

Autobiographic Verses, Volume 1
Verse 1 to 100

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Maurice Ling

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2019

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Prologue

“Can there be anything that we write that is strictly non-autobiographic?” is the question I asked myself. Almost everything that we write will draw upon personal experiences; thus, all writings can be autobiographic in the broadest sense. Cao Xue Qin draws upon his family history in *Dream of the Red Mansion*, where his grandfather, Cao Yin, was the playmate of Emperor Kang Xi whom then promoted him to Commissioner of Textiles and Silk.

I want to continue my autobiographic journey after the completion of my first themed autobiography describing my six years of undergraduate and graduate studies in Melbourne. However, it is a daunting task and I had struggled for a long while with regards to which format to use.

Not a skillful writer of prose and narratives, I have always like poetic style for its directness, conciseness, and perhaps even, obfuscation to some extent. Why not use it to compile my autobiography then? This is the result.

Treat this as a compilation of poems I penned if you will for I am not interested to put things in chronological order but as a reflection – penning events and feelings as they come to mind. At the end of the day, it will be the reader’s job to piece all these anecdotal events and feeling together.

The only aspect of my life that I will not be focused on is the six years I had in Melbourne when I pursued my undergraduate and graduate studies. That stage of my life is so important and yet focused and concise to me that it is a separate autobiography on its own:

Ling, MHT. 2013. Six Years of Melbourne: July 2002 to April 2008. ISBN 978-1-304-41694-0.

1. Possession of Treasured Wine

Sixty lunars of my years
With friends I thought so dear
Hoping the forged bonds can stay the ages
But a mere stone throws off gauges

On that day of eleven
Writing scrolls upon heated head
That I drop in rolls
That in fate I seal
To find in zeal

Thrown through shuttle
Agonizing tears across flutter
Waving hands to thyness above
Coldness cuts I feel alone

Sheering sleepless nights I thought
For all the pain sustained
Like sleeping on rose bed
Pushing beneath thorns me bled

In slain
Stepping onto solemn lane
Forgoing the slainful dust
I mount on with new bust
Welcome the warmth amidst joyous tears
Bathing me heart in deep sea
Of cherished love
Of joy

Asking providence

What true friends might be
As the old man say
They are like treasured old wine
To be savoured in pleasure
For it will tend your wounds in leisure
-- 02/02/99

Commentary: "Possession of Treasured Wine" is one of my earliest poetry works. It speaks of an invisible "caste" system of elitism in Singapore's education structure, of which I walked from one layer to the next lower by a "sad" twist of fate. "Sad" because I've suffered but grew greatly in the process. I thought I must as well write it down before social numbness got into me.....

For a large part of my primary school life, I'm in this so-called "best class". During primary 5 final year exams, a high fever resulted in me merely passing all papers and thus, outcast from this class. "Outcast" is a very real word and feeling I've felt.

There I was, almost friendless, as my so-called friends of my "former" group just brushed pass my shoulders when they see me. I WAS NOT THEIR GROUP ANYMORE. An agonizing fact. In this sadness and tears, I made some strong friendships, which endured till now.

I ask God, or anything high up, "what are true friends?" The answer I got is "true friends are like vintage port. To be savoured and enjoyed over almost eternity." With this..... I hope all who reads this till now, can find your true friends.....

2. Greatest Teacher

Thou art greatest teacher there might be
In life one might see
Searching vast land for his greatness
Neglecting the one in liveness
Far might have been
Near might have seen
For excellence is once called Life
Knowing thou eminence
Tasting thee forbiddance
Thy seek
How life teach
In a way nor mortal mentor does
Life let you stay in rust
Without ruth
Trials ply prior lessons truth
In pain
You learn and gain
Etching the mind where innocence slain
Sending the law
In varied forms
Hitting the mind where it becomes norms
In pain in life you learn
Where this teacher dignity earns
--5/5/99

Commentary: As what Viktor E Frankl said “*If there is a meaning in life at all, then there must be a meaning in suffering. Suffering is an ineradicable part of life, even as fate and death. Without suffering and death human life cannot be complete. The way in which a man accepts his fate and all the suffering it entails, the way in which he takes up his cross, gives him ample opportunity — even*

under the most difficult circumstances — to add a deeper meaning to his life. It may remain brave, dignified and unselfish. Or in the bitter fight for self-preservation he may forget his human dignity and become no more than an animal. Here lies the chance for a man either to make use of or to forgo the opportunities of attaining the moral values that a difficult situation may afford him. And this decides whether he is worthy of his sufferings or not. ... Such men are not only in concentration camps. Everywhere man is confronted with fate, with the chance of achieving something through his own suffering.”

Life teaches in very stern and tough ways and the best of all, you cannot complain. Yet, because of its qualities, it is the best teacher and the most impartial teacher.

3. Joy of Lion

This animal we know
Dressed in golden glow
Sitted the warrior god
Lion we call as lord

Roving across landscaped sky
Harbouring no strings behind
Free as it comes
Ease as it goes
In this glamour
Mind seeks to harbour

Running pass the hindbound guys
Evoking passions
Through enjoyment of life's sessions
Exist in dreamland
Aborted plan

How I here to ply this world
Alone with lion's pur
How I want to fly this plain
Housed in golden mane
I am this lion
To seek sparkling flame
-- 31/1/02

4. Eagle's Cry

Soaring majestic clear skies
Only those wonderous flies
Looking up
Lies the envy of many landed ducks
The ants only sees the eagle at height
Not knowing that the eagle cries at night

His majesty owns the sky
So why it needs to cry
Be the lord of great blue plains
Is the wishful hope of many little dames
But inneath heart's weakest lames
Is a soul that can weep in pain

Sorrow sits as buddy mate
Loneliness serves on plate
Watching ants in clusters
Can barely hide in plasters
For the heartness wound may just tear
At the slightest touch there

Born as an eagle
Endowed upon freedom's freeder
To be fighter's leader
Torn by a love for land
A eagle can't be bounded then
Chained eagle is just a dead man
-- 31/1/02

Commentary: These two poems (Joy of Lion and Eagle's Cry) are analogous duets of each other, in the sense that they speak of oppo-

site emotional tones. The emotional-existential extremities of a youthful "great man" are imposed on two animals of majesty, the lion and the eagle.

The lion sets to enjoy the glamour of being in high places, the envious eyes of many sighting him. To many, a lion's achievements only exist in dreams, never attainable.....

The eagle sets to epic a wound in the heart. "The greatest has no friends." And certainly, this is a sorrow for the eagle, for he has to fly alone and in loneliness. In the day, he enjoys all the shine but at night, he can only shed tears in silence. He wants to be down on land for a while but doesn't know how to..... Being an eagle, his mission is to lord over, therefore, despite his desires, being landed will make him lose all zeal...

5. Fly at the Speed of Light

Arrows of time
Rays of light
Sped pass us with Heculian might
Flows of ice
Waves of tide
Washing horizon with freshen pride
Time had gone
These ties will be for long

Glaze through event glass
Near six years had passed
Sit at time of fly
Realise that age gone by
Who knows when we next meet
How changes have been made
Perhaps another few had sped pass
Perhaps in pale beard and golden brows
Savouring the days we had in youth
-- 15/2/02

Commentary: This is one of the follow ups of the poem One in a Million. Also written during the period where I've been sending a number of friends off for further pursuits. Somehow, it came as a revelation that six years had passed since we first saw each other in polytechnic. In many context, we can be considered to be "old" friends already. How time has gone by is indeed fearful. Perhaps without conscious thoughts, we might mimic the grand-daddies having coffee and savouring the time gone by. As in the song "Those were the days"

6. One in a Million

Out'd cosy warm waters
We face the world
Within cocoon stay for five
Little butterfly break and fly

From Fresh foreign faces
To each other live's places
So long had time walk
To see strangers in flock
As such, precision crafted destinies
To set paths into unities

In proverbial tone
'100 lifetimes to meet in same raft
1000 to rest on same wollen bath'
Worthy friends are hard to seek
Thus I hold all in reach
-- 23/02/02

Commentary: Out of the sudden, while waiting for Eric to arrive for Chinese New Year visiting, I contempt the value of a friend. By the time, I wrote this poem, I've sent 4 friends off in the airport to pursue their dreams overseas.....

I begin to wonder the fate in play for 2 persons to meet and to become great friends, or just friends. Came a conclusion of the immensity of fate at work, to think, there are about 7000 million people walking Earth today... Ask ourselves, DO WE HAVE 7000 FRIENDS?

Thus, a friendship is really "ONE IN A MILLION".

7. Ongoing

Five weeks to the call
Of the summer dawn
I waited for long
To breathe frozen air
Under lighter skies

Is it cool as I may
I do beg and pray
Find a place where heart flows
Out of damn furnace
Of what? I don't know

Doubting clouds overcast the skies
Paramountic pressures churning inside
Silly as it seems
Out of usual raying beam
Consequent of slag
Months of cerebral depravity

Light on the end
Oncoming avalanche or fairyland
Sloughing insights from limbical lord
Who knows what may I be prod
-- 3/6/02

8. In 48 Hours

Tickling along little streams
Time goes by
In short brightness sun
I've been here twice

Seeing one when wake
No feel of late
That's eight rounds ago
Now to see another go

Depths of red sea
Bless them true and free
May time will see us glamour
Of spent sum

Next on list
Here sits me
Feel notes weird
Of what I wonder
Of unseekness I ponder
-- 4/7/02

9. Churned Limbical Notes

Day to move
In grimness to prove
Wierdness of feel
That refuse to appeal

Sitting on bed
I look around late
Like firstness sail
Funniness can't be said

Anxiety reads the going man
Fearness lingers at plan
Not clearing the sight
Rushed blood with melacholy sees the light
-- 6/7/02

Commentary: This trilogy of poems (Ongoing, In 48 Hours, and Churned Limbical Notes) illustrates my feelings of my impeding departure to Melbourne for my further education then, on 6/7/02.

This is the day, the event that I hoped and foreseen since when I'm 16, and it's finally coming my way, real near me. However, as the days draw nearer, the pressure and uncertainties built up. Perhaps it's the money spent, perhaps it's the expectations I have, perhaps it's the unknown awaiting me. It may be a blend of all, I can't tell for sure. With all my might, I put up a strong front, layers of cosmetics. Reckoned that to "tremble" at this stage will put all around me into untold worries which is something I can't do at this point in time. I'm sure this is a common feeling experienced by all sharing my path.

As what Keith encapsulates it, "It's like military enlistment all over again. Pre-enlistment anxiety....."

10. First Motar Shot, and On-Going

Four seasons had passed
Since the day I left home encrusted
Feelings of which are hard to find
Written in three coloured proses lines
There I pen my blood in tears
One pushing joy
One pulling fear

Eight scripts, hexa-tens I have back
Looks like a winning strike
But in marginal plight
Inked merely hepty three

Annum ahead had just begun
Must ready myself with arms
To tackle furry milk
My arcane on silk
-- 13/7/04

Commentary: Wrote this poem at the end of my 3rd year undergraduate before I go into honours year. It was a tough year and a difficult time as I did not do well for my first semester of my 3rd year; hence, pulled down my overall grades to merely a 3rd class honours. It was an uphill battle for my honours project and I need to do very well to get into graduate studies.

11. End of Supported Years

Crochet centuria since first cry
Two in downunder lie
Verbal word semi-decum past
I've hit end of pension glass

Two years ran past by
Two weeks there my script
Awaiting to be ripped
Ten months of work
Ten thousand speak the tales

End at that
Thirty since first step
Waging again
Seems always with buckets of pain
Emotions wrecked
From tales four months back
Tears dry and gone
What me got but all alone
Work I put so much more
Knowing the art
Still placed among all
What meanings
This war wage?
-- 19/05/04

Commentary: This was written at the end of my honours year in Melbourne, which signifies the end of a road. The next road, if any, depends on myself. The pain stems from the fact that I did not get the grade that I wanted – I was a mark short from first class honours. Is it worth fighting this war?

12. One More

Two years downunder
Done what I've set upover
At this end of line
I sought for an extended fly
Saw it
A path aimed at the sky

Though a setback
I hadn't expect
Using as a force
To spur on-forth
To greater glory
Setback as my amnesty
-- 14/06/04

Commentary: Continuing from *End of Supported Years*, I decided to continue fighting this war at least for another round – to do my doctorate. Hopeful that this setback will be a strength to push me forward so as not to have any regrets. If I fail, at least I can tell myself that I did my best.

13. 六年返回情

三十载, 语云立, 坐已回守汝不级
一波浪, 目异村, 六春清早如一休
思当景, 对今朝, 心沸喜愁优乐待
欲二月, 可侵猎, 但有重重不可呆
离与惜, 两头难, 前车反复何不可
待一页, 新一篇, 魂归咀嚼梦作章
-- 01/04/08

Commentary: April Fool's 2008 was my 2nd last day in Melbourne. This almost reads like a conclusion and what lies ahead of my work and life in Melbourne. It is a nice city and I love it. It talks about the emotional conflicts at that time and my attempt and resolution to make sense of it all. It is a time that I had chosen to leave - the balance had just tipped - despite all my intentions to stay on. It says of a new page in my life and the past is in my memories to chew - till the day when we meet again.

14. The Balance Un-Tipped

Two days to the South
I looked myself in the path
It seems the winds had swept
A mixed thought I thought the sand had kept

Warm rays beat the ground
Words around
Lighting glows I found
Boy, in this, can I drown

Why had I walked from this rivers
Of the pleasure it givers
The jot of hot sun delivers
With moans too, that grievors

Stacks of words in a year
For the work I can hold dear
Seen by flickerness of the wind
it may all be an unfulfilled dream

Packaged thoughts
Pain and worry
Use the line
All these game I sight
I wonder where I can light
Admist the blight

Yet yearning
The excitement forthcoming
In this seemingly homecoming
How can I be receiving

With the balance lie untipping
-- 09/04/09

Commentary: I went back to Melbourne in April 2009 to give my final PhD seminar and to finish up the last chapter of my thesis. This poem was penned on the second day when I visited Kevin in Deakin University and sat in for his lab meeting – after a year. Looking at the scribbling on the whiteboard and all the discussions flows, I realized that I missed all of these. And I thought that I had made the decision not to do full time research. Little did I know, the winds blowing outside the glass panel had just unearthed all of these again. For all the grant chasing I had seen so far, I thought I had convinced myself not to go for it again. I remembered telling myself that for all the efforts I can put into grant writing, how many am I going to get? It is quite bleak. But yet, at this very moment, at this most unsuspecting time, it got un-leashed in me again. Will this be the start of another un-tipping?

15. 人滩

旷海有波涛
千年见今朝
岁月飘渺间
人生多少篇

常见人云步海边
举指沙田云语言
似机遇语录
欲长年可见
沧海水烈
日洗磨灭

百年之体
千载何知
波卷滩沙
人忘沙留
-- 17/06/2009

Commentary: Written on June 17, 2009, while sitting at the beach watching the waves hitting the shores. This sight probably had not changed much since millenniums ago but a person's time is limited and how much can one write.

Looking at people walking along the beach and wrote on the sand. It is like trying to write your life but the next wave will come and erode your words away. Isn't this like a person's life? Your words and work are only between each wave.

At the end of the day, what does all these means when people are forgotten? What remains is a smooth slate of sand.

16. Enterobacteriaceae

Bacteria here I come
Striving in my own food dump
Called by many names
And none of them are ever the same
Antibiotics I fear not
Awashed I am in this very clot
Out come millions in a poo
So be it... I'm making more too
Water water I should not meet
But if you ever see me in one
I'll say... You better run
With all the gathering of us fellow
We will turn MacConkey yellow
-- 02/10/2009

Commentary: A "shit" poem describing the bacterium that I had been working on - *Escherichia coli*.

17. 争江山

江山依旧岁齐天
人事长绕不入眠
赤兔城门顿时烈
一载几十就化灭
后孺何日问何寻
不知所为争青云
-- 23/04/12

Commentary: Written on April 23, 2012, while I was reminiscing all the events back in Singapore Polytechnic that led to my resignation in 2010. A person's life is just a few decades and as Zhuang Zi said, is like a horse speeding past a gate - there is no meaning in the grand scheme of things. Yet, all these fighting and politicking has kept us awake and bothered. When I read history today and looking at the blood shed by named and unnamed warriors of the past, be it Julius Caesar or Genghis Khan, I cannot help but wonder why? Is it really worth it? How much land one needs to be buried with? Then I look again, what will the future say about us?

18. 乙未中秋

中秋月圆高望台
回眉独思日不来
花容圆缺太阴排
唯独满灼太阳开

柔银嫦娥吴刚殿
二仙各待空闺楼
射日不忍娥泣遍
吴嫂不义砍树头

万年水流空悲切
回头苦岸情执烈
天若有情天亦老
抹执识空方岸道
—— 25/9/2016

19. Melvin Mooted

An evening of June 1988
A very common even after dinner
The sky blue and was not too humid
The day that things changed
Mum brought me to Pan Island
Family clinic for 2 years
Thought mum was sick only that she isn't
Awaiting outside after consultation
Awaiting a revelation
Was ask if I wanted a brother or sister
A brother I wanted
A brother too small to be seen
A brother the size of a bean
A brother, I perhaps longed
Mum was shocked
A decade since the dock
Promised to carry him to school if wanted
Promised to take care of him if needed
Anything to keep him
Anything to not lose him
Why him? I just knew is him
Called grandma to tell the news
Locked the deal
Next nine months of growing dust
-- 21/06/16

Commentary: The very day I knew that mum was pregnant with whom would be Melvin, I just knew that I will have a brother rather than a sister - subconsciously and instinctively, I just know.

20. Sims Drive

My first home
Home and house I was born into
A west-facing house
Setting sun shining through
A house of ten in 2 bedrooms
Grandparents, parents, 2 uncles and 3 aunts

Besides Manjusri
Lived in for 5 years
Lined with floor mats
Cemented kitchen floor
Where shower and urinal do not talk

A corridor where kids played
Micro-village of grandmothers
Casual chatters all day long
With occasional card games

A large landing platform where the lifts were
We were on 7th floor while the lifts go to 6th and 10th
A space where kids run and play
A place where kids play sparkles every Chinese New Year eve
A place where Grandmothers will gather and wrap rice dumplings
all night

That was the place where we gathered
For joy, for laughter, for sadness, and for the last day
The place where we seek refuge when wanted
The place where Jackson and Melvin sought refuge when needed
The place for all weathers
The place for all fritters

The place I last saw in June 2008
The place was lost to us since 2009
The place of immense memories
If the walls could speak
Tales of
The place
The place
-- 21/06/16

Commentary: Block 41, Sims Drive, is the place I spend my childhood – my paternal grandparents' place. It is right beside Manjusri Secondary School where there were 2 stone lions at the school gate. The stone lions which I had sat on many times as a kid. If the walls can talk, there are many tales that it can tell. After grandma's passing in June 2008, I never visited it again. It was eventually sold in 2009.

21. Coconut Seed

The seed that start it all
The seed in the sturdy brown ball
Coconut, a seed or a nut
Questioning the ten year heart
She said it is a seed
I refused to see the deed
For I saw the white fibrous golf
A coconut seed at the hawker's loft
One against the class
Hiding my resolve in my box of glass
Two days off I sought my prize
Showing the seed small in size
Not bowing to authoritative voice
Skepticism my only choice
-- 17/03/16

Commentary: My first single recallable memory of science was in Gongshang Primary School arguing with my science teacher, Mrs Tay, on whether coconut has a seed. She said that the entire coconut is a seed but I remembered seeing a seed in a coconut. The following week, I got my mum to scout the market with me for a coconut seed to show her. I was 10 years old and in Primary 4 then. Perhaps that was where I really got interested in science – to learn the natural world.

22. 射雕靖

良镛笔下三部曲，射雕起文是郭靖
英雄一身篆人生，半生逢师各有因，步步迈入保宋令

少时遇得哲别师，紧尊母训代人信
习得一神射箭手，蒙古四兄教打滚
莫看儿戏固本功，箭射修习眼手力
打滚融汇骨骼行，此如学前家庭教

草原逢得江南怪，虽非高手但时重
七怪七计视开拓，磨练扎根不盲宠
巧遇全真七子首，传得吐纳行气法
若是不得江南计，吐纳真传也无利
出入学堂多师长，个个不必当首席
唯求视野增辽远
江南七计展外开，全真气诀收敛内
郭靖根本已平稳，高考成绩也圆润

丐帮七公收郭靖，低分纳入入本科，又有黄蓉当陪读
本科降龙十八掌，负有内外与哲思
战龙在野出乾卦，亢龙有悔刚转柔
虽说降龙学士班，依教奉行也不专

硕士盟得周伯通，左右互搏空明拳
顽童教导自创诀
博士论文选九阴，伯通身配导师责
独导难成博论文
旁有一灯佛武师，世称南帝大师也
寥寥烟火点明亮

不愧降龙出易经, 老頑本出沙门岭
得助西毒欧阳锋, 月内三擒又三放
日后蛤蟆擒飞雕, 苦逼九阴内容述
不时蛤蟆且戮雕, 两周成就速成班

华山论剑也论文, 郭靖剑会乘文书
三堂会审射雕靖, 东邪西毒洪七公
各战郭靖三百回, 九百考题得博士

读思射雕郭靖录, 令人发思有觉悟
郭靖本初不如康, 但有母教而逢别
折别视靖本质佳
有逢层层不间断, 熬出华山大会证
-- 19/03/16

Commentary: Guo Jing (郭靖) is one of the main characters in Louis Cha's Condor Heroes, to the extent that I think the trilogy is the story of Guo Jing – how he ended up being an admiral-like figure to protect Song Dynasty against Liao. This is also a story of education – Guo Jing had many teachers along the way and through them, Louis Cha gave a good depiction of the role of teachers at every stage of life.

Guo Jing's mother taught Guo Jing to be trustworthy and first teacher, Zhe Bie, noticed that. His trustworthiness is a major factor that Zhe Bie took Guo Jing under his wings to teach him archery. At the same time, Guo Jing's childhood playmates were 4 Mongolian brothers whom taught him Mongolian wrestling. These are the foundation of Guo Jing's martial arts. Although they seem like games, Guo Jing learned how to focus from archery and built physical strength from both archery and wrestling. Zhe Bie and the

Mongolian brothers are equivalent to Guo Jing's primary school teachers.

Guo Jing then met a group of 7 martial artists, collectively known as 7 freaks of Jiang Nan. Each one has a different skill, from staff to fist fighting and so on. However, collectively or individually, they are considered 3rd grade martial artists. They were firm but patient with Guo Jing. Essentially, they expanded the vision of Guo Jing into different forms of martial arts. Then, Guo Jing met a priest, Qiu Chu Ji, whom taught him breathing skills, which will not be effective should Guo Jing had not learnt the basic forms of martial arts. This stage represents secondary school – the expansion of vision and building a very strong foundation. Teachers at this stage need not be top grade but must be able to expand the worldview of the student while continuing to strengthen the foundation.

Hong Qi Gong, the chief of Beggars' Sect and one of the top martial artist, became Guo Jing's undergraduate instructor. Hong Qi Gong's main skill is 降龙十八掌 and uses a lot of concepts from 易经. Huang Rong, eventually became Guo Jing's wife, was Guo Jing's classmate then. Huang Rong is Huang Yao Shi's daughter. She is exceedingly intelligent and can revise many of the concepts with Guo Jing. Huang Yao Shi is on par with Hong Qi Gong in terms of martial arts and is also well-versed in military philosophies. In a way, 降龙十八掌 became Guo Jing's undergraduate major. At this stage (undergraduate), Hong Qi Gong is able to consolidate Guo Jing's learnings by fixing a major for him. More importantly, it is a training of life skill and the required philosophy to accompany it. In this way, 降龙十八掌 is both Guo Jing's undergraduate major and dissertation.

After graduation, Guo Jing met Zhou Bo Tong, also a top grade martial artist and Qiu Chu Ji's elder, and taught him some pretty

weird skills – left hand fighting with right hand. Although this is like exploratory, I see this as Guo Jing's graduate classes or his Masters. Eventually, Guo Jing zoomed down to 九阴真经 as his doctoral thesis topic with the help of Zhou Bo Tong. This exploration phase may also be seen as the initial stage of graduate/doctoral studies as the thesis topic is still in flux. The mentor then has the role to enable exploration while helping the mentee zoom down on something he/she picks.

It is important to note that Zhou Bo Tong is also Guo Jing's doctoral adviser even though Zhou Bo Tong is not an expert in 九阴真经. Hence, lie within this is an advice for graduate advisers – you should allow for exploration and respect the mentees' choice of eventual thesis topic; at the end of the day, it is the mentee's thesis.

Once the thesis topic is fixed, Guo Jing continued his study and seek out expert advice on different areas. Two experts are important in Guo Jing's life at this stage, Yi Deng and Ouyang Feng. Yi Deng is a high-ranking monk and a top martial artist himself. Although Zhou Bo Tong was trained in both Taoist and Buddhist philosophies, Yi Deng's accomplishment in Buddhist philosophy goes beyond Zhou Bo Tong. Hence, Guo Jing learned extensively from Yi Deng, which is like an intensive graduate philosophy internship. Ouyang Feng kidnapped Guo Jing and forced him into dual often. Although not intended, the 2 weeks of captivity under Ouyang Feng is equivalent of intensive practical skills upgrading for Guo Jing as Ouyang Feng is an accomplished martial artist himself.

I find it interesting that Guo Jing was tutored at different stages under all the 4 of the 5 top martial artists at that point in time – Hong Qi Jong, Zhou Bo Tong, Yi Deng, and Ouyang Feng. This reminded me of Simeon Poisson, whom is known for Poisson regression

and Poisson distribution. Poisson's thesis advisers were Joseph-Louis Lagrange and Pierre-Simon Laplace, where we got Lagrange multiplier and Laplace transformation from.

The Meet of Hua Shan, 华山论剑, can be seen as Guo Jing's viva or doctoral thesis examination. He was examined by 3 examiners – Huang Yao Shi, Hong Qi Gong, and Ouyang Feng. After 300 rounds of examination, Guo Jing got his bonnet.

Guo Jing's story amazed me as he is not the cleverest – more likely, a pretty dumb student. It is his good starting point (trustworthiness), the fortune to meet suitable teachers at each stage without much breaks in between, and good learning attitude that made him succeed. Contrasting this with Guo Jing's childhood friend, Yang Kang, whom was much more intelligent than Guo Jing. Yang Kang's intelligence, without continual guidance from various suitable teachers and a wrong attitude, got him killed in the end.

23. 老海石

年糕玉，老海石
彩虹村，初相识
去年三月访台湾
二天早晨转东岸
村内廊，有石摊
摆乌彩，接称宝
单眼瞧去不识货
此物称玉有迷惑
何为玉，常言到
是美石，中和斐
海洗污浊有掺杂
不解老海也为美
从此遇，挑石味
地舍利，寻姿魅
金丝和田玉髓晶
唯独不懂老海灵
它有润，耐寻味
年糕质，咀嚼齿
彩韵多，种类繁
有米稠，有油乌
红心脏，麦芽糖
总多寻秘无头绪
润味质齿四揭蒂
各有立地在四方
通为一处无中央
四面八方疏不漏
耐人寻味在圆融

-- 20/03/17

Commentary: Spent 9 days holidaying in Taiwan in March 2017 – we arrived in Taipei, took a train to Taichung, and travelled back to Taipei via Hualien.

On the 2nd day, we visited Rainbow Village at Taichung and there was a pushcart selling stones. I am intrigued as I like stones very much. One of the stones that caught my interest is 年糕玉, supposedly a form of jade. They do not look like any jade or jade stones that I know. Although they have different colours and combinations, these stones do not have the beauty of jade. Instead, they look rather ugly. Narrowly defined, only nephrite and jadeite can be known as jade but broadly speaking, any beautiful stone can be jade. However, these 年糕玉 are not exactly beautiful. This triggered my curiosity – what makes a stone a jade?

Researching further, 年糕玉 is a sea-washed stone – a stone that had been washed in the sea for millions of years and as a result, some minerals had been infused while others had been leached out; giving it a non-uniformed layered effect, which gives the “chewy” feel of steamed pastries – like 年糕 of different ages. Yet, it is this unevenness of colourings and texture and this chewy feeling that is the beauty of this stone – a stone that endures and encourages us to search for new feel, sensations, and even flavour.

I restarted my stones collection from this trip.

24. 饮酒思故友

人生依旧在
对月唱楚歌
意思故人赏阴开
今夜酒醉嫦银合
—12/11/17

Commentary: Had some alcohol with a couple of friends in Chinatown on a Saturday night, 11th November 2017, and thought of some of the friends and acquaintances of the past whom I had lost contact with. I wonder how they are now..... Hoping that they also doing well, had some drinks with their current friends, and enjoying the full moon tonight.

25. 盼猫

去年冬风，
送弟南下追翼梦。
每日离门望右房，
盼守猫睡太虚廊。
九月短归探官，
得一职心石下补坑。
此时寒风又吹起，
思念情生难代替。

— 20/12/17

Commentary: On December 5, 2016; Melvin went to Perth for his flying training. That is his dream. His bedroom is on my left as I walked out of mine and I used to pop my head in to see his sleeping on his bed. Although he did come back for a week in September for his interview and got an offer, he is back to complete his training. As the cool breeze of December blows again, I miss hugging him.

26. 配雌鸠

俊男美女，自自而单。
司愿偶陪，诏凰来宴。
凤守不鸣，因司故而。
非拒凰兮，而为友戏。
兄见事词，观闪雌雄。
司因易过，雌鸠成恋。

— 20/12/17

27. 德俊的丸

俊邀众男往自家
有茶有酒有招待
冬至德俊搓汤圆
手里面团想温丸
- 22/12/17

28. 弥陀颂

两百亿国各取长
自在王前宣誓谈
五劫福德五劫功
只为建国舍群众
七宝组成楼台阁
妙水莲池百鸟合
清风飘叶颂法歌
民众个个皆圣众
道友谈论法慧功
寿命无量弥陀赐
娑婆上级逊于此
极乐妙土门何在
诚信愿往弥陀来
不需灭业五逆罪
只需圣号佛心对
但非恶业从此消
五劫福德当底瑶
四十八无量悲愿
都为六道做底垫
-- 22/12/17

Commentary: This poem is a praise to Amitabha, whom build his pure land by taking the best qualities of more than 20 billion other pure lands. Spending 5 kaplas to build, Amitabha only requires us to believe in his existence and to have the intention to be reborn there, for him to pick us up. There is no need to repay all negative karma beforehand as Amitabha had used 5 kaplas of merits as our guarantor to our creditors that we will repay our debts.

29. Ethan Baby at Reunion

Ethan, my first nephew
For 2006 reunion before one
Cute Ethan looks so fair
Drinking milk and pooping there
Mummy Lindy carried him
Granny Florence wiping butt
Lifting Ethan to new diapers
Poop again like wasabi from a tube
Granny saw and yelp
Great grandmother came to help
And 3 generations watched Ethan poop
-- 24/12/17

30. 论玉

石之美者就是玉，玉含上品有九德。
仁者温润光泽。智者清晰纹理。
义者坚硬不屈。节者清正不伤。
纯者清明不垢。勇者可折不屈。
诚者优缺表外。容者美光不犯。
理者音纯不乱。

九为极数道之顶。自古帝王君子命。
玺仗斧钺示权贵。国胜君主惜玉之。
国到顶胜玉也细，从此国运山水流。
日升高清步春秋。

商有武丁伐玉门，千里行兵占石坑。
妇好为武丁之后，妇好坟出玉七百。
一件器皿一年工，四十工匠一身劳，
只为妇好作遗裳。武丁之后汤商衰。

唐胜官配和田带，一品高官十二块。
李柷登宣汉白石，可怜不及汉白玉。
比起高宗李世明，官级三品带和田。
可想景宗谥为哀。

明代宫廷皆和田，神宗万历无好玉。
和田运输三千里，城城守吏窃皇玉。
治国何以治到此，守国变成盗国者。
重八孝陵内哭泣。

清弘历爱玉无限，后人封他为玉痴。
乾隆自犯乾上爻，又玩田黄又玩玉。
大禹治水图玉山，五吨青白新疆来。
劈山开路又建桥，三年运石两年雕。
大清运衰乾隆起。

射箭玉谍免指伤，后代看指权贵寒。
久用手把玉包浆，包浆扳指价值高。
骑射带指谍必伤，无缺扳指包浆厚。
只因盘玩废骑射，防守武技逐日退。
亡国之日不久已，败衰预言在扳指。

颗颗玉石章章文，件件玉器篇篇论。
考玉可见胜与衰。
虽有德但也有九，乾卦谨慎必须考。
九五不该盼上爻，飞龙在天上有悔。
玉中之意在于此。
虽有德而不可极，玉劝一切行中庸。
-- 24/12/17

Commentary: In nearly all imperial Chinese dynasties, jade is one of the ultimate luxury items. It is said that jade has 9 qualities which reflects the 9 qualities of a gentleman. The number 9 signifies the peak – peak of power, peak of achievements, and so on – because of that, all emperors, nobilities, and gentlemen loves jade. The rise and decline of dynasties can be seen from jade use. Jade-wear are artifacts with no real added purpose. For example, a jade sword cannot be used for war and a jade axe will shatter if used like an axe. The finest jade-wear originates at the peak of a dynasty; from then on, decline happens.

I listed 5 examples of such heights and decline of dynasties. Firstly, the 22nd king of Shang dynasty, 武丁, started a 3-year war in the northwest to secure jade; specifically, nephrite from Xinjiang (和田玉). 755 jade objects were excavated from his queen's tomb; his queen is by the name of 妇好. It is estimated that it will take a year for a craftsman to make a jade-wear. Hence, the lives of at least 40 craftsmen were spent on making jade-wear for her burial. Shang dynasty started to decline after 武丁.

Secondly, in the early part of Tang dynasty, many officials have pieces of nephrite on official belts as a sign of rank. Yet, the coronation tablet of the last Tang dynasty emperor (李柷) is not even jade but marble. Compared to perhaps just a hundred years before that a 3rd level official would have nephrite on his belt, no wonder 李柷 is the "*Pitious Emperor of the Tang*" (唐哀帝).

Thirdly, Ming dynasty emperors used lots of jade-wear. By the time it reaches to 明神宗万历皇, 朱翊鈞 lamented that none of the jade that was shipped to Beijing was any good but he still had to use them. The reason was that it took 3000 kilometres journey to ship nephrite from Xinjiang to Beijing and along the way, guards and officials stole the good pieces from the imperial shipment. Instead of protecting the country, they stole from the country. Given that the first Ming emperor (朱元璋, original name was 朱重八) abhors corruption, he would have been crying in his tomb (孝陵) at the state of affairs.

Fourthly, Emperor Qianlong of Qing dynasty loves jade and a pretty rare type of stone called 田黄. He ordered to have a large piece of nephrite to carve into a sculpture. This piece of nephrite weighs 5 tons. It took 3 years to transport back to Beijing – roads were built, and forests were cleared just to transport this piece of jade.

After which, it took 2 years to carve this sculpture, which is currently housed in Beijing Museum. Till today, nobody knows how this sculpture can be carved. Qing dynasty started to decline from Qianlong's reign.

Lastly, nobilities on horseback tend to wear a thick jade ring (玉扳指) to protect their thumb during archery. Hence, this ring has been used to symbolize status. When an animate object (be it stone or wood) is constantly handled, it will have a polished finish with a layer of waxy oxidation, formed from layers after layers of sebum coating and oxidation. This results in a unique polish known as 包浆, which increases the value of the artifact. As a protective ring, parts of the ring would be worn out from cuts and burns by the arrows. Hence, a good sebum polish on a perfect jade ring means that the owner had neglected his archery and his duty to carry arms for the country. Therefore, this ring foretold the decline of the dynasty.

Every piece of jade tells a story and often, the story of rise and decline. The number 9 is the peak and in Book of Change (易经), the hexagram of only nines represents heaven (乾卦). Even the emperor can only be at the 5th of 6 levels. Maybe this is the meaning of jade – to remind us that there is a seed of decline even in the best object.

31. Surya's Christmas 2017

Once this year at Susu's place
On Christmas eve
Smoked duck tartlets and mushroom soup
Gratinated potatoes and baked salmon
Deliciously prepared by Ferry team
Colin watching swimming by
Passing the parcel for two full rounds
Penalty land by music sounds
Set of bedsheets and a bag
For the one who landed the last deck
Gift exchange by the lots
I got Trevor's gift of tea tumbler
Trevor got a box of refreshing amber
Josh got my book on ascent of money
Only Eric got an obscene phallic nasty
Always nice to meet and gather
Hope to see them happy as ever
-- 24/12/17

Commentary: This is probably the 2nd or 3rd time we are at Surya's place for Christmas. I always love to do Christmas at Surya's place as the food is always fantastic – this year's food is prepared by Ferry's team which includes a chef; hence, quality is assured. Colin is the game master and we had a game of "pass the parcel" where we sit in a circle to pass the parcel. Whoever holds on to the parcel when the music stops get a forfeit – much like musical chairs. We also had gift exchange – I got Trevor's tumbler and Josh got my book. I do hope we can do this every year.

32. 金丝玉

广东玉商逛石摊，
买得玉质小石蛋。
花了五十回家玩，
零三那日立史栏。

润黄坚硬质地好，
显漏田黄特籽高。
十斤买下两百元，
五彩层次金丝玉。

产地西北新疆漠，
又名戈壁玉石获。
戈壁也出五彩泥，
玉石透光不可替。

玉肉细腻又润手，
沙吹毛孔包浆受。
红透贵于黄和白，
天使泪中宝石光。

戈壁方圆一百里，
冬夏温差八十五。
冷热风沙百万年，
只代惜君一片天。
-- 28/12/17

Commentary: Gobi jade or 金丝玉 is a new type of jade stone that is known in this century. It was said that a jade merchant from

Guandong, China, found an interesting stone at a stone merchant's store in 2003 and spent RMB 50 on it. After playing with it, the jade merchant found that this stone has certain jade-like qualities to it and bought 10 catties of it for RMB 200. These stones came to be known as Gobi jade as they originated from Gobi Desert, within a radius of about 100 km. The best quality ones were known as "tears of angels".

I came across Gobi jade in 2015 when I was buying some stones in Bugis and is attracted by its main yellow tones with very glossy smooth surface. It does feel like jade to me. Since then, I bought more than 100 pieces online of various qualities. When I ordered online in mid-2016, it was SGD 15 per package of 800 grams, consisting between 4 to 15 stones depending on size. Most of them are yellow with a few white or red varieties. Personally, I like the translucent nature of the stone. However, most online merchants were selling for SGD 6-30 per piece by end of 2017. When I read more, it seems that Gobi Desert ran out of such jade for easy picking.

33. 木化玉

上古之树已明终，
沉息阴土木不朽。
千年时光硅踢碳，
从此石化带木纹。
分叉水浸矿填色，
铜而生绿铁而红。
又有地压千万年，
温度恰好石英晶。
低温不凝高而溶，
巧夺地理石化玉。
最早树玉三亿年，
最迟六千五百万。
惜之此玉来不易，
颗颗天时地理合。

-- 28/12/17

Commentary: Nothing amazed me more than the creation of Tree jade, which started as a tree. When this tree died, it got covered with mud and prevented the rotting process. If the conditions were right, the tree got fossilized into a stone, known as Petrified wood. This process can take as short as a few thousand years. If the conditions were right, the quartz in Petrified wood can be slightly melted and re-crystalized under the heat and pressure of the earth, turning the Petrified wood into chalcedony, which is then known as Tree jade. This process takes millions of years and the conditions must be just right – too hot and the structures will be lost; too cold and melting will not occur. Tree jade are from trees in Cretaceous period (65 million years ago) to as old as Carboniferous period (3 billion years ago). Hence, each piece is a treasure.

34. Melvin is Back

Last December, sending Melvin off
Feeling a little doff
As we ate burgers
Had his first solo flight
Welcome with a splash
Recorded on dash
On Tuesday, passed his final
Door open to a path bright
Back on yesterday morning
Awaiting his luggages coming
Was in bed when he came back
Walked to my bed with a big hug
"I am back" with a long hug
Before sleeping like a sluggish bed bug
-- 29/12/17

Commentary: On December 28, 2017; Melvin is finally back from Perth as he had completed his commercial pilot training. He arrived back in Singapore in early morning and Veron went to pick him up. I was dozing in and out of my sleep for the entire night, waiting for Melvin to be back until I heard him coming into my room to tell me that he is back. I gave him a big hug and continued my sleep.

35. Countdown at Budi's

Last minute arrangement at lunch time
Gather at Budi's for the first time
Bought food for a little feast
Far too much to say the least
Ham, chicken, cheese, nuggets, salad, sushi, yoghurt and ice cream
For Yong, Colin, Nadjmi, Trevor, Eric, Budi, and me
Watch Moana as we dine
Voyagers to settlers kind
A tale of faith and exploration
Strongly forge ahead despite hesitation
Rained heavily tonight
Fireworks drenched not so bright
Colin chatted with someone near
Did not take Moana dear
Left past an hour into the year
-- 01/01/18

36. Phil's Visit

Coffee mate of my doctoral days
Third visit to Singapore
Four days for the new year
Loves the food and gained blubber
Enjoys durian cheese tarts and frog porridge
But dislikes the ugly coffee foam
Walked from Raffles City to Clarke Quay
Stayed in Chinatown at Park 22
Room so tiny for a seventy
But was for the food and culture
Bought me an egg and bondaged cat
Smoked bananas that I love
Last visit was 3 years that
A good friend from down-under land
-- 01/01/18

37. Five Years of Maciej

Arrived in 2013 on Singa
From far north a Pole
Four years battling watery poop
Challenging thesis it may be
But succeed in landing each sole

From fermenter to synthetic biologist
Hunting the choleric protagonist
Baking the starchy dough he ferments
Eating gingerbread as Pumpkin laments

The Grand Duke Holowko his highness is
A lord in lab, his skills this
Ending his five years with us
Onto Bisbane on new year cusp
-- 17/01/18

38. 参石

房有石而雅
掌中石润神
愁时把温柔
万年风水游
-- 17/01/18

Commentary: I like stones since primary school. I definitely remembered that geologist was one of my possible ambitions but it has no market in Singapore. As such, it was not something I can pursue. Nevertheless, I like stones and like to play with it in my hands. As I played with a stone, it reminded me of the Orb in Belgariad series by David Eddings where God Aldur picked up an ordinary looking stone at the creek and through centuries of playing and handling it, polished it into a magical object. I am not Aldur and my stones will never be an Orb, much less that I do not have centuries to play with a stone. Nevertheless, a stone in my living room or on my desk, makes the place elegant. Playing a stone in my hands helps to smooth my spirits. In frustrations, playing with a stone reminded me that almost no problems are as serious in the large scheme of things. I remembered a part in Bill Clinton's autobiography that he had a moon rock in Oval Office and that gave him perspectives when things get heated up – this moon rock had been around for more than 100 million years; is there anything today that still matters 100 million years later?

39. Grandfather Died

The day Grandpa died
I was fourteen
On an October Tuesday I believe
Called solemnly to office I conceive
Gently told by Ms Tan
Fetched to Sims Drive
All were at void deck
Grandma inconsolable
Nights of chill
Melvin's nose weakened

The Sunday before
Breakfast of soup and rice
A bowl of pork soup each
Mum, Melvin and me
Grandpa drove in carpark
First in many years

Day of his last
Ate at food centre with gust
Walking back to home
Sat midway where he built his dome
-- 25/01/18

Commentary: Grandfather passed away in October 1993, when I was 14 years old. I remembered that it was a Tuesday.

The weekend before, Grandfather called up Mum saying that he wanted to bring us for lunch. He insisted on a lunch and we went to Bendemeer for 肉骨茶. Each of us got our own bowl of 肉骨茶 even though Mum said that we cannot finish it but Grandpa said

that we should just eat or there will not be another chance. After that, he wanted to visit his friends at Geylang Lorong 1 and even insisted that Mum let him drive into the carpark – that was also the last time he touched a steering wheel.

40. 戊戌狗年

戊戌狗年正月初三
各路聚在华府林
今年不在二姑楼
热锅二汤围桌栏

表姐寻买白肚鱼
清蒸鱼卵沾白醋
甜香带苦肉细质
口口怀念阿婆时
猪弟一言点到诉
九年春节不再同

吃饱喝足台面开
玩牌点满二十一
庄家碰到五龙台
来来去去接欢喜
公公婆婆在天望
满脸喜悦见一家
— 18/02/18

Commentary: We gathered at Jentson's place on the 3rd day of Chinese New Year this year as Aunt Grace's place is not available. We had steamboat dinner with 2 different soups and Lindy bought some Rabbit fish for steaming. Dipping into vinegar, the flesh was smooth and delicious. With every bite, the thoughts and conversation were about Grandma. Images of Grandma's house in Sims Drive and the scene at my place every Chinese New Year came back. Jentson summarized it succulently – Chinese New Year for the last 9 years had not been the same after Grandma passed away

in 2008. Jentson had even tattooed Grandma's death date on his chest. I do miss her a lot. However, I hope Grandma and Grandpa can be consoled by seeing us together.

41. The World My Nephew Faces

Thirteen the year of Adrian Mole
World he faces is different to his old
Learning skills not known of today
For a job created after far away
Yet, he needs to start now
How to... Is a question that struck me down
Develop the second order brain
In today's first order drain
Might he stand a chance
In the stage where he will dance
- 03/04/18

42. 不惑

夸越子论不惑年
瞭望前后邹此天
二十潜龙伏地用
首起十年仰大人
修诸博文而立足
这年三爻点到户
终日乾乾建根本
欲立门户多见闻
信访各地参寺部
六十文章为自试
天干地枝到不惑
欲跃过渊必离群
修养神魂添魄力
飞龙在天跃龙门
心有志忑信不足
但愿一跳远卧坑
鹏鸟击水三千里
自建风卷九千里
为离北冥奔南池
- 06/04/18

Commentary: Forty years old is an important age in Confucius' views as it represents the age where one is stable in his own stand and views. This comes ten years after establishing one's learnings at the age of 30. At 30 years old, I was conferred my doctorate and spent 10 years building up my academic profile. Now nearing 40, I have more than 60 publications under my belt to prove myself. However, I am also tired and reaching the point of burnt out. The

next step in front of me is huge – it is crossing a chasm. In some sense, I am feeling inadequate to take the leap at this point. Yet, I know that I do have to leap in time to come – I cannot cross is 2 small leaps. I must prepare myself – like the mythical bird that needs circle the winds to create a typhoon of nine thousand miles high so that its huge wings can be supported for it from soar from the North Sea to the South Sea.

43. Colin in Lost

Past midnight drinks
Where Colin nears his limits
Almost puking he thoughts
Walking away alone
A walk to relax
From the drinks he feels tax
Without a person besides
This cannot be condone
For ethanol in his belly
He might collapse in any alley
- 08/04/18

44. 金刚台

三心日落上品上
诚心深心回向心
虚空法界皆因果
绕绕众生三界火
事件有因也有果
善恶到头还自受
丝毫不差不折扣
不叹恶人不入坑
善人得福是心深
诚心诚意什么呢
有尊弥陀住极乐
三圣做主得南无
事事如期有着落
回向心中是二法
一为愿往极乐土
二发菩提向此处
有此三心观经书
必得挂牌上上录
时机一到万圣来
自在手持金刚台
弹指之间生彼国
立即金身听妙法
神足飞遍千万国
一一受记无尚果
- 09/04/18

45. 见半生照

十有七九那年事
回味幕幕此
今日仲锦一叠照
故友事件已过半生了

即有貌似意不淡
只是发有沧
一生有几二十载
友谊乃珍这生非妄来
- 01/05/18

46. Melvin's Wedding

Six years ago on Melvin's birthday
Veronica came for feast
In America I was away
Awoken by busy sounds
Melvin drove his bride
For the start of the new ride
Seven thirty at the rooftop loft
A day of joy and aircon soft
All in red the two mothers dress
Flanking the aisle
Where Veron's arm was handed to Melvin
Bittersweet tears in giving
For a practical marriage address
In the words of wise
For the man and wife
Melvin spoke of our late dad
Whom Uncle Jimmy said whose fortune had just stopped just that
Ending the ceremony with the tea
Second in line I drink
Marks Melvin and Veronica's new life together
To fulfill their vows this life thereafter
- 12/05/18

47. 论酒

舜子杜康初酿酒
来自帝派管粮仓
一时大雨渗谷粮
滴滴酿露有芬香
王子指沾清液漏
又命接滴一碗够
此液芳涩带土味
去土柔涩润舌勒
杜康朝夕想此事
梦里仙翁对此斥
水从天来谷从地
缺少人物而不融
谷粮清水混九日
九为天地创始数
九日酉时取三人
取之人物一滴血
切没误时坏此决
杜康仿晓到九日
申时已备择三人
酉时已到得书生
二滴来自武将称
久久苦等快到戌
门外叫来一痴人
三人三滴血以入
杜康尝酿土味无
涩也柔和香升度
酉时三滴入酿故

此酿从此名为酒
九日发酵酒为九

因血甘酒得三魂
钩起喝者的七魄
论古道今看酒客
三杯佳酿谈天下
第一滴为书生魂
再三入肚性勇猛
此乃二滴武将铿
劝君到此适可止
又入三杯耍糊闹
为何喝到当痴人
- 09/06/18

Commentary: The Chinese legend of alcoholic beverage goes all the way back to Du Kang, a son of the legendary Shun. Du Kang was tasked to manage grains. One day, a heavy rain fell and soaked the grains. The grains fermented into a coarse alcoholic beverage but Du Kang found that it had an earthy taste; otherwise, it will be a fine beverage. He was wondering about this when a heavenly being appearing in his dreams to tell him to mix water and grains for nine days. Nine is the number of creations in Chinese mythology. On the ninth day, Du Kang is to add a drop of blood each from three persons. Du Kang followed the instructions and on the ninth day, the first drop of blood was from a scholar. The second drop of blood was from a warrior. Du Kang did not find a suitable person for the third drop of blood and in nick of time, got an insane person to drip a drop into the mixture. At once, the brew is fragrant and smooth to drink. This beverage is known as alcohol and the name is pronounced as “nine”.

Hence, alcohol contains the soul of three persons whose blood was in the mix. As one drinks, he opens himself up to discuss various aspects of life. That is the soul of a scholar. If he continues to drink more, he will be more daring and courageous (Dutch courage). This is the soul of the warrior. At this point, it is advised to stop drinking. Any more alcohol and he will start to make a fool out of himself, which is the soul of the insane.

48. 金庸三世酒

金庸笔下三世酒
过去现在与未来
乔峰令狐张无忌
谈论酒道喝三杯

聚贤庄乔峰会友
脉从大辽心在宋
总敌都是故亲友
一碗对饮断恩亲
乔峰痛饮过去酒
口口裂心伤难控

现在酒饮令狐冲
心无拘锁性豪迈
江湖四海广结友
不论高下与正邪
不谈过去和未来
一坛香酒在眼前

芷若无忌大婚前
张主独身晃夜道
步步无奈心向赵
店内郡主火锅酒
两心向照酒杯溜
一酒断定未来路

试问三酒哪杯好
过去必带血泪老

未来道路云烟间
能饮现在是好天
- 10/06/18

49. 林伟忠印

就业成家一年内
岁将三十是可谓
难得迈入理想职
航班副座入口吃

此时正好赐官印
红白玛瑙汉白文
林伟忠印上下排
朱砂红底好事来
— 16/01/19

Commentary: The last 12 months is important for Melvin, for he had gotten his dream job as a pilot, and gotten married. At the age of 30, I think I can see him establishing himself. This is a good time to gift him his own seal – a symbol of authority and establishment. Made of red agate with white streaks where his name is carved in – a traditional Han dynasty style. Hope that the red background will bring him more luck.

50. Tea at New Year

Fifth of February

Start of annualry

All opted for warm Chinese tea

The year where cold drinks were not seen

Perhaps it is the age

Perhaps it has reached the stage

Of appreciating warm tea

Of subtle fragrances

Of lightness and lean

-- 06/02/19

51. 对饮

萌豆凉地卧
大树盘烈阳
幼年饮冰凉
成人喝热灼
凉甜入口舒
灼涩咽喉浓
人生各阶段
对照方舒畅
-- 06/02/19

Commentary: A seed can only germinate on cool and moist ground but the grown tree strives towards the hot sun. When we are young, we prefer chilled and sweet drinks; such as, soft drinks. As we mature, we grow to appreciate warm or strong drinks; such as, warm tea, black coffee without sugar, and even stronger liquor like brandy and rice wines. Why the change in palette? Perhaps it is because at different stages in life, the change in palette reflects our experiences and predicament. Through this, it relieves our inner sentiments.

52. 存钱点滴

极柔似水穿石洞
细露常滴武岩痛
若缝存钱初步难
可设零币一袋篮
黄昏到府投所碎
几月之后必得贵
-- 06/02/19

Commentary: Water is the ultimate soft material but constant drips can bore a hole in rocks. Hence, if one finds it difficult to start savings, I have a very simple method – Just have a container or basket and every night, just drop in all your loose coins. Before long, you will have something substantial.

53. 生肖之哲

公孙轩辕皇帝贵
建造甲子以命岁
一年一兽共十二
对应太岁木星格
深思表法不单纯
六双合对前后顺
鼠表智慧牛表勤
虎表勇猛兔表谨
龙表刚猛蛇表柔
马表勇往羊和顺
猴表灵活鸡恒定
狗表为他猪为己
看似古贤深思路
时时提醒也待步
-- 06/02/19

Commentary: The 12 zodiac animals in Chinese astrology maps the 12 years of Jupiter's orbit. However, there is a lot of wisdom in the choice and pairing of these 12 animals. In essence, there are 6 pairs complementing each other. I guess this is the hope from the ancients to us – reminding us the 12 qualities of life that we should balance.

- The wisdom of the mouse pairs with the diligence of the cow.
- The bravery of the tiger pairs with the carefulness of the rabbit.
- The valor of the dragon pairs with the gentleness of the snake.

- The forwardness of the horse pairs with the harmoniousness of the goat.
- The wittiness of the monkey pairs with the clockwork of the rooster.
- The giving of the dog pairs with the selfishness of the pig.

54. 999 Days

Arises before the sun
Ready to zoom the basalt run
A short flight to KL and back
Bears a lot of weight as hands on deck
999 days from start of cadet
To this, the second bar beget
An adventure for my flying cat
Hitting targets like eagle on running rat
More than a decade of dream
Arriving just before thirtieth birthday cream
Third day of lunar year
A seal and a joyous tear
-- 07/02/19

Commentary: Today marks an important milestone in Melvin's flying career where he officially finished training as a second officer. A very early test flight to Kuala Lumpur and back. There is a lot at stake but Melvin did it. According to him, this marks 999 days since he started ground school. This promotion to first officer came on the third day of the new lunar year and just before his thirtieth birthday – a seal had been made.

55. 缘起

缘起七年前
又逢夏天烈日连
车残河下隧
母泣言语我难对
此祸临
心不平
为有仰天求苍明
口中爱染六字明
心里红炎狮头定
房照朱光六字顶
六百应对
信心缘起
助缘德行不可替
-- 13/02/19

56. 转缘

往昔恶种现
不去极乐国
邪藤转缘助
忏悔增念故
-- 17/03/19

57. Stoa

Only our thoughts and actions are ours
Even the outcome is not
Do our part
Let the end decides itself
Nothing we own
All were borrowed
Flesh from the earth
Who are we before conception
Who are we decades after death
On borrowed time of a hundred years
Leave a better world if possible
Leave as a better being
On the four pillars
The four corners of coffin
Wisdom, to distinct good and bad
Morality, the task on hand
Courage, accept the end in spite
Moderation, the middle path
Not about apathy
Instead, full of empathy
Not expecting reciprocity
Life on hand is one to live
Manage ourselves and let whatever be
-- 08/04/19

58. 国清三隐

唐有官吏闾丘胤
身往天台国清寺
欲解病苦度化龙
二贤文殊普贤处
号为寒山与拾得
吏人寻山高贤处
丰干道指二贤路
寒岩只见乞丐样
丘胤施礼说来意
不料大笑眼不厉
丰干鼎鼎乃弥陀
遇佛不识何寻我
二贤缩身石缝中
缝中传出劝世言
诸位各行自努力
修行自己不由人
从此无人见体同
闾吏回反找丰干
只见丰干已圆寂

-- 08/04/19

59. Expectations

Expectations, the conditioned love
Expectations, the want for the done
Expectations, the pain out of plan
Expectations, the agony we bury

A done deed, with no outward lead
A done deed, with no seed
No pain from un-germination
No change of determination
Love with no condition
Comes with no expectation
-- 16/04/19

60. Goodbye, Josh

A sad news in the morning
That our Barney our purple dinosaur
Was already gone the Saturday before
From a bleed in the brain
Was hard news to hear
Despite his hallmark bubbly strain
Will remember his smiles
Will remember his laughter and fun
Will remember for who he is
One who never once wears a frown
The ever jovial Josh
Leaving us at forty-two
Seeing his photo was not easy
On a paper brings a tear
Hope he glides into the golden glow
To the land of paved jewels
To a clean land
Hope he will be part of the entourage
But now
Rest your weariness
Release yourself
-- 01/05/19

61. 八问悟空之初

山洞老猿已古今
白猴尊者望仙途
猿猴何知贺州路
猴王寻访仙门兮
遇夫口中斜月洞
凡人何指菩提弄
菩提师前七年兮
地煞之变径斗云
一日一夜可得灵
菩提号为祖师兮
变法闹事登云逃
不授道理何师老
龙宫深处神铁兮
千年无众知微妙
何方得咒降材料
本为修得不死兮
惨遭压往阎王殿
祖师言语是何面
师门一堂兄弟兮
别后五百无一闻
道友竟然各闭门
猴王封号齐天兮
排往仙园守蟠桃
猴爱果何不乱套
-- 01/06/19

62. 人生一时

悠悠雪花从天落
随风漂流大地阔
各由自道各有路
不治风流写自故
嫣然可争翱翔时
天地来早与来迟
虽是雪瓣不一样
触地也成白海洋

-- 29/6/19

Commentary: What is a lifetime in the grand scale of things? It is probably nothing significant. It is like a snowflake from the sky. Yes, every snowflake is unique, and every snowflake dances its own dance across the sky. It is only for a short moment. Before long, it will reach the ground, and will we see is a sea of white.

63. Ebony “Wand”

Five palm widths
Of eight twenty grams
Length-wise wavy lines of dark and light
Fine fragrance and tapered ends
Weighty ebony rod I call a wand

A teaching pointer
A rolling pin
A massage totem
Nearly a weapon it can be

A completely balanced wand
Of all five elements
Earth, wind, water and fire
Clothed in spiritual attire
Though a little too thick
But a nice baton
-- 01/07/2019

64. Anemic Decade

First July marks the longest
A supposed expansion in the earnest
Real world does not match the number
We will find out who is the dumber

Changing calculations by quarter
Forging the numbers a little rounder
How can five point three be out of work
When thirty seven do not work
Unneeded gets deflated
Needed are inflated

The front is bleak
Many aspects seen its peak
First baby now at sixty-seven
At least thirty years to move all to heaven
Four decades of growth parallels population
Isn't this a revelation
This fall may not be recoverable
Out of time as easily discoverable

If only people are willing to see
The future's plea
But most prefers to dream
Willingly wrap in lies' team
Entire lives in a big set of lies
Willing ignorance the casted dices

I hope I am very wrong
As the only one stabbed by the prong
Right and everyone will suffer

To see and live will be so much harder
Let me be totally wrong please
And let others carry on with ease
-- 03/07/19

65. 因果

有因必有果
果肉福与祸
当寻其中子
浩瀚万里丝
自身种其因
萌芽成树林
一子繁千果
蔓延大地阔
因而圣人畏
此因能成魅
-- 03/07/19

66. 人生核味

果实皆有核
十之八九苦
甜肉藏苦涩
人生何坎坷
-- 11/07/19

67. 离尘

世间满尘沙
五浊假繁华
参禅饮清茶
洗净红尘渣
当愿胎光离
佛光不嫌弃
-- 13/07/19

68. 多宝彩串

一串多宝一零八
九节各有十一仔
仔仔色润各不同
白有象果黑有檀
紫逢罗兰开鸡翅
多彩高贵难独选
一串彩色合我意
-- 14/07/19

69. 榴莲

芬芳百米飘
荆棘绿壳耀
果肉深黄色
甘内带苦乐
幼年吃榴莲
可为中餐垫
我弟三岁时
周末三车果
装满几大盒
随时要吃可
婆婆得重疾
病床过生日
蛋糕榴莲肉
车场吃到够
表弟思外婆
黄肉供像前
灵堂吃榴莲
-- 21/07/19

70. 不乱之心

弥陀开短经
愿当欲生者
一日若七日
保持不乱心
未知何不乱
先知有乱情
乱为常反复
有如山峻岭
不乱池塘水
轻波也宁静
信心何反复
一信雪平路
愿往何反复
至心往一处
蜻蜓点水面
微浪也成片
狂风起巨浪
冰池也不然
-- 11/08/19

Commentary: This is talking abt "一心不乱" from 啊弥陀经。
There are 3 kinds of 一心不乱 - (1) 信一心不乱, (2) 愿一心不乱,
and (3) 行一心不乱。

信一心不乱 - Have you waiver from believing in (1) the presence
of 啊弥陀佛, (2) the presence of 极乐世界, and (3) the confidence
that Shakyamuni's teachings of 啊弥陀佛 and 极乐世界 are correct?

If you have these 3, you have 信一心不乱。In fact, how to be 信很乱? One moment 信, one moment don't 信? Or one day 信, one day don't 信? If that is the case, you probably have bipolar disorder in the first place.

愿一心不乱 - Have you waiver from wanting to go 极乐世界? If no, then you also have 愿一心不乱。

行一心不乱 - This is not easy. 行一心不乱 requires a part of your mind to be 念佛, 念极乐世界 all the time. It is almost like a background process and this needs training. If can do this, then you will reach the next level, called 功夫成片; 而且是大片。

71. Worry Not

Worry not, the days where things go wrong
Worry not, the days when sky is gloom
Worry not, the days when effort fails
Worry not, the days where disaster strikes

Focus on the thoughts and deeds
Not on expectations
Focus on what we can do
Not on the reactions of others
Results of our actions
Often depends on actions of others
But our reactions are
Put up the best fight
A battle worthy for ourselves
As a lesson or aspiration
Not for the final score
For we are
Spiritual beings in a human experience
-- 11/08/19

72. 人生戏剧

百年同船千年共床
人生戏曲扮演长
一世一戏
有如台湾长剧
前生子父今世父子
今生来世也同祠

事起有愿或有业
百岁泪痕钩起缠绵械
母烹子食
共业唯有待共灭

可怜人人不识情
活在梦幻泡影中
各各入戏以为真
愿得智慧错破影
-- 17/08/19

73. Half Life Ago

Twenty years to the date
A big snap in life
Awake to the Sun never so gloom
So bright yet so cold
Seven in the morning at Pasir Ris
A brave front but senseless within
To the ferry terminal
Onto a barren island for the next three months
Exchange the pink plastic for a green
A quiet lunch
A walk down Ladang
To a building called Leopard
Platoon Three Section Four Bed Four
Paired with Vincent
Opposite is Calvin and his Keroppi clock

Twenty years had passed
It was a waste of time
But a necessary waste
For one is forced to grow
Toughened up to meet the world
It was the grain of sand that resulted in the pearl
-- 18/08/19

74. 十七年

十七年风雨飘荡
一路走来心思浪
背痠脚疼白头沧
二十四那年回荡

穿越山河无休站
细风轻摆芭蕉扇
明月悬挂清风楼
冬至又临明年奏

我已迈入到尽头
疲厌入髓志残扣
愿我参得龟息眠
唯可开眼见晴天
-- 09/09/19

Commentary: I am really tired this time – so razor close to a complete burnt out – never been so close before. It is a combination of years of overwork and lack of long periods of rests.

- February 2003 – started my final semester in Melbourne
- June 2003 – started my honours year
- May 2004 – started my PhD
- June 2004 – started my BSc in computer science
- June 2005 – completed my BSc in computer science
- 01 April 2008 – left Melbourne
- 04 April 2008 – started lecturing in Singapore Polytechnic
- 24 Dec 2009 – passed my PhD
- 15 Dec 2010 – left Singapore Polytechnic
- 16 Dec 2010 – started in Life Technologies

- 04 Jan 2012 – left Life Technologies
- 07 Jan 2012 - started in South Dakota State University after 30 hours of door-to-door flight
- 21 Dec 2012 – left South Dakota
- 03 Jan 2013 – started in Nanyang Technological University
- 28 Feb 2017 – left Nanyang Technological University
- 26 Feb 2017 – first lecture in MDIS

Now, I know how it feels like to be working non-stop for 2 decades. I am almost there.

75. 犀牛角紫檀

犀牛紫檀木
红花梨压缩而处
一串十二颗
三千目抛光每个
一串在手沉
体态柔滑枣红深
盘玩过一月
油脂带稠细浆略
隔放两周干
垫面手磨又美观
-- 21/09/19

76. 诗词颂

脱口一首诗词颂
情感见血在其中
血浊模糊藏人懂
有缘知音见底空
-- 29/09/19

Commentary: I chose to write this quasi-autobiography, that deals mainly with emotions and feelings about events, in verses and poetic verses as I find this medium to be more direct. It cuts through to the depth of emotions with few words. Yet, there is a level of fussiness and only the ones that really knows me well are able to see the plain and raw feelings.

77. The Road Behind

Where were we from
Where will we go
A decision made
Every year every day every hour every minute every second
A step forward leaves a print behind
Looking back to the start
Knowing the road
I asked will I walk
To this point
Despite the deep seated weary
Affirmative without hesitation
Each step was the best option then
-- 29/09/19

Commentary: Being on razor-edge to complete burn out, I do ask myself today – will I do what I did if I was put back 20 years ago and knowing the outcomes of today? My answer will be a yes, for each step and each decision was still the best that I can make at that moment in time.

78. Shifting Vibration

Why here why now who are we
Deep core questions bug us thee
Immortal spirits in a temporary human experience
Understanding it will start our deliverance
Temporarily fitting into this worldly dimension
Reliving our previous ascension
Events that can be rather incomprehension
May be forgotten mutual agreement for this intension
Elevating to the fourth space
We realize a dreamy place
The ones we saw as individuals
Are really interdividuals
Where all is one and one is all
In the fifth form
We are all part of the universal swarm
Swirling around in organized sandstorm
We are here to know
Relearning to go with the flow
-- 29/09/19

79. 十二岁那年

四十回眉
六小儿歌
一点钟声奔门冲
书塞背包里
结伴戏步走
一切抛脑后
夕阳红落一切归空
辰时天明学府
六班食堂在修复
科堂偶尔不定位
可怜尊师难找谁
这班真是很难教
逼得龙师泪两条
-- 30/09/19

80. 历练

前方的茫然
背后的沮丧
为人生经验尔谈
眼前的希望
过去的悲欢
亦做路途的惆怅
-- 01/10/19

Commentary:

Uncertainties in front
Sorrows and disappointments behind
Are dialogues of experiences in this life
Hopes ahead
Happiness behind
Are shelters in this path

81. 往事反騰

二十年的经历
不朽情思埋深泥
过去的往事
昔日的言词
如惊蛰雷霆日
我只能复口咀嚼
行牛食草之略
-- 02/10/19

Commentary: I got a sense of why I might be burnt out now since my work so far had not deviated substantially in the last year and I enjoyed teaching. It may not be the tiredness that caused this burnt out but it may be piles of incomplete processing. It is like my brain trying to consolidate / digest / work through my last 20 years of life - all the loose ends, missing closures, undigested or unprocessed or semi-processed thoughts and emotions. That's why I'm so tired; it is like a hard disk that had not defragmented for 20 years. It is now hitting it RAM drive limits and fragmentation limits, and forcing itself to defragment / update the system, etc.

82. 川流静池

洪水滚黄土
急流推船浮
静湖彻底清
沉淀见平路
-- 03/10/19

Commentary: Raging waters can help to propel a ship forward but it also churns the mud from the bed. A calm lake that is clear is able to see the bed clearly and sometimes we need this clarity and calm to see the beauty of the reefs. Daily activities and work are what we need; yet, we should not neglect the importance of sitting down quietly to reflect.

83. 合花

无树何有名
明镜自见己
虽说本无物
我乃未开悟
-- 03/10/19

Commentary: Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng once wrote

菩提本无树，
明镜亦非台，
本来无一物，
何处惹尘埃？

But if there is no bodhi tree, should there even be a name? The mirror is reflecting myself but if there is no mirror, what reflects me and what is being reflected? Although I understand these concepts from a theoretical point of view, I had not internalized it for I am not yet there.

Hence, the title of this poem is called “closed flower” (合花) – 花开见佛必得开悟。

84. 沙滩步

漫步走沙滩
时空不间断
踏出细旅脚印
各自的旅程
原始的童真
奔跑穿越成网
那重叠的脚印
叙述一段你我的迈进
走散了也如此宁静
看似如丝绸
也是互叠交叉缠绵
看着以往脚印
勾起昔日苦甜
在无边无境的沙步海
谁的记忆可依赖
离去的步伐
何时敢问你好吗
自古存在的沙滩
载着千思万虑的波浪
在遥远的时空
被水风抹淡
眼前看似丝绵的沙滩
是否也埋了前人的遗忘
-- 04/10/19

Commentary: Our paths along time, is like our footprint on beach – every person lays down his own track. Our crossing paths, like

crisscrossing footprint forming a net. Sometimes friends just quietly left us onto their own path, and it is only down the road that we realized that we had lost them. There are occasions that we know that that will likely be the last time we see each other but often, it is a gradual fade. Even the finest silk cloth is made up of weaves. Looking back at all these stacked prints, what are left are just memories and often, we are hard-pressed to identify who walked with who. To those whom left, when will there be courage and opportunity to ask, “how are you?” Further and further back into time, our shared footprints got eroded by the wind and waves. What is finally left is another silken beach, just like the untouched beach ahead of me. However, is ahead also a burial of forgotten memories?

I wrote this poem while thinking some of my old friends whom turned into acquaintances and eventually, strangers. Some of them, whom I was once close with, I do not even remember their names nor faces. There is no way of contacting them, and even if there is, do I even have the courage to do that? Or such memories should just be let go?

85. 咖啡

无糖黑浓酿
灼热起飘香
口中苦带涩
心燥舒解了
-- 05/10/19

Commentary: Black coffee is something that I grew to like. The warmth and the aroma, unstained by milk or other flavours. It is almost always bitter with some level of astringency. Over time, I realized why I learn to like black coffee – the heat and flavours corresponds to our frustrations. Drinking a good cup of black coffee relieves our tensions from within; thus, therapeutic.

86. 夜静俗声

阵阵潮湿伸云柔
滴滴雨水向海流
俗事风雨起伏燥
夜默禅归心平道
-- 07/10/19

Commentary: After the hassle and buzzle of the day, don't we all seek to calm down the mind to the quietness of Zen at night? Much like the noisy raindrops flows to the sea or the buzzle steam graces across the sky as clouds.

87. Being a “Big Brother”

The truck roving ahead on the cold hard road
With taillights as weak beacon for those to follow
Prying the path with a weathered staff
Taking others with a mindful laugh
Facing the chilling winds full head on
Raging sun that toast my face to a prawn
Leading others like a miniature Agamemnon
To the fight to the hills to their own pantheon
Why I did what I had done
Maybe because I did not have such a begun
-- 08/10/19

88. Humpty Dumpty, Why

All the King's horses and men
Could not mend Humpty Dumpty's dent
A childhood song
That repeats a lesson long forgone
An egg with a brittle shell atop a wall tall
Who asked Humpty Dumpty to sit on the wall
-- 11/10/19

Commentary:

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.
All the king's horses and all the king's men
Couldn't put Humpty together again.

Why nobody asked why Humpty Dumpty did not or fail to or refused to recognized itself as an egg and put itself in a precarious situation on top of a wall? Is it not then a waste of resources – the King's men and horses? I am tempted to just say “Humpty Dumpty, you want to sit on the wall; you asked for it.”

89. Flow

Go with the flow
Though sometimes may not be what you want to glow
It may even seems like bubbles blow
Trust that it will go
A tower starts as earthy heap
Years of build
Decorations by painter's grip
Can be years as faithful leap
Pains along the way
Welcoming dawning sun ray
-- 15/10/19

90. 你我

人事百态分你我
一念隔西东
宇宙浩大成区域
各自为郎中
众生本性皆圆满
法性大日同
万物根性同一体
何为不相融

-- 16/10/19

91. 静态

柔息，身处平静中而养心。

静坐，转日间步伐为平淡。

冥想，在不动中而游太虚。

沉思，坐溪流旁看水清实。

在柔静冥沉中，见分清浊。

在平间悠步中，看明两旁。

在游水养心中，明了虚实。

-- 04/11/19

92. 人间百态

人间有百态
歌剧可重来
恩怨背数载
卸妆何自在
-- 04/11/19

Commentary: We are all spiritual beings living a temporary human experience. This life that we are in is like a drama where each of us play a different role according to the script. Yet, we took our roles too seriously and even thought that this is who we are without realizing that we are just playing a role, a character in the current drama or theatrical. Is the worth bearing the weight of all the grudges, the grudges from the script? When Leonardo di Caprio played the role of Romeo in Romeo and Juliet, did Leonardo really wanted to kill John Leguizamo (the actor playing the role of Tybalt Capulet) when Tybalt fatally wounded Benvolio Montague? Of course not. Yet, we acted as though. We should all realize that we are all casting on a universal play.

93. 空劫色变

二十八年遇双煞
天空逢地劫
快步卫气喉干咳
面色青与淡
水火不济四个月
血满有几罐
不得蓝衣躺病床
前景何沮丧
丁亥不亡真是福
如猪逃屠场
-- 16/11/19

94. World of Dreams

Solidity of the earth
Firmness of rocks
What it is after it dissolves
What we see as solid
Four miles of emptiness
What is solid and what is not
When I dream
Am I awake
When I am drunk
All feels dreamy
Am I awake
Am I dreaming a dream
Or am I the dream
-- 16/11/19

95. 三条鱼

庄篇诉三鱼
境界游三旅
鲲长几千里
化鹏飞南冥
六月骑风顶
借物而成名
桥下游鱼儿
自身活得乐
不闻别人诃
鲋干吐沫润
何必自行困
独自寻混沌
-- 17/11/19

Commentary: Zhuang Zi used the analogy of fishes to give us some pointers in life. The first fish is called Kun, which is a giant fish. Kun will metamorphose into a giant bird, called Peng. In order for Peng to fly from the North Sea to the South Sea, it needs to generate a whirlpool of wind for six months and wait for the correct time in summer to combine the force of its whirlpool with the summer winds before it can have enough lift to fly to the South Sea. Zhuang Zi used this to show, among many other things, that Peng was great but not truly free for anyone depending its success on external forces (the summer winds) could not be truly free.

The second fish is a fish that lives in a river under a bridge. One day, Zhuang Zi was strolling along the bridge with a friend and Zhuang Zi told his friend that “how happy the fishes are.” His friend then say, “how do you know that the fishes are happy when

you are not a fish?” To that, Zhuang Zi replied “how do you know that the fish is not happy?” This might sound like a silly conversation but what Zhuang Zi was trying to say was that the fishes’ happiness is regardless of their opinions. Beyond not depending on others for our happiness and freedom, our happiness and freedom come from within ourselves – Zhuang Zi’s and his friend’s opinions have no impact on the fishes’ happiness and freedom.

The third fish was a pair of fishes in a drying pond where they were blowing bubbles with whatever little water that was remaining to keep each other moist. Zhuang Zi saw that and said, “why do they even bother and not move out into the larger lake while they still can?” Very often, we are in our dilemma because we had trapped ourselves into the situation. Maybe the pair of fish refused to leave each other but the nature of life is to be at ease alone.

After my paternal grandfather’s death, I saw my paternal grandmother having to deal with her last 14 years of being alone most of the time. This made me realize that I came to this world alone and I alone, must walk my path. This was where I decided to forge a path for myself. Being alone does not equate to being lonely. I can be among a crowd that I know but felt lonely; yet, I can be alone without being lonely. This was where I learnt that only by being comfortable and at ease being alone, I could focus on my aspirations. This was the time where I experienced the joy of travelling by myself.

96. 此时的娑婆

浩然大海
片野大地
此时的娑婆
埋藏几万年的种子
有不圆的梦
有不足的课
此时的娑婆
在龙灵攀登而升中
此时的众生
应宿缘而来
无不有前因
得一席之地
拜汇在九霄云海
中
-- 18/11/19

97. 三十之后

放眼望去
二十起拼搏
孔丘论语相送
十年迈进路途
三十立
立身而定方向
立业而有所长
立内而建根本
立外而善交友
四十不惑
事业攀升而不惑
健康病痛而不惑
生活常规而不惑
社交人脉而不惑
五十知天命
从何而来为知前
有责未尽为知后
现果必有前因
明日树阴今日栽
不冤天不尤人
一切由自生
六十耳顺
看淡而耳顺
从外而视内
耕种之年已尽
恰逢收成之季
成败已实

自当随言
七十随心不越矩
随心谋嗜
随心乐好
随心踏步
随心修灵
不越情礼法
由心而安
由心而淡
-- 19/11/19

Commentary: This poem is my interpretation of a passage in Analects where Confucius said “吾十有五而志于学，三十而立，四十而不惑，五十而知天命，六十而耳顺，七十而从心所欲，不逾矩。” This can be translated as “At fifteen, I was set on learning; at thirty, I stood firm in my views; at forty, I was unperturbed by external; at fifty, I understood the mandate of heaven; at sixty, my ears can listen to all words; at seventy, I could follow my heart's desire without transgressing the norm.”

Putting into concrete practice; at thirty years old, I should (1) establish my directions in life, (2) decide on a set of skills to excel in, (3) establish foundations in all aspects of life especially finances, and (4) acquiring good friendships.

At forty years old, I should know (1) why my endeavours succeed or fail, (2) why am I in health and in aches, (3) the core routines of my daily life, and (4) my social views and reach.

At fifty years old, I should evaluate (1) my past route to know my future, and (2) what responsibilities I had completed and what had

not. I should know the laws of cause and effect – the outcomes of my current state are substantially, if not all, of my doings.

At sixty years old, I should realize that the end of my career and my route is foreseeable. I should realize that this is the time to let go of major responsibilities and gradually enjoy the fruits of my labour. If the fruits are sweet, I should enjoy. If the fruits are sour, I should except. I should realize that I will be subjected to judgement by others and I should accept my verdict as I had done my best. This is the time to write my major autobiography.

At seventy years old, if I am still around; I should be able to do as I wish without too much restrictions within my own means and without violating legal and moral rules, or what is expected of me at this age. More or less wealth almost does not matter anymore. Larger or smaller house no longer matters. Life and death no longer make a difference and everyday should be considered as a bonus. Be calm and be at ease with myself.

98. 世家沦沉

常言道
福无过三
运可跨越
沉沦始于三
康熙定江平藩
雍正整吏财康
弘历好喜成伤
可怜嘉庆啊
称帝便吃不保暖
朱家中期王爷累
清朝后百八旗废
沉沦祸根何处寻
世族二字就是云
宝剑火锤炼
宝玉雕磨件
家族子孙生在堂
武火不提文火荡
清爽温风草莓族
各不成才只成猪
但为宗亲赐爵位
何有道理不成亏
-- 20/11/19

Commentary: A couple of sightings and events recently made me think of a Chinese saying, “Wealth does not go beyond three generations” (富不过三代). I wonder why this is the case and is there anyway to avoid it?

In Qing dynasty, Emperor Kang Xi consolidated power and firm up the borders. Emperor Yong Zheng reformed officialdom and got finances in order. But Qing Dynasty started decline during the reign of Emperor Qian Long. By the time, Emperor Jia Qing came to throne; poor guy, he is faced with the start of a declining empire leading up to the First Opium War. Tax revenue can barely support the privileges of the royal descendants by the second half of Ming Dynasty while the core military of Qing dynasty was pretty much rotten during its last century.

Re-examining history, the conclusion I drew is that family fortunes fail because of family. Descendants of those rich families are given managerial roles and directorships without proving their capabilities in the external world. They had never been tried by fire; the kind that empire builders, their own forefathers, had gone through. Most of them cannot even withstand flickering flames. And yet, they enjoy the luxuries without being able to pay for those luxuries. How not to decline?

99. 自在

行事不慌不思报
成败潇然不受铐
随缘布施种善因
只求善果撒遍地
清茶淡饭养脾胃
静坐阅书不疲惫
一周晨运有三日
静动饮欲中庸乐
没怨天地不怨人
宽带别人饶我身
偶尔逢得三五人
喝茶论道品人生
挣得名利又何必
洒脱自在养仙气
-- 21/11/19

Commentary: I recently found out that one of my colleagues will be retiring at the end of this year, which then got me to think – what do I really want if I am to retire? After a few days of contemplation, my answer will be “at ease” (自在). As I consider this further, I do realize that I do not have to be retired to be at ease. I can be at ease now, with a change in mindset and several habits. What is at ease to me then? This poem is just to list down a few points –

- Whatever I do, do so without rush or anxiety or in expectation of returns; which is a fundamental stoic point of view.
- Success and failures are natural aspects of life, and should never be bondages on ourselves.

- Be generous and contribute time, energy, wealth, experiences, and knowledge; so that the world may be a better place.
- Eat lightly and plainly to be gentle to the gut.
- Meditate or sit calmly, and read a book to nourish the mind.
- Exercise a couple of times a week and maintain moderation in all activities and desires.
- Do not blame anyone; forgive others is to forgive myself.
- Whenever possible, meet up with friends or someone junior for tea, coffee, and have a good chat.
- Do not do things just to covert benefits or status.

100. 够了吧

俗事何为够
一生才不漏
够字一句多
开花不结果
多在夕夕下
几夕才是恰
古人造字时
智慧入骨刺
多少才算够
足以有留后
这题无人答
自答便是啦
-- 22/11/19

Commentary: When I was in Primary 4, right before exams, my Chinese teacher went through the entire textbook and asked us to clarify any words/phrases that we did not understand and one of the terms I asked was “什么是‘不够’？” (What is "not enough"?) 30 years later, I am still having trouble defining what is enough and what is not.

How much work is enough for the day? For the year? For a lifetime? How much money or status is enough? How much enjoyment or pleasure is enough? How much happiness is enough? How many pairs of shoes or shirt or anything is enough? How many close friends is enough? How much productivity is enough? How high a GDP is enough?

I dare to say, I had not seen anyone who can answer even half of the 10 questions above.

The Chinese character, 够, is made up of 2 words, 句 (sentence) and 多 (many). Many sentences is enough. How many is many? How many is too many? Or even closer, how many is one too many? The Chinese word of many, 多, is made up of 2 of the same word, 夕, which can be translated to "evening" or "the end of a day or some defined events". Hence, many (多) is a recursive term of many evenings or many days. How many days is enough for anything? How many days is enough for a life?

The words 够 (enough) and 多 (many) seems to tell me that nobody can ever say what enough for anyone, maybe except for themselves, if they have the courage and will of mind to limit the boundless. Only by limiting the boundless, it will ever be enough.

I think I am getting to an answer now...

Epilogue

It took me two decades to complete these 100 verses with more than half written in this year alone, where I set an annual resolution to write 50 poems. With the completion of these 100 verses, I am happy to say that I had completed the goal to write 50 poems this year. This is my most productive year as far as writing poems is concerned and I do hope that I can keep up this productivity.

This compilation contains various musings, thoughts, and reflections along the way. It allows me to pen down the bones without bothering too much about the context, which opens to many interpretations. That is somewhat what I like about poems and verses rather than narratives. However, during the course of sharing the verses as I wrote them, I do realize that many of my verses especially my Chinese verses can be misunderstood. Maybe my Chinese standard need substantial improvement. To prevent too much misunderstanding, which then destroys the entire purpose; and while allowing time for my Chinese standard to improve, I added some of my own commentaries.

Hopefully, this compilation the first of many to come. See you next time.

Maurice Ling
November 22, 2019.

