

Edlyn Ang

Inescapable

I.

It is the parties that are unreal: cleanness
of scented air on italian marble;
clinks of riedel crystal, the endless
pouring of champagne,
watching bubbles rise beneath the yellow, tasselled lamps;
around the rooms, floating in moth murmurs of small talk;
the dip and rise of languid, speaking hands –
these are the beautiful, the luminous, the cool.

Then they vanish like the evanescence they are:
beyond the hour of cinderella, what's left
in 3 a.m. small room stifling –
the insomniac's tv filtering in and gritted coarse edges
of night arguments flung in dialect;
engine roars of racing bikes below, the malay boys, gas-gunning –
it is diesel and hard everywhere and this is the return.

II.

You stand alone
there's a lull, and darkness insulates:
stepping out of silk, removing
drop-pearl earrings they catch
the moon from out the window,
for a moment, the soft delineation of redeemed phantoms –
this, too, is return.

Smoke

Write a killer bass riff and overlay it with strings of loneliness.
This is the genesis of rock and love.

Like a blower trapping smoke in the body of his glass nightingale:
Galatea, fill shape, take form, turn warm.

These monsoon days when the mind floods in rain and hours.
In the wings, a charlatan phoenix waits for immolation,

knowing realism yet chancing the gamble of renaissance –
within strictures of a dream, that something true exists.

Tendrils of haze, encircling my wrists. Insubstantial
is the chimera, lacing our atom closeness.

There's brutality here, in the tender ways we use each other.
But on the last day the artist shall owe her muse no debts at all.

Rendition

Peering between parapets for a glimpse of sea.
Growing up to the taste of salt and horizon.

Funerals were an everyday affair, as weddings;
void decks were where the abandoned caught the breeze.

Night held the sufferance of insomnia and voyeured arguments
slapped from lancing, two-timing mouths; aged, bleeding older.

When flats lit up in a vertical constellation of unnamed stars
there was the possibility, at least, of rewriting the scene.

A mother prayed her child could be gold but did not believe.
An afterthought affection was the atonement for years of hunger.

Someone once asked why I wrote such death and sadness.
“Because hope does not need to be exorcised.”

Doves like white pigeons

Under the hot idolatry of eyes. Learnt long ago
The proper way of entrance is to light up the room.
Acquiescent manners of sitting in a man's lap, in softness
that is a woman's coup de grace.

Ash-tarred. The air burnt with expectation.
A smile glosses the eclipsed landscape.
Upon crumbling altars my incense, swallowed.

For as a single fibre clings
tenacious to wholeness, it is enough
that wings and the apparel of gentleness
conceal what feathered scars lie in history.
The denouement only has to seem gold.

Edlyn Ang has been published in Singaporean journals, *2ndrule*, *Quarterly Literary Review Singapore*, *The Poetry Billboard*, and in the Australian *Stylus Poetry Journal*. She was featured in the anthologies *One-Winged* and *Love Gathers All*, and in the Hong Kong exhibition, *ColoringWords*.