

## Two-Thirds

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**Maurice Ling**

Maurice HT Ling  
2023

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## Prologue

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If my time is up at 66 years old, do I have enough time to teach and explain to Caleb everything that I want to teach and explain? This has been a thought for about 2 years now. Caleb will only be 25 years old when I reach 66 years old – there may not be enough time and he may not be ready for it.

I can follow what Hill Harper did as he wrote a book titled “Letters to a Young Brother”. This was when I thought of penning down concise philosophical thoughts. I talked to Trevor and Ray about it. It turned out that my poems may be a good starting format but as Ray said, Caleb’s command of Chinese must be as good as mine to understand my Chinese poems. Maybe adding commentaries to the poems that I wrote may help.

This is the result, containing 250 poems spanning from 20 to 44 years old. About half of them are philosophical while the other half is a mixture of daily sights and events.

I titled this compilation as “Two-Thirds” because I am 44 years old this year, which is two-thirds of 66 years old.

Maurice Ling  
May 30, 2023.

## The Verses

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### 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 opposite 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 impending 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 gives  
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 would 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  
頑童教导自创诀

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  
不时蛤蟆且戳雕, 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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-uniform 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 今夜酒醉嫦娥合  
—12/11/17

**Commentary:** Had some alcohol with a couple of friends in Chinatown on a Saturday night, 11<sup>th</sup> 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. 配雌鳩

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，雌鳩成恋。  
— 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 countless 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。

射箭玉谏免指伤，后代看指权贵寒。  
久用手把玉包浆，包浆扳指价值高。  
骑射带指谏必伤，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 22<sup>nd</sup> 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 田黃. 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 5<sup>th</sup> 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 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> 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，从此石化带木文。  
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 bonded 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

**Commentary:** Maciej came to Singapore from Poland 5 years ago on a Singa scholarship for his PhD, working on cholera biosensor. He has completed his doctorate, done a term of post-doctoral training, and is off to CSIRO in Australia. Hence, this poem is to commemorate his term in Singapore.

### 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 3<sup>rd</sup> day of Chinese New Year this year as Auntie 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

**Commentary:** My nephew, Ethan, is 13 years old this year but he will face a world very different from that of his dad. For one, he has to learn skills that are not known today to prepare for a job that is yet to be created today. Yet, he needs to start but how? I do not have an answer. The only suggestion is to develop second order thinking. Instead of learning something (which is first order thinking), learn the techniques to learn. Predicting weather is first order while controlling weather is second order. Hopefully by doing so, he will have a good chance.

## 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

**Commentary:** I aim for 上品上生 when I go 极乐世界.

#### 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

**Commentary:** Just past my 39<sup>th</sup> birthday recently. Reminiscing 20 years ago when I was still a polytechnic student. It seems recent but that was half a lifetime ago. How many 20 years do we have?

## 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

**Commentary:** Louis Cha (金庸) wrote about 3 different types of liquor in his books – the past, the present, and the future. Liquor of the past is exemplified by 乔峰 at 聚贤庄 where he tossed the ending of friendships of his past. 令狐冲 only drinks to the present. 张无忌 drinks to future intentions the night before his wedding. Which one is better? The past is always with tears while the future is uncertain.

#### 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

**Commentary:** The first time that all of my generation opted for warm Chinese tea during Chinese New Year.

## 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

**Commentary:** I started chanting everyday, and increasingly when Melvin got into a car accident back in 2012, when I was in South Dakota for my postdoctoral research fellowship. I felt the affinity to Ragaraja (爱染明王) and started chanting his mantra diligently. I called that for one night when I was chanting, my entire room turned red, then I saw Ragaraja appeared in front of me like a hologram and showed me the number 6. Eventually, Melvin was fined \$600 for careless driving in 2013.

## 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

**Commentary:** I felt myself being pulled back into this Samsara world by pleasures, and the thought to give up my vows to go 极乐

世界 emerged. I strongly repent and restate my vows to go 极乐世界 and ask for empowerment from Amitabha and all buddhas to sustain my vows. It also tells me that my vows are never going to be strong enough. The success to go 极乐世界 lies with Amitabha and not myself.

## 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

**Commentary:** My take on Stoicism.

## 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

**Commentary:** Story of the 3 monks (丰干, 寒山, and 拾得) in Guoqing Temple in Tiantai Mountain. It is said that Han Shan (寒山) and She De (拾得) were Manjusri (文殊菩萨) and Samantabhadra (普贤菩萨) while Feng Gan (丰干) was Amitabha buddha.

## 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

**Commentary:** Expectation is what causes pain. I know from Stoicism that outcomes are not within our control. If we can do anything with no expectations, then our pain should lessen.

## 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

**Commentary:** Josh Lim passed away at home from brain hemorrhage. We are joining to temple to pay our last respects today. He is only 42 years old. Josh worked so hard for his life and paid off his mortgage for his Jurong West flat, and he had even bought a fair bit of physical gold and silver. Two years ago, he got so tired that he took an unpaid or self-funded sabbatical leave to rest. Then last year, he had difficulties finding a new job that he went into business partnership with his friend. Ended up overworking himself again and now, he is gone. Is it worth it? Rest well, Josh; you did more than enough.

### 61. 八问悟空之初

|         |         |         |
|---------|---------|---------|
| 山洞老猿已古兮 | 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

**Commentary:** A poem documenting my 8 questions about 孙悟空 (Sun Wukong)'s beginnings in Journey to the West.

1. How did the old ape know sufficiently about immortality and 西牛贺州 to advise Wukong towards it? Who is this ape?
2. Who is really the person that directed Wukong to 斜月三星洞? Is he really a non-immortal?



3. Wukong spent 7 years there and really only learnt all the magical arts in the last night? Is it really believable?
4. Why did 菩提祖师 not want Wukong to reveal his name no matter what? Who is 菩提祖师?
5. When Wukong went to 龙宫, none of the people in 龙宫 knows how to use 金箍棒 but Wukong knows about it? Isn't it like waiting for him?
6. If Wukong is already an immortal, how can his name be in 生死簿?
7. When Wukong was imprisoned under 五指山, none of his friends nor those he trained with under 菩提祖师 came to visit him? It is like all disappeared?
8. Wukong is a monkey and monkey loves fruits but he was given the task to oversee the heavenly peach garden (蟠桃园), isn't that a trap?

Based on all these, Wukong's path had been planned probably way before his birth.

## 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

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

**Commentary:** We have a decade of very anemic economic recovery. I do not think there is any growth as the numbers did not show growth as compared to 2008. I believe the real situation is a lot. At

this moment, the oldest of baby boomers are 67 years old and hitting retirement. As such, things are not too rosy ahead. Nevertheless, I hope that I am too pessimistic and wrong. If I am right, the world ahead will be horrible.

## 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

**Commentary:** Cause and effect, or karma, is very real. A seed can germinate into a large tree, which can produce millions of seeds in its lifetime. That is why saints are more fearful of cause than effect.

## 66. 人生核味

果实皆有核 十之八九苦 甜肉藏苦涩 人生何坎坎坷

-- 11/07/19

**Commentary:** Many seeds are bitter in taste, such as orange seeds and apple seeds. Isn't this resembling life itself? Every sweetness lies a seed of bitterness.

## 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

**Commentary:** I do not wish to reincarnate into this world anymore. My goal is to go to the Western world of bliss to be with Amitabha.

## 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

**Commentary:** I bought my first 108-bead 多宝 mala. Essentially, it contains different woods – for people like me that cannot decide on what wood(s) I like.

## 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

**Commentary:** Durian, a fruit that my family love. It is my first favourite fruit and Melvin can eat durian as meals when he was young. Still recall when Grandfather was still around (before 1994),

we used to drive to Geylang Lorong 1 to cart back durians and pack into boxes before putting into the fridge. When Grandma was really sick with breast cancer in 2008, we bought durian cake for her birthday but could only eat in the carpark due to the smell. At her wake, Jentson bought durians for her and offered on the altar.

## 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 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

**Commentary:** We are eternal spiritual beings having a human experience, so things can go wrong and should go wrong to give us the ups and downs of life. Just put our best foot forward and accept the outcomes.

## 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

**Commentary:** Our lives are like enacting in a drama. Each of us plays a different role but we had forgotten about that and thinking this is the real thing. It is not. Nevertheless, if an actor is too into the drama, it may not be easy to get out – 入戏太深, and that had happened to many good actors / actresses. Roles may change the next time we get a new script. It takes wisdom to know this and even much more wisdom to internalize this.

## 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

**Commentary:** Finally met up with my BMT mates; Vincent, Anthony, and Cyril; after almost 20 years since Leopard company. I still recalled that I was platoon 3, section 4, bed 4; and Vincent was my BMT buddy back then. Opposite my bed was this guy called Calvin with his super-irritating Keroppi clock.

## 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

**Commentary:** From our current 3<sup>rd</sup> dimensional (3D) reality to 4D reality, we need realize that we are interdividuals rather than individuals. And from 4D to 5D, we need to realize that we are part of the same source.

## 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

**Commentary:** Recalling my primary 6 life – it was rather carefree as compared to now. After class, we will walk together to Tampines interchange to take bus home. As we will be taking PSLE at the end of the year, it is a requirement to practice mathematics questions in the canteen before school start. In class, we will keep changing seats. Definitely, my primary 6 class is really difficult to teach and we made Mrs Fong cry several times.

## 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. 往事反腾

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 its 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  
看着以往的脚步 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

**Commentary:** Being the eldest in the family is already great responsibility. Being the eldest in my generation with no older cousins, is much worse. Lindy only comes in much later when I was already in my 20s. I have nobody to ask anything and nobody to lead the way. But in the process, I trained myself to take the pressure because there was no other option available for me.

## 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 seem 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

**Commentary:** Always trust the flow of the universe, even though there are things that may not emerge what you want. This is more so if you can be in the flow. Nothing will be smooth all the way. A tall tower emerges from a heap of earth. It takes years to build and decorate.

## 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

**Commentary:** We are all from the same source and are all one. The dharma body of every buddha is Vairocana. Yet, it is not easy to do it.

## 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

**Commentary:** Meditation is to calm the mind and let the sediments settle. Once the mind is calm and settled, then we can see what we really need and want.

## 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

**Commentary:** What is a dream and what is not? Is the current reality real or just an elaborated dream? Does the me in my dream know that I am in a dream? When I am drunk, I am dreamy? Am I then awoke or dreaming? Or am I the dreamer, the dream, and the one in the dream?

### 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  
不闻别人壻 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. 此时的婆婆

浩然大海 片野大地  
此时的婆婆 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 when 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...

## 101. 枣红籽

花青红紫酸碱变 掌上油汗盘中练  
籽木文玩考耐心 沉稳枣红入大殿  
— 15/01/20

**Commentary:** The beauty of playing with seed-based mala (菩提手串 or 菩提念珠) is the change in colour due to the acidity in perspiration and oil from the skin. The changing colour is both the effect of acid on anthocyanin and oil on the wood.

## 102. 何为

千里音 思忧情 微声传遍万里宁  
身心倦 望日落 哪放有片琉璃灵  
二十年 三十载 已对火灾不留恋  
信不漏 愿乃楼 但愿同附狮子吼  
— 16/01/20

**Commentary:** What are we doing here? Each day comes with new problems – maybe mine or from others. Everyone in this Samsara world is fighting their own battles every day. I am seeing everyone with their own battles – no one has it easier than anyone. It is very tiring. Personally, I do not want to be back anymore. My faith in Amitabha and intention to be reborn in 极乐世界 after this life is my only hope.

## 103. 日落西海

酉阳奔照西海落 橘红目润彩云波  
檬黄枣棕丝绸带 日至预光紫霞来  
— 16/01/20

**Commentary:** While waiting for my jogging friends to arrive at MBS, I am enjoying the sights of sunset and the increasingly purple sky.

## 104. 异乡除夕

三十除夕午 异乡思故土 心滋泪招感 非意所能挡  
先以言相陪 火锅在房内 雪鱼当归汤 肉片水漂浪  
伴解相思苦 重现光明路  
— 27/01/20

**Commentary:** I went to find Jian Rui as he was alone in Singapore and today is the eve of Chinese New Year. An epidemic just broke out in China, and he is definitely not able to go back home; hence, he missed his daughters. We set up a small steamboat for dinner using his rice cooker.

## 105. 爷爷善举

元宵十六庚子难  
同乡六十一祖姑诞  
这年席上思爷  
可想多年别 曾是此会主  
手中接奖杵 办捐款无数  
建校修房利灌溉  
百年后升天可不赖  
— 09/02/20

**Commentary:** We celebrated the 61st anniversary of 潮安仙都林氏同乡会, my clan association and is also the clan association that grandfather was chairman for many years ago. I thought of the good deeds he had done – organizing donations to build a school and irrigation in the village.

## 106. 异乡弟

|       |       |       |       |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 初面有一年 | 珍珠楼上田 | 腊月又重逢 | 夜色有些萌 |
| 冰箱品红酒 | 谈吐何温心 | 道出手串误 | 双婉各一不 |
| 观音六字言 | 可破地狱钳 | 而次谈佛语 | 极乐世界去 |
| 有信又有愿 | 弥陀大摄愿 | 观音前立誓 | 极乐证无尚 |
| 荣得真佛弟 | 拂尘赐法器 | 分离极乐见 | 欣慰心一片 |
| 新冠瘟疫发 | 心中有点怕 | 观音前一签 | 两笼退与前 |
| 幸好事态变 | 有留三十天 | 你我哥弟称 | 不有此一生 |
| 不知宿世因 | 哪有这丛林 | 如今离别夜 | 有点不舍心 |
| 此时不如前 | 急讯又视频 | 虽隔有千里 | 手机如同地 |
| 但愿不久时 | 哥往白云市 |       |       |

— 12/03/20

**Commentary:** Jian Rui is like my brother from a different village. I met him a year ago and we reconnected 4 months ago. We talked a bit about Buddhism but I did not know how receptive he is, unless he accepted my comments on not wear malas on both wrists. Since then, I know that he focused on 观音 and chants 六字真言. I explained to him about Amitabha and 极乐世界, which made him vow to be reborn there as well. Then COVID happens and made things very uncertain. Jian Rui chose to go back to China as well as it is far too uncertain for him to stay on in Singapore. We will keep in contact using messaging and video calls but I certainly want to visit him in China.



## 107. 送弟回国

年末千里南来岛 百日辛苦心酸泪  
本为相送我情高 不料不舍有点被  
虽可视频语音档 难挡回头泪两行  
渴望弟弟多珍重 有待来日再重逢  
— 13/03/20

## 108. 闭门泪

清明分晓生日前 却含泪痕心碎片 晨起当儿有谈笑  
却遭未时拉屏了 刺身骨痛不由己 鼻上心酸泪流利  
今天正逢三个月 难到至此鸟飞绝 人情纸薄心不甘  
笔沾泪墨望门槛 忆往老泪如水帘 回向贤弟极乐见  
— 29/03/20

## 109. 庚子疫

自知杞人忧其天 脑海琢磨心酸眠  
冠疫每日报新例 不晓迎春在何年  
— 31/03/20

**Commentary:** The pandemic, which came to be known as COVID-19, had exploded worldwide. Every day, new cases are recorded, and we have little idea of what things will look like over the next few months or even few years. Tough times ahead.

## 110. 六日日升

|         |         |         |
|---------|---------|---------|
| 四天以来无音讯 | 望川心急蚂蚁群 | 筊杯仰天求开示 |
| 一知身安但缘尽 | 顿时泪痕如雨淋 | 二明重逢极乐土 |
| 跪起心生安慰故 | 我以回向保西路 | 无论从此嫣得渡 |
| 虽有不甘也无处 | 七七念珠收白盒 | 待我身后一同焚 |
| 收拾心情念弥陀 | 四字宏名三万笏 | 斩断西路节外枝 |
| 永保异弟生莲池 | 三圣悯我苦苦求 | 超凡神力免一日 |
| 就在六天过一分 | 一通语音惊梦魂 | 可知弟弟受苦了 |
| 急忙字谈含喜泪 | 首要答应两件事 | 六字名号一日十 |
| 信愿坚决极乐事 | 无论来日再走散 | 几十年后乐兔谈 |
| 异乡之弟有如亲 | 意通有如千里临 |         |

— 11/04/20

## 111. 新缘再逢

|         |         |         |
|---------|---------|---------|
| 时隔五日又重逢 | 有些不解何缘尽 | 法界缘分似蔓藤 |
| 有相皆缘分合成 | 贤弟隔离习禅心 | 龙树菩萨说难行 |
| 人生数载难成果 | 此道依靠本佛性 | 虽然心疼金刚经 |
| 应证有相皆虚妄 | 焚灰如土养村民 | 何尝不是开心领 |
| 贤弟为在家居士 | 观音真言弥陀号 | 家为爸爸两宝宝 |
| 龙树指此易行道 | 登上弥陀大愿船 | 直奔极乐莲花号 |
| 答应信愿持弥陀 | 贤弟弃难选择易 | 何尝不是尽前缘 |
| 如今重逢是新缘 | 喜得弟弟又重生 | 兄弟誓成极乐人 |

-- 11/04/20

## 112. 盟誓

|         |         |         |
|---------|---------|---------|
| 前车危机而誓盟 | 前路荆棘斩乱滕 | 无论如何持信愿 |
| 每日十颂弥陀号 | 信有弥陀莲花路 | 对此娑婆不眷恋 |
| 无论前路是究竟 | 信不动摇愿直行 | 兄弟走散终点聚 |
| 八宝莲池佛光浴 | 定了终点往前推 | 真怕走失丧了志 |
| 因而立下当前誓 | 人生起伏谁能说 | 今天不知明天事 |
| 生离死别道不尽 | 谁对这事有把握 | 无论发生任何事 |
| 不丧信愿不丧志 | 各自过好各自活 | 是为彼此的承诺 |
| 可能几年或几十 | 兄弟海会莲花池 |         |

-- 27/04/20

**Commentary:** Jian Rui and I made 2w promises to each other – We will chant at least 10 times of Amitabha’s name every day, and maintain our intentions and vows to go 极乐世界. With these, even though we get separated, we will still meet at the end. All separations are just human world and it is just separated for several decades.

## 113. A Good Virus

I am beginning to think  
This virus that is striking the world with crimson ink  
May actually be a good virus after all  
A virus that we do not want but good for the long haul

Braking our accelerating track  
That may well be greeted in total train wreck  
Surfacing the dead woods and the elephants in the room  
Sweeping every industry and every aspect like a giant broom

Corporations that grew so big that dominates our lives  
Millions paid in top salaries that suddenly took their dives  
Questioning the quality of the leadership  
Empty promises and chatters all called to strip

Much work that we were told that cannot be done  
Must now be made to spun  
With much of the world forced to stay at home  
Meetings, emails, essential work; seems to be just foam

Our needs are relatively easy but wants are never satisfied  
With malls closed and deliveries delayed, our wants get clarified  
Questioning and evaluating our exuberance  
Once a convenience now sticks out as protuberance

Students once complain about everything  
Now realizes they need to be responsible for every damn thing  
The same applies for everybody  
Every finger pointing out has three towards embody

No longer can we ignore the great divide  
Of rich and poor well fenced on either side  
I've seen the other side but chose to turn a blind eye  
Now I can't as daily news shows the underlie

And the bust and rush hour  
Surrounded in our own ivory tower  
Have we spare a thought of those we had left alone  
Thinking that the world had them disown

Is this the world we should be moving forward  
Never did we get time to be proper steward  
This virus triggers a great realization  
Gave us time to consider the eventual actualization

Finally, everybody has to slow down  
As panicking struggles can cause us to drown  
Giving more time to reflect for themselves  
Feeding and taking care of our and other selves

Slowly but gradually everyone eases into this thing  
Like a snake that shreds its molty skin  
Stocktaking within us of what is important  
Bits and pieces shedding what is redundant

Consider our needs and wants and how we treated others  
Realize that everyone and every being is our sisters and brothers  
Seeing an enemy in desperate need  
Maybe offering to mend the broken bridge than leaving to bleed

We had been abusing the world to the point of unsustainable  
A chance now to change our habits to collectively maintainable  
Cultivating relationships, hobbies, and abilities  
Rooted in love, tolerance, and civilities

Let our old ways be gone and the thoughtful new arises  
Gaia issued this call for revolutionizes  
Hope that we as apex species do not squander this chance  
Miss this and we may never be able to take another stance  
-- 03/05/20

**Commentary:** The poem that I wrote about COVID and published in “Wang, VCC, Ling, MHT. 2020. Science/Education Portraits VI: Anecdotes of Life in Singapore During COVID-19 (February 2020 to September 2020). EC Clinical and Medical Case Reports 3(11): 98-111.”

## 114. Where Had We Gone Wrong

We grew up in a time  
Where there was no computer screen  
Where we read a physical book and wrote diaries with a real pen  
Where we can name the flowers in the park  
Where we knew that mango has one seed and saw chickens with feathers  
Where we ironed our own school uniforms and folded our blankets every morning  
Where we are given weekly allowances for school and budgeted our expenses  
Where we shared food with schoolmates whom had a little less to eat  
Where complaining to parents about teachers meant a certain persecution  
Where parents respected teachers  
Where we knew the names of the cleaners in school and addressed them as "uncles" and "aunties"  
And most important of all  
Where we can organize outings without mobile phones and everyone knew how to respect everyone's time as their own and turn up for appointments on time  
Where had we gone wrong  
-- 15/05/20

**Commentary:** COVID really gave us a lot of time to think, and as I thought through the last 3 decades that I have seen, I began to wonder; how did we manage to get so wrong?

## 115. 千年之隔

曾经上古本一木    不知何时劈两部    各行各业一万年

|         |         |         |
|---------|---------|---------|
| 擦身而过多少天 | 千年以前那一生 | 知晓本来同一根 |
| 但而因果不相同 | 需隔千年方才融 | 如同牛羊奔草原 |
| 各吃各草角相连 | 千年已过重逢日 | 千里之行来相遇 |
| 一见又隔三百日 | 仿佛预言三盟誓 | 牛有角羊也有角 |
| 奔驰旷野双双鸟 | 一在林门等双木 | 一生刘家水南流 |
| 水流滋木建经库 | 万年善根净土宗 | 弥陀座前莲池同 |
| 千年之隔今已满 | 一气两仪生三清 | 一木两角又三盟 |
| 日颂弥陀一万声 | 依据观经无量证 | 信愿具足人间步 |
| 今生最后娑婆路 | 虽苦最多几十年 | 哪比千年隔离间 |
| 菩提愿下上品池 | 花开见佛不久日 |         |

-- 16/06/20

## 116. 景星回府

|         |         |         |
|---------|---------|---------|
| 初见那时歌声中 | 一唱就到两点钟 | 之后多次参夜跑 |
| 小小白白黝黑发 | 不料疫情庚子生 | 就业情况不对乘 |
| 也有想到父母迈 | 想想还是回府来 | 最后也在歌声中 |
| 两个地方也相同 | 疫情不妙相见难 | 不能送行豪荡荡 |
| 希望不久可重逢 | 白云星州走一趟 |         |

-- 17/06/20

**Commentary:** Kings (景星) went back to China today. Recalled that I first met him in Teo Heng KTV where we sang till 2 am. He joined us for our Thursday jogs. The last time I met him was also in Teo Heng – the last session of Teo Heng before the lockdown (called circuit breaker). Due to lockdown, his job was affected and made redundant; hence, no choice but to return to China. I did ask him, and he said that he does want to go back home as his parents are also getting old. I think the difficult part is the uncertainty of this pandemic – no idea when we will meet again.

## 117. 等待

|         |         |         |
|---------|---------|---------|
| 人生本是进修班 | 几十一百年一堂 | 背包上学自知苦 |
| 第一天来谁不哭 | 百千万劫难遭遇 | 今生喜获净土律 |
| 万年史中一二百 | 今的人身不白来 | 信愿具足一片心 |
| 求佛加持如初临 | 终身不离净土道 | 至终弥陀来引导 |
| 今生所剩有几年 | 一梦一醒两万天 | 善果逆景都随缘 |
| 出离心生不留恋 | 此后时光集训殿 | 训练再苦是磨练 |
| 愿我日增出离心 | 潇洒走完曲折领 | 等待来临莲花台 |
| 说走就走回家来 |         |         |

-- 19/06/20

**Commentary:** I am determined to go Western world of bliss (极乐世界) to be with Amitabha after my current life. Having a human body is not easy and I am not going to waste it. I have both the trust / faith, and intention to go 极乐世界. I am confident that I will make it there. At best, I have only 20 thousand days left in this world, probably only 10 thousand days or so. I hope that when it is time to go, I will gladly and gracefully sit on my lotus platform.

## 118. 极乐学府

|         |         |         |
|---------|---------|---------|
| 两百二十亿之最 | 一入门槛就不退 | 聚足不善皆可达 |
| 门槛只需信愿跨 | 永离六道不净土 | 换个金身上学府 |
| 分身他心无不通 | 六大神通都聚足 | 生活所需都具备 |
| 美食衣冠随意配 | 极乐是最好学府 | 一世成佛在此处 |
| 天界难比极乐好 | 一切都有弥陀靠 |         |

-- 30/06/20



**Commentary:** Western world of bliss (极乐世界) is Amitabha's pure land that he gathered the best of billions of pure lands. Everything required is provided; hence, it is the best world to be in. It is basically a school to learn to be a buddha.

### 119. 证享

天尊确认花甲过 六年之后不为惑 询问去向笑不答  
并非八十一天啦 太尚指题莲花上 此地入门释家当  
心境欢喜又法喜 回家船票有时机 人事只是苦中乐  
毕竟不可就留的 三十甲子楞严白 百劫火宅不可来  
欢喜忆境持宏名 祝我得力宣舟令

-- 04/08/20

**Commentary:** I decided to do a divination about my lifespan and 老君 told me it will be 66 years. I then asked 老君 whether I will go Western world of bliss (极乐世界) but got 笑筌. In my head, I heard 老君 said to me that my intention is to go 极乐世界, not 八十一天; hence, he cannot answer and direct me to Amitabha instead. Knowing that my lifespan is 66 years old makes me very happy – this world is too tiring and demanding for me. I am happy that I can see the end.

### 120. 平点

人在闹市兮 心梦平淡花草香  
身居田村兮 又盼灯红酒绿处  
咸蛋糊粥兮 瓷碗玉筷摆山海  
南北香辣兮 想念清淡菜羹面

-- 10/10/20

**Commentary:** Life can be a dilemma of choice – living in a busy and convenient city but wanting the relaxing life of suburban life but if living in the suburban rural, I will want the bust and hustle of city life. When eating plain porridge with salted eggs, I may want fish and meat but if too much of good food, then a bowl of plain noodle soup will be nice. Perhaps the key is then to enjoy the moment – something I enjoy now may not be something I enjoyed before. Similarly, something I enjoyed before may not be something I enjoy at this moment. But yet, it does not mean it will not return. For example, for a period of time, I love to eat dates but it has been weeks since I ate a date.

### 121. 莲花同住

百年同船渡 看似几尺间 如重叠星光 真相并非然  
各自因果障 对面含悲伤 唯有朝西方 万丈无量光  
誓往极乐国 当下就成就 前途不迷惑 同船坐莲花  
念念心相应 同归永安乐

-- 11/11/20

### 122. Same One

Wondering about a forgotten name  
For once so close and tame  
Wondering about a forgotten face  
For once so near to daze  
It was once so close  
Now sunken into memory's most  
Glaze the twin star

An illusion for they are truly afar  
Has the number been lost or not  
Perhaps line had been laid before the original dot  
Secret lies in the original name  
Before the clothes the body and the fame  
The clue lies in the deep end joint  
Where all goes to Omega Point  
-- 13/11/20

### 123. Lunch With An Old Friend

Lunch with an old friend  
More than thirty years in hand  
Mekajiki marugo and tori age  
That is nice food for a day  
It is nice to see the awaiting queue  
Economy managing on some dew  
Two hour chat over kopi siew-dai  
Bitter-sweetness calling ai lai mai  
Value of antique friends  
Knowing the other's thinking trends  
-- 14/11/20

**Commentary:** Today is the first time I met up with Lyn (BMX) since circuit breaker, for lunch at Parkway Parade. It is really good to see her again as things were really uncertain back then. There is still a lot of uncertainty with this pandemic but at least, we are getting a bit of social life back.

## 124. 知己

塞外马千匹 只寻伯乐已 知音能几人 高山流水底  
伯牙汉江弹 子期诗鸣唱 一生几纵横 清茶夜不散  
-- 15/11/20

**Commentary:** Finding a true friend that really knows ourselves is so difficult. It is something that we can only hope for.

## 125. 三十路

古来人生三十立 立家立业又立勤 天生亲戚各自选  
好友良伴似同源 鸟会择良木而寝 人需选善业投灵

奋斗十载四十岁 自视斤量会不会 十年耕耘喜悲交  
创伤胜利一身了 厉害当前我不惑 天云地水自己活

愿得潇洒到半百 过往二十何处来 人到五十大车站  
终结半身茶香淡 来龙去脉知天命 前方责任要拿定

有往十年清业务 六十花甲一路途 前处有景走马花  
利弊得失随它化 若有杂务随手拿 非己之事不管它

人生七十古来稀 多少当年不到期 凤凰山鸡也叫老  
清粥豆干红枣糕 知心亲友茶水招 世事无常乐逍遥  
-- 30/11/20

**Commentary:** My interpretation of Confucius' words: 三十而立，四十而不惑，五十而知天命，六十而耳顺，七十而从心所欲不踰矩。

- Established at 30 years old (三十而立). Establish what? Establish home (立家) – choose which relatives that you want to maintain close contact and which relatives to distance. Establish career (立业) – decide what career directions, it may not be path but general direction is needed. Establish aspirations (立勤) – what are your core values and what kind of person you want to be.
- 40 is the age of non-confusion (四十而不惑). After walking 10 years, we tasted both successes and failures, and have seen people making it big and people that fell. Some succeed then fell while others made a comeback. 40 years old is the point where our parents aged and started to leave this world. Taking lessons, I am no longer confused with my directions.
- 50, by then, we are definitely at middle years. This is the point of knowing the destiny (五十而知天命). We know that life dealt us a hand but we are the ones that play the hand – most of destiny is self-created. We see where we came from and seen the history of many others. At this point, we stock take our success and failures, completed duties and on-going responsibilities. We walked 2 decades to arrive here, and we have about 2 decades left to go. 50 years old is an important mid-point and we can see the end of our careers. We seen our fruits from 2 decades of work, and can predict 2 decades ahead as well. If there is any changes to be made, now is the time.
- 10 more years of completing responsibilities and we are now 60 years old. It is the point of hearing and pick to listen – we can hear anything but we have to pick what we want to accept (六十而耳顺). No massive changes should be made now. Past successes and losses are no longer important. We are officially old. Finish up the remaining responsibilities

and enjoy the scenery without taking sides. Care less and let by-gone be gone.

- Not many people can live to 70 years old – I have friends who passed away in their late 20s. Hopefully, I still have friends of more than 20 years but I definitely have once friends that I had lost contact for at least 20 years. By now, all responsibilities should be completed. Nobody is young now. The pageant in school or the ugly duckling, are wrinkled. Hope that I have the wisdom to be kind to myself (if I ever reach this age) – 享清福。

## 126. 铁鼠大雪

十月七，大雪了  
正入寒冬子月到 庚子年末得双鼠  
铁齿咬伤前猪土 大雪双子极阴处  
北海玄水搅松土 但愿诸言不现前  
悲闷今年够可怜  
-- 07/12/20

**Commentary:** Jian Rui told me that it snowed heavily in China. 2020 is the year of 庚子 (metal rat) and 2019 was earth pig. The poor pig is chomped by the metal rat. Disaster after disaster... When will this end?

## 127. Beach

Dusk on crashing waves  
Moon on wanes  
Silken beach crystal dust

Winds whistle between palm husk  
Sculpted sands on Bondi  
Tugging on heart strings line  
— 11/12/20

## 128. 雨阳雨

夜半倾雨晨清凉 炎阳中天汗不康  
四点又得雷雨下 不知明日天何强  
-- 17/12/20

**Commentary:** It rained heavily from early morning; hence, it was very cooling when I get to work. By lunch time, it was blazing hot and humid – I am perspiring non-stop. Yet, thunderstorm started at 4pm. No idea what tomorrow brings.

## 129. 赠年糕玉

冬至来临年关到 俊杰台东山水遥 掬得一宝大块头  
台东墨玉垫心楼 摆上镇店年糕玉 可谓地海酝舍利  
柴色枣红齿香透 老陈耐嚼神情漏 吾谢爷爷赠此宝  
更愿爷孙安康好  
-- 19/12/20

**Commentary:** Victor Wang Chun Chieh (王俊杰) was my honours student. He came from Taiwan and lives in Singapore for a long time. He knows that I love stones and crystals and I mentioned to him about 年糕玉. In his last trip back to Taiwan, Victor's

grandfather bought a piece of 年糕玉 for me. It is a great gift, and I wrote this poem to commemorate it.

### 130. 2020 冬至

今天冬至到 侄子八月了 客厅到处爬 找人又寻吃  
我嚼杏仁香 双目望我对 母亲庆生日 今年六十四  
一锅虾贝煮 冬至一年过 今年不少祸 病扫火森林  
水灾又寒冰 庚子追己亥 铁鼠土猪坏 明年逢辛丑  
金牛挖地头

-- 21/12/20

**Commentary:** Sights of winter solstice of 2020. Caleb is 8 months old yesterday, and is crawling around everywhere, finding people and finding food. I was chewing some almonds and cashew nuts when he crawled over, looking at me trying to find where the smell comes from. Mum just turned 64 years old 2 days ago, and we have steamboat for dinner. 2020 is a very tough year with COVID. There were massive forest fires in Australia, floods and hail in other places. Next year, 2021, may not look good as well.

### 131. Synchronicity

Signs from ouroboros and eternity  
Yet sighting them alone can be pronounced antirationalist  
Noncommittally and naturally appearing cappelletti  
Centrifuge with circumstances is rather impressionistic  
High up the clock to see four vermicelli  
Rationalizing but too much of a synchronization  
Order within the chaos of archipelago  
Notwithstanding but once seen it is like a sledgehammer



Illumination of fiery bright torch  
Circumspect to find it spiritualistic and beyond linguistic  
Indeterministic yet in the correct organization  
This is subtle and undeniable synchronicity  
Yorking to look at the ending bolus  
-- 17/01/21

**Commentary:** I am seeing a lot of synchronicities these days – 1111 on the clock, and so on. Maybe it is hinting me something, maybe it is not. I cannot tell for now. Maybe in time, I will. Maybe all it says is that I am more observant to it.

### 132. 年关回想

正是年关至 浮现昨日景 可惜相逢迟 千言万语鼎  
有幸今生见 同誓金刚莲 如今飞路绝 两地看月缺  
但愿有朝日 对面聊常事  
-- 10/02/21

**Commentary:** Thinking of Jian Rui and the events last year. We are kept in contact and vow to go 极乐世界. Even if we lost each other, it will be like seeing the same moon at 2 different places. We will both end up and unite in 极乐世界.

### 133. 除夕夜

铁鼠除夕夜 在家围炉烈 今夜大汤煮 去年两人属  
勺勺尝清汤 当归香如浪  
-- 11/02/21

**Commentary:** Reminiscing the steamboat dinner I had with Jian Rui last Chinese New Year eve.

### 134. 四十二

楼台景花湖中月 不惑二年是喜悦 不为起伏不在浪  
点滴川流清翠雨 七杯水仙浓苦香 白玉菩提在手酿  
-- 30/03/21

**Commentary:** I am 42 years old today. Crossing 40 (不惑之年) is a big step for me and I am glad about it. Hopefully, I will be able to maintain my peace, and enjoy what I have – listen to the rain, enjoying a pot of tea, coffee, or alcohol; and playing with my beads.

### 135. 四十二之愿

春寒凉风在 清明已到来 咸蛋陪白粥 腐乳加纯厚  
酱清肉末逗 翠花中清步 悠闲中带速 休饮甘香茶  
咖啡也不差 衣裳求舒坦 静坐养心房 左手盘石平  
右掌角而静 时聚有三五 谈论宇宙故 练历秉童心  
斗角非本性 思不离墨砚 行不离尊严 日落手持书  
随意览经库  
-- 30/03/21

**Commentary:** My 10 birthday wishes for 42 years old and maybe beyond – (1) a bowl of rice porridge with salted eggs, fermented bean curd, and minced meat in soy sauce; (2) strolling or jogging in the gardens; (3) a pot of tea or coffee; (4) comfortable clothes; (5) a place to meditate or sit quietly; (6) beads, horns, and stones to play; (7) gathering with friends and discuss anything of our interest; (8)

do not engage in unnecessary arguments; (9) write my thoughts and actions in my diary; and (10) volumes of books to read.

### 136. 自训

今年感慨兮 朦胧之后走一半  
何年知古今 先人路途也是此  
我知何想兮 流出欣慰人憔悴  
瞧出眼后兮 不知所谓顿恍然  
何时明了兮 无奈与奋斗之间  
此为何解兮 无奈中自为自战  
取舍起手兮 为世为德为能也  
-- 30/03/21

### 137. 蛋花粥

一锅蛋花粥 熬至有点稠 燕麦加两匙 营养又去脂  
味美益五脏 滋润不能藏  
-- 31/03/21

**Commentary:** When alone, I like to have a bowl of porridge with beaten egg and oats mixed in.

### 138. Morning Buzzer

Another wake another day  
Another year another way  
Sleep is never enough

After days without ringing rough  
A baby sleeps and wakes he wants  
Without any grants  
When it went astray  
To this daily dismay  
Decades of depravity  
Never fulfilled by months of serenity  
The day will come  
By the path of chosen some  
-- 31/03/21

**Commentary:** Woke up sleepily by my alarm – always felt that I never get enough sleep. When will the day come when I no longer need an alarm? I must plan and make it happen, or it will never happen. This can mean that I must take the path less travelled – early retirement.

### 139. 文玩

掌中有文玩 始于文具房 纸笔与砚墨 如今一整罗  
石骨木揭有 各有各名头 文玩无贵贱 此物养沉淀  
-- 10/04/21

**Commentary:** 文玩 originally refers to “scholarly toys”; such as, brushes, paper weights, and ink tablets. Now, it is extended to many things; including, stones, beads, wood, bamboo, carvings, tea pots, seeds, and so on; and it takes various forms. 文玩 is never and should never be about the price or value of items – you can play a landscaping pebble. It is an adult fidget toy to help you stay calm, reduce stress, and improves concentration; much like spinning a pen in hand.

## 140. 端午节

紫色晚霞润端午 我思十年后一幕  
九千里路绕莲池 身居半百似合度  
-- 14/06/21

## 141. 18 Months of Uncertainty

18 months to the day  
The lockdown of China they say  
Massive changes we await  
Not sure when is next elate  
Unable to see my nephew at born  
His cuteness shines at dawn  
He is now at 15 month  
Uncertainty remains undone  
A circuit breaker and numerous flip-flops  
Malls packed with empty shops  
Cooped up in this island  
Dining in is again forbidden as we once again tightened  
Even if re-open  
When will it be re-broken  
Two-thirds vaccination may be someone's performance  
With changing definition comes with what assurance  
Half-life of antibodies is in question  
Airborne or droplets in similar fashion  
Confirmed reinfection and novel variant  
Path ahead is not quite brilliant  
We may use this time  
To think to structure for another prime

-- 25/07/21

**Commentary:** We are back to tighter COVID restrictions again as case load increases drastically in recent weeks. It has been 18 months of uncertainty since COVID began in January 2020. Not sure when will this end.

### 142. 六道木

五台山神树 文殊降龙木 色泽有偏白 心有六线带  
盘捻间上色 静在红与褐 指间水波纹 幽香醒断魂

-- 25/07/21

**Commentary:** My appreciation of prayer beads made from *Abelia biflora*.

### 143. 闷热

飞雪悠悠 火焰三丘  
闷热笼罩陆地烤 百步不到背湿了  
冷空高悬 天方地圆  
潮湿汗浹不想动 缩入冷气被窝中

-- 26/07/21

**Commentary:** A blazing hot and humid day in Singapore – sweating all over from minutes of walk. Just want to hibernate in somewhere with air-conditioning.

## 144. Retirement

On my mind since teenage  
When time is of my advantage  
A time not toll for money  
With a sufficient pot of honey

Looking at elderly cleaning tables  
A day of work is a day enables  
Country will offer perpetual handshake  
That is their gravest mistake

With time to spare  
I am responsible for my own affair  
Starting was tough and it was painstaking  
Twenty years of undertaking

Almost thirty to the day  
About to see the light at archway  
The goal is not about no work  
But kept busy other than financial perk  
— 01/08/21

**Commentary:** Retirement has always been in my thoughts since 16 years old. Retirement to me is not about not working or not doing anything but it is about not needing to work for money. I recalled that at that time, I looked at the old cleaner aunties and uncles; then thought to myself that they only made one mistake – the society will take care of them. Hence, I decided to plan my own way. Almost 30 years had passed, and I am now about to see the light at the end.

### 145. 失眠夜

两点不入眠 四点未合眼 肚子在做响 路上几车辆  
我刚编代码 就是这样吧 躺着听鸟鸣 等着闹钟铃  
-- 14/08/21

**Commentary:** Another sleepless night.

### 146. 刘老牛

家有一头牛 他就叫老刘 每天早上叫 十点睡觉了  
一天复一天 盼着大白莲 肩上抗责任 辛苦不为恨  
醒来默念颂 心头乐其中  
-- 26/08/21

### 147. Quiet in A Group

Sitting alone among crowd  
Retreat from a little loud  
Why am I here  
Names of less than half  
Spending the time seems rather tough  
Perhaps I can do a little clear  
-- 02/09/21

**Commentary:** Sometimes I wonder why I bother to be in a group that I am beginning to feel so distant with; most of them, I don't even know their names. The thought of leaving the group do pop up in my mind. I will see how long I will stay on for, or maybe I will explore a different mode of friendship.



### 148. 墙上草

三十河东，三十河西。风水轮流，不成归一。  
世事反复，成住坏空。清汤稠羹，汤换药同。  
一代开拓，一代荒堕。事已看多，我心平落。

-- 16/09/21

### 149. 桃核串

桃核贯五四 十三合四季 脑纹攀中离 金刚菩提陪  
无患子中对 六道木茶晶 红白乘得挺 一共七十五  
华丽而接土 七宝桃核串 虐手心不乱

-- 17/09/21

### 150. 择串

紫檀茶晶与无患 有长有短一罗筐 天人出门换千衣  
每日选择不相比 一生一串可羡慕 我今只愿不过度  
净瓶杨柳观音持 老君法宝开超市 千手示现百法器  
原来功力在自己

-- 07/10/21

**Commentary:** My collection of mala / prayer beads has increased. What to carry when I go out will require a minute or two to choose. I admire those people that can have 1 string of prayer beads for life, like 观音 only carrying a flask. 太上老君, on the other hand, has enough items that he can open a supermarket. However, 观音 in his

thousand-arms form also carries a thousand items. So maybe I am over-thinking and just take the middle path – more than one but not too many.

### 151. 持名

竹林深处木鱼声 清灯古佛论大乘  
十劫开启莲花会 愿佛加持悟我真  
-- 10/10/21

**Commentary:** I choose chanting Amitabha's name as my central spiritual practice.

### 152. 择易

观音为何持念珠 正法明佛也念汝 大悲咒中有大悲  
本性本愿入三昧 如雷泡影悟空真 自明本性难行门  
两岸世尊大愿船 上船稳坐心不乱 弃难择易末法时  
莲化金身大道至  
-- 10/10/21

**Commentary:** This is a continuation of the previous poem. In Buddhism, there are generally 2 types of paths – difficult path (难行道), and easy path (易行道). The difficult path requires self-realization, self-purification of karma, and self-enlightenment – all depends on oneself. The easy path depends on empowerment by buddha, especially Amitabha through his vows; and is established in chanting and contemplating his name. The difficult path is not suitable for this phase of history; hence, I choose the easy path. I firmly put my faith in Amitabha and his ability for my redemption.

### 153. 失联的朋友

划旧照，看见故友坐床头  
离别难，你那沉思与泪光  
回想当时，悉尼港湾游船  
几日闲暇，网上文字对聊  
终究在车站，南下八百里  
如今二十年，对月愿团圆  
-- 10/10/21

**Commentary:** I was looking through some old photographs and saw Frank, a China guy that I met in Sydney back in 2002. The last time I saw him was in 2004 in Sydney and he went back to China. I still recalled that he was solemn and a bit sad when he saw me off at the bus terminal. I think deep inside we know that it will not be easy to meet him again after that day and we had lost contact with him since. I do wonder how he is now.

### 154. 燕麦

燕麦真好吃 充实又去脂 奶稠加果片 冷热皆可食  
-- 16/10/21

**Commentary:** I love to eat oats – hot or cold, or with fruits. It is both filling and helps reduce my cholesterol.

### 155. 宝宝吃早餐

周末十点半 宝宝吃早餐 番茄面鸡肉 一口接一口  
奶奶喂得慢 大声催促了 吃了半碗面 番茄酱满脸  
-- 17/10/21

**Commentary:** We went IKEA for brunch this morning and the sight of Caleb eating his tomato pasta.

### 156. 天热的咖啡

饭后喝咖啡 下午不会累 躲进麦当劳 出门汗夹背  
-- 19/10/21

**Commentary:** Another day of heat and humidity. I wanted a cup of coffee after lunch to keep awake. Due to the heat and humidity outside, I decided to go to McDonalds where there is air-conditioning. But the moment I step out, I am sweating again.

### 157. 牛生日

我家刘老牛 今天三十六 真诚心不丢 每天念圣号  
手牵两宝宝 梦中接引了  
-- 22/10/21

### 158. 风阳

清早翠风，云盖日朦。悠悠凉意。  
屋内爽，微风寒，一身无汗。

阴霾透阳，低云铺张。点滴微露秋风凉。

-- 22/10/21

## 159. 九月十八

九月十八菩萨诞  
一年没进观音堂  
疫情故，唯有拱手瞻目  
信愿行，天下健康和平  
佛牙不开，禅堂难来  
一心专念，三圣可见  
功破阿鼻，莲出污泥  
闻声救苦，慈航引路  
愿船我坐，八宝莲朵

-- 23/10/21

## 160. 18 Months

Toddling in on Saturday morning  
Dark green stegosaurus he hugging  
Wants the bread his dad eating  
Two more incisors in upper gums showing  
Ten kilograms and growing  
Along the table trucks he pushing  
Up the kitchen step a box of toys he pulling  
Before long he will be sweating  
Little Caleb a small human walking  
Last year this time he was learning crawling  
Lifting his butt and shaking

Eighteen and three days counting  
Every week is new changing  
-- 23/10/21

**Commentary:** Caleb at 18 months old.

### 161. 三搭

金刚棱，凤眼稳，无患滚。  
十八中反面，九九五四垫。  
六尘六根应六识，九组对应可编织。  
虎皮纹木坐顶端，牦牛红木坐三观。  
多宝搭出朴实感，加个背云也哗然。  
-- 23/10/21

### 162. 补疫苗

一针唤醒五杯红酒醉 行走也不对  
口干舌燥又梦幻 今日五颗蛋  
虽到晚上没胃口 喝着热汤稠  
隔早臂痛昏沉 周身无力坐卧难忍  
四十二小时苏醒 感觉这人有点稳  
--31/10/21

**Commentary:** Just had by COVID booster injection yesterday at about 2pm and it was bad. Within minutes, I felt dizzy and went to Toast Box or something for soft-boiled eggs and coffee. My hands were trembling, and I had to sit down. I felt drunk, like having drank 5 glasses of wine. I had no appetite last night and drank some

soup. My arm was very sore this morning and felt very uncomfortable. Things get better 24-hours post-injection.

### 163. 华姐

华姐跑步必拍照 上车先戴套  
润红脸蛋自带光 每天以为胖  
言中悠悠带客道 本质心地好  
遇见蟑螂彻底的尖爆了

到了晚上常食饮 像个猫头鹰  
灯红酒绿举杯三巡衣衫开领  
三步一语交际广  
天空晨红才入寝

-- 31/10/21

**Commentary:** A poem about Maxton Huang.

### 164. 菩提老三样

菩提老三样 星月照金刚 十四凤眼环 衬托朴素感

-- 01/01/22

### 165. 贵哥结缘

一偏我云  
道悠悠经诵 六祖示楞伽

菩提四老 甘孜柏香  
颗圆三棱 贯穿一零八  
漂泊万里成串 幸得贵哥结缘  
— 19/01/22

**Commentary:** Recently, I am following a YouTube channel by a Taiwanese by the name of 黄煜贵 introducing various 问玩. He calls himself 贵哥, and he is not a beads or crystal seller but someone in food business. But due to pandemic, things slowed for him and he used his channel to keep himself entertained. In a recent video, he asked a question, 什么是我? and invited responses. My response is 什么是我? 其实贵哥在影片中已经提到一个很关键的元素 - 意识; 在玄学就称之为神识。

《六祖坛经》有云“时有风吹幡动，一僧曰风动。一僧曰幡动。议论不已。惠能进曰不是风动，不是幡动，仁者心动。”这也对应了《楞严经》内二十五圆通章中的“尘，根，识”的概念。我们所看的东西，就是尘。我们用来看的器官（眼睛），就是根。尘与根相应，就是光线（尘）投影在视网膜（根）而通过化学反应所产生在视神经的电波，就是识。无尘或根的伤害，就无法产生对应的识。而辨别这眼耳鼻舌身识的，就是意识。

何为我，就可以从意识的存在和意识的延续来解释。而最关键的意识，就是自我意识。我快 43 岁了，基本上已经没有来自母胎时代的细胞了，除了干细胞之外。可是自我意识还在这身体延续着，所以我还是我。整容换性甚至变成机器人，自我意识还延续着，所以我还是我。可是如果我把自己储存在电脑或二次元空间，那我原有的自我意识是延续还是复制呢？关键就在我这个肉体还有自我意识吗？如果有，那就是复制，也就是说所储存在电脑或二次元空间根本不是我。如同说，



我的儿子是我的复制，可是他是我吗？他会被我影响 - 人格的影响，三观的影响，甚至基因和表观遗传的影响。可是，他还是他，我还是我。

所谓的自我意识，就是末那识。意识为尘，以末那识为根。而末那识为尘，以阿赖耶识为根。“诸法无我，谁在轮回？”说的就是阿赖耶识。阿赖耶识也就是不生不灭的第八识如来藏 - 存一切习气的种子，因果的种子。一个刚出生的孩子的性格，就来自于阿赖耶识的发动。

所以追根究底，“我”其实就是一个阿赖耶识；“我”就是这个从无量始劫以来习气和因果的种子凝聚。所以为什么说把自己储存在电脑或二次元空间，是复制自我意识而不是延续呢？因为这个在电脑或二次元空间的自我意识链接不上相同的阿赖耶识。这也就是说当我老了，健忘了，脑子不好使了，我还是我；因为我还是这阿赖耶识的延续。分了这阿赖耶识，就是道家所谓的“魂飞魄散”。了解了阿赖耶识也就了解了道家的“分灵” - 世界各地的妈祖庙都是根本上从湄洲妈祖祖庙分灵出来而成。所以到底有天庭有几尊妈祖？难道是“妈祖”是一的部队的代号吗？不是，只有一尊妈祖。所以的分灵是连接同一个阿赖耶识 - 这阿赖耶识从林默（妈祖原名）延续。

那么在台湾还有“大妈祖”，二妈祖”，“三妈祖”之说。道家有太上老君 81 化身之说。佛教也有观世音菩萨化身绿度母，化身准提佛母，化身马头明王；而绿度母化身 21 度母之说。这又是怎么回事？如《道德经》开篇云“道可道也，非恒道也。名可名也，非恒名也。无名，万物之始也；有名，万物之母也。” - 一切的源头是无，是一真法界。无量诸佛的法身是大日如来（毗卢遮那佛）。众生皆有佛性。众生成佛后的法身都是大日如来。一化无量，无量归一。所以，根本的根本，

也就没有“我”。看官皆是我，我皆是看官。你的至亲也是你，你的至爱也是你，你的冤家也是你，你的敌人更是你。

Subsequently, 贵哥 wanted to give away a 三棱 108-bead 柏香 mala, which is one of its kind in the world as 三棱柏香 is very rare. I am the lucky winner for his lucky draw, and he sent it to be by express mail – Taiwan to Singapore, door to door, within 22 hours. Hence, I wrote this poem to commemorate it.

### 166. 四老六样

六字真言很亲切 观音势至伴星月 藏文玛瑙挂在腰  
南赡部洲显功效 二圣引路入大乘 五十四级方可证  
路中遇的凤凰眼 大智明性花开莲 夜里星月照光明  
苦海无涯慰心灵 木患本师释迦佛 叩首本尊阿弥陀  
金刚台坐菩提场 愿得今生道无上

— 22/01/22

### 167. 心忧

两年焦心 回首泪痕 悠悠千里异乡  
送往白云 含泪挥手 流着冰心红酿  
日日思念 夜夜担忧 头冠银丝我心愁  
坚守盟誓 我心独求 两角终端在西游

— 10/02/22

## 168. 双月

生得何态兮 放声哭笑一身豪  
世态冷暖兮 人情似纸张张薄  
双月何照兮 坦然自在与歌高  
星辰照耀兮 始终聚散待时到  
— 10/02/22

## 169. 重组柏香

两月换四款 又一次拆串 韵意有些隐 柏香有顺情  
— 26/02/22

## 170. 1049 Days

Tired in the form  
Fatigue in mind storm  
It is another decade  
The neverending charade  
With feedstock decline  
Fourth quartile a line  
Strawberries in protest  
To be named in contest  
A decade I may  
Enough to call a day  
— 26/02/22

**Commentary:** I am feeling an oncoming burnout again and trying my best to starve it off. These last 2 years had been exhausting. In-

stead of semi-retiring from 55, which is 13 years from now; I think I should retire latest when I turn 53, which is 10 years from now.

### 171. Positive Day 1

Two lines seen after a night of fever  
Ten hours of sleep in shiver  
Headache and running nose and cough  
Lethargy coming on and off  
Worry for my little Caleb  
Also an infected cherub  
With a high fever overnight  
Luckily he is now alright  
Interesting episodes of lethargy  
Sudden onset with absolute low energy  
Eyes will blur and words will smear  
Have to lie down until all is clear  
— 02/03/22

### 172. Positive Day 2

Temperature had dampened  
Shivers had lightened  
No more sudden and extreme lethargy  
Energy is still a dispossessory  
Scratchy throat sore from cough  
Awaking several times with thickened froth  
Caleb temperature is back to normally suppositive  
Yet his parents are now positive  
He still has a hoarse voice  
Like me from all the coughing noise

The overall feel of weak  
Calls for another ten hours of sleep  
— 03/03/22

### 173. Positive Day 3

Fever and chills are almost gone  
Awakened by the sore throat at dawn  
Coughing bolus of thick dark phlegm  
Scouring my throat with a thorny stem  
Energy is coming back  
But I should still hit the sack  
Lethargy still constant throughout the day  
Intermittent headaches drums the way  
Salted cococut water and honey to the rescue  
Smoothing the inflammed epiglottal tissue  
I think I should do another long night rest  
Rest and time to perform its conquest  
— 04/03/22

### 174. Positive Day 4

A day without panadol  
Phlegm still thick as glycol  
Throat is getting much less sore  
Drenched with coconut and honey pour  
Energy is back by more than half  
Nose mild congestion and mild throat chaff  
Irritating nasal drips clicks the cough  
Blocking the air in its trough  
Caleb is still a couch potato

More energetic but not yet a dynamo  
Mum is in the clear  
Which calls for a little cheer  
— 05/03/22

### 175. Positive Day 5

Energy is back four-fifth  
Lethargy is now a myth  
But not out of the woods  
Still two lines of magenta goods  
Throat is no longer sore  
But cough is constant roar  
Phlegm is mostly clear  
Light deep hoarse is still near  
Melvin's fever has subsided  
His recovery is well guided  
Maybe I just need another day or two  
Leaving behind all this goo  
— 06/03/22

**Commentary:** Positive Day 1 to 5 is the record of my first COVID-19 infection as it progresses.

### 176. 仰山涛

山涛浪涛尽 心存炽热情 力尽托孤人 泥林瞧西晋  
— 09/04/22

**Commentary:** I was reading the story of 竹林七贤, and really admire 山涛.

## 177. 小黄牛

我家的刘老牛  
如今成了小黄牛  
从早忙到晚 只为三餐暖  
两个宝宝在厅堂  
雪茄与诗涵 朴素又乖巧  
累了我家的老刘  
踏实  
— 10/04/22

## 178. 轮回

等生死齐万物  
大鱼吃小鱼 万物养鲸鱼  
终究一跃育百年  
目目江水在流失  
唯有江水流不止  
— 10/04/22

**Commentary:** “等生死齐万物” comes from Zhuang Zi (庄子) – basically, every living thing is just waiting to die. This is not a pessimistic view but a realistic view. In the eyes of death, everything is equal. Knowing that we will all die some day reminds us that nothing is really serious or permanent; only then, we do not take ourselves too seriously and start living. Whenever there is birth, there is death. Whenever there is gathering, there is separation. Big

fish eats small fish, so how can there be equality in life? When apex predators or large animals, like whale, die; their carcasses will need tens of smaller animals. This is the circle of life. Hence, what we see as life and death are just pages in this book of life while life itself, remains. Therefore, we are just a tiny section in the grand flow of life. Even so, we should do something to enhance ourselves – to experience life itself; to enhance and improve lives of those around us. What is life? Life is to experience.

### 179. 叔夜

竹林叶落嵇康亡 付刑一曲广陵撒  
首落宴散看世道 鼓起童真埋心坎  
— 10/04/22

**Commentary:** Talking about another important character of 竹林七贤 – 嵇康.

### 180. 蜜蜡

两千万年苏门林 赤颜蓝幽蜜橘荫  
天崩地裂吾未动 沉静酝酿蜜蜡心  
— 13/04/22

**Commentary:** I bought several pieces of Sumatran amber, including a wrist mala. Sumatran amber is about 10 to 20 million years old. The ones I bought are cognac to dark red colour with natural inclusions. I like the mellowness and it remains me of endurance in face of catastrophe – Indonesia has many earthquakes and volcanos.



### 181. 核桃串

核桃盘枣红 需求五年功 指尖揉心棱 时满达圆通  
— 29/04/22

**Commentary:** Based on what I read online, it will take at least 5 years of effort of playing for peach seeds to turn red. Maybe this will train my peace and endurance.

### 182. 小宝宝

一个两岁瓜 每天笑哈哈 我家小正凯 长了大门牙  
— 02/05/22

**Commentary:** Caleb is 2 years old now, and has big incisors.

### 183. 泡姜

黑醋泡老姜 酸辣中带呛 朝食三五片 活血又壮阳  
— 03/05/22

**Commentary:** Ginger pickled in rice vinegar is something healthy. Eating 3 to 5 slices a day can help to improve blood circulation.

### 184. 望壬子

盼望壬子三千五 敦煌青海珞珈步  
南柯梦中得觉醒 泡影莲瓣乘路途

— 10/05/22

**Commentary:** The next 壬子年 is 2032 when I will be 52 years old. This is my targeted retirement age, if not earlier. It is 10 years away or another 3500 days. Hopefully, I still have enough energy and health to visit Silk Road and Putuo mountain. Whatever in this world, all the name and statuses, are just a dream – 南柯一梦.

The story of 南柯一梦 (Dream of Nan Ke) is about a scholar named Chun Yufen during the Tang Dynasty. Beneath the wall of his courtyard grew a Guhuai tree (Chinese scholar tree). On a particular day, feeling unhappy, he napped after indulging in alcohol. Vaguely, two emissaries approached him, inviting him to visit the Kingdom of Da Huan An. Boarding a carriage, Chun Yufen reached the kingdom's palace after a short journey. Impressed by Chun Yufen's intellect and refined demeanor, the king decided to wed him to the princess. Chun Yufen enjoyed a blissful life with the princess. Before long, Chun Yufen was appointed Governor of Nan Ke. There, he remained preoccupied with the well-being of his subjects and the affairs of the state, endearing himself to the populace. One fateful day, the nation of Tan Luo launched an invasion, resulting in a disastrous defeat for the forces of Da Huai An. The King ordered Chun Yufen to lead the army against the invaders. Lacking military knowledge, Chun Yufen mounted a hasty defense and fled after the defeat. The King's anger flared and dismissed Chun Yufen from his position. Not long thereafter, his wife (the princess) succumbed to illness. Reduced to a state of destitution, even his dog failed to recognize him and barked in response. Unexpectedly, Chun Yufen awoke, realizing it had all been a dream. A peculiar sensation dawned on him as he discovered a sizable ant cave beneath the Guhuai plant, housing the ant king. The ant cave resembled a pavilion, a miniature town. Letting out a sigh of contemplation, Chun Yufen mused those years of opulence and prosperity had amounted to nothing more than a dream in Nan Ke.

Everything we work for in this world is not going to last – Nations collapse, dynasties fall. Even this planet will be destroyed when our Sun becomes a red giant some 2 to 4 billion years from now. This means what whatever gold and precious artifacts, relics; will all be destroyed eventually by no other than our beloved and life-giving Sun – once the source of life will be then the source of destruction. Knowing that all is a dream, I will rather devote myself to my spiritual practice and go 极乐世界 when my current ends.

### 185. Maybe A Chapter Closed

Maybe here it ends  
The last session tonight  
I am happy  
Not a place of delight  
Wise words peppered the walls  
Even at urinal stalls  
If only a tenth were practiced  
But mismanaged to abyss  
Five years and four months  
Every quarter some new stunts  
Yet I am grateful  
To have clocked my hours  
Seeing graduates makes it meaningful  
— 17/05/22

**Commentary:** I wrote this poem on my way back from MDIS as I completed my last contracted lecture. I do not have any more contracts with MDIS on hand, so this may be the end. Do I feel sad? Actually no. With all the inspirational quotes all over the place, including urinals; if only 10% were practiced, it will be a much better

place. Mismanagement is almost an understatement with new rubbish from them every quarter. Nevertheless, I am grateful to clock my university level teaching hours and seeing students graduating gives it some meanings.

### 186. 房有蟑螂

五月逢五毒 床下蟑螂途 杀虫剂猛喷 毒害或淹路  
— 02/06/22

**Commentary:** Today is 五月初五 also known as 五毒节 where a lot of insects and arthropods will be crawling around. I saw a cockroach crawling to be bed when I got back home and flooded it with insecticide.

### 187. 五月

九问天 胜圆阴缺在何时  
人看月 大小圆缺各有时  
太阴本无缺 但勾人喜悦  
月光本虚幻 人自作惆怅  
— 14/06/22

**Commentary:** Moon – something that poets have written about for centuries. The waxing and waning have been a subject of gathering and separation in Chinese literature. However, waxing and waning are illusions. Hence, it is the person that gives it meanings and got trapped by the given meanings.

## 188. 无患子

红似龙眼核 无患求安乐 优雅朴素中 何来忧患呢

— 18/06/22

**Commentary:** 无患子 (Western soapberry) is the first prayer beads documented in Buddhism and with its own sutra - 《佛说木槌子经》 - documenting the benefits of chanting with soapberry prayer beads. Soapberry is in the same genus as lychee and longan, and soapberry seeds feels like longan seeds but much tougher. I gotten myself several bags of seeds and made myself a 54-seed mala with seeds leaning towards red. I like the plain look and it is calm to chant with it.

《佛说木槌子经》

闻如是：

一时佛游罗阅祇耆闍崛山中，与大比丘众一千二百五十人俱，菩萨无数，名称远闻，天、人所敬。时难国王，名波流离，遣使来到佛所，顶礼佛足，白佛言：“世尊！我国边小，频岁寇贼，五谷勇贵，疾病流行，人民困苦，我恒不得安卧。如来法藏，多悉深广；我有忧务，不得修行。唯愿世尊特垂慈愍，赐我要法！使我日夜易得修行，未来世中远离众苦。”

佛告王言：“若欲灭烦恼障、报障者，当贯木槌子一百八，以常自随。若行、若坐、若卧，恒当至心，无分散意，称佛陀、达摩、僧伽名，乃过一木槌子，如是渐次度木槌子，若十、若二十、若百、若千，乃至百千万。若能满二十万遍，身心不乱，无诸谄曲者，舍命得生第三焰天，衣食自然，常安乐行。若复

能满一百万遍者，当得断除百八结业，始名背生死流，趣向泥洹，永断烦恼根，获无上果。”

信还启王，王大欢喜，遥向世尊，头面礼佛云：“大善！我当奉行。”即敕吏民，营办木楔子，以为千具，六亲国戚，皆与一具。王常诵念，虽亲军旅，亦不废置。又作是念：“世尊大慈，普应一切。若我此善，得免长沦苦海，如来当现我身，为我说法。”愿乐迫切，三日不食。

佛即应形，与诸眷属，来其宫内，而告王曰：“莎斗比丘，诵三宝名，经历十岁，得成斯陀含果；渐次习行，今在普香世界，作辟支佛。”王闻是已，倍复修行。

佛告阿难：“何况能诵三宝名，经历万数；但能闻此人名，生一念随喜者，未来生处，常闻十善。”

说是法时，大众欢喜，皆愿奉行！

## 189. Blue Heelers T Shirt

Red t-shirt with Blue Heelers logo  
That year of two thousand and six  
Salvation Army along Flemington Road  
Summer day of warm episode  
A secondhand t-shirt  
Less than five dollars  
Travelled half the globe  
As a cheap sleeping robe  
Sixteen years since passed  
It has done its last  
— 18/06/22

**Commentary:** Today is the last time I wear my Blue Heeler's t-shirt, which I bought in 2006 from Salvation Army shop along Flemington Road during my PhD days. I still recall that it was summer when I bought it. It cost me less than AUD 5 but followed me through my postdoctoral days in South Dakota, USA. It is now very worn and torn.

## 190. Monday

Why the alarm did not ring  
Now seven thirty in the morning  
Turning off my chant  
And saw my alarm  
Ready to go office with a little yawn  
Wondering where had Sunday gone  
Realizing this is the day of sun  
Just no sound of Caleb having fun  
Was there too much work?  
Or did I miss my Caleb?  
— 19/06/22

**Commentary:** Today is Sunday but I thought it is Monday and jumped out of bed at 7.30 am wondering why my alarm did not go off. As I was thinking of going to office, I realized it is Sunday but did not hear Caleb playing his toys as he did not come over this week. Am I too stressed up over my work or did I miss my Caleb?

## 191. Writing Proposal

Talk, Talk, and Talk

Talk to supervisor; Talk to colleagues; Talk to your friends  
But don't irritate them with your endless talk  
Think, Think, and Think  
Think what you can do; Think what can be done; Think what is worth  
Write, Write, and Rewrite  
Be concise; Be consistent; Be entertaining  
Rewrite till you do not want to see it anymore  
Then it is about ready and done  
— 05/07/22

**Commentary:** I wrote this poem to document the steps of writing a final year project proposal.

## 192. 多串

三天喜长四天短 脖子一串手三环  
说是玩具亦法器 随应心情盘心安  
— 10/07/22

**Commentary:** Well, I have just too many mala / prayer beads. Maybe they are really just tools or toys. Instead of seeing them as individual strings of beads; they are just collectively, beads. Instead of bothering about too many books, I have a library of books.

## 193. AutoX

Self-reflection as a study  
Who will bother a nobody  
Autobiography and autoethnography



Philosophically sound methodology  
Actioned by objective methodology  
Triangulation and reflectivity  
Minimizing its subjectivity  
Casting off self-vanity  
Then it is a worthy study  
Crossing the final gantry  
Of unveiled anonymity  
— 10/07/22

**Commentary:** I am using autobiographical and autoethnographical approaches for some of my research. Due to its self-reflective nature, the lingering question is always about why this work is needed. Many have shown that autobiographical and autoethnographical approaches are sound methodologies and triangulation can be used to support its findings. This will reduce the subjectivity. However, self-vanity must be cautioned. Then the most difficult part of the study is, how much do I want to put myself in public?

## 194. 冲劲

身频心电图 冲劲有起伏 遇谷就反弹 久炖在火炉  
— 13/07/22

**Commentary:** Sometimes I wonder if I have the energy and drive to go on. In depth of the valley lies the point to restart the next journey. Maybe taking enough rest between each task / battle will help. We are all in an infinite game – there is no win but just playing to be in the game.

## 195. 放下

放下先拿起 苦海两岸立 陶淵明五官 择安田野川  
叔同滚红尘 顿悟弘一身 持物了分别 了空自然去  
— 17/07/22

**Commentary:** The requisite to let go is to take it up – we can only give up something when we are immersed in it. Hence, the way to conquer something is to be in it, then emerge out of it.

## 196. 观望

顶戴博士十二年 一路走来望秋月  
何来 路遥望山顶 云雾飘渺摸不定  
何奈 足踏荆棘自行路 花丛盆景见月明  
— 21/07/22

**Commentary:** It has been 12 years since I wore the bonnet of a doctorate. Exploring different paths, both academic and industry, as I walk and once a while looking at the moon (aiming high). I know every path have their own heights - director in polytechnic, professorship, or senior staff scientist / vice president in company, or start my own company. But when I tried to focus and aim for the peak / top or even a much higher step (from senior executive to middle management), I find it foggy externally (is there really a route) and internally (do I want to promote to there). What else then? What else can I do? Seems like the only way is to clear an unbeaten route for myself, which is not easy - when people had moved a kilometre ahead because they are willing to do what their new route requires, I find myself unwilling to commit and as a result, either still at same spot or barely moving. Maybe I am already in the best spot. If

I stumble across a flower garden (external - a role that I am willing to promote into, etc), that is good. Otherwise, I will just tend the couple bonsai pots (internal - keep several small plants, and if one pot dies, just get a new one), is also not too bad.

## 197. 老友

老友何久 三十六年可秀  
有二足已 生若再来何求  
— 05/08/22

**Commentary:** Old friends – how old is old? I boast to have 2 friends of more than 36 years of friendship each. What more can I ask for?

## 198. 欢送宇涵

宇涵白衣衫  
两年未见迈学堂  
六年医修十年道  
抹茶代酒  
欢送千里游  
— 05/08/22

**Commentary:** Meet up with Raphael Hon for dinner at Tampines One before he embarks on grueling years of studies to be a medical practitioner. I have great hopes for him.

## 199. 润粥

清粥也食疗  
一碗浓稠阴阳道  
暖胃而生津  
性平而柔  
最佳无非一碗清粥  
— 06/08/22

**Commentary:** Rice porridge is an excellent food with medicinal properties if used properly. When cooked to congee, it can relieve many indigestion and stomach issues. When more watery, it can help to replace lost fluids.

## 200. 咸蛋

奶白青花壳 咸蛋儿时乐 蛋油点白粥 此乃幸福阁  
— 06/08/22

**Commentary:** I love to eat salted eggs since I was a kid. The yolk must ooze a bit of oil and accompanying a bowl of plain rice porridge – it is heavenly. Happiness can be this easy.

## 201. 诗两百

入案诗两百 目标二成排 一年四十首 写尽一生来  
— 09/08/22

**Commentary:** Commemorating my 200<sup>th</sup> poem – 20% of my poem writing life goal. I am going to use this format to document fragments of my life from now onwards.

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## 202. 卤猪脚

肉实卤猪脚 骨边嫩筋料 皮脂满胶原 香卤配饭妙  
— 09/08/22

**Commentary:** Braised pork trotter is such a delicacy. Firm muscular meat, soften tendons, and skin full of collagenic stickiness. With a scoop of braised sauce, it is delicious with a bowl of white rice.

## 203. 离合岁月

人世道，岁月沧桑。  
相遇间，悲欢离合。  
何必？  
无相欠非得相见，无相连难得相聚。  
聚欢离伤，合苦散乐。  
何为？  
了缘以。  
— 09/08/22

**Commentary:** In this life, we have seen the come and go, the gathering and separation. But why? As Chinese day, if 2 persons do not owe each other anything, they will not meet. Conversely, once the debt is cleared, each is again on their own ways. It can be gathered happily and departed sadly, or gathered miserably and departed happily, or any combinations in between. It does not matter. At the end, it is just clearing debt to each other.

## 204. 人生

长城依旧在 未见始皇来 莫谈千年情 曾祖是何名  
忙碌了一生 无愧大愿成 百年何你我 人间何曾来  
— 25/08/22

**Commentary:** We kept thinking of wanting to accomplish something big in life and busied ourselves over it. Worse still, we become sad, disappointed and miserable when things and events do not go the way that we want. Is it worth it? The Great Wall is still there but where is the first emperor of China. Don't bother about leaving your name for a thousand years – how many people even know the names of their 8 great grandparents? Similarly, you will be forgotten by most of your great grandchildren or even grandchildren. Hundred years later, we will all be gone from this world. And in another hundred years, people who ever seen you will also be gone. Unless you are some famous or notable persons, your name and contributions will also be forgotten. By then, have you ever come to this world before?

## 205. 故人

闲暇悠悠逛石场 迎来故人看  
别了二十年 无声无息连  
知相识也安在 缘起看缘开  
— 17/09/22

**Commentary:** Bumped into Tristan Chen at a crystal fair this afternoon. It has been almost 20 years since I last saw him. Good to know that he is well; and maybe, that is enough for me to know.

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## 206. 水月

花开就有花谢 日出必有日落 望瞧月色圆缺 月又何尝离别  
— 15/10/22

**Commentary:** Flower blossoming will mean that it must wilt. Sunrise foretold sunset. This is the natural flow of the universe that nobody can stop. Although everything that starts must end, the flow of start to end is a constant. Life begins with birth and ends with death but the flow of life has been constant. While we are watching the waxing and waning of the moon, the moon does not actually wax and wane.

## 207. 晚风

微风轻爽 晚霞悠凉 漫步街道 舒心烦躁  
今宵元旦 我欲独览 静坐三环 汤水一碗  
婆婆事何 饱睡而乐 五百回眉 强求着累  
晚风随缘 何必缠绵  
— 01/01/23

**Commentary:** I was feeling uncalm at the evening of December 31, 2022. However, the night was cooling and breezy. Hence, I went for a walk and drank a bowl of soup before going home to meditate for the third time today. Whatever happens in this Samsara world, all I bother now is to fill my tummy and sleep. Pushing and wanting things are just too tiring. Let everything comes and go accordingly – I am not going to bother changing things to what I want.

## 208. Grounding Myself

Last hour of twenty two  
A line on sand drew  
No longer a daily cuckeroo  
Focus inwardly my own breakthrough  
Silence sitting amidst copper blue  
Observing the hullabaloo  
Chewing roasted cashew  
The past is not my miscue  
It takes more than me to glue  
Play their part or let run through  
— 01/01/23

**Commentary:** I have been doing things wrongly for 2022 and before. This year, I am no longer going to send morning messages to anyone who does not bother. I will focus more on myself and my own needs.

## 209. 静思

心浮忧涌不持兮，何为白头郎  
日出日落晚霞兮，花开有落完  
花蕊硕果藏籽兮，天地得循环  
缘起势必席散兮，看淡也自然  
昔日利往与我兮，瞭望清水塘  
法性苍生何处兮，普贤十愿王  
常寂光中我何兮，缘聚示蒲团  
禅莲静榭闲章兮，畅谈十三观



— 02/01/23

## 210. Black Aromatic Coffee

Long black or filtered brew  
Coffee oil in bubbly mildew  
Unsweetened and unstained  
Jots through the mind profaned  
A cup of black coffee  
Tart without acidity  
Herbaceous smokey aromaticity  
A sip to release  
To restore inner peace  
— 02/01/23

**Commentary:** I like hot black coffee without sugar, as it gives the flavour in its purest form. It is not a nice drink but through the tart and aroma, it relieves my stress.

## 211. 禅莲静榭

禅思探密法界通 莲池八宝归西丛  
静心恒持繁华中 榭宅优美影边容  
— 02/01/23

**Commentary:** 禅莲静榭 is a goal I set for myself.

禅 = Zen = comprehensive, pursuit of wisdom

莲 = lotus = roots in mud and murky waters with flowers in the air.  
Symbolizes a sense of purity in this hideous world. Symbolizes

firmness of ideals surrounded by temptations. And also symbolizes my direction for afterlife

静 = quietness, stillness, meditative. Symbolizes firmness of ideals surrounded by noise and distractions.

榭 = a pavilion that takes the beauty and meanings from surroundings.

Taken together, it represents my pursuit of ideals – maintaining steadfast to my own goals, which are often unendorsed and even frowned upon in this world is materialism and temptations. I am the pavilion that is decorated by my ideals of wisdom, un-temptedness, and firmness / stillness. Without these decorative ideals (wisdom, un-temptedness, and firmness / stillness), I am just a wall-less shelter of no value. Hence, I shall be known as 莲静居士.

## 212. Lost

Lost, a sense of dread

Lost, a feel of panic

Lost, a release of joy

Unrestrained and unbound

Schedule, expectations and the nagging sound

The fool start as lost

Walking off the cliff with a bag of toss

Zero, the start as fool

Zero, has all the tool

— 05/01/23

**Commentary:** What is this feeling of being lost? It basically means unrestrained and unbounded – we felt lost because we are not strapped to anything, anyone, any schedule, or any destination. Let's be unrestrained as the Fool walking off the cliff into the unknown. The Fool is given the number zero in Major Arcana in the

Tarot – the starting point, the ouroboros, and has all the tools to start. Maybe feeling lost is then the starting point.

## 213. Zero

Centered between two ouroboros  
Boundless field of desert rose  
Swinging like a pendulum  
Throughout all of saeculum  
Infinite potential  
Exist for all experiential  
Weaving through this simulacra  
Playful dance in this grand opera  
— 06/01/23

**Commentary:** Further elaboration on the concept of zero. Zero lies between two infinities, where infinity can be seen as one. Zero and one is the binary of this simulacra. Between zero and one lies all the possibilities.

## 214. Mortgage

Leash of twenty years  
Ebbs of painful tears  
Finally I am in the clear  
All in nine years  
Eighteen months of commitment  
Chunks of remittance  
Final payment of mortgage  
And cleared of its bondage  
— 07/01/23

**Commentary:** I had finally cleared my mortgage and unless I do something drastic, it will not come back again. To clear it, I had paid an additional 220 to 230 thousand dollars into my mortgage last year. Some people were telling me that I should have invested the money for better returns than my mortgage interest, which is low. My point is this – mortgage interest, regardless of how low it is, is a known loss; while invest for returns, regardless of how high it is, is an unknown gain. At this point in my life where I want to shift to semi-retirement, clearing mortgage will be a good move. Another way to put it is this – comparing between a monthly mortgage payment or a potential investment gain, which will keep you up at night if you lose your job? Furthermore, speaking from the point of without a mortgage, the mental burden of carrying a mortgage is unbelievable.

## 215. 静坐

静坐冥思风沙垫 眼观眉心养丹田  
抖落尘埃世间物 无色无相无心见  
— 24/01/23

**Commentary:** Sitting quietly with eyes closed on a cushion. Focused between the eyebrows or solar plexus or belly. Let the dust from the outside world detach itself from the body. Focus on the calmness and vastness of the universe. This is meditation.

## 216. 失眠

又是一个失眠夜 翻来覆去思不灭  
肚子似乎有些饿 写篇代码看机械

— 27/01/23

**Commentary:** Another night that I cannot fall asleep. As I toss and turn, I am starting to feel hungry. Woke up and continue my coding instead.

## 217. Canopy

Not many can grow a banyan tree  
Mine may be a willow  
Behind littered with seeds and toll  
Ahead lies duties and roll  
We brought ourselves here  
That we do agree  
Sitting under the canopy  
Enjoying our little balcony  
— 14/02/23

**Commentary:** I spent the last 20 years building to what I am/have today. It is like planting a tree. While everyone may plant a different tree (equivalent to the different decisions made and paths taken), it is still your tree (the outcome of your collective decisions and choices). Not everyone ends up with a sturdy tree with large canopy like a banyan tree. And mine may be a flimsy weeping willow, it is nevertheless my own tree. So enjoy whatever canopy it provides while completing whatever duties and responsibilities lie ahead.

## 218. The Tree

On moistened moss pit lies a seed  
It may be a beautiful deed

Of the thousands that scattered  
Perhaps only one has roots gathered  
Some may reach the sky  
Some may wilt and die  
Most will run their average years  
Filled with bouts of laughter and tears

A seed in the ground it sprout  
Forty and four roll in rout  
Nourished by long wavy streams  
Also a boulevard of broken dreams  
One in ten bears fruition  
The journey its own realization  
Perhaps nothing is broken and waste  
Composing to nutritious paste

Yours may be a banyan fig  
While mine may be a mesh of crawling twig  
Nurtured by decisions and cross roads  
Executing each branch of source codes  
Will I have done any differently  
Resulting in disparate consequently  
For the information and options known  
I cannot see myself changing different anchor stone

Each seed may have a different genetics  
Not something easily malleable to kinetics  
I have my unique set of quirk  
Yielding an idiosyncratic framework  
Shuttling between teaching and research  
Yet not wanting the ivory perch  
This shapes my oddly pruned canopy  
It is a somewhat melodious balcony

Twenty years of hard work past  
Another twenty in its forecast  
Now I have reached the tipping point  
Starting the harvest from this joint  
Behind littered with seeds and toll  
Ahead lies uncompleted duties and roll  
So far I have walked this route  
Only to continue along with little doubt

The tree has started to bear some fruits  
Along with delicious vegetable roots  
Each day can finally start with a smile  
And gradually living a little more freestyle  
Doing irrational things once in a while  
Reliving my inner bibliophile  
Maintaining inner peace by meditation  
Drop by drop to becoming an exhilaration

There have been many mistakes made  
And many requiring more than first aid  
There will always be broken branches  
Some fruits ends up as insects' lunches  
All are experiences of life  
Agarwood form from damaging strife  
Everyone has episodes of taint  
For we are far from being saint

Hope the canopy can provide some shelter  
For animals and seedlings against the swelter  
Somehow entrust as eldest and first born  
Over time certainly tired and worn  
I will do what I will with remaining time  
Lemonade with honey and lime  
For I am this tree

Time has come to be carefree  
— 15/03/23

**Commentary:** This poem is an elaboration of the previous poem.

## 219. 细雨佛牙寺

阴雨细细凉风爽 佛牙一趟醒神汤  
一顿素饭一杯茶 盘腿禅音养心安  
— 28/02/23

**Commentary:** Visited 佛牙寺 while it is drizzling. A nice vegetarian meal and a cup of tea. Then proceed to meditate in the meditation hall at level 4 gives me peace.

## 220. Melbourne, Maybe Soon

Thirteen years of disappointment  
Back to my red slash garment  
Left two years back I know  
Yet not realise time has roll  
Felt like I left the day before  
Buildings and scenery endure  
People moved on  
The mix and blend is gone  
Alone in honours and postgraduate room  
Reminder of an empty tomb  
Disappointment set from the start  
Wrong mindset at the very start  
Maybe I will be back soon  
When I reset like in new moon



— 18/03/23

**Commentary:** The last time I was back in Melbourne was 13 years ago for my PhD convocation. Although I had left Melbourne 2 years before, my brain did not register that. Hence, it was a disappointing trip. All the people had gone even though sights remain the same. I sat alone in honours and postgraduate room – the furnitures are the same but the people changed. I had the wrong mindset to begin with. 13 years had past and maybe the sights have changed sufficiently to reset my brain.

## 221. 悼念牛弟弟

Jian Rui (刘建瑞) passed away 2 days ago, 21 March 2023.

每谈家常触感伤，人生多磨难  
三十八年的遭遇，凡事顺心肠  
回想三年在机场，你落泪千行  
那日哭送弟回国，欲后白云观  
今时疫情已舒缓，赴约湖南关  
不料弟弟此时归，轮我泪千行  
五问观音你何在，极乐绿莲台  
又问道祖你去向，弥陀坐前来  
心知弟弟到彼岸，荣登解脱道  
智明欢喜但心痛，走得如此冲  
虽愿结伴游灵山，此愿自私中  
人生多累比解脱，回响佛光颂  
虽然写词泪洒面，我知你笑容  
猪哥哥坚守盟誓，身后极乐逢  
只求刘菩萨入梦，告知我心安

哥哥自己会自顾，弟弟在旁护  
余生之后兄弟两，八宝莲池步  
— 23/03/23

## 222. 换籍

本来光音天，甜汤浊露恋  
处在娑婆如刀钳 一天一世累  
娑婆现五浊，累劫不知措  
蒙的释迦引弥陀 只要信和愿  
八万四千相，遍照法界亮  
一句弘名破无间 此界不留恋  
一念换国籍，下品下垫底  
大轮莲花为我舟 我乃出差已  
— 24/03/23

**Commentary:** Shakyamuni said that humans were from heaven, specifically 光音天; but fell in love with the taste of water in this realm; hence, stuck here. Every day is a pain, tiredness, and dread in this Samsara world. For eons, we have no idea what to do. Luckily, there is Amitabha and through his great vows we are able to be reborn to his world, 极乐世界, after this life. In fact, by the first chant of his name, Amitabha had already changed our nationality to 极乐世界. We have 下品下生 of 观无量寿经 as our confidence. 下品下生 of 观无量寿经 says that even those committed all 5 unforgivable sins (in history, only 1 person ever committed 3 of the 5) and did every evil deeds conceivable, can still be saved by Amitabha and be reborn in 极乐世界 after this life, we have nothing to be worried about. We are definitely not that bad. And who can do every single evil deed conceivable? Hence, my lotus seat will be my

boat. I am already a being of 极乐世界, only out stationed in this Samsara world.

## 223. 牛弟弟三七

今天你三七 我已不哭泣 询问十来便 都说你坐莲  
十三观见你 稳住宝菩提 你我有盟誓 走散不丧志  
红酒冷冰块 畅谈世间怀 脱离此娑婆 宝树金地摩  
来日到我时 你随大势至  
— 10/04/23

**Commentary:** Today is Jian Rui's 21<sup>st</sup> day. I am no longer crying. Over the last 3 weeks, I had asking 阿弥陀佛, 观音, and 道祖 multiple times where Jian Rui is reborn to. There is never a concern except that he had committed suicide. If Amitabha knows everything within millions of eons, how can he not know how we die? If a person that committed every conceivable evil deed, including genocide or mass murder etc, can be reborn into 极乐世界, how can suicide be worse? Yes, suicide cannot be encouraged but it is not a deal-breaker. Hence, all the answers I get is the same – he is in 极乐世界. I also saw him there in my visualizations. I have no doubt that he is in 极乐世界. I will fulfill our promise and see you there when my time is up. When the time comes, you will come with Mahasthamaprapta (大势至) to pick me up.

## 224. 牛弟弟七七

明天是你七七  
随有心酸日子过得去

绿莲绽开 万般霞光  
安坐无量前 我会履盟誓  
待逢来日我归时  
— 07/05/23

**Commentary:** Today is Jian Rui's 49<sup>th</sup> day. I still feel sad but I still have my own responsibilities to fulfill. I know that you are already with Amitabha. Don't worry, I will fulfill my promise and will see you in 极乐世界 in the near future.

## 225. Let It End

Let it end  
Constant in its disgusting bend  
This is the third time  
Autistic wood, quiet off, and this lime  
I have to rest  
From this meaningless test  
For a place that discard gifted books  
It has long rotten in roots  
It is my call for sabbatical  
Refresh myself in bibliographical  
— 08/05/23

**Commentary:** I am really quite tired of MDIS – they messed up my contract again and expected me to accept a revised contract retrospectively after the work is done. This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> time that I may or thought this will end – the first time was when Eugene Koh was around. The second was last year when I finished my biometry class without further contracts. This is the third and I think I'm tired and sick of it. MDIS is a place that threw away (not give away to students) my donated books and I wonder whether they deserve

to be called an educational institution. If this ends, I am fine with it and I'll go for my much needed sabbatical.

Two days later, I did the following:

1. I had a face-to-face meeting with Kavi (manager for lecturer management), also vetter for all contracts issued to associate lecturers.
2. Told Kavi that signed contract should be honoured. And Rebecca (the lady that prepared the contract) should never edit/amend a signed contract under any circumstances. Kavi agrees on the mistakes.
3. I presented 3 options that I have.
  - a. I go to small claims tribunal. That may cost Kavi's and Rebecca's jobs - That is not what I want and we will not go there.
  - b. I can insist that MDIS pay. Kavi will have to explain to finance director; thereby, exposing Rebecca's mistake and her oversight in contract vetting, which may well go into their appraisal (potentially for future sacking). That is not what I wish for and I don't intend to go there.
  - c. I also cannot be the only losing party. Hence, I negotiated for continued honours dissertation supervision for subsequent batches and I will ignore this blunder. I explained that honours dissertation supervision is what I have been, am, and enjoy doing.
4. Kavi agrees to support my continued honours dissertation supervision.
5. On my side, if Kavi fulfills her side of the bargain, good; if not, I just let karma deal with them.

I think this is the best I can do.

## 226. Oneness

Who are we  
Cells within one  
Universal spirit the source of everyone  
Neverending enactment  
The play is never done  
Soul is the tree trunk  
Incarnate personality its tiny chunk  
The source and the oversoul  
Soul and incarnated fragment  
All it is as the entire whole  
— 13/05/23

**Commentary:** Our soul / spirit never incarnates nor reincarnates. Instead, what incarnates is a fragment of the soul which creates temporary existence. Some people call this a personality. Because of Jian Rui's death, I have been thinking a lot. Perhaps as a result of this, I had an interesting dream. I dreamt that I attended a personal sound bath, attended by Christina and Mae (Christina and Mae are 2 of the sound bath practitioners that I know). But the studio is very big, can hardly see the walls and a thin layer of constant mist on the floor. The floor is not wood but of giant agate slabs. What is interesting is that there are many different people coming for personal sound bath, and each tended by a pair of Christina and Mae. So yes, there are many replicates of Christina and Mae. And the studio is so big that each triplet of person coming for sound bath, Christina and Mae are not interfering with others. At the end of the sound bath, a voice said to me, "so you see, all the replicates of Christinas are the same spirit, so are Maes. Similarly, you have different simultaneous incarnates across various worlds but your spirit is perpetual and does not incarnate."

Our spirit is like a tree trunk and the incarnated personality is like branches. There can be many incarnated personalities at the same time, like there are many branches from the trunk. When the incarnation ends, the fragment of the soul returns to the main soul with experiences and lessons learnt. In this case, our soul is synonymous with our higher self. So perhaps there are multiple Christinas and Maes across the multiverse. Then on a larger scale, all the souls are emanations of the source. In the Book of Genesis, God created man in his own image. If we consider God as the source, then each person is an emanation of God. In Mahayana Sublime Treasure King Sutra (大乘庄严宝王经), the following is said about the body of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva (观世音菩萨):

- There is a Gold hair pore, inside which there are innumerable hundreds of thousands of ten thousands of Gandharvas. They do not suffer from transmigration but are always enjoying the supreme bliss.
- There is a Black hair pore, inside which there are innumerable hundreds of thousands of ten thousands of kotis of nayutas of immortals who have supernatural powers. Some of them have one kind of supernatural power; some of them have two, three, four, or five supernatural powers; and some of them have fully the six supernatural powers.
- There is also a Treasure Sublime hair pore, inside which there are innumerable hundreds of thousands of ten thousands of kotis of nayutas of Gandharva women, who have beautiful faces and good and wonderful figures, adorned with various ornaments.
- There is also a hair pore called Sweet Dew Sprinkling. Dwelling inside this hair pore, there are innumerable hundreds of thousands of ten thousands of kotis of nayutas of heavenly people, who have attained the first Bhumi, the second Bhumi, and up to the position of Bodhisattva Mahasattva of the tenth Bhumi.

So what is Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva? Isn't he the universe and the mentioned pores are equivalent to different worlds in the universe? This is consistent with the concept that the dharma body of all buddhas is Vairocana. And since all beings will eventually attain Buddhahood, all beings are emanations of Vairocana, the source.

## 227. 8000 Days

Eight thousand days  
Two hundred thousand hours  
May it be perpetual holidays  
Meadow of sage powers  
Of what cometh I hope to surrender  
Engulfed in life splendor  
A third is what lies ahead  
Weeks and months flew like arrowhead  
— 24/05/23

**Commentary:** I expect my lifespan to be about 66 years old; meaning to say, I have about 8000 days or 200 thousand hours left. What do I want to do? Hopefully, I am enjoying the fruits of my labour thus far and accepting whatever that is to come.

## 228. 不系舟

不系之舟随波浪 逆风倒江累心房  
我欲游河腾九霄 余生大道此土壤  
— 22/05/23

**Commentary:** “不系之舟” comes from Zhuang Zi (庄子) 列御寇, meaning an unfastened boat that is free to float. It is symbolic of



going with the flow. Going against the flow has been too exhausting for me. I decided to just surrender to the flow, to the universe. Maybe it is not doing things much differently but I will not push outcomes. Maybe by doing so, I will reach my destination and still enjoy the scenery. I will meander the river with the flow; and if the winds are right, fly into the vastness of the sky.

## 229. 随游

九重天遥望浮云 山顶星辰看月明  
游江渡洋杖与株 浩瀚宇宙任我行  
— 26/05/23

**Commentary:** This poem has the same theme as the previous one. If I am flying high in sky, I get to enjoy the clouds. Otherwise, I can look up and enjoy the moon and stars. Beads in one hand and a staff in another, the universe is for my travels.

## 230. 书和咖啡

悠悠午后一本书 浓浓烤香咖啡屋  
纵使公务多繁忙 书与咖啡也自处  
— 27/05/23

**Commentary:** Reading a book with a cup of coffee is one of the activities I love.

## 231. Thieves of Happiness

Happiness  
Or its nemesis  
There is no how  
For the source stems deep down  
Controlling every outcome  
Sounds so arrogantly dumb  
Surrender to the flow  
And enjoy the scenery show  
The ego's conceited role  
May the world orbit at our sole  
Be of service to others  
For all are born from mothers  
Envious desires never have enough  
Lock shut within our own handcuff  
Gratitude for differing talent  
Make each of us a unique gallant  
Consume to fill the inner void  
Recognize the inner diamond asteroid  
Comfort invites the dull and bored  
Scattered challenges the mighty sword  
Happiness speak from inner voice  
Happiness is actually your choice  
— 27/05/23

**Commentary:** This poem is my take on “The Five Thieves of Happiness” by John Izzo. I agree with him that happiness is our natural state but is clouded. So what is preventing us from being our natural state? John says that there are 5 thieves; namely, control, conceit, coveting, consumption, and comfort. Firstly, control comes from the control of outcomes, which Stoicism says that outcomes of our actions cannot be controlled by us. We can only control our own emotions. We want rain when it is sunny and want sunny when it rains. The remedy for control is surrender – surrender to

what comes along; surrender to the outcomes. If it rains, then enjoy the cool weather rather than wanting clothes to dry. Secondly, conceit is egoistic pride – being the centre of the storyline or in the limelight. Why do we need to be the centre of the story or even have a story? Why do we even need our own story when my story is part of the stories of the people I touched, positively or negatively? Like in 陋室铭, “苔痕上阶绿, 草色入帘青”; why my house cannot include the nature from outside? Like 随喜 in Buddhism, if you see a person doing good deeds and you are happy for him, this is 随喜. What ends up is that you are contributing into the pool of merits of that person. The remedy for conceit is service to others – you do not need your own story but you are instrumental in the story of others. Thirdly, coveting means envy with desires. There are always greater and lesser people than us, and we are all unique in our gifts. There will be something others can do much better than us and something we can do much better than others. Why do we need to be good at everything? The remedy to coveting is gratitude – be grateful for our own set of uniqueness. Do well and excel in our own domains while dabble in others. I will never win a marathon but that does not preclude me from slow jogs. Fourthly, consumption seems to be filling the void in us. We buy things, we hoard things to fill the emptiness in us. Consumption is the physical manifestation of wanting more – wanting more gifts (coveting), wanting more focus (conceit), and wanting more control. The remedy for consumption is knowing that we are complete in ourselves. We use things rather than letting things use us. The grasses outside are my curtains; the fragrances of flowers are my perfume. 论语 says “君子使物, 不为物使。万物本空, 无法拥有, 即可用不可得” – I can use everything as everything is for my use. Lastly, comfort warns against too comfortable. It steals our happiness by dullness. So its remedy is constant challenges – read something, learn something, experience something.

## 232. Levels of Consciousness

One to one, fool to world  
Seven chakras in upward whorl  
Four elements at the base  
Magician's Torah in fool's grace  
Environmental line draw two thrones  
The past is bones and present is hormones  
Lovers in chariot predicate on self-aware  
Survival demands justice and warfare  
Hermit turns the wheel with strength  
Unity in one at different wavelength  
Surrender for renewal where wisdom lies  
Temperance juggling in alchemize  
Tower of devil shatter and gone  
Back to oneness the great phenomenon  
Moon and sun calling the night of soul  
Gateway to source as we are one whole  
Fool in the world as elements in this  
Fool is the creator for the next cycle of bliss  
— 28/05/23

**Commentary:** Our world has been in the 3<sup>rd</sup> level of consciousness (commonly known as 3D consciousness) and seems to be going to the 4D. An epiphany comes to be and wonder there is correspondences in Tarot since the major arcana has 22 cards. This is my elaboration – every level of consciousness is represented by 3 cards. The 7 levels or dimensions of consciousness is also represented by the 7 chakras, from root to crown. 1D consciousness comes from zero (the Fool) are elements – the 4 elements (heart, sword, wand, and cup) of the Magician and the guiding law represented by Torah held by the High Priestess. 1D consciousness is resonance – the resonance of crystals, for example. 2D consciousness is the interac-

tion with the environment. At this stage, we are talking about plants and most animals, especially non-mammals. Representing 2D is Empress, Emperor, and Hierophant; all representing duality. 3D consciousness is self-awareness and survival. Lovers represent union, cross-roads, and future. Chariot represents balance and choices. Justice represents system and order. In 3D consciousness, it is us versus them; hence, there are conflicts and wars. 4D, which we are going into, is unity – understanding that all are interconnected and inter-related. Every individual has different set of gifts to support mankind, which corresponds to heart chakra. We are first mankind (global citizen) before we are citizens of independent countries before we are employees. So why are we acting as though we are warring companies and warring state in the 3D? This requires the meditation of Hermit to mediate the movement of the Wheel of Fortune. If we come out correctly, there will be renewed Strength. 5D represents complete surrender (Hanged Man) and renewal (Death) – the alchemy of 4D. When we emerge, we will be completely in-tune with nature as represented by Temperance. It will require wisdom of the throat chakra. 6D consciousness is oneness (third-eye chakra) but before that will be the night of the soul (Devil) and the demolition of boundaries (Tower). Stars will emerge. 7D consciousness is the gateway to the source where the tools of duality (Sun and Moon) re-emerged, and the Fool is called / resurrected in Judgement for the next cycle of the World. Basically, the Fool becomes the creator.

### 233. Sage Powers

Empathy works for yourself and others  
All are brothers and all have druthers  
Exploring new fields  
You will never know what unexpected yields

Innovate what we can see  
Having fun and be carefree  
Navigate to and forth uncharted water  
All is safe under the watch of Magna Mater  
Anticipate the saboteurs that activate  
Intercept them before they become great  
Five powers of the sage  
Release from cage we shall engage  
— 29/05/23

**Commentary:** These 5 sage powers (empathize, explore, innovate, navigate, activate) come from a book “Positive Intelligence” by Shirzad Chamine, as a way to keep the saboteurs in check.

## 234. 万众一心

鲲鹏展翅九万里 水厚载舟起  
天地我室楼房衣 玄黄宇宙兮  
四海一家六道生 日月照星辰  
道生一一生二二 齐万物而乐  
— 29/05/23

**Commentary:** In Zhuang Zi (庄子) 逍遥游, kun (鲲) fish becomes peng (鹏) and peng’s wingspan is thousands of miles. When it flies, it has to fly at the height of thousands of miles. Water must be deep enough before it can support a big ship. 刘伶 (one of 竹林七贤) of Western Jin dynasty said “我以天地为栋宇，屋室为裤衣”. Beings within the four seas are family and we are all connected to all beings within the 6 realms of existence as we are all from the same source. When the view is large enough, the entire universe / the entire creation is my playground. Sun, moon, and stars are my toys. “等生死，齐万物” comes from Zhuang Zi’s 齐物论.

## 235. 善恶

善恶不抵消 需以回向调 颗豆生千万 小举招大浩  
— 30/05/23

**Commentary:** Good and bad deeds do not negate each other, as much as assets and liabilities do not negate each other until assets are sold to pay off liabilities. Similar for good and bad deeds, 回向 or parinamana is needed. As a bean can sprout and grow to give thousands of beans, a single innocuous good or bad deed can have devastating effects.

## 236. 晨雨

睡醒天色灰暗 晨雨挥洒坦然 雨伞微凉湿裤 洗净热浪尘烟  
— 01/06/23

**Commentary:** Sight of morning rain.

## 237. 军符

军符调兵遣将 籙乃秘令代码 催动官阶执意 通达天地太虚  
— 01/06/23

**Commentary:** In Taoism, amulets or talisman are basically orders or instructions or spiritual soldiers – orders written in code. The strength of it is dependent on the deity that issues it or the position

of the person issuing it – for example, I as a commoner can write a letter but signed off with seal affixed by a minister on a ministerial letterhead, that letter becomes a letter written by a minister. It also depends on the strength of intention, the willpower of the person. I believe this to be the simulation code of this universe:

```
environmentBag <-- initial bag of environmen-
tal conditions
programBag <-- initial bag of programs

while universe == True:
    for program in programBag
        environmentBag, programBag = \
            program(environmentBag)
```

Every one of us, spiritual beings or humans, is just a program. Some people call it God's algorithm. And everyone of us has the ability to write new codes. In Matrix, the Oracle may be modifying Neo's code using her cookies. So, when I issue an amulet, I am trying to modify an existing code or a variable, or even a new program. In other religions, it can be a prayer, a chant, a mantra, or a ritual. Intention can be both the order and the driving force.

## 238. 美好的一天

晨来迎风自醒 梳洗一口茶饮 平心念佛阅经 或者写字晨运  
平日早午合餐 约朋三两相伴 文玩株串石花 咖啡红酒文化  
午睡阅读工作 冥思太虚着落  
— 02/06/23

**Commentary:** What is a good day? Waking up without alarm clock. Enjoy a cup of tea after washing up. Calm the mind down with meditation, chanting, or reading. Or do some writing or going



for morning exercises. Maybe have brunch by myself, or lunch with a couple of friends. Playing my beads and stones, or enjoying the nature. Have a cup of coffee or wine if so desire. Afternoon can be used for some work, reading, or a nap. Meditate or sit alone or have my own entertainment when night falls. This is my ideal day.

## 239. Shitty Ground

Shit makes a fertile ground  
Where plants grow green and bound  
Trees rooted in fertile soil  
Air plants roll in coil  
Shepherd's tree dug deep  
Deep waters for its upkeep  
Heaps of value in waste manure  
Endure and secure  
-- 06/06/23

**Commentary:** Most people, especially students, don't realize the value of shitty work. Worse still, those academically poor students don't or refuse to realize it. If the student is academically good; yes, they may not need to accept shitty jobs / tasks as they have more choices. But if academically weak student is willing to deal with shitty tasks, he can still build a solid portfolio and move on from there. There is value in shitty tasks but that does not mean do it forever. Instead, accept some shitty projects and do it well to build some portfolio and get off the ground, then leave the topsoil to ferment for others to use. A student that is willing to take up shitty jobs / tasks to build himself up is a rare breed.

## 240. Latte at 10 pm

Late night latte in gentle breeze  
Brings the temperature down a degree  
Strolling along wavering leaves  
In my garden where weary reprieves  
Public library as my book room  
Thousands of books within my zoom  
Fenceless garden stretches beyond  
Free spirit releases from self-bond  
— 10/06/23

**Commentary:** Went to McDonald's to drink a cup of latte at 10pm. There was a breeze as I walk back home, rustling the bougainvillea along the way. It does feel like this is my garden. Do I really need a personal and private garden? Probably not and I do not want to spend the cost to upkeep it as well. I contribute to the society, and this is part of the fruits that I enjoy. It reminded me of Caroline Hu, the HR director when I was still a staff in Singapore Polytechnic. She donated many books to SP library – many books in the inspiration section were gifts from her. And she also used SP library like her own library – I have seen her borrowing her own gifted books to read. I can also see our public libraries as like my own library since there are only so many books that I can read at any one time. So if my private garden is not fenced up, where it ends? My entire estate? The entire country, the entire world, or the entire universe? The desire to own, the desire to fence; is what limits me. By releasing myself from my own fence, I have everything.

## 241. 香蕉麦

黄肉香甜饱满  
温热米麦是小正凯的最爱

大口接着要  
吃到满脸真好笑  
香蕉奶香  
营养不错的甜餐  
— 11/06/23

**Commentary:** Caleb loves to eat cereal with bananas, which is nutritious and delicious.

## 242. 香蕉

黄蒂香蕉美又甜 燕麦单吃好一天  
芬芳营养又饱腹 微微烤焦好甜点  
— 12/06/23

**Commentary:** Not just Caleb, I love bananas as well – be it by itself or in oats and cereals. Banana is both nutritious but also high in calories. Maybe that is why I am still plump. When I was studying in Melbourne, I will have sliced bananas on top of raisin bread and the entire thing grilled, which then gives it caramelized taste.

## 243. Ode to Banana

Berries of herbaceous Musa  
A comb of delicious banana  
As both food and dessert  
Eating it daily it can't hurt

It is the ancient Greeks hate  
Boiled skin and all was how they ate

Luckily we now eat on its own  
Fully ripe as they are grown

Sliced into cereal and oats  
Warm or cold in ethanoate notes  
Sliced on bread with cinnamon dust  
Is a taste you must trust

Blend in milk with assorted berries  
Banana starch thickens as varies  
Add some yogurt to make a smoothie  
Coloured berries shade it groovy

Skinned and battered to oil they go  
Call that goreng pisang you know  
Crunchy coating caramelized softness  
Eaten hot and throat go soreness

Keep it ripe till spotted brown  
Six days to get Cavendish this down  
Is a requirement for banana cake  
Heavenly and moist awaits the bake

Grilled or barbecued or smoked for taste  
On its own or Nutella you will amaze  
A snack a food and a dessert too  
Smoothness all the way to the loo

How can I miss my Swensen's prize  
Banana split holds my childhood high  
Making at home isn't so tough  
Three scoops of ice cream and banana laugh

Such is banana's versatility

Countless ways of edibility  
Many styles shows its compatibility  
Delicious with decent affordability  
— 12/06/23

**Commentary:** Continuing my description for my love of bananas – the many ways of eating bananas.

## 244. Decisions

Decisions, decisions, and more decisions  
Facts of everyday life  
Forked roads and incisions  
A path walked and a path cut with knife  
Looking back  
You wonder if that is the best choice  
History has no backtrack  
Situation at decision is where you rejoice  
Was it the best choice given what you have  
Would you make the same choice given the same situation  
Then it is an optimal decision  
— 14/06/23

**Commentary:** We have decisions to make every day. Quite often, we will look back and wonder if we had made a correct decision. To me, that is redundant and useless – we cannot examine a decision retrospectively, only prospectively as history cannot be backtracked. For me, I ask myself whether the decisions that I made are suitable given the information I had at that moment – new information after the decision cannot be considered because I do not know it at the point of decision. If I am still able to make the

same decision given what I know and what I have at that point in time, then it is a good decision and there is no regret.

## 245. 死灰之木

外境不扰稳深洞 相由心生对面笼  
大地齐物心广阔 游戏人间载虚空  
— 16/06/23

**Commentary:** “心似已灰之木，身如不系之舟。问汝平生功业，黄州惠州儋州。” was what 苏轼 penned for himself. The emotions are unaffected by the world and the body meanders along. 已灰之木 comes from Zhuang Zi (庄子) 齐物论, “形固可以使如槁木，而心固可使如死灰乎” while “不系之舟” comes from Zhuang Zi’s 列御寇. It is basically going into the flow of the universe or fully surrendering to the universe, without affected by what comes along in the ride. Surrendering to the flow. I am not a drop in the ocean; I am the ocean. When I am a drop in the ocean, I am against everything – every creature can be my enemy. When I am the ocean, the cycle of life in the ocean is my metabolism – we are all connected, and we are one. What we see as individuals are like cell in your body thinking that they are still unicellular, or even as molecules in metabolism. I have an interesting insight. One of my China friends, Kings, when for the 玄奘之路 (expedition in the start point of silk road) and I used to have it as one of the places I want to visit in this life. After he did the trip, I tested something out in my meditation. I know this friend quite well and his vibes don't repel me. So in meditation, I can feel his energy and somehow managed to resonate with his expedition. It is like I'm able to copy his energy signature is the best I can put it. Once out of that meditation, it is like I've done the expedition but like more than a decade

ago (digested experience), and now I no longer feel the strong urge to go silk road. It is optional now.

## 246. Overlapping Stars

Some stars overlap  
Touching each other by the earflap  
But this is a mirage  
From the observer's collage  
They seems overlap but really far  
The reality can be so bizarre  
Two persons may walk together  
Flocking of the feather  
Held together by a thin fragile thread  
An obscure touch can make one fled  
May you never need to understand this  
It is all a hit or miss  
Each star is alone bright and might  
Know the nature of overlapping stars and you will be alright  
— 16/06/23

**Commentary:** What we see as constellations or stars that are close together, may be a mirage, a 2-dimensional projection of a 3-dimensional world. Two stars that overlap may be very far away. Similarly, two persons seemingly together may not be together in mind. What holds them together may be very fragile. Quite often, it is just a temporary crossing of paths. Rather than focusing on the crossed paths and agonizing when it is over, know that every star is mighty on its own – so is every person.

## 247. 牛弟弟百日

百日已过，心有灰末。汝姐断联，意不缠绵。雪茹诗涵，愿她安康。红酒涩烈，庚子离别。你坐莲台，无常看开。拂尘扫净，八宝池定。无量座前，胜友证见。每天回向，菩提光亮。愿你道场，我为护航。盟誓盛言，天地共见。路尽来时，登台扶持。吟词触感，泪盈眼眶。你命是苦，三十八路。知你得乐，我也安乐。今虽走散，来日方长。  
— 29/06/23

**Commentary:** Today is Jian Rui's 100<sup>th</sup> day since he committed suicide in March. Till today, I still think about him but I am also gradually letting go. I know that he is already in 极乐世界 though multiple verifications across many days. I can see him in my visualizations and I still chant for him daily hoping that he attain Buddhahood quickly. That is all I can do for now. I wish his daughters, 雪茹 and 诗涵, well. I know that I will see them in 极乐世界 when my day comes.

## 248. 绝魂丹

此生若不登极乐 骨血肉为志咒引  
总生善举为催灵 愿我元神万分折  
— 11/08/23

**Commentary:** I am truly tired of everything. If I cannot make it to 极乐世界 after this lifetime, then may my bones be the will, my blood be the driver, my flesh be the conduit, and the karmic forces of all my merits form into the spell to destroy my spirit and soul. Either I make it to 极乐世界 or no longer exist in this universe, is my prayers.



## 249. 阅秋声赋

七夕扫阅秋声赋 成住坏空自然途  
王侯九等皆为是 何以天地争辉路  
— 22/08/23

**Commentary:** 秋声赋 was written by 欧阳修 (Ouyang Xiu) in 1059 when he was 53 years old. The original classical Chinese text (原文) is

欧阳子方夜读书，闻有声自西南来者，悚然而听之，曰：异哉！初淅沥以萧飒，忽奔腾而砰湃；如波涛夜惊，风雨骤至。其触于物也，鏦鏦铮铮<sup>5</sup>，金铁皆鸣；又如赴敌之兵，衔枚疾走，不闻号令，但闻人马之行声。余谓童子<sup>7</sup>：“此何声也？汝出视之。”童子曰：“星月皎洁，明河在天，四无人声，声在树间。”予曰：“噫嘻，悲哉！此秋声也。胡为而来哉？”

“盖夫秋之为状也，其色惨淡，烟霏云敛；其容清明，天高日晶；其气栗冽，砭人肌骨；其意萧条，山川寂寥。故其为声也，淅淅切切，呼号愤发。丰草绿缛而争茂，佳木葱茏而可悦。草拂之而色变，木遭之而叶脱。其所以摧败零落者，乃其一气之余烈。夫秋，刑官也，于时为阴；又兵象也，于行用金。是谓天地之义气，常以肃杀而为心。天之于物，春生秋实，故其在乐也，商声主西方之音，夷则为七月之律。商，伤也，物既老而悲伤；夷，戮也，物过盛而当杀。”

“嗟夫！草木无情，有时飘零。人为动物，惟物之灵。百忧感其心，万事劳其形，有动于中，必摇其精。而况思其力之所不及，忧其智之所不能，宜其渥然丹者为槁木，黟然黑者为星星。

奈何以非金石之质，欲与草木而争荣？念谁为之戕贼，亦何恨乎秋声！”

童子莫对，垂头而睡。但闻四壁虫声唧唧，如助余之叹息。

The modern Chinese translation (白话译文) is

欧阳先生正在夜里读书，听到有声音从西南方向传来，惊异地注意听取，说：奇怪啊！开始时淅淅沥沥细碎凄凉，忽然间飞驰跳跃响亮宏壮，像惊涛骇浪午夜汹涌，疾风暴雨突然降临；它和别的物体接触时，发出清越的撞击声，如同金属轰鸣。又像奔敌营的士兵，口中衔着枚行进，听不到号令，只听到人和马奔跑的声音。我对书童说：“这是什么声音呢？你出去看一下。”书童回答说：“星星月亮光辉灿烂，银河高高挂在天空，四周寂静无人，声音在树木中间。”我说：“唉，可悲啊！这是秋季的声音呀，为什么就到来了呢？”

“那秋季呈现的状态是：它的色彩单调，烟散云收，凄凉暗淡；它的容貌洁净，天清气爽，阳光灿烂；它的气候酷烈，凉意袭人，深入肌骨；它的意象冷落，山寒水瘦，萧森寂寞。所以它发出的声音，凄凉悲切，愤怒激烈。茂草绿毯子一般争相滋长，树木青翠欲滴令人喜爱，茂草遇到它就枯黄，树木遭逢它就落叶。秋季所以能摧毁茂草，凋零树木，因为是自然界的运化规律。这秋季，是人间罚恶的法官，在四季中属于阴；又是战争的象征，在五行中代表金。属于天地间的刚正之气，经常以严酷暴戾作为本性。自然界对于万物，春季生长秋季结果。所以秋季在音乐中，商声是西方的音符，夷则是七月的乐律。商即悲伤，万物已经衰老就产生悲伤；夷即杀戮，万物过于茂盛就应该杀戮、消减。”

“可叹啊！茂草树木没有感情，在一定的时间仍不免飘飞零落。人是有血肉的动物，一切生物中的灵长。成百种忧虑感触人的内心，成万项事务劳累人的身体，只要内心有所触动，必然扰乱他的精神；而且还要考虑他力量所不能完成的事务，担心他智慧所无法解决的问题。理所当然地会使人鲜细润泽的容颜变得枯瘠苍老，乌黑茂密的须发变得花白稀疏。为什么要用不是金石那样坚固不变的本质，想去和茂草树木争一时之景呢？考虑到究竟是什么原因摧残了人，又何必怨恨这秋季的声音呢！”

书童没有回答，低着头打瞌睡了。只听到四边墙壁外唧唧的虫鸣，好像在附和着我的叹气声。

The only law in this universe is natural law of change and balance - 天地不仁，以万物为刍狗；圣人不仁，以百姓为刍狗。 As much as we want, we cannot change the coming and going of the seasons; neither can we change the wheels of history. We can only go with it, enjoy the benefits, joy, pains and sorrows as they comes. Be in the market and mitigate the risks by strategies like dollar-cost averaging is much better than trying to time the market. Even Qing dynasty resolved all the issues plaguing previous dynasties, it falls flat in the face of industrial revolution and global maritime explorations. As Ouyang Xiu said, we are not plants and stones; yet, we want to bear their burden – of course we will be tired. Even this planet is doomed when our sun becomes a red giant. 成住坏空 is natural creation and destruction – a Mayfly may only live for 24 hours but Bistlecone Pine may live for thousands of years – even then, Bistlecone Pine will not survive our planet’s eventual destruction. It is a matter of just how long. Maybe some relationships are meant to last a lifetime while others for years or months or days – it is just a natural cycle. Whether emperors or commoners, there is no real difference. So, why fight against this law? 尽人事，听天命 - put in appropriate efforts or even the best efforts, then let it go.

## 250. 阅六一居士传

人非巅峰处，我与事物同。千里遥风下，百年骸与霞。  
当年宏伟楼，今在古籍中。日出浓重装，月下衣清凉。  
当年已过往，繁烟随风藏。上山望春景，山下室清净。  
书宝琴棋酒，人生何所求。来时我手空，归时皆放走。

-- 27/08/23

**Commentary:** 六一居士传 was written by 欧阳修 (Ouyang Xiu) in 1046 when he was 40 years old. The original classical Chinese text (原文) is

六一居士初谪滁山，自号醉翁。既老而衰且病，将退休于颍水之上，则又更号六一居士。

客有问曰：“六一，何谓也？”居士曰：“吾家藏书一万卷，集录三代以来金石遗文一千卷，有琴一张，有棋一局，而常置酒一壶。”客曰：“是为五一尔，奈何？”居士曰：“以吾一翁，老于此五物之间，是岂不为六一乎？”客笑曰：“子欲逃名者乎？而屡易其号。此庄生所谓畏影而走乎日中者也；余将见子疾走大喘渴死，而名不得逃也。”居士曰：“吾因知名之不可逃，然亦知夫不必逃也；吾为此名，聊以志吾之乐尔。”客曰：“其乐如何？”居士曰：“吾之乐可胜道哉！方其得意于五物也，泰山在前而不见，疾雷破柱而不惊；虽响九奏于洞庭之野，阅大战于涿鹿之原，未足喻其乐且适也。然常患不得极吾乐于其间者，世事之为吾累者众也。其大者有二焉，轩裳珪组劳吾形于外，忧患思虑劳吾心于内，使吾形不病而已悴，心未老而先衰，尚何暇于五物哉？虽然，吾自乞其身于朝者三

年矣，一日天子惻然哀之，赐其骸骨，使得与此五物偕返于田庐，庶几偿其夙愿焉。此吾之所以志也。”客复笑曰：“子知轩裳珪组之累其形，而不知五物之累其心乎？”居士曰：“不然。累于彼者已劳矣，又多忧；累于此者既佚矣，幸无患。吾其何择哉？”于是与客俱起，握手大笑曰：“置之，区区不足较也。”

已而叹曰：“夫士少而仕，老而休，盖有不待七十者矣。吾素慕之，宜去一也。吾尝用于时矣，而讫无称焉，宜去二也。壮犹如此，今既老且病矣，乃以难强之筋骸，贪过分之荣禄，是将违其素志而自食其言，宜去三也。吾负三宜去，虽无五物，其去宜矣，复何道哉！”

The modern Chinese translation (白话译文) is

六一居士最初被贬谪到滁州山乡时，自己以醉翁为号。年老体弱，又多病，将要辞别官场，到颍水之滨颐养天年，便又改变名号叫六一居士。

有位客人问道：“六一，讲的是什么？”居士说：“我家里藏了书一万卷，收集收录夏商周三代以来金石文字一千卷，有一张琴，有一盘棋，又经常备好酒一壶。”客人说：“这只是五个一，怎么说‘六一’呢？”居士说：“加上我这一个老头，在这五种物品中间老去，这难道不是‘六一’了吗？”客人笑着说：“您大概是想逃避名声的人吧，因而屡次改换名号。这正像庄子所讥讽的那个害怕影子而跑到阳光中去的人；我将会看见您（像那个人一样），迅速奔跑，大口喘气，干渴而死，名声却不能逃脱。”居士说：“我本就知道名声不可以逃脱，也知道我没有必要逃避；我取这个名号，姑且用来记下我的乐趣罢了。”客人说：“你的乐趣怎么样呢？”居士说：“我的

乐趣可以说得尽吗!当自己在这五种物品中得到意趣时，泰山在面前也看不见，迅雷劈破柱子也不惊慌；即使在洞庭湖原野上奏响九韶音乐，在涿鹿大地观看大战役，也不足以形容自己的快乐和舒适。然而常常忧虑不能在这五种物品中尽情享乐，原因是世事给我的拖累太多了。其中大的方面有两件，官车、官服、符信、印绶从外面使我的身体感到劳累，忧患思虑从里面使我的内心感到疲惫，使我没有生病却已经显得憔悴，人没有老，精神却已衰竭，还有什么空闲花在这五种物品上呢？虽然如此，我向朝廷请求告老还乡已有三年了，(如果)某一天天子发出恻隐之心哀怜我，赐还我这把老骨头，让我能够和这五种物品一起回归田园，差不多就有希望实现自己素来的愿望了。这便是我记述我的乐趣的原因。”客人又笑着说：“您知道官车、官服、符信、印绶劳累自己的身体，却不知道这五种物品也会劳累心力吗？”居士说：“不是这样。我被官场拖累，已经劳苦了，又有很多忧愁；被这些物品所吸引，既很安逸，又庆幸没有祸患。我将选择哪方面呢？”于是和客人一同站起来，握着手大笑说：“停止辩论吧，区区小事是不值得比较的。”

辩论之后，居士叹息说：“读书人从年轻时开始做官，到年老时退休，往往是有等不到七十岁就退休的人。我素来羡慕他们，这是我应当离职的第一点理由。我曾经被当朝任用，但最终没有值得称道的政绩，这是应当离职的第二点理由。强壮时尚且如此，现在既老又多病，凭着难以支撑的身体去贪恋过多的职位俸禄，这将会违背自己平素的志愿，自食其言，这是应当离职的第三点理由。我有这三点应当离职的理由，即使没有这五种物品，（我）离职也是应当的，还要再说什么呢！”

In 六一居士传, Ouyang Xiu changed his secondary name (号) from 醉翁 to 六一居士 as he is looking towards retirement. Retirement also means that the peak of career is over. Retirement then is more

of a change in mental state rather than anything. I've seen so many people that holds onto their working titles even in retirement and as a result, unable to retire properly. Ouyang Xiu gave 3 reasons to retire – (a) he admires those that can retire before 70 years old, (b) he has been a courtier but did not consider having made much progress, and (c) he had not done what he aspired when he was young and now, he is old. I can feel the same thing as well. I do want to retire early. I certainly did not achieve that I wanted in career and not much hope in doing so. I did not even do all the degrees that I had wanted to do. I also feel very worn out as well – went through a burnout and is starving off another one. Hence, retirement has been on my mind for the last few years.

Ouyang Xiu said that he has (a) ten thousand volumes of books, (b) a thousand items of historical works, (c) a set of chess, (d) a zither, and (e) a flask of wine. Then he adds himself in, amounting to 6 ones (六一). He puts himself as one of the items rather than owning the items. Long time ago, my mum cut herself badly while washing toilet windows and I asked her the same time – is it that she is washing the toilet or is the toilet washing her? Similarly, I've seen so many people being used by their cars by cleaning and keeping it in tip top condition. Best performance is Pareto Optimality, which is not possible to maintain; while decent performance is Nash Equilibrium, which is maintainable. As we grow older, our bodies cannot be as good and healthy as before – muscles and looks are increasingly difficult to maintain at the best condition. So why bother to be at the best? Just be not too bad. In this world, we do not own anything. We do not even own our bodies. Once we do not own anything, nothing owns us as well. We use what the world provides. We come to this world empty handed. During our lives, we accumulate stuffs and tools. As we are preparing to retire, it is decumulation of stuffs and tools. Again, I find that many people cannot decumulate and ends up suffering. All that we can bring away when we leave this world are memories and experiences.

There are 2 types of fortunes – 鴻福 and 清福. 鴻福 refers to fortunes in the business of life, and may include good food and drinks, dance and music; while 清福 refers fortunes in the simplicity of life, and may include sitting silently, or eating simple meals. Many people know how to enjoy 鴻福 but not 清福, and bothers themselves with things and ends up burdening themselves. I know that I can enjoy my 鴻福 but also hopes that I can enjoy my 清福.



## Epilogue

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Originally, I compiled this anthology for Caleb who may still be too young to understand my poems when I am no longer around. The intention was to write commentaries to help him understand these poems. But as I added more commentaries and re-read some of my old poems and commentaries, I find that I am giving myself the same advice again – things that I had advised others and myself but forgotten about it.

Maurice Ling  
August 31, 2023.

