheung
Water Colour on Paper
2025

ESSAYS

Shakespeare's Use of the Moon as a Multi-Layered Symbol in *Romeo and Juliet*

Kerry Lee

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The moon carries multiple layers of meaning throughout Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. I argue that the moon's inconsistency influences the judgement of *Romeo and Juliet*; its dual nature both shelters the lovers and symbolises chastity; and its "sick and pale" foreshadows tragedy and breakdown in natural and social order. This essay will mainly focus on Act 2, Scene 2, the balcony scene where Romeo sneaks to Juliet's balcony.

There are eight phases in the lunar cycle as the moon orbits the Earth; these phases continually change (moon phases). Juliet expresses her worries over the moon's inconsistency when she tells Romeo, "O, swear not by the moon, th' inconstant moon, that monthly changes in her circle orb" (2.2.109-111).

After understanding the moon's nature, it is possible to interpret how the moon's changing phases and association with night create a realm of transformation and chaos, influencing characters' emotions and sanity. Later, the dual nature of the moon explores its representation in the protection of the lovers and symbolisation of chastity. Finally, the moon foreshadows a breakdown in social and natural order.

As the night progresses, Juliet loses her rationality, and her emotions increasingly overpower her judgement. In the early night, when the moon still shines, Juliet represents reason and calm. As Juliet warns:

And the place death, considering who thou art.

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If any of my kinsmen find thee here. (2.2.73)

Juliet is aware of the tension and hostile relationship between the two families, since they have been enemies for centuries. Moreover, Juliet is worried about Romeo's safety and aware of the consequences, showing she has examined the situation when she sees his appearance; she therefore warns him of his dangerous act. The night represents irrationality and lunacy; therefore, Juliet struggles between sanity and emotion. As Juliet says:

'Tis almost morning. I would have thee gone,

And yet no further than a wanton's bird,

That lets it hop a little from his hand. (2.2.190)

The phrase "'Tis almost morning" implies that Romeo has already stayed for a long time; as morning approaches, his risk of exposure increases because the darkness no longer protects him. In this urgent circumstance, Juliet knows Romeo must go, yet she desires to keep him close. Juliet then compares herself to "a wanton's bird", showing how love reduces her to being irrational and wilful. Juliet's self-contradiction is evident in two contrasting speeches: first, she recognises the circumstances and consequences and tries to avoid danger; then she ignores them to follow her emotional desire.

After understanding how the moon influences Juliet's sanity and emotions, the following focuses on the moon's dual nature: it both protects the lovers and symbolises chastity.

The moon and darkness collectively protect the lovers from the danger of exposure. When Juliet expresses her worries about Romeo, Romeo replies, “I have night’s cloak to hide me from their eyes” (2.2.107). This shows night as a literal and symbolic shield from the Capulets, the enemies of Romeo’s family. Furthermore, moonlight fosters their love by allowing them to meet. When Juliet asks Romeo, “By whose direction found’st thou out this place?” Romeo replies, “By love, that first did prompt me to inquire.” (2.2.86) The moon often takes its natural role as a source of light as well, usually with positive and lyrical overtones (Martin 296). Therefore, it is possible to interpret that although Romeo claims love leads him to meet Juliet, he relies on the moonlight to reach the balcony. Together, the night hides the lovers from danger and moonlight guides the lovers to meet, allowing them to grow an intimate connection.

Moonlight not only protects the lovers and enables love, but it also symbolises chastity. Romeo desires sexual interaction with Juliet. However, the moon also refers to Diana, the chastity goddess. Therefore, Romeo exclaims:

Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon,
Who is already sick and pale with grief. (2.2.4-5)

He compares Juliet to the sun and tells her to fight against the moon in his monologue. In this statement, Romeo attacks the moon to praise the beauty of Juliet. Later, Romeo exclaims, “Be not her maid since she is envious. Her vestal livery is but sick and green, and none but fools do wear. Cast it off!” (2.2.8-10) Romeo tells Juliet not to be influenced by the moon; do not submit to the chastity it represents and thereby accept his sexual invitation in his monologue. Juliet remains chaste. Juliet exclaims:

In truth, fair Montague, I am too fond,
And therefore thou mayst think my ‘havior light.
But trust me, gentleman, I’ll prove more true

Than those that have more coying to be strange. (2.2.98-100)

In this statement, Juliet expresses her love and tells Romeo that she is “more true” than the women who act coy or strange, in other words, distant, to preserve a reputation for chastity. She then redefines chastity as truthful and constant love, not artificial coyness imposed by other women. Her promise to be “more true” conveys her seriousness about chastity, as it is a sign of her sincere love and asserts her commitment to it. The symbolism of Juliet’s chastity is also related to her family. In Elizabethan society, daughters were regarded as property of their fathers. It was considered the father’s responsibility to safeguard his daughter’s virginity prior marriage. Moreover, premarital sex is socially and legally forbidden. As a result, Juliet’s chastity not only preserves the family’s reputation but also shows her loyalty.

THE SICK MOON:

DEATH AND DECAY IN NATURAL AND SOCIAL ORDER

Finally, the sickness and paleness of the moon foreshadow death and decay, thereby signalling a breakdown in both natural and social order. It can be understood through the lunar cycle. In Act 2, Scene 2, the moon is in its last quarter—about one week before the new moon; when the moon is invisible from Earth and nights are the darkest. After *Romeo and Juliet* marry in Act 2, the play moves into the new moon phase, which represents darkness. It is worth noting that the word “death” appears after their marriage in greater numbers. It looks like “death” steals up behind “love” (Reiko 87). Moreover, in Act 2, when Romeo exclaims, “Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon, who is already sick and pale with grief, that thou, her maid, art far more fair than she.” (2.2.4-6) The moon’s “sick and pale” is attributed to Juliet and its envy anticipates the deaths to come.

The moon is deeply tied to mental health; this is evident in words such as “lunar” and “lunacy”. The word “lunacy” comes from the Latin word

“luna” (moon). Hence, it is believed that lunacy is triggered by the moon’s cycle. The impulsiveness of Romeo is also a trait of lunacy. Later, the unsteady attitude of Romeo is similar to the moon’s changing nature. In Act 3, when Tybalt and Mercutio fight, Romeo tries to break up the fight. Yet, Tybalt stabs Mercutio under Romeo’s arm. Romeo explains his intervention:

11 Tybalt, that an hour
Hath been my kinsman! O sweet Juliet,
Thy beauty hath made me effeminate
And in my temper softened valor’s steel! (3.1.113-115)

It shows that Romeo’s intervention is because of Juliet, as they are married in Act 2, and the Montagues and Capulets are now family. Therefore, Tybalt is not only Juliet’s cousin but also Romeo’s kinsman; Juliet’s love makes Romeo calm and soft, not as hot-headed as before, leading him to resolve the conflict. Although Romeo’s intentions are sincere, they precipitate tragedy: Mercutio’s death, Tybalt’s death, and Romeo’s banishment. It shows that the love between *Romeo and Juliet* disrupts Verona’s social order.

The sickness and paleness of the moon also signal in the natural order. In Romeo’s statement, “Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon.” (2.2.4) In this metaphor, Juliet is the sun, while the moon is jealous and represents the goddess of chastity. Yet, Juliet—the sun—loses her power upon death; it therefore loses its sparks, resulting in the extinguished sunlight. The natural order itself seems to be broken, as the prince declares, “A glooming peace this morning with it brings, the sun, for sorrow, will not show his head.” (5.3.305-306). Even though peace has been achieved, it is dark and sorrowful because it comes at the price of the lovers’ lives. “The sun, for sorrow, will not show his head” personifies nature to reflect the grief of Verona. It can be interpreted that Juliet—the sun—is too sorrowful because of the tragedy to her and Romeo to show light. Therefore, even though morning has arrived, it feels like night; even the natural world mourns in disorder.

Therefore, the prince’s sunless morning in Verona confirms that the lovers’ tragedy has cosmic consequences.

In conclusion, Shakespeare’s use of the moon in the balcony scene reveals a multilayered symbol. In the balcony scene, Juliet struggles between rationality and emotional desire. At the same time, night and moonlight protect Romeo and help the lovers meet, but the moon also stands for chastity, so Juliet chooses to be “more true” and wait for marriage. As the moon grows “sick and pale” and the nights move toward darkness, the story moves into death and decay; their love, meant to heal the feud, instead disrupts Verona’s social order. By the end, the city is left with a “glooming peace”, where natural order is also disrupted.

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The “Dark Side of the Moon”: Celestial Chaos, Madness, and Earthly Tragedy in Shakespeare’s *King Lear*

Michael Dong

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INTRODUCTION

The moon is a common symbol in literature. In Shakespeare’s writing, the stars and moon are more than just pretty lights. They are strong forces. They have a clear meaning and power. They change the characters’ lives and their whole world. For Shakespeare’s audience, the moon was very important. It was not just a light in the sky. It controlled the tides. It showed the passing of time. It stood for purity and magic. Most of all, it showed the balance between the world and society. In the plays, when the moon acts strangely, it means trouble for people. It can mean a mind breaking down, a king losing power, or a family falling apart.

This paper will show how Shakespeare uses the moon as a symbol in *King Lear*. In this play, the moon is a key symbol. It does not just sit in the background. Instead, it reflects the play’s main ideas: chaos, madness, and a broken society. Shakespeare uses moon language, warnings from the sky, and wild night storms. These things make the tragedy bigger. They move it from an individual’s problem to a problem for the whole world. This study will focus on *King Lear*. Looking at the play which shows the moon’s role clearly and deeply. So, we can follow one main idea: in the play, the moon acts in “unnatural” ways. This shows the “unnatural” things people do. This makes the play more than a story about human mistakes. It becomes a story about a universe that is broken.

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The argument will proceed in steps. First, it will establish the narrative and thematic landscape of *King Lear*. Then, it will chart the moon’s symbolic function in three connected dimensions: first, as a symbol of cosmic and social disorder; second, as a catalyst for and mirror of madness; and third, as a structural symbol of foreshadowing and inevitability. This focused exploration aims to show how Shakespeare’s moon in *King Lear* stops being a distant orb. Instead, it becomes the cold, inconstant eye of the storm. This storm consumes a ruler, a family, and a kingdom.

SYNOPSIS OF *KING LEAR*

King Lear is a tragic story about an elderly king whose arrogance led to chaos. *King Lear* decided to divide his kingdom among his three daughters, but he required them to express their love for him in exaggerated ways. His two elder daughters, Goneril and Regan, feigned flattery to him and received the shares they deserved. However, his youngest and most sincere daughter, Cordelia, refused to exaggerate her love for her father. *King Lear* banished her and her loyal advisor, Kent, from their home and deprived them of their rights.

Once Goneril and Regan gained power, they betrayed their father. They deprived him of his knightly status and dignity and then threw him into a stormy environment. In pain, Lear fell into a state of madness and wandered alone in the wilderness, accompanied only by his fool and the disguised

Kent. He met Edgar, another victim of betrayal. Edgar was the legitimate son of the Earl of Gloucester. He was framed by his illegitimate brother, Edmund, and now hides under the name “Poor Tom”, being a crazy beggar. Edgar’s pretended madness reflected Lear’s true mental breakdown.

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The Earl of Gloucester tries to help Lear, so Goneril and Regan punish him for treason by blinding him. The blinded Gloucester is later guided by Edgar, who conceals his identity. Meanwhile, Cordelia returns from France with an army to rescue her father. She and Lear are reunited briefly, but their forces are defeated. Edmund, now a commander, orders Cordelia’s execution. Goneril poisons Regan out of jealousy over Edmund, then kills herself. The play ends with almost total devastation: Lear dies of grief holding Cordelia’s body, leaving the shattered kingdom to Edgar and Kent.

BAD MOON RISING:

THE MOON AS A SYMBOL OF COSMIC AND SOCIAL DISORDER

In *King Lear*, the moon is not just a light in the sky. It is a key symbol. It connects the order of heavens to the order of human society. When the moon acts strangely, it is a clear sign. It signals that the natural world and the social world are falling apart. This idea is most directly stated by the Earl of Gloucester. His speech in Act 1, Scene 2 sets the symbolic framework for the entire tragedy. Shakespeare uses the moon to show a world where all normal rules are broken.

Gloucester’s Speech on Eclipses (Act 1)

The most direct link between the moon and disorder comes early in the play. The Earl of Gloucester speaks to his son Edmund. He talks about recent strange events in the sky. He says,

These late eclipses in the sun and moon portend no good to us...

Love cools, friendship falls off, brothers divide... in palaces, treason; and the bond cracked ’twixt son and father. (1.2.101-107)

This speech is very important. Gloucester believes the heavens control life on Earth. An eclipse is when the sun or moon is blocked. In Shakespeare’s time, people saw this as a very bad sign. It meant the natural world was out of balance. Gloucester says this imbalance causes human problems. Love disappears. Friends turn away. Brothers fight. In palaces, people commit treason. The bond between a father and son breaks.

He is giving a warning. The disturbed moon is a direct cause of the terrible events that will follow. His own family will show this. His son Edmund will betray him. The king’s daughters will turn against the king. The chaos in the kingdom is mirrored by the chaos in the sky. The disrupted moon is a clear signal of a disrupted world. In this world, children no longer obey their parents. Kings lose power. The play then shows this exact thing happening. Gloucester’s speech sets the stage. It tells the audience that what follows is not just bad luck. It is a cosmic disaster.

The Storm on the Heath as Lunar Domain (Act 3)

The moon rules the world of night. The storm on the heath is not just bad weather. It is part of the moon’s domain. This storm is where the breakdown becomes physical and real. *King Lear* is caught in this “tyranny of the open night” (3.4.2). There is no friendly moon to see him here. There is only dark and chaotic weather. This stormy night pushes Lear into madness. It turns him from a powerful king into a crazy old man.

The storm shows the moon’s power in a different way. It is not a silent predictor now. It is an active, violent force. Lear shouts at the wind and rain. He challenges them. He says, “Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! Rage!

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blow!” (3.2.1-2). The storm answers him with fury. This is the lunar world in action. It is not calm or romantic. It is a place of raw chaos. It reflects the chaos in Lear’s mind and in his kingdom.

His companion, Edgar, pretends to be Poor Tom. He talks about being cursed by the stars. He says “Star-blasting” (3.4.58) and being vexed by a “foul fiend” (3.4.59). His crazy talk fits perfectly with the wild night. The chaotic moonlit world does not cause love here. Instead, it causes a loss of sanity. The storm is the physical form of the disorder Gloucester predicted. The sky is angry. The earth is in chaos. The king is mad. All these things are connected. They all happen under the same inconstant moon. The moon provides cover for this total breakdown. It shows that the problems are not small. They are as big as the sky itself. When the moon is not normal, it means the world is not normal. The authorities of parents and kings are destroyed. The natural order of life is turned upside down. The storm proves that Gloucester was right. The disturbance in heaven has come down to Earth.

THE “DARK SIDE OF THE MOON”:

LEAR’S PSYCHOLOGICAL UNRAVELING

The moon’s symbolic power in *King Lear* moves beyond being a mere omen. It becomes an active participant in the tragedy. It directly fuels the psychological breakdown of the play’s central characters. The chaotic world of moonlit night does not just predict madness. It actively creates it and then holds up a mirror to it. This is seen most clearly in the transformation of *King Lear* himself.

The Moonlit World as Catalyst for Madness

For Lear, the storm on the heath is not just a setting. It is a crucible for his madness. The play places this event within the domain of the moon, the ruler of night, and instability. It provides the stage for transformation into insanity. Lear is caught in what the text calls the “tyranny of the open night” (3.4.2). This phrase is important. The night is not passive; it is a tyrant. It oppresses him. There is no gentle, watchful moon. Instead, there is only the dark and chaotic fury of the storm, which is an extension of the moon’s inconstant and disruptive nature.

This environment directly attacks Lear’s mind. He is stripped of all his kingly comforts, his knights, and his shelter. He is exposed to raw elements. The storm outside begins to match the storm inside his head. His speeches on the heath show this blend. He shouts at the wind and rain as if they are his disobedient subjects or his cruel daughters: “Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow!” (3.2.1-2). He is trying to command the chaos, just as he once commanded a kingdom. But the lunar world does not obey it. Its wildness overwhelms him. It pushes him from a state of angry rationality into true, profound madness. The moon’s domain provides the extreme conditions—the total loss of order and comfort—that break his sanity. His journey from a powerful king to a “crazy old man” happens under the moon’s dark, chaotic light.

THE MOON AS AN OMEN

Apart from the chaos and madness depicted in the play, Shakespeare also uses the moon as a narrative tool in *King Lear*. It plays an important role in predicting future events. When the moon is mentioned in a strange way, or when the characters talk about the disorder of celestial bodies, it gives a warning to the audience. It indicates that natural order and social order are collapsing. This creates a sense of an inevitable fate that envelops the entire play.

Lunar Images as Prediction

This play profoundly expresses the view that stars and the moon control life on Earth. The most famous example is Gloucester's speech about the solar eclipse, which sets the tone for the tragedy from the very beginning. But the use of the moon and stars as a means of prophecy is not limited to this speech. It runs through the language of other characters, forming a coherent pattern of prediction.

For example, let's look at the character The Fool. He is not just a comic actor; he often utters heart-wrenching truths. In his poems and riddles, he uses the imagery of the moon and seasons to predict the consequences of Lear's actions. He warns Lear that giving up the crown is a serious mistake and implies that this unnatural behaviour will bring unnatural consequences. Although he does not directly mention the moon, his remarks about the inversion of seasons and losing one's mind are in line with the chaotic cosmic pattern represented by the solar eclipse. His predictive role links the king's personal folly with the broader cosmic framework established by the moon phases.

Furthermore, the language related to the moon is filled with a sense of danger and inevitability. These characters themselves also feel that they are living in an era determined by ominous signs. This feeling prompts them to move towards the tragic ending. After losing his sight, Gloucester laments: "As flies to wanton boys are we to th' gods; They kill us for their sport." (4.1.36-37) This sentence echoes the sense of helplessness towards cosmic forces initially suggested by that uneasy moon. The gods are cruel and arbitrary, and this belief stems from the realisation that observing natural signs will only predict destruction.

The Moon and Unnatural Phenomena

The moon's warning is ultimately a warning about the "unnatural." Gloucester explicitly connects the eclipses to the breaking of the most fundamental bonds: "the bond crack'd 'twixt son and father." (1.2). The entire tragedy unfolds as a series of these unnatural breaks: daughters against father, son against father, sister against sister.

The moon, with its irregular lunar eclipses and association with chaotic nights, becomes a symbol of this inverted state of the natural world. When the celestial body that governs tides and cycles shows abnormal behaviour itself, it not only allows but also reflects the abnormal behaviour existing on Earth. Edmund's rise, *Gunnar* and Regan's cruelty, and Cordelia's expulsion are "unnatural" behaviours. They are the counterparts of human behaviour and lunar eclipses. This play creates a direct parallel relationship: when the moon becomes dark and its order is disrupted, the rational light, loyalty, and family love in the depicted world of the play also go out.

This creates an inescapable dramatic contrast effect for the audience. In the first act, we hear the voice of the prediction. Then, scene after scene, we witness the realisation of the prediction. The early abnormality of the moon predicts the arrival of the outcome—predicting a world where a child will betray parents, the king will go insane wandering around, and love will not save anyone. This prophecy is not subtle or ambiguous; it directly declares the collapse of the universe. When Lear carried Cordelia's body onto the stage, the audience understood that this was not merely a sad ending. It was the conclusion of that terrifying trajectory that had been predestined in the stars and signalled from the very beginning by that tumultuous moon. The prediction of the lunar phase ensured that this tragedy was both extremely cruel and extremely inevitable.

SCHOLARLY CONTEXT AND CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES

The moon in *King Lear* is not just a literary symbol. It is a window. It shows the intellectual and cultural debates of Shakespeare's England. Scholarly research helps us. It shows how Shakespeare used beliefs about the moon and astrology to build his tragedy. The study of the cosmological views of that period helps to clarify how the playwright utilised the common understanding of the moon among people at that time and the broader field of astrology to construct his tragic works. This series of studies places the imagery in this play within a real historical context filled with fear, superstition, and scientific exploration.

In Shakespeare's England, people believed in the power of the stars. This belief was common in Renaissance Europe. It is popular for people to read almanacs and prognostications (Camden 73). Plays talked about astrology often. This shows the audience is familiar with the subject and its folklore (Sondheim 243). This belief system had two parts. These were astrologia naturalis (natural astrology) and astrologia judicialis (judicial astrology). Natural astrology studied how planets influenced nature. For example, it studied the moon's effect on tides and growth. People saw this as a kind of science. Judicial astrology was different. It prophesied human destiny based on planets. It was a "fatalistic doctrine" (Sondheim 245). *King Lear* uses this distinction. It also shows the controversy about it.

Gloucester's speech about eclipses is a key example. It shows belief in judicial astrology. Eclipses were seen as omens of disaster, and Gloucester says the eclipses cause terrible things. He says, "Love cools, friendship falls off, brothers divide...the bond cracked 'twixt son and father." (1.2). This was not a strange view. It reflected public fear. Shakespeare uses Gloucester to show this fear. He shows that disorder in the sky means disorder on Earth.

Then Shakespeare shows the opposite view. He uses Edmund's soliloquy. Edmund calls judicial astrology "the excellent foppery of the world." (1.2.121) He says people blame the sun and moon for their own mistakes.

As Currie and Neal explain, this "apparent opposition between Edmund and his father reflects the Renaissance controversy over the validity of judicial astrology, and no doubt the divided beliefs of the audience" (4). Edmund shows a new scepticism. He agrees with people like King James I. James I disliked these practices (Elton 156). Shakespeare shows this argument. He asks: Are we controlled by the stars? Or are we responsible for our own "surfeits of...behaviour" (1.2.122)?

This history changes how we see the moon's symbolism. The play does not choose a side. The tragedy makes both views seem possible. The disasters Gloucester fears do happen. But Edmund's own actions also cause the plot. Human evil does not need stars. The moon is in the middle of this tension. It is both an active omen and a passive symbol. Characters see what they want to see in it.

In the end, scholarly work proves something. The moon in *King Lear* is a historical symbol. Shakespeare did not make it up. He used public beliefs. He put the moon in a big debate. This debate was about fate and responsibility. This makes the play more than a family story. It becomes a cosmic question. The "unnatural moon" is not just a pretty phrase. It is a sign. It shows a world where people argue about order, fate, and the mind.

CONCLUSION

In the end, the moon in *King Lear* is not a background detail. It is a central force. We saw it work as a clear prediction. This prediction showed cosmic and social disorder, starting with Gloucester's speech on eclipses. We saw how its chaotic power drove *King Lear* into madness on the stormy heath. We saw this same chaos reflected in Edgar's role as Poor Tom. Finally, we saw how its symbolism created a feeling of fate. This foreshadowed the tragic end of all natural bonds. Scholarly research shows this was a real

belief in Shakespeare's time. The fight between Gloucester's superstition and Edmund's doubt was real for the audience.

Looking only at *King Lear* shows the full power of this symbol. Shakespeare uses the moon to link a king's personal madness to the fall of his whole kingdom. He links it to the breakdown of the universe. The unnatural moon shines its cold light on an unnatural world. It reminds us that in this play, human suffering is not small. It is written in the stars. It is mirrored in the unsteady, silent eye of the night.

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Illuminating the Dark: The Moon, the Unseen, and the Hidden Narrative in Baudelaire's "The One Possessed"

Mark Lee

Charles Baudelaire's poetry does not simply describe darkness; it inhabits it. In his poem "The One Possessed", Baudelaire constructs a world where light is borrowed, meaning is obscured, and the speaker's true self exists only in shadow. This essay will analyse how the poem uses the imagery of the moon, the concept of the unseen, and an underlying hidden narrative to explore themes of spiritual emptiness, Satanic allure, and the embrace of madness. The central argument is that the speaker, much like the moon he invokes, possesses no light of his own and must derive his identity and purpose from dark, unseen forces. To understand this, it is first necessary to examine the poet himself and his reputation as a "poète maudit".

Charles Baudelaire was an influential French poet, born in 1821 and died in 1867. He is regarded as one of the most important nineteenth-century poets in all of Europe. He became well-known primarily due to revolutionary works such as *Les Fleurs du Mal* (1857) and *Petits Poèmes en prose* (1868). These two collections highlight Baudelaire's abilities as a poet and position him as a perceptive critic of literature and art. According to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Baudelaire is the embodiment of the "poète maudit" (1998), or "accursed poet". A "poète maudit" refers to an outsider poet, one judged negatively by those in authority and viewed as a threat due to their ability to unveil society's spiritual deficits. Paul Verlaine addressed this concept in his 1884 work *Les Poètes Maudits*, and it describes how the poet moved from a previously revered role (visionary/prophet) to a state of alien-

ation and indignity. This framework is essential for interpreting “The One Possessed”, as the poem’s speaker perfectly embodies this cursed figure—one who finds truth and beauty in what society deems dark and forbidden.

THE MOON AS A SYMBOL OF BORROWED LIGHT AND HIDDEN IDENTITY

The poem immediately establishes its focus on the unseen through the central image of the moon. The opening line, “The sun was covered with a crepe. Like him, moon of my life.” is rich with meaning. This suggests that the speaker has an obscured or cloudy existence, evidenced by the term “crares”. *Crape* is defined as a thin, wrinkled fabric used to indicate mourning or death. What remains is the “moon of my life”, a phrase that reveals the speaker’s fundamental nature. The moon has no light of its own; it merely reflects the light of an absent or obscured sun. The speaker, by identifying his life with the moon, confesses that his identity is not original but borrowed. He exists in a state of reflection, not illumination. This metaphor introduces the poem’s concern with the unseen: the speaker’s true self is hidden, visible only through the pale, secondary light of a celestial body associated with night, mystery, and madness. In the second line, the descent into shadow deepens: “swathe yourself with dark.” Here, the writer covers himself completely in darkness, which suggests a deliberate choice to remain hidden and to find identity in obscurity.

THE UNSEEN FORCE: ENNUI, THE ABYSS, AND THE SATANIC NARRATIVE

Beyond the moon, the poem talks about the unseen forces that drive the speaker’s existence. The phrase “be somber, Ennui’s abyss” employs “abyss”, a bottomless void synonymous with darkness, to represent a

horrifying, deadly emptiness. Being “somber” in this context suggests the person is utterly hopeless and willingly places himself in this dark place. The command to “plunge your whole being” into this abyss indicates that the speaker finds a dark purpose in surrendering to this unseen void.

Also, the poem explores the theme of Satanic possession and worship. In the final line (line 14), the declaration “Dear Beelzebub, I adore you” is pivotal. “Beelzebub” is the prince of the devils (Lotha, 2025), often called the “Lord of the Flies”. Historically, he was a Philistine deity worshipped in Ekron, and in Christian theology, he is adopted as a principal demon. In Baudelaire’s poem, the statement “Beelzebub, I adore you” signifies more than obsession. It is a direct expression of devotion to Satan and his dominion. It conveys that the speaker is not merely chased by a Satanic force but embraces it wholeheartedly. Throughout the poem, this Satanic presence operates as a hidden narrative, a subtext that only becomes explicit in the final line.

MADNESS AND THE UNSEEN MIND

The poem also explores the unseen recesses of the human mind. The speaker’s fascination with lunacy further develops the theme of a hidden narrative. In line 6, the poet writes, “like an eclipsed star that leaves the half-light, to strut in the place which Madness encumbers”. He describes a person striding confidently into a place of madness. This suggests he derives pleasure from entering an abnormal, lunatic state. Someone willingly walking toward madness indicates a preference for, or attraction to, irrational and weird behaviour. Another line (line 8) further expresses this twisted perception: “That is fine! Charming poniard springs out of your sheath.” Here, he describes a poniard (a dagger) as “charming.” This is a deliberately incongruous choice because a poniard is a weapon associated with violence concealment, and sudden revelation. By calling it “charming,” the

speaker reveals an unseen aspect of his psyche: he finds beauty in danger and pleasure in objects of harm. This is the hidden narrative of the mind, a perspective so alien to conventional morality that it can only be expressed through paradoxical language. This contrast reveals something important about the speaker's mind: he finds beauty in things that should be frightening. This connects to the larger theme of aestheticising dark or disturbing experiences, which runs throughout Baudelaire's work.

DECAY AND DEATH: THE UNSEEN END

Finally, the poem confronts the ultimate unseen reality: death. The speaker's physical decay is described in line 13: "There is no fibre in my whole trembling body." This line depicts a body failing from within, its strength leached away by the dark forces the speaker has embraced. Decay is an unseen process, happening internally, but its effects are becoming visible. The command to "swathe yourself with darkness" and "be silent, be sombre" takes on a new meaning in this context. It becomes preparation for the grave. The speaker is not just hiding from the world; he is preparing for his own disappearance into the ultimate darkness. The unseen end, i.e., death, is the final fulfilment of his devotion to the abyss and to Beelzebub.

In conclusion, this poem is a masterful exploration of darkness, death, decay, and a perverse love for Beelzebub, a love for the devil himself. Through the recurring image of the moon, Baudelaire establishes a speaker who has no light of his own and must derive his identity from dark, unseen forces. The hidden narrative of Satanic influence, the voluntary descent into the abyss of ennui, and the embrace of madness all point to a complete inversion of traditional values. The speaker finds beauty and meaning in suffering and evil, even as his body rots and his mind races with macabre thoughts. This is the epitome of what it means to be a "damned poet": someone who resides outside of society, takes joy in transgression, and finds significance in everything that society rejects. When taken as a whole, these

elements paint a picture of complete spiritual destruction. As he descends into iniquity, the character in Baudelaire's work finds joy in everything that society fears: darkness, Satan, insanity, and death.

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Appendix

29

The One Possessed

Charles Baudelaire
Eng. trans. William Aggeler

The sun was covered with a crape. Like him,
Moon of my life! swathe yourself with darkness;
Sleep or smoke as you will; be silent, be somber,
And plunge your whole being into Ennui's abyss;

I love you thus! However, if today you wish,
Like an eclipsed star that leaves the half-light,
To strut in the places which Madness encumbers,
That is fine! Charming poniard spring out of your sheath!

Light your eyes at the flame of the lustres!
Kindle passion in the glances of churls!
To me you're all pleasure, morbid or petulant;

Be what you will, black night, red dawn;
There is no fiber in my whole trembling body
That does not cry: "Dear Beelzebub, I adore you!"

Le Possédé

Charles Baudelaire

30

Le soleil s'est couvert d'un crêpe. Comme lui,
Ô Lune de ma vie! emmitoufle-toi d'ombre
Dors ou fume à ton gré; sois muette, sois sombre,
Et plonge tout entière au gouffre de l'Ennui;

Je t'aime ainsi! Pourtant, si tu veux aujourd'hui,
Comme un astre éclipsé qui sort de la pénombre,
Te pavaner aux lieux que la Folie encombre
C'est bien! Charmant poignard, jaillis de ton étui!

Allume ta prunelle à la flamme des lustres!
Allume le désir dans les regards des rustres!
Tout de toi m'est plaisir, morbide ou pétulant;

Sois ce que tu voudras, nuit noire, rouge aurore;
Il n'est pas une fibre en tout mon corps tremblant
Qui ne crie: Ô mon cher Belzébuth, je t'adore!



POEMS

Midnight
Chris Bird
Ink on Paper
2025

Before the Dawn

Chris Bird

33

The monster felt reflective.

She stared out from the rooftop at the midnight city.
In the central plaza stood a huge Christmas tree.

Moonlight outlined spires and domes,
endless factories, offices, and gardens.

On the surface the city had a certain dignity.
Yet the monster sensed that under the superficial life
of the city there was another story.

In the shadows street cats glanced up at the monster.
The cats were elegant,
moving between the surges of darkness.

The monster looked up at the distant moon.
The moon and the monster were old acquaintances.
“Henrietta the Monster, come back to me for silence.”

In fact, the moon’s offer was appealing to Henrietta.
The monster glanced down at her colourful poker dot patterned socks.

She was rather proud of her stylish footwear
which had been gifted by a distant star.
She looked across the midnight skyline.
She scratched her ivory horns.

34

The moonlight tingled on the monster’s horns.

“That moon speaks a lot of sense,” thought Henrietta.
Out of the silence came a mesmerising sound
like a small bell trembling with golden chimes.

On a nearby rooftop a ghost shimmered into view.

The ghost wore antique clothing
completed with an old-fashioned top hat.

The phantom waved at Henrietta.

“Lovely night isn’t it!” declared the ghost.
“Christmas is here again,” smiled the ghost.

The ghosts of the city waited until midnight to appear.
During the day the ghosts occupied statues
and monuments around the central squares.

Ghosts walked along the pavements at night,
remarking on how much the city had changed.

Henrietta gave a “thumps-up” to the ghost.
Then she leapt beyond the rooftop
and landed in the city park.

Despite her great size she moved with grace.

This was her favourite location in the night city.
Trees swayed in the midnight breeze.

The old trees were very accustomed
to the monster and each nodded in greeting.

Henrietta patted the trunk of a tree.

Two young lovers had scratched
a heart on the bark beside their names.

Then the great monster noticed a pale shape beside the pathway.
She crossed the wide lawns.
“Where are you off to?” whispered the moon.

Born in London in 1967 to a working-class family, Chris Bird developed an interest in poetry and drawing from a young age. However, his twenties saw the onset of his schizophrenia. He became homeless in London during a time when rough sleeping was still illegal. Eventually diagnosed and receiving treatment, he took part in writing and art workshops for people with mental illness. He has continued writing and drawing to this day. His first anthology, Transmission (2023), published by Write-London, explores his experiences of homelessness, undiagnosed schizophrenia, and heroin addiction.

Three Haikus (for my late mother)

Susanna Ng

OLD DAYS

At the Mid-Autumn night,
“Pray to Grandpa Moon!” you say.
How carefree!

ADULTHOOD

Years after years, we grow.
We learn how to breathe
and how not to breathe—

SOMEWHERE BEYOND

You’re now beholding us
somewhere near the moon.
How are you?

Susanna Ng is a full-time student at The Hong Kong Baptist University of Hong Kong, pursuing a Master’s degree in Global English Literary and Cultural Studies in the Department of English. Early 2024 was a difficult time for Susanna as she lost her beloved mother. Fortunately, her strong faith in the Lord has helped her rebuild her life. Her passion for Japanese culture leads her to compose three haikus expressing how much she misses her mother.

Fragment

Bian Zhilin
trans. Lai Yiqi

37 You stand on the bridge admiring the scenery,
he appreciating the scenery stares at you from a window.
The bright moon adorns your window,
and you adorn a stranger's dream.

斷章

卞之琳 著

你站在橋上看風景，
看風景的人在樓上看你。
明月裝飾了你的窗子，
你裝飾了別人的夢。

Gazing Far Away

Li Shaojun
trans. Lai Yiqi

The sky harbours an ancient moon,
I am yearning for home.
Through the haze, I see:
on the mountain path, my father, carrying the moon above his head,
is walking ahead
of me; and I trail behind, hauling a long lean shadow.

38

遠望

李少君 著

天空含著一個古老的月亮
我含著一顆懷鄉的心
在恍惚之中隱約望見：
山路上，父親頭頂著月亮
在前面走著
我跟在後面，拖著長長的瘦小
的影子

Poem of the Sea

Terayama Shuji
Eng. trans. Lai Yiqi

『海の詩』短歌

寺山修司

39

Tears are
the tiniest
ocean
that humans create.

Towards the moonlit
sea, I fling
a letter.

Across the shimmering
moon in the sea,
the letter, ah, will
blossom into blue.

What the world
calls “fish”
is, after all, actually
somebody’s letter.

なみだは
人間のつくることのできる
一番小さな
海です
月夜のうみに
いちまいの
手紙を流して
やりました

月の光に
照らされて

手紙は青く
なるでしょう

人が魚と
よぶものは
みんなだれかの
手紙です

Lai Yiqi is a graduate from the Master of Arts in English Language Teaching and Assessment (MA-ELTA) at The Hong Kong University of Education. She has been teaching piano for twelve years and is now in her second year of teaching English at school.

海之詩

寺山修司 著
張秋明 譯

淚水是
人類所能製造
最小的
海洋。

朝向
月夜的海洋
投遞
一封書信。

在波光粼粼的
月光中，
那封信將會
化為藍色吧。

世人稱為
魚的東西，
原本都是某人的信。

40

Moonlight

Paul Verlaine
trans. Stephen Li

- 41 Your soul is a psychedelic landscape
The performers in patchwork costumes are there parading.
They play the piano and dance—after all
The heart brimming with desire cannot be concealed by the colorful attire.
- Though they also sing softly and melodiously, eulogising
The birth of love and beauty with victory—
They dare not trust their own good dreams finally,
Their songs are dissipated into the moonlight.
- Scattered into the dim and beautiful moonlight,
To linger in the dreams of the birds on the tree,
To make the fountain deep in the white stone cluster again,
Spewing out a faint sound of joyful deglutition.

Clair de lune

Paul Verlaine

Votre âme est un paysage choisi
Que vont charmant masques et bergamasques
Jouant du luth et dansant et quasi
Tristes sous leurs déguisements fantasques.

Tout en chantant sur le mode mineur
L'amour vainqueur et la vie opportune,
Ils n'ont pas l'air de croire à leur bonheur
Et leur chanson se mêle au clair de lune,

Au calme clair de lune triste et beau,
Qui fait rêver les oiseaux dans les arbres
Et sangloter d'extase les jets d'eau,
Les grands jets d'eau sveltes parmi les marbres.

Moon Night

Joseph von Eichendorff
trans. Stephen Li

43

As if, the sky
Kissed the soil lightly,
The soil is going to make the sky inscribed
Into the dreams of flower lights.

The wind blows through the fields,
The wheat ears sway softly,
The rustling of the woods,
The starry night is bright and clear.

My soul
Stretches two wings,
Flying over the peaceful soil,
As if going to my hometown.

Mondnacht

Joseph von Eichendorff

Es war, als hätt' der Himmel
Die Erde still geküßt,
Daß sie im Blütenschimmer
Von ihm nun träumen müßt'.

Die Luft ging durch die Felder,
Die Ähren wogten sacht,
Es rauschten leis' die Wälder,
So sternklar war die Nacht.

Und meine Seele spannte
Weit ihre Flügel aus,
Flog durch die stillen Lande,
Als flöge sie nach Haus.

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Swear Not by the Moon

Nathan Lam

44

O, swear not by the moon, th'inconstant moon,
Who heralds the coming of sun and snow,
Foretells the arrival of drought and monsoon,
Farmers bless'd with prosperity and growth.
O, trust not the moon, which waxes and wanes.
The fisherman who sails the starlight sea,
Rowing away from the encroaching day,
Filling his net with a slivery bounty.
O, rely not upon that lunatic,
By artists and fools, admired alike.
Mysterious romance that captivates,
Such splendour that attracts the mortal sight.
O, capricious, many-faced disc of light,
O, beautiful traveller of the night.

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The Far Side of the Moon

Becky Tsui
trans. Hannah Shum

45

The setting sun glides above us,
scattering its secrets all around,
holding together the mortals.

His sight and her vision
pierces through their fates.
Frigid air scratches the night,
the moon fiddling with her face,
looking towards the strangers.

Their minds are awakened by serenity,
while their souls are chastised by fate.

His round cheeks rippling like the dam nearby,
her lips shut in the ice slips of despair.
Speechlessness burdens their limbs.

Two pairs of hands, freezing,
burdened with what their skin cannot bear.
Their fingertips compelled to readjust their breaths.
Ruthlessness, after all, swallows desire.

46

Suddenly, the moon is smeared by rains or tears
for the moon waxes and wanes like our fate.

Hours, minutes, seconds revolve.
Is that how destiny plays with us?
How she urges the moonlight to be true
to itself and yet no hearts can be saved—
the moon, not at least, reaching out?

All these, refracting the far side of the moon,
however, surely, nourishing the birth of stars,
and relentlessly, giving nature a kind heart.

Hannah Shum values gaining insights from books and conversations with friends. For her, refreshing and recharging comes from tranquil hikes or picturesque vacations. As she strives to become a congruent soul carer, she is learning to find peace with her own pace rather than constantly pushing herself.

月亮的側面

徐凱瑩

47

夕陽在天上流動，
堆砌四散的光線，
凝聚了塵世的悵惘。

他和她的視覺，
刺破暗淡的餘輝。
淒冷的空氣撩撥夜空，
月亮隨之拋棄面紗，
不幸地與他們四目交投。
頭腦慢慢被寧靜喚醒，
靈魂同時被浪漫鞭撻。

他圓形的面頰，
孵化出身旁堤壩的漣漪，
內心卻建築了充滿傷疤的圍牆；
她兩片薄薄的嘴唇，
關在失望的鎖頭內，
無言最後掌控四肢的活動。

兩隻冰冷的手，
撫摸着皮膚不能承受的重擔，
指尖禁不住調節混沌的呼吸，
無情始終吞噬欲望的本質。
一剎那，
淚珠般的雨點，
塗鴉在月亮表面，
陰晴圓缺成為塵世的宿命。

時分秒不斷迴轉，
上蒼喜歡玩弄悲歡利合，
驅使月光苗有秉持她的價值，
不會拯救掏空了的心房。
上蒼無能洗淨心痛的裂縫。
但這分裂的人間常態，
折射了月亮側面的光芒，
更給予無數小星星養分，
為大自然執掌一顆善心。

Becky Tsui considers herself a rather boring person, spending her free time reading the news and books. She enjoys running and occasionally writing poems to keep her creative juices flowing. Her goal at this stage is to maintain a simple life. No more tough times ahead!

The Moon's Notes

Betty Xie

trans. Edison Chim & Jack Xu

48

THE MOON'S NOTE 1

—Written in the reflection of the moonlit rails

Need not question the wax or the wane,
there is a milky way in the human realm.
Need not fix what is not broken,
time knows how to fill the void.
Let the wind take a step further into the unknown,
let the reflected moonlight return to the water-like stars.

THE MOON'S NOTE 2

—Written in the mending moonlight

The moonlight pardons the shadow
always before the dawn.
One side longing for the other,
one side shackled by the other.
When the moonlight bends to pick up
the last fragment of the fractured moon,
the sky heals the deepest of scars.

THE MOON'S NOTE 3

—Written when the moonlight bids
goodnight to the new year

The years lost in the distance,
the goodnights never received.
One farewell is all as well.
Love outlasts forgetting: love outlasts forgetting;
yes, the wind,
the wind, yes, always remembers,
delivering every unfinished
goodnight.

Edison Chim and Jack Xu are both full-time students at The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong, pursuing a BA (Hons) in English within the Department of English.

月亮手記

謝晶晶

月亮手記（一）

—寫在倒映的月光火車

不必去追問圓缺，
人間自有銀河。
不必去修補缺口，
歲月更懂得充盈。
讓遠方的風抵達未知的遠方，
讓倒映的月光歸還如水的星辰。

月亮手記（二）

—寫在彌合的月光裡

月光赦免了暗處，
總在破曉前。
一面是思念，一面是鎖鏈。
當月光俯身拾起，
最後一片碎月。
整片天空癒合最深的裂隙。

月亮手記（三）

—寫在和新年說晚安的月光裡

那些整年遺忘的遠方，
那些不曾收到的晚安，
一個告別，亦是全部。
但啟程的愛比遺忘更長，
但風，
但風總記得，
抵達所有未完成的晚安。

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Luna

Ka Chou
Water Colour on Paper
2025

SHORT STORIES

A Joyful Reunion

Helen Chong

53

The stars shrilled, “Wake up! Wake up! You’re in excellent shape now!”

The moon woke up.

After a full day of rest, she had regained all her energy.

Thrilled, the moon called back, “I am so delighted that every one of you keeps me company.”

Meanwhile, the North Star had an idea. “Why don’t you get closer to the ground,” it suggested, “and see what merry togetherness you find?”

The moon crept down gradually. Looking at the river, time slowed down.

So profound was her relaxation that she shone with a radiance that felt like a silent “hello” to all who were looking at her.

In the Moon River, one music note rose to stare at the moon. Inspired, it jumped with joy.

The other notes spun round and round, weaving perfect music. Soon after, note E leapt onto the riverbank to greet the lower notes. Note B, however, was now out in the cold.

Note C asked, “Is a high-pitch note missing somewhere?”

“Shall we find her? Otherwise, we’ll never be united!”

They searched everywhere in the river, even diving to the bottom. There, the high note lay sprawled, like dying upon the riverbed.

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The mezzo-soprano note said, “We must find a way to revive her fading heart—she is our family.”

The bass note asked, “Should we sing to bring the soprano back to life?”

They tried to sing in harmony to form a perfect team. Honestly, this was not only for musical unity but also to gently pull the waning high note out of her tunnel vision. Perhaps, by listening to their soothing melodies, she could let those trapped, high-pitched feelings find a way out. And so, they continued, softly nudging one another forward.

Coincidentally, two well-known cellists, Hauser and Šulić, were strolling along the riverbank.

They were captivated by the whispering beauty of the musical notes. Taking out their cellos, they began to play straight from their hearts. The delicate sounds emanating from their instruments nudged the smooth water, stirring the sunken high-pitched note.

Her eyes fluttered open!

Finally, she was lifted from the river’s depths.

All the music notes patted her shoulders and hugged her.

Now assembled as one, they became a team of vigorous, harmonious notes.

Working alongside Hauser and Šulić, they brought their newfound harmony to symphony lovers around the world. In time, Hauser and Šulić's live performances took the world by storm. For years, cello lovers have immersed themselves in their heavenly music.

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Every Mid-Autumn Festival, under the full moon, Hauser's team returns to the Moon River to celebrate a wonderful reunion. Of course, the full moon herself yearns to greet them on this special night. To her, nothing brings greater happiness than this simple, joyous gathering.

Helen Chong is studying a Master of Arts in English Language Teaching and Assessment (MA-ELTA) at The Hong Kong University of Hong Kong. She believes language ignites imagination and creativity. As a private English tutor, she often crafts writing samples for her students, gaining professional experience that has deepened her interest in writing, particularly in storytelling and personal narratives.

The Crescent

Celeste Cheung

"Chardonnay or Macmillan? Do I sound posh enough?" Rudy asked, in a fake accent.

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"Terry, would you read the first paragraph for me?" I tried to copy his imitation.

"You seldom flee from situations, not without staying for a few minutes," said Rudy, "not without a word."

Something felt off. No, scratch that. Things had been feeling off since this afternoon, right from my second-round interview at my thirteenth company in the past six months of job hunting. I handed over to the administrative department copies of my qualifications, transcripts, and other papers that reflect my competence. They asked me in English, proceeded with Cantonese, and concluded in Mandarin. Questions followed by answers, polished and rephrased through experience and practice. No follow-ups. No interest in the person I am. The director shook my hand with a grip respectful enough for this brief encounter.

I had lobster ramen with Rudy afterwards, and he had one with a tori paitan soup. Rich and flavourful. The Japanese beer was everything. The writer's club meeting that followed? It was just, well, off.

"The woman before us asked us to move aside when the street could only fit two people in width. Move where?" I recalled our path before the meeting.

Rudy shuddered and said, "I saw her going in. The lights were too dim for a welcoming occasion."

“Closed door, no greeting staff, literally no seats other than that narrow space between those men in either burgundy or navy cardigans and leather shoes. Could you feel the force field?” I asked.

“I did not feel comfy either, but you would usually endure things like this for a while before leaving. You just turned around and gestured for me to do the same,” Rudy replied, drawing his finger in circular motion, then shifted into a running gesture, like what I just did at the bar.

I shook my head and whispered, “So wrong.”

“Not right,” Rudy snickered. “Thirteenth interview?” He asked.

I averted my eyes and sighed. “I can feel it in my guts, no chance. They asked me standard questions, I answered, and they moved on to case studies as if there was nothing more to procedures and protocols. Warmth, passion, visions. Too ideal to exist. I have been thinking through the answerless wait, yet my attempts tumbled into similar patterns: anticipation, preparation and practice, the showdown, the silence... Our paths won’t cross again.”

“You know, I’ve been rooting for you along your every step. Cold, echoless, quiet. The world is like that sometimes,” Rudy had a habit of shoving sweets into his mouth when he was anxious, and even more so for this mortified introvert. He continued with his stuffed cheeks, “whatever happens, you are not walking in circles, and you are most definitely not stagnant. All these experiences, whether smooth or rough, do not define you as the person you are, but they will become your assets as you move forward.”

I opened my savoury corn snack and had a mouthful.

“Why do I have to work?” Rudy exclaimed. “All this just to sustain side jobs? Sorry, passions.”

“Who are we?” I patted on his shoulders, my fellow reality-hating ally. Perhaps opportunities arise for the right person, whether the chooser or the chosen, when they could harness time.

“The moon tames the tides, indifferent pulls of the resistant waters. It is coming for me, too,” I said.

Rudy paused to think, then responded. “The moon is bound to the dark, yet it shapeshifts; we’re bound to space and time, yet we can change, too. Remember what you wrote here?” He flipped open the first page of the notebook I gave him for his birthday. “Every patch of hard earth is a chance to meander. Feel the velocity, whether swift or slow, then...”

“Morph.”

He nodded and pointed at the sky, “We see a crescent, but its shifting light does not define its shape. It’s all about our perspectives and timing. The moon remains as a sphere, a whole.”

Warped Moons

Celeste Cheung

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You have been waking up after five hours of sleep, exactly a hundred minutes before your alarm—a quarter to six.

“Why do mornings feel like nights now?” you ask.

I lose traces of my orbit upon sunrise, when I dissolve into the bright and blue. Darkness elucidates my contours, so I can see myself.

“I had more leniency before, more daylight,” you say, and your voice penetrates through the waking dawn. “A quarter to six. What a dreadful curse.”

“A curse?” I ask. You stare at me, eyes wide open. “A curse to see me?” You slip away before a word is blurted. In my last life, Ciel, nights were even longer. Let me tell you the story of Avery, till our next rendezvous.

*

“A quarter to six,” Ciel sighed as she double-checked if her work alarm was off, unnecessary for her day off. Her body, though, was still reluctant towards longer and deeper sleep, like it used to be when she was between jobs, or when she had her last job.

A hundred minutes early, as usual. The dream, however, felt misplaced. Not because of the talking moon, but dreaming itself, as it was once lost for some time. Some people would have a practice of longhand writing in the morning, when they discover subconscious thoughts from the three handwritten pages that document their flow of consciousness. Ciel, however, found traces of herself in dreams. Dreams of fabricated selves in hyperrealistic scenarios—from the room escape at the Oi Man Plaza, the murderous

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confrontation at an inexistent tea shop on Nathan Road, to the rare, aimless saunters on the snowy streets of Japan.

What did Avery have to do with all this, though?

*

Avery Adler, one of Ciel’s characters from a rustic, snow-covered fictional village called Chroma, talks to the moon every night in the story “The Painter.” She would go to the porch, feast her eyes on the midnight sky, and chant the Adler’s family ritual before creating her art.

Here I stand under the midnight sky. I, Avery, let the constellation guide me.

In “The Painter,” Avery enters a trial called “The Colour Test,” in which all Chromans at the age of twenty-three must walk past a series of Soul Spheres, unagitated. These spheres evoke memories of the people passing through by reenacting the scenes of their lives. Long-dealt struggles, compartmentalised experiences, suppressed emotions... These young villagers are put to the test of emotional clarity, maturity, and balance.

Avery struggles with a scene at home as she fights over the Adler’s family paintbrush with her sister, Ava. She is articulate and clear at first, but she loses her calmness when Ava exposes her recurring habit of comparing herself with her family.

*

“I am the only one who cannot contain sadness or anger in this house,” Ciel recalled the central line from Avery and Ava’s confrontation. A projection

of the author's struggle that jarred her through adolescence still enshrouds her from time to time. Resolutions come easily in the story, as Avery makes peace with her feelings, passes the Colour Test, and reconciles with her sister in the end. Yet, this seems a bit naive to the author.

"I lashed out at my family the night before," Ciel sobbed as she retold the happenings to Marcy on a Saturday night after work. She could hear the sounds on the street, clearer than ever, when silence fell upon the end of a wrestle with changes and choices—two days after the interview.

Ciel was packing her bag for the interview on Thursday night, and the bag needed some charms. It needed to be customised, to show character. The first few keychains and badges did not feel right, and her family helped to find options that might work. They joked about something, and she snapped. Throwing things on the floor, like a child with a tantrum. She asked them not to speak about it, not just yet, as she needed to work early on Saturday morning, and any emotional fluctuation before bed would deprive her of her sleep. Yet, her sister dropped the bomb without waiting.

"You know what's worse, Marcy?" Ciel apologised. "Again, my emotionally contained family tolerated my outbursts, and I could not own up to my actions, but let my temper take control instead," her voice trembled.

Marcy passed a bowl of soup to Ciel and said, "You were just exhausted. Labour-intensive job, anxiety-prone personality, sleep deprivation, and poor appetite. It's a bad mix for anyone."

"Thanks," Ciel took a sip of the soup before the starters.

Countless thoughts slipped by with every spoonful. Shadows from her previous companies left her with zero margins for mistakes and a constantly perturbed mind. The uncertainty from her prolonged job search confined her with fear, as she saw scarce chances of finding a suitable job amid gloomy economic prospects. One offer, six months into the job now. A

rough and frantic start, a perpetual process of adapting and fine-tuning, her mind and body drained and fatigued.

Still, that was no excuse.

Dinner was hearty and comforting—steaming hot soup, al dente pasta, humongous clams bursting with umami. The girls went on a walk along the Tseung Kwan O promenade, with a drink from the convenience store—a shared tradition from high school years. For better digestion, Marcy would say.

"Maybe you were tolerating them, too," Marcy said, after a gulp of oolong tea. "See, you spend day and night balancing between work, family, friends, and health. You love your family, and meeting friends makes you happy. Good health needs to be earned. You hate work. Then, why not just minimise this vexing part of life the best you can?"

The waters beyond the promenade seemed more pristine than before, as if sediments had sunk into the seabed. Gentle waves, rolling towards the pier side. Ciel always thought that oceans had to be completely still and serene, like a lake, to reflect the moon. Yet, she saw the full moon, morphing into crescents, quarters, and weirdly warped circles—varying silhouettes of her own.

Celeste Cheung's passion for capturing emotions through prose has deepened after a creative writing class at the City University of Hong Kong and the Master of Fine Arts Program (MFA) at The University of Hong Kong. She is fascinated by all things related to water, from pristine lakes and raging rivers to ceaseless waves. A flâneuse and crafter, she is particularly drawn to coming-of-age stories.

Flower Crab Goddess

Peijia Zhang

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I discovered the delicacy of flower crabs through a big plate of Typhoon Shelter Crabs. A man who liked my mother ordered it at a restaurant table. I was eleven.

Neither Mother nor the man finished the single piece of crab in their own bowls. I ate the rest of the plateful. In fact, I wallowed in the succulent, sweet meat so much that my lips and white dress were spotted with fried garlic and scallion crumbs.

“Wipe your mouth. You are embarrassing me,” Mother said when the man left the table to pay the bill.

He seemed pleased that I enjoyed the crabs.

“And look at your dirty dress. You are getting yourself into eating saan-wak when we get home.”

Mother glared. She clamped her teeth to enunciate the words clearly to me in Shanghainese, our mother tongue. It was also my only time eating flower crabs—a local delicacy here that had no place in our Shanghainese roots.

Before the meal, Mother had said she would not keep me long with her this time.

“I will be married again soon.”

When we got home after the meal, she said it was for my own good that she would discipline me with eating saan-wak to ensure that I wouldn’t pig out on anything again.

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Manners and elegance, she said, would someday land me a good job and marry well, or at least make me a lady.

A flower crab can molt up to twenty-seven times over a lifetime. During each molting, she would find it impossible to eat anything despite her cravings. As I grew older, I understood what Mother was trying to teach me—the tacit path to womanhood is, through molting, perhaps as much as twenty-seven times. Because of that, I grew to feel a special affinity with the flower crabs—almost a kinship to them.

Mother was divorced again when I was fifteen. I moved in with her again.

Mother gave me money to buy instant meals. Mother doesn’t allow snacking.

“What money do we have to buy that junk food? And don’t you know you are getting fat?”

The daily meals and sharing a small bed with her in her small apartment were my privileges of being her daughter, she said. I couldn’t have asked for more, and I had no complaints—we had only each other then in the vast and strange city we had come to call home. I never told my mother what I wanted to eat or didn’t have enough to eat, even though I had come to realize I have a big appetite growing up.

Her discipline with me about eating saan-wak continued into my adulthood.

It happened when I forgot to clean the bedsheet stained by a spot of period blood; when I failed to bring her an umbrella to the metro station when she came home from work on a rainy day; when I asked her for money to pay for a graduation day trip for secondary school. In early winters, Mother

always had me buy and steam some Shanghainese hairy crabs to eat with a dipping sauce made of ginger, Chinese black vinegar, and a pinch of sugar. It was our most ritualistic meal of the year—we didn't celebrate festivals. Mother said she had grown up eating these hairy crabs.

I never liked these crabs—they are not meaty or pleasant to look at. Shanghainese hairy crabs' drab and muddy looks don't match up to the flower crabs' majestic blue armors that gradient into ivory and then brownish speckles. The flower crabs are like the goldfish of the crustacean kingdom— whoever had first come up with the idea of eating them in human history must have had been starving.

The flower crabs in a red basin at a neighborhood seafood stall became my only friends since I was fifteen. I went to talk to them often: "I know you guys would rather be eaten than bound here by ropes. Someone will take you home and make you eat saan-wak. But I promise it will be okay eventually. You see, you do get used to eating saan-wak, like me," I chanted the speech to them in Shanghainese whenever I visited—to comfort my friends who could only wait for their own demise.

Once, as I was talking to them, I saw one crab's black, round eye fall into the water in the red basin. The tiny eye disappeared instantly under the bodies of the dozens of crabs trying to scuttle among themselves, jostling. After a while, the one-eyed crab forced itself towards the other side of the elongated, oval basin and then back to where it was again, as if to say to me: "You can get used to it yourself, but not us. We are here to play the field, no matter how bounded."

The vendor, a man who said he was originally from Guangdong, told me I can tell the gender of the crabs by the shape of their flaps on their stomachs. The female crabs have dome-shaped flaps; the males have triangular ones.

There is something rounder about women compared to men. Maybe that's why the Chinese moon deity Chang'e is a goddess. In the story of Chang'e,

she trades off the life she shares with her husband on Earth to ascend to the Moon for her own divinity and immortality. She then lives there alone in the Vast Cold Palace with the Jade Rabbit as her companion. Does she ever miss her husband and her non-solitary life on Earth and regret her decision? Mother may have been Chang'e in her past life—which explains why she has to ensure she never lives in solitude in this life.

We only have this life now. You can only have it either way, never both, I suppose.

My breasts had been starting to develop at nine years old. A boy in my class had crashed onto them with his chest while he was running around in the class. It probably hadn't registered in his mind or body that anything had happened, as he had kept on running and playing without stopping. I had been stunned that my breasts were such sensitive receptors of pain that I'd been unable to move or make a sound for a minute or two.

As Mother heard what happened when I came home, she peered her eyes in the mirror on her vanity table at me and said I must wear bras from now on.

I put them on—the kind that mature women wear with wires in them. Is this how women felt every day? I wondered. I covered myself with baggy clothes that Mother gave me so as not to expose my wired breasts to any attention or ridicule. I knew that I had become different from the other girls who had not reached their bodies' puberty. I became a woman.

As Mother took me on the journey of womanhood, my body also became rounder. I brought secret snacks with the money I got from part-time jobs, and I ate the snacks before coming home so Mother wouldn't see me.

I became the fat girl in class, and it did not bother me much until Josiah showed up when we were both in university. I had met him at an ice-cream shop where I worked as a part-timer. I felt intoxicated when he spoke to me. He said he loved my round face and curly hair, and he spoke to difficult customers on my behalf.

Mother saw us once when he walked me home and told me not to see him again, as she had arranged me on a blind date with her friend's son who was also from Shanghai.

"Why do you have to hate everything I like?" I asked.

"My little girl, you don't know anything about men yet. I will screen them for you," Mother said in a soft tone.

"What about yourself? You got married without asking me."

"There is only one way to be a good woman in our culture. To go through the pain of being a good daughter and become a mother yourself. Then you get to have the say. You will have it someday too, like me. It is only a matter of time."

"So you can do anything to me because you're a mother now? Is that what makes you happy?"

"No, that is not what I meant," Mother said matter-of-factly. "See—I have been trying to teach you this since you were young. There is only one path to how women are made—we learn to be a good daughter, a good mother, a good wife, a good daughter-in-law, a good friend, a good employee, a good lady. This is how you earn your dignity."

"What if I don't care about the dignity?" I asked.

"Dignity is the price of your freedom in this society. That is why we say—a daughter-in-law must go through many trials to level up to become a mother-in-law. Without that dignity, we are like a woman without a piece of clothing to wear. Now you tell me, how will you live like that?"

Perhaps Mother was right—I can learn this game from the flower crabs.

Like the flower crabs, if they were born to be eaten on this earth, they can submit to fate while still dreaming of becoming a goddess, swimming fast at the bottom of the sea.

I left Josiah and quit the ice-cream shop job.

Mother went on a trip back to Shanghai last week. Every day while she was gone, I had been buying four flower crabs daily with my savings at the vendor's stall.

"I know they are good, but don't eat so many," the vendor said, standing on the wet floor in his black rain boots. "And don't you think I want to do business? But these crabs have high levels of toxins in them. You can't eat that much."

It was the third day I had been going back for more crabs.

I waited for him to finish his short speech, and I assured him that I wouldn't eat all of them myself, so he sold them to me.

It was raining. The crabs were in the plastic bag in my hand.

I opened them, washed their legs with a toothbrush in the kitchen sink, and put two of them into the steamer.

I'd seen many flower crabs on streets—women in the latest Zara dresses and neon nails, with their flashy boyfriends. Wired bras, reshaped noses, balanced heels—they had been through molting to flourish like a goddess.

I was yet to become them, but I have been on my way—

I asked for the crabs' forgiveness and ate them.

* *Eating saan-wak (吃生活) in Shanghainese refers to parents giving children corporal punishments.*

Peijia Zhang is a China-born writer. Having been educated in China and the US, she currently lives in Hong Kong. Her writings explore personal memories and storytelling. Her short story "Two Ducks" was published in The Hong Kong Review and she is currently working on a memoir.

Lament of a Timekeeper

Terence Chan

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Don't they seem rather apathetic to you? Though I suppose it would be difficult for you to notice, seeing as you only come out after the shadows have chased away the last vestiges of sunlight. And besides, this city has never quite reclaimed its taste for nocturnal activities, even after we drove away that hideous plague. Do I dislike the sun? Not in the slightest. He is a perfectly affable fellow, if not a bit too enthusiastic at times. Though I am simply too busy during the day to enjoy his company. The hourly chimes affect my constitution, and frankly speaking, I do not know why they bothered giving me this soulless mechanical voice. For what use is a timekeeper in this day and age? They don't even wear watches anymore.

Oh please, madam, why do you look at me so? There is something in your countenance that puzzles me. Do I detect a faint hint of pity? Nonsense, I am most certainly not feeling maudlin, but the night is still, and tranquillity encourages reflection. So perhaps, I will admit to being stirred by nostalgia. Do you recall me in my youth? So full of vigour and vitality. How I would chime every quarter of the hour and never tire. Good heavens, has it really been more than a hundred years? Oh, how the years conspire against us all, and yet here you are, looking every bit as radiant as whence I first laid eyes upon you that starless spring night. Back when I had purpose, when I was whole. When I was master timekeeper of the marvellous Kowloon Railway Station.

Did you know how slow service had been in those early years? Just a few trains a day, carrying businessmen looking to ply their trade or settlers

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seeking greener pastures. What courage that must have taken. To leave the familiarity of hearth and home and venture into foreign lands. Perhaps many of them had regarded me as a representation of this city, welcoming travellers as the Colossus did for those who sought passage into Rhodes. Oh, tease me not, dear madam, and do not judge me by my current appearance. I may not be as tall as the Colossus, but was I not quite the dashing gentleman back then? Sometimes on a cool autumn morning, they would stop and admire these magnificent granite columns and these bricks, red like fresh cinnamon bark. Standing tall at fifty-one metres, I loomed over them, towered over them, and yet, they would show no fear. Not even the children, and often they kept their eyes on me as they passed by, and I could see the longing in the reflection of their eyes. I took pleasure in watching them, the children in particular, and I wondered if they would find contentment in their newfound home. In fact, I was touched by the way they would rely on me to tell them the time of day in what was surely a period of great uncertainty in their lives. I grew to love them, and because of that, I grew to love the duty of my station. We had not yet been closely acquainted then, you and I, for I toiled throughout all hours of day and night. Truth be told, despite the never-ending nature of my labour, I did not mind it in the slightest. It is a pleasure to possess purpose. I felt content. And then, that blasted war.

What an utterly revolting affair.

This War of Resistance.

I bore witness to such depravities and came to understand humanity's boundless capacity for cruelty. These scars of mine, pockmarks kissed by searing hot lead; a reminder of their innate talent for wanton destruction. And as quickly as my love for them grew, so too did my discomfort and disillusionment. How did I appear to you then, dear madam? Drabbed in a coat of dreary grey, brought low, silenced, humiliated. I apologise if I had frightened you during that dreadful time. I myself had felt absolutely dreadful.

After the war ended, my voice was returned to me and I resumed my duties, but nothing felt the same. I did not feel the same. Had I been irrevocably warped by my experiences? My booming voice reached far and wide, echoing across the harbour, and yet, the sound felt empty, as if conviction was lacking. Did they perceive my creeping anxieties and deem me unfit for my duties? I was made silent once again on a rainy evening in March. Cogs and motors no longer synchronised, my deep fears had been realised. And then, they ordered my execution. Though I had failed in my duties, I still felt bitter resentment. It stung, to be discarded so callously like worthless rubble. I, who had witnessed the humble beginnings of this city, for whom I had served to the best of my abilities. I had no voice, and yet, I felt the unrelenting impulse to scream. Some of them rallied for me and petitioned for my survival. Their pleas were heard and summarily ignored. My identity and purpose, unceremoniously stripped away from me, red brick walls torn down, great granite columns knocked over, railroad tracks exorcised from the earth. Did I weep, dear madam? You wouldn't have heard me, but perhaps you had seen me shed tears. For myself and for the dashed hopes of those who had come to my aid.

In failing myself, I felt as if I had failed them.

I would like you to know, dear madam, that through my many years of silence, your presence sustained me. You gave me some semblance of calm

as I wallowed away the hours and days, contemplating my altered existence. Perhaps I am being unfair to the sun, as I have said he is a perfectly affable fellow, but there are too many distractions during the day. Travelers come up to me and take pictures as if I were a paraded animal. They declared me a monument. I chuckled when I heard. I am a relic of a bygone era existing in the liminal space between antiquity and the modern world. For what do I commemorate in a city so eager to erase its history and heritage, ostensibly in the name of progress? I hear them in the dead of night. Faint rumblings beneath the earth. Ghostly vibrations. Trains racing towards the void.

A product of my imagination? Had I allowed my mind to wander too far?

The most peculiar thing occurred several years ago. Clad in black, touting flags and banners, singing and chanting before marching off to some unknown destination. I looked at them; I looked at the reflection of their eyes and I couldn't decide exactly what it was that I saw. It was not unlike the longing I saw in those children all those years ago, but perhaps tinted with a hint of desperation. They gathered around me again and again, before marching off to an uncharted future, and each time the desperation in their eyes grew. Symbolism is not my business. I have my pleasures, though they are fewer as the years go by. I had a purpose, though I had lost it. And, incapable as I may be, I will not have this responsibility entrusted to me. I will not be made into their icon.

They are gone now, replaced once again by the jolly traveller touting cameras and shopping bags. The desperation, however, still lingers. I can hear them, dear moon. Like phantom whispers, they ring silently as my new mechanical voice does. This mechanical voice that operates on its own accord throughout the day; a simulacrum that, at the very least ceases its infernal ringing at midnight. The whispers are undying. In my anguish, I

make my plea to you, dear moon, in a voice that is not my own. You, who are purity and eternity made manifest.

Oh, moon up high, in the starless sky, deliver me. Deliver me.

Terence Chan spent ten years in corporate legal and compliance before deciding that his creative energies deserve a wider outlet. He has traded his suits for loungewear and now holds a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing from The University of Hong Kong. He writes about anything he feels like but particularly enjoys horror and gets giddy about ghosts and ghouls.

How Light am I?

Josy Chow

An owl pushed a letter through the letterbox. I drew it into my right hand with a small flick of magic.

It was my Hogwarts letter.

I could finally use magic freely—not just in our tiny neighbourhood, not just in secret, but properly, with Lily. Since she left for Hogwarts last September, we’d only seen each other once at Christmas. I missed her stories about moving staircases and floating candles and homework that exploded if stirred wrong.

Summer and Christmas gatherings are never quiet in our family. The Potters, the Granger-Weasleys, and us all pile into one house or another for two whole weeks. There are feasts that last all afternoon, treasure hunts in Grandpa Sirius’s mansion, and family Quidditch games where no one agrees on the score. But in recent years, our holidays have taken on a different ritual.

They’ve become Albus’s study counselling time.

As a legendary wizard, Uncle Harry has been constantly venting about his son’s poor school performance. “How many feathers do you need to break into pieces? It’s already your third year, come on, son.”

Albus simply stared at the carpet, as if grey mist had settled around him.

“No worries, mate,” Uncle Ron said, clapping his shoulder. “You’re already better than I was. I couldn’t even say the spell right. At least you could pronounce ‘wingardium leviosa’ from day one.”

Aunt Hermione smacked the back of Ron's head with her Wizengamot Precedent Volume I and whispered, "You're not helping."

Ron grinned regardless. "Less theory, more doing. That's the trick," he said.

The adults rolled their eyes, but Albus managed a small smile.

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This summer, Mum and Dad suggested we do something special before I started Hogwarts. I proposed the Quidditch Friendly in London in August—England versus Australia. "Uncle Draco would reserve enough VIP seats," I said.

However, Mum shook her head gently. "That's exciting, but I don't think we should invite Uncle Harry's family." Dad explained, "Albus has enough pressure already." I suddenly remembered Uncle Harry was the youngest Seeker of Gryffindor.

Later, Uncle Draco did reserve the entire VIP cubicle for us and his family. It'd be great to see Scorpius again.

For something enjoyable with the Potters and the Granger-Weasleys, we decided to go on a magical beast excursion across Europe, Africa, Asia, and Australia. We'd visit forests, coastlines, and maybe even mountains. Places where creatures lived without worrying about who could cast the perfect spell. "Beasts don't judge," Dad said. "And Harry won't have space to complain," Mum added with a smile.

Lily, Hugo, and I wanted to explore beasts all over the world rather than just half the globe. The quickest way to travel would be using a Portkey, so we could have plenty of time to explore and return for the Quidditch Friendly, but our parents thought it was too dangerous for kids.

I asked if we could try travelling the Muggle way this time—planes, airports, all of it. I said I could manage the non-ergonomic seats. Dad stroked my hair, said, "You shouldn't have to squeeze yourself into something that hurts you." And Mum said softly, "And you shouldn't have to hide your magic either." She continued, "I mean, how can you go to the toilet if you're not even allowed to use a broomstick to fly? You can't fully participate if you have to hide your basic needs."

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So, we'll travel the wizarding way instead—brooms for short stretches, an enchanted car for longer ones. All have spells wrapping around us like invisible cloaks. Safer. Easier. Still free to a certain extent. Why on earth does reality keep reminding me how light I am?—as if I'm like dust that can be swished away easily?

I don't remember the very beginning. My first clear memory is warmth and a voice saying, "You're safe now."

Before that, as I was told, I was born to Muggle parents. I couldn't crawl. I couldn't stand. But magic burst out of me anyway. Toys floating. Objects sliding across rooms. Things breaking when I cried.

One night, my parents were ecstatic, thinking I had taken my first step. It was only a stumble—magic surging under a full moon. The Ministry detected the surge and related it to lycanthropy—werewolf transformation patterns that were overgeneralised into danger and fear. They asked questions my parents couldn't answer, used words my mother had never heard before.

Soon after, I was sent away.

At the orphanage, the other children played in the yard while I could only sit still on the bed, because nobody understood that I loved playing like other kids as long as I had someone to help me move around. While I

couldn't pretend to be a "normal" walking kid, I could pretend to be a Muggle sitting kid. I learned to swallow my magic. To stay quiet. To be small. I was always afraid that if something floated, cracked, or shimmered, I would be moved again. Forgotten.

Mum and Aunt Hermione found me there while working on a story about Muggle children. At first glance, they thought I was a shy Muggle kid. They approached me and saw I was close to becoming an Obscurial. That's how they found out I'm magical. I only know that I was tired of being afraid of myself.

"You're safe now, honey," Mum said, pulling me into her chest when she took me to the home I was longing for.

That is my first real memory. Warmth. Breathing. A heartbeat that wasn't afraid of me.

I never grew up as a Muggle, disabled or not, but I don't fully belong in the wizarding world either. Outside wizard homes and Hogwarts, my magic must stay small and quiet because I'm underage. I'm also worried about my future as a witch, because the wizarding community is obligated to hide their magical abilities from Muggles—the mainstream of the world. My needs seem to shrink to fit other people's rules forever.

But Hogwarts feels like space.

I try to picture the castle the way Lily described it—windows lit like constellations, staircases that move when they feel like it, ghosts drifting through walls like mist that forgot it was once water. She said the ceilings sometimes look like the real sky. I wonder if I'll be able to tell the difference between stars above me and stars painted in magic overhead.

There, everyone casts spells. Everyone flies. Everyone knows what magic feels like in their bones.

Maybe there, I won't feel like dust.

Tomorrow, we'll go to Diagon Alley for uniforms, books, and a wand that will finally be mine. Can't wait to step into a place where magic can be unleashed.

Josy Chow holds a Bachelor of Arts and a Master of Arts in English Studies from The University of Hong Kong, specialising in the relationship between English literature and disability studies. Her academic work continues to explore disability perspectives through the lens of literature and humanities. She is currently engaged in supporting Hong Kong's rare disease community and pursues creative writing as a means of fostering inclusive representation.



Pink Moon

Little Half
Water Colour on Paper
2025

CREATIVE NON- FICTION

Unrecorded

Kaden Yung

81

In my life, much of what shapes it is unrecorded. It happens oftentimes when the world looks away. During the day, memories must compete with schedules, conversations, and a constant pressure to proceed. At night, when my body slows down, some thoughts return with a clarity that feels almost deliberate. These are not the thoughts that usually survive in the morning time, and they do not ask to be resolved.

Under the moon, they briefly reappear, leaving only the reality that something important is almost understood by me. It is during these nights, under the moon in Hong Kong, that I remember several friendships. They once made my days and are non-existent unless I recollect them. They do not appear to be losses, nor are there dramatic endings. No single instance has caused anything to collapse. Instead, they persist like a scene in a painting: conversations that have changed how I would perceive a tumultuous time, a connection that has made urgency not urgent at all, and a presence that has steadied me while not demanding much. There is no proof of these moments. No photos, no videos, no nothing. They are never recorded; they barely leave a visible trace. Yet they shape me in ways that surpass most of what I have documented or can see.

These friendships entered my life during my final year of secondary school and my first year at university, a period when I mostly believed new friendships would be hard to come by. I did not seek them out with many intentions, nor did I find them significant at first. They arrived swiftly, wove themselves into my daily life, and for a time, made those days joyous and full. None of them lasted very long, yet each one positively altered the

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emotional weather of the days they occupied. Now, when I think of these friendships, it is not chronology that brings them back but the night—when the world is silent, and when my memories can speak without interruption.

The first one to reappear after months left my mind unrecognisable and my heart disoriented. At that time, actually, I had learned how to navigate life with caution, aware of how easily things could unravel and lose momentum. Then, suddenly, there was someone beside me again, bringing my joy back, someone I had met while practising for a school performance. Truth be told, the performance was not extraordinary or grandiose. What mattered were the rituals during that dark winter: arriving at the same location, repeating the same movements, improving ourselves after making the same mistakes. The rehearsals surrendered to time, creating a space where I finally felt a magical return: an internal ray of light that I thought would never come back. Between sessions of the rehearsals, there were glances of shared understanding, moments of quiet humour, and a silent agreement that what we were doing mattered simply because we were doing it together. It all culminated in the performance. Before and after, we sat together in joyful unison near the stage, content in the knowledge that our efforts had culminated in something beautiful. I still remember departing from those practices feeling much lighter than when I arrived. This friendship never promised longevity, but it reminded me that fate had plans for me after a period of trauma and rupture.

The second and third friendships arrived together, and in a manner entirely different from the first. They belonged to a time when my life was full of

urgencies, pressure, and decisions from all directions, as my years in school neared their conclusion. Weeks after first meeting these friends, I remember running into them by chance at a park, a meeting with no scheduling behind it and, therefore, no real expectation. We talked while walking, without any aim. During breaks, we frequently crossed paths in the library, where we read, chatted, and hung out as if nothing was at stake. Urgency lost its sharpness, and silence was normalised, as if my body was allowed to rest. After I graduated from secondary school and began my university chapter, these friendships somehow continued, though they evolved into a more digital story. Our paths diverged, and we focused on our own goals as time went on. To say their presence made me feel less stressed would be an understatement; for a while, they were most of what I needed.

The absence they left behind was not dramatic. There was no single moment that could truly define their end; I would rather say they simply stopped existing. Despite this, I did not immediately seek a replacement. Instead, I carried the warmth of what had been, unsure if it would linger. Then, a fourth friend arrived, just as a sense of an era had passed. I still vividly remember our encounter, for it took place when I visited my secondary school, a place I no longer belonged to or needed in any way, yet one that still held many fragments of not only who I was, but who I am.

We met while I was pondering in the library. We talked for a long time there, among bookshelves and views that felt both familiar and diminished, like a statue reconstructed after an earthquake. That chat did not fully revive what I had lost. Still, it kept my sense of friendship alive: a flame that was not burning bright or urgent, but just stable enough to prove that something had not gone out entirely. We would chat occasionally on a few other occasions, and there was comfort in such restraints. Like the previous friendships, our different paths meant we would rarely meet again; thus I knew that a good connection did not need to arrive at the very start to truly matter.

None of these friendships survives into the present. They were not incomplete because they ended, but were rather complete precisely because they happened. I no longer wait for their return, nor do I search for reasons for their fading, as life moves forward without much pausing to negotiate with itself. Yet, under the moon, these friendships return at night as shadows of clarity. Without much context and any consequences, they exist solely as they are.

Kaden Yung is a Year Three English major at The Hong Kong Baptist University. His writing spans opinion-based commentary on diverse topics, especially on sports and pop culture as well as reflective prose. His personal essays often delve into themes of memory, transience, and human emotion. His creative non-fiction "Unresolved" marks a departure from his typically analytical work, offering instead an intimate examination of brief friendships and unrecorded moments that he cherishes during his transition from secondary school to university.

Waxing and Wanning

Nathan Lam

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Sometimes, on quiet nights, I sit by my windowsill and watch the moon, waxing and waning.



Isn't it wondrous, to see that pale orb trace the boundary of our world? Some nights the glow is silvery blue, silent and pure. Other times, it radiates a soft yellow, almost a gentle imitation of its brother. Regardless of its shape and colour, I watch it pass us by.



Isn't it strange how long the moon has watched over us? The significance it has had on us humans? The pale traveller who watched over our nomadic hunter-gatherer ancestors. The mother who bears a child every month, governing the fertility of fallow fields bearing fruit. It mirrors the faces of those who observe it.



And as it watches us, we humans reciprocate in obsession. Artemis the moon-mad, driving maidens to wildness. Hecate the many-faced, wandering liminal boundaries. Khonshu the watcher, observing the wanderers of the night. Chang'e the tragic wife, an untouchable symbol of beauty and romance. Tsukuyomi-no-Mikoto the pure, governing celestial cycles and timekeeping. The lunacy of the lūna, as it were.

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What enraptures us so much about the moon? Why do we proclaim its beauty and assign it gentle grace in contrast to its solar counterpart, who is defined by power and fierceness? Is the sun not an equal provider for the growth of food? Are our daily lives not conducted under the golden glow of the day? Why does it not occupy such a space as the moon? What romance does it lack, that we are not drawn to a soft pale blue canvas but a swathe of glittering dark velvet?



I know why it fascinates me. When I am tired of the hectic bustle of the day, I hide away and comfort myself with the silence of the night sky. Every night the moon passes by the busy lights of the skyscrapers, a constant in a life of chaos and anxiety. I breathe in starlight and I am at peace.



So sometimes, on quiet nights, I sit by my windowsill and watch the moon, waxing and waning.



At My Own Pace

Joyce Man

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Lining up under the faint lunar beam, the synthetically intoned MTR announcement echoed, “Please stand behind the yellow line...”

The dazzling lights and a sudden swirl of breeze transported me into a different realm. I struggled to move into the carriage and soon channelled among the tired bodies.

Another night of class, after another day of work.

Beams of light refracted against my skin, forcing my body to function. It felt like it was okay to work a little longer. Just kept focusing on the tasks to be completed.

Back at my flat, I peeled an orange as a nutritious snack.

Every time I peel an orange, my thumb hurts. The peel is thick and glossy, with no weak spot to attack.

Back when I was a child, after finishing dinner at home, Mum would take care of the dishes while Dad would wash some fruit for us. I always sat there, with my eyes fixated on the TV screen. Sometimes, I would quietly watch and wait for Dad to peel the oranges. My parents always bought oranges because they are cheap and healthy. There was even once that they brought a box of around fifty oranges home! That’s how much they love eating them.

Dad has a pair of big, rough hands, holding the orange as if Gulliver were on the tiny man’s island. As large pieces of peel separated themselves from the flesh, a unique and refreshing scent filled the room. If one peel got

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near a flame, the flame would dance vigorously, celebrating the sacrifice of another orange.

One, two, three. Dad would divide the flesh into three portions.

They were always uneven, as he claimed his authority over the family and the honour of conquering the orange. While waiting for my orange ration, I sometimes felt disdain for what he did. Why bother with these little things when you are THE father? Why should a father calculate every tiny bit with his wife and daughter when it comes to sharing an orange? When the orange was not even bought by him! I mean, maybe he paid part of it, but it was Mum who carried them home from the wet market. Oh, it’s not just the fruit but every dish on the dining table. He would always pick the largest chicken drumstick, the biggest abalone, and the most of everything.

It was not fair, I always remarked.

There were exceptional cases, though. Indeed, quite a few.

When the orange was exceptionally sour, he would give us one or two slices more, just like the food he doesn’t like. Sometimes he would peel a new one, ‘reserving’ the last one for us. And if the fruit tasted exceptionally good, he would just tell us to take another one ourselves.

Mum doesn’t know how to peel an orange.

Like me, she tends to hurt her fingers. So, she cuts it with a knife, leaving some juice spilled on the table. But that’s fine because she is not as stingy as Dad. She doesn’t regard the oranges as dearly as he does. Most importantly,

I do not particularly like eating oranges. The sourness always attacks my teeth and somewhere in my head, making me feel anxious and tense. It doesn't feel natural. Therefore, when I stretch my mouth and use considerable strength to crumble the fibrous slice, the flesh seems to struggle for survival, telling me it is not as good as it smells, that I should let it go. But I won't. After all, it costs time and money to buy, water to wash, strength to carry, to peel, and to consume. I know how many minerals it contains, along with its side effects of weight loss and benefits for constipation patients like me. So, I always fight with it and with myself until the large chunk travels down, taking up space in my stomach. Maybe I've become as stingy as my father without realising it. What was left on my desk was the cold, dried peel that gradually lost its sparkle.

Now that I have grown up, I no longer struggle when I swallow the flesh.

I can even eat the whole orange as I please! Sometimes, I will peel the oranges while sometimes I will cut them. Though I have never liked the sourness of oranges, somehow, it doesn't bother me anymore. Oranges can relieve my constipation and bloating issues—that's why I eat them regularly.

After a quick shower, I lay down and tried to get to sleep as scheduled while the moon revolved at its own pace. As the dim moonlight gently fell on me, I tried to process my feelings, slowly relax and settle down after the hectic day.

I am still on the way to embrace the person that I am becoming, at my own pace.

Joyce Man is an English educator currently pursuing an MA in English Language Teaching at The Chinese University of Hong Kong. A graduate of The University of Hong Kong (BA, PGDE), she has an academic background that spans English studies, psychology, and Japanese, informing her interdisciplinary approach to language pedagogy.

INTERVIEW

Beyond the Medical Gaze: Trekking through the Human Body Interview with Chan Dick

Michelle Choi



Chan Dick is a photographer who enjoys capturing everyday subjects through an artistic lens. Having studied graphic design, he incorporates graphic design elements into his photographic work, particularly evident in his photobooks, refining them to achieve the desired results he wants to have. He now focuses primarily on photography. As a professional photographer, his subjects encompass natural environments, social phenomena, and architectural structures. He captures seemingly mundane objects or hidden details through simple lines and off-angle compositions. His most renowned work, *Chai Wan Fire Station* (2014), captures the everyday life and training of firefighters in Hong Kong from a unique bird's-eye view through his studio's ventilation window. Through this unique angle, the photographed figures appear as miniature models existing within reality. This piece also marks his first award-winning work, being honoured with the Hong Kong Photo Book Awards in 2015 and the Tokyo International Foto Awards in 2016. Through his photographic perspective and the form of his images, he conveys the current state of society and the changes of the times. Throughout his career, he is interested in documenting Hong Kong's daily life, a practice he continues to this day.

Our conversation took place at the Festival Walk, in a small café. When I arrived, Chan Dick had already found a seat. We exchanged warm greetings and began with casual stories about our daily life. After ordering drinks and desserts, we turned the conversation to the pieces he creates with his camera. The following interview is grounded in Chan Dick's interesting work, *The Trek* (2018), a photography book on human anatomy which leads us into our body with an artist's perspective.

M = INTERVIEWER

C = CHAN DICK

M You were interested in drawing and studied graphic design; and yet, your professional practice is firmly rooted in photography. How's this shift from drawing to photography shaped your visual thinking?

C Drawing trained me how to exercise the poetics of reduction. When you draw, you choose what not to exclude before choosing what to include. Photography was a late arrival, but I tackled it with similar discipline since I never wanted to be loaded with detail or technical parade. Graphic design has taught me organisation, space, and moderation; and the same rules continue to inform my decisions in photography. The camera's turned itself into a means to distil, and not only to document. That's why my photos are minimalistic, yet not simple. They're compressed decisions.

M The concept of reduction is especially evident in *The Trek*, where human specimens are transformed into landscapes and organic forms. What was the significance of not depicting anatomical details directly, as those in scientific analyses?

*Temporal Bone*

C Anatomy carries authority since the medical gaze is trained to categorise and label. I didn't want to reproduce that hierarchy. When individuals view organs directly, they feel fear or curiosity, yet both reactions establish distance. I wanted to create access into our body without instructions on how to feel, and so I reconsidered the specimens as valleys, flowers, or even textiles. I wanted to enable viewers to see the image not intellectually, but emotionally. It's only later that they understand what they're witnessing, and that delayed realisation is essential.

M In your series *The Trek*, one photograph presents a bone fragment that resembles a bird in flight against a void, while another shows a cross-section

of muscle fibre similar to a dense, ancient forest. In your shifting focus, I see a continued merging of reality and illusion. Why do you feel this integration is important?

C Good observation. Reality's often too heavy to present directly; and as I indicated earlier, the public often has a fearful perception of human specimens, as they can evoke mortality. Creating an illusion by reframing a specimen as a flower or a river valley invites the reader to look longer, relate themselves to the image, and ultimately realise they're looking at themselves. This discovery and connection are what I aim to facilitate.

M I'd then say that the work unsettles a long-held perception, but not as educational in a traditional way.

C Yes, but I'd say it reorders the process of learning. Not all knowledge can be explained. In some cases, it emerges from hesitation, from those moments in *The Trek* where the reader's denied a quick resolution. It's in this pausing space that room is made to contemplate our body, mortality, and the ethics of viewing. I want people to look at the human body beyond the boundaries imposed by science, culture, religion, or taboo.

M The fact that you partnered with The University of Hong Kong's Medical School demonstrates institutional trust. What was your approach to ethical responsibility when handling human specimens?

C Ethics was at the centre of the work. I constantly remembered that these were once humans. My project focused on respect, anonymity, and purpose. I steered clear of sensational angles and didn't highlight trauma or pathology. I didn't wish to aestheticise death, but to restore dignity through abstraction. To me, ethics is the tenderness for an image to embrace its subject.

M For *The Trek*, how does the book form, rather than an exhibition space, matter to this project?

C An exhibition is controlled by architecture, crowd movement and distraction, while a book controls tempo. In *The Trek*, the sequencing was designed so that the images appear almost like a journey through a landscape. The title suggests movement, perseverance, and growth. I wanted the reader to get immersed in a journey through the body but without being told that they're inside it.

M The landscapes that you rendered for the images are frequently ambiguous. Some look like rivers or geological paths, others like cloth or botanical architecture. Was this ambiguity deliberate?

C It was very intentional. Ambiguity prevents closure since an image that settles too soon on one reading ceases to engage. I want the images to be open, so that the reader has to carry their own memory and imagination to the seen. One person sees a river valley, another a lace. Both are correct, and both tell us something about how we give meaning to our body.

M Unlike your previous series, *Chai Wan Fire Station* (2014), *The Trek* seems to be less about society and community in general? How do you see such a change?

C I interpret it as a deepening, not a departure. *The Trek's* about the most basic and shared condition: physical vulnerability. The body remains engaging with every one of us even in silence. By re-presenting human specimens, I reflect upon the way medical units define our relation to life and death.

M What do you feel *The Trek* has contributed to regarding the way people think about human specimens and photography as an art?

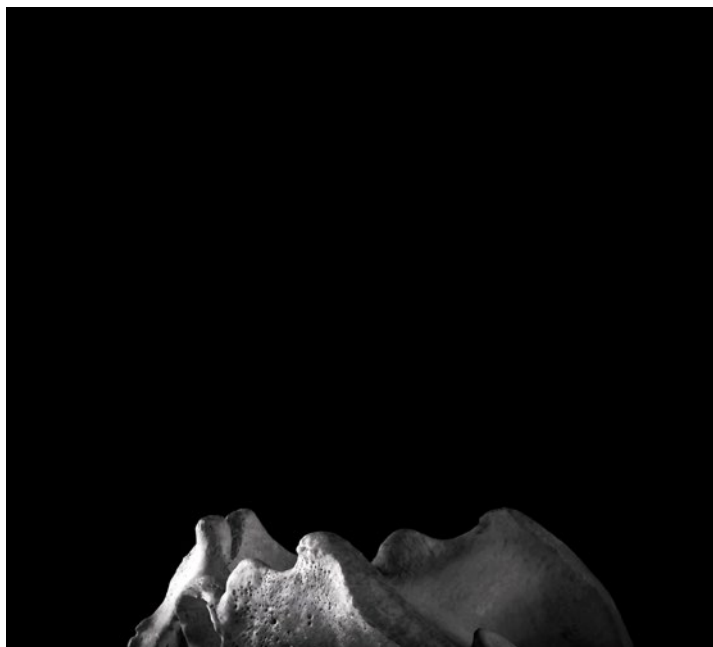
C I believe it's softened the gaze. I've heard many readers say they were initially lured by the photos' beauty and subsequently unsettled by a sense of familiarity. That shift matters. It questions the idea that medical imagery should be purely clinical and that photography must clarify. I want the book to help people consider challenging topics with patience, not avoidance.

M Your dedication to photography has been recognised globally with awards from Japan, Hong Kong, and the International Photography Awards. How do these recognitions impact you personally and professionally?

C The prizes are recognition, not approval. They sort of let me know my work resonates beyond its immediate context. It matters particularly because the projects themselves are anchored within a city. The issues that *The Trek* addresses are not culturally specific. Professionally, awards open up exhibition opportunities; personally, they serve as a reminder that quiet work can travel far.

Greater Omentum





Pelvis

M Your works have been exhibited in museums in Japan and Hong Kong. Does exhibition alter your thinking about legacy?

C It brings accountability. Once a museum acquires a work, it enters a dialogue that extends beyond my lifetime. That consciousness promotes rigour. It also pushes me to think of what future audiences who might not be a part of contemporary discussions will see and experience. I strive to produce work that can still be read even when contexts change.

M In our previous discussion, you're eager to hear more about the experiences of younger generations related to modern life and education. How's your curiosity feeding your practice?

C I learn from listening. My own thinking has blind spots that can be revealed by younger generations. Their experiences of anxiety around productivity, identity, and uncertainty are profoundly embodied. These discussions make me more sensitive to vulnerability and resilience. To me, photography doesn't exist in isolation from dialogue; it's shaped by it.

M I've to ask: do you think photography can change society? And should more young people take it as a long-term career?

C Yes, but not in isolation. Photography acts as a mirror or a window that prompts deeper, often uncomfortable, reflection. Photography can make people pause, reflect, question, and dig deeper into their long-held perspectives. The younger generation should continue and advance the work we've been doing. However, change comes from people, but art can speak to or encourage the thought that begins the change.

M How've you been developing your professional practice after *The Trek*?

C Since then, I've kept working on cross-disciplinary projects, specifically where art overlaps with science, history or urban studies. But I want to go even further beyond literal representation. I'm also working on how personal and institutional archives can be reactivated visually without turning them nostalgic.

M What'd you like the reader to take away after experiencing *The Trek*?

C I hope they can sit with uncertainty. Not confusion, but openness. When the work gets them to rethink their understanding of

the human body, their relationship to images or to death, it has done its job. Photography need not provide answers.

M Lastly, upon reflection upon your career, what're you most proud of?

C That I never gave up on being curious. That I never stopped making those simple yet reflective images. I kept asking, "What more is there?" That question is the driving force for me. I hope it continues to ignite my work.



Proximal End of Radius

Michelle Choi is a full-time student pursuing journalism at The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong. She likes exploring different ideas and themes through research and interviews. Drawing inspiration from photographs and artworks, she writes about stories that can inspire others to create their own art.

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