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*Writing Portfolio, Part 2*

Theme: Miscommunication  
*(can you understand me?)*







## Reflection

This script was created by poring through hundreds of blog posts, personal writings, and abandoned Word documents, then stitching them together in order to create a sort of dialogue. Similar to the autofiction that I write, it is rooted in my real-life thoughts: this text specifically deals with the aftermath of experiencing an act of violence and the resulting unhealthy relationship.

I chose the format of a theatre script to display the internal dialogue that runs through my mind all the time. The characters, representing the mindset of a me at a certain time/date, perform their own soliloquys and argue. There is no strict chronological timeline as the character-dates talk with and over each other, and the back-and-forth nature they discuss certain motifs (such as darkness, destruction, fate) parallel the inconsistency of coping.

The idea behind a theatre script is also similar to how I feel when sharing personal stories. I am unsure how others may receive it, and whether they would shame or encourage me—although both are uncomfortable to me. The listener (or reader, or audience in this case) chooses to interpret what I say however they want, but with a script, they can now also choose how to perform my thoughts. That is also why there is minimal stage direction.

A script is also difficult to digest on paper. The reader has to remember each character and find the differences in voice, as well as decide on the pacing. These extra steps in communication make it easier for misinterpretations to occur, and often, that is how I feel when I try to express myself through words.





Astronomers say they have heard the sound of a black hole singing. And what it is singing, and perhaps has been singing for more than two billion years, they say,

Desire/longing.

Insanity and Law

BEAUTIFUL BLOSSOMS.

红鱼，红枫，

Lidocaine

日日夜夜。

manslaughter

I closed my eyes.

“To kill time,”

(i still dreamed of blood)

长夜漫漫，



偷走了夕陽 黑白了無常

离开

“悔恨”

的

我

比孤魂还孤独，比野鬼更像鬼。

We did not touch each other. We were both leaning over the abyss.

下辈子，别遇见了

再哭一夜 一夜就好

One crosses the border to become a new person. One finishes a manuscript and cuts off the characters. One adopts a language. These are false and forced frameworks, providing illusory freedom, as time provides illusory leniency when we, in anguish, let it pass monotonously. “To kill time,” an English phrase that still chills me: time can be killed but only by frivolous matters and purposeless activities. No one thinks of suicide as a courageous endeavor to kill time.

他不再感到疼痛，

“我说过，我对我所有的决定都不后悔。”

也因此不再惧怕黑暗。

再看一眼 一眼就好

The sun is waiting.

the sinkhole in my heart slowly begins to close

空心的城牆 慌亂了日常

“You are nothing. You must do anything you can to get rid of this nothingness.” We can kill time, but language kills us.

請鑑別姿態美不美



# THE ORIGIN OF FRUIT FLIES

i wasn't gonna say anything  
but yeah every day i go on  
spotify and see u listening to  
it and get more and more  
concerned

The website, however, no longer exists.

I see the daylight.  
I see my life. Your death.  
My life that goes on. Your death that goes on

HAVING LIVED  
FOR 30 YEARS,

I KNOW THAT  
NO MATTER  
HOW  
TERRIFYING OR  
BEAUTIFUL  
A DREAM IS,

IT'S JUST  
A DREAM.

Check out Mindfulness Meditations  
by Shoppers Drug Mart

30 MINUTES OF  
ETHICS AND MORAL  
LATER

staying up until 6am.

i've made a mistake. it's 5am. the sun's going to rise. i don't  
have enough time to say what i want to say before falling  
asleep. let me try:

Maggots everywhere.  
There's no one like you.  
Whenever I look really close at something, it swarms with white larvae.  
Black folding in.  
I open my mouth and I too am full of them, crawling down my throat.

the asscrack of dawn.

19.09.2017 - isolation + existentialism  
19.09.2017 - an act in two parts  
20.09.2017 - non-confrontational  
21.09.2017 - a bit gruesome

*Closing your eyes isn't going to change anything. Nothing's going to  
disappear just because you can't see what's going on. In fact, things will  
even be worse the next time you open your eyes. That's the kind of world  
we live in. Keep your eyes wide open. Only a coward closes his eyes.  
Closing your eyes and plugging up your ears won't make time stand still.*

i dreamt last night that i was looking for something (or someone) in an empty  
wasteland that stretched eternally in all directions.

## Reflection

These three image-poems are the result of months of collecting bits and pieces from various texts ranging from television scripts to song lyrics, news articles to PDFs of novels, and everything in between. Similar to the script in concept, I wanted to create something from smaller pieces, borrowing words and phrases from others and synthesizing them into something readers can then digest and understand as mine. I included snippets from Chinese language sources, which although can be easily translated with apps, are perhaps not meant to be immediately understood.

The images serve as a sort-of segue into the third piece on translation and provide a glimpse into what I consider as my difficulties regarding languages. The first poem draws upon my traumas and insecurities, using small pieces to represent the half-formed thoughts; the second details more my struggles with expressing emotions through both Chinese and English, opting instead for abstract descriptions through these cut screenshots; and the third is entirely in English, showing how I work around those feelings of inadequacy (using humour, obsessively writing and rewriting and cataloguing, etc.).

Again, I attempt to use "poetry" as a blanket term for the disjointed experiments I conduct with thought processes I don't want to make explicit. I do not think I will ever have a firm grasp of what poetry really is, but the format here works well enough to represent yet another way I think. The visuals here are also representative of the emotional subject matter, consisting of my digital drawings and various noise filters layered in between.

In this case, the miscommunication is quite clear: can these borrowed phrases tell you any more than I can myself?

## Translations (L to R, row by row):

p. 8:

红鱼, 红枫 - red fish, red maple.

日日夜夜 - every day, every night.

长夜漫漫 - the night is long.

离开“悔恨”的 我比孤魂还孤独比野鬼更像鬼。 - the me without remorse is lonelier than a ghost, more  
mostrous than a demon,

偷走了夕陽 黑白了無常 - away with the sunrise, no difference between black and white

下辈子, 别遇见了 - in the next life, [i hope we] we don't meet

再哭一夜 一夜就好 - cry another night, just one more night is enough

p. 9:

他不再感到疼痛, 也因此不再惧怕黑暗。 - he no longer feels pain, and thus isn't scared of the dark.

“我说过, 我对我所有的决定都不后悔。” - “i've said before, i've never regretted any of my decisions.”

再看一眼 一眼就好 - just one more look, one more is enough

空心的城牆 慌亂了日常 - an empty city, the chaotic everyday

請鑑別姿態美不美 - please tell me if my posture is beautiful or not



### 3. translation (1)

#### A. 双关语

我的母语不是英语 但是我现在只会用英语说话，写作文，思考。小时候会说的上海话都变成模糊的回忆，像那种想哭但哭不出来的悲感。给家里打电话时我也会说英语— 说话流畅，但同时又觉得空虚。也许现在我只能用英语来想象了。

哦，不对。

说实话，写英文作文也会反反复复的擦除并再次写入相同的字。我不知道这是为什么。可能是应为我有点强迫症，或者自闭症，反正我知道我肯定有病。我看过一篇文章（好像是前年看的）是关于第一代移民家庭的生活。它的内容是关于汉语的保存 以及孩子们表达情感的困难。看了之后我觉得我真的有这种问题。遇到悲伤或焦虑时，我什么也不说，也绝对不告诉我的父母。是我调节自己了吗？我在压抑记忆吗？或者只是我从来没有学会这么用词来形容恐惧和爱？

今年我开始看中文同人小说。理论上我认为如果我知道原作故事会更容易理解情节，因此我慢慢的从只认识2000的字到现在的4000多。这不是很快，我知道。我也不是在认真的学（这是我的阿喀琉斯之踵：我太自豪，不敢承认失败，所以我宁愿半途而废），我甚至没有学会手写汉字。我会写的只是我平常会用的，比如：画，梦，开心，爱，你，蓝，明，我，想，死。可能有点幼稚。我读高中时我的同学通常会说这种话，说什么什么要kms，考试丢一分好想死，明天有两节课要做presentation BRB去跳楼。我10年级的历史老师曾经告诉我们，如果我们真的想自杀，应该在教室外面的走廊上自杀。这样，他就不必处理清理工作和任何警察报告。……我好像有点跑题了。

总而言之 我感觉现在我什么语言都不会说了。更朋友说“i love you guys,” 显得很傻（或许只是我内心觉得傻），更我妈妈说“爱你love you see you later拜拜” 也有点不真诚。是我害羞在说不出“吾想依” 还是我心里有什么抗吗？那篇文章还说，因为我的第一语言不是英语，我首次遇到某些情感时是在我无法使用语言的年龄，但也是刚刚开始听懂的时候。在婴儿阶段 我们是理解爸爸妈妈说的话（当然，是一种非常基本的理解）可是！到了去学校的年纪后，我很快就忘了我最初的语言。曾经很流利，但现在我口吃，使用错误的动词，遗漏了一些字，发音错误。于是我想再学，重新开始。

我看电视剧的时候，以及看同人文的时候，会觉得它们的形容词最贴切，每个场景的描述更容易理解，它们写的感情也更接近我理解的边界。这是我阅读英语文学时很少感受到的亲密感...也许只在诗中？但我总是被告知我的解答不正确。可能我只是文盲。

写这些已经花了我一个多小时。算了吧，我还是继续我的论文写作，可能最多做一些翻译。我没有任何天赋，只有无限的抱怨。

### 3. translation (2)

#### B. double-ambiguity

my first language was shanghaiese, but i've long since lost my grasp on the language. i no longer know how to think or speak in it, and i could never write using chinese characters. what little i knew of the language from my early childhood has now turned into blurry memories, like the feeling when you want to cry but cannot summon the tears. perhaps now i only know how to use english to imagine it.

well, that's not quite it.

to be honest, even when i write in english i repeatedly erase and rewrite the same sentiments. i don't know why. maybe i'm a bit obsessive, or a bit developmentally challenged-whatever it is, there's definitely something wrong with me. i read an article some time ago about first generation immigrant children, focusing on the preservation (or lack of) of their mother language, as well as their difficulties expressing emotion. after reading it, i realized i empathized. when i'm sad, i don't say anything, and would never even consider telling my parents. have i somehow conditioned myself to be this way? am i repressing something? or is it because i've simply never learned the words to describe fear, or love?

this year i start reading chinese fanfiction. in theory, i thought that if i knew the original source content it would be easier to understand the plot. as a result, i slowly went from recognizing 2000 characters to over 4000. i know this isn't that fast, but i haven't been studying diligently (this is my achilles' heel: i'm too proud, too unwilling to admit failure, and so i'd rather half-ass things). i don't even know how to hand-write chinese. the ones i know are oft-used: to draw, dream, happiness, love, you, blue, clear, i, wish, to die. it's a bit childish. in high school, my classmates would say these things often. a mild nuisance? god, i want to kms. missed a point on a test? let me go die. have two presentations tomorrow? brb, jumping off of a building. my tenth grade history teacher told us that if we really wanted to commit suicide, to do it in the hallway. that way, he wouldn't have deal with clean-up or any police reports. ...but i digress.

in general, i feel like i can no longer speak any language. saying “i love you guys” to my friends feels shallow (perhaps it's just my self-defeating inner voice), and saying “love you, see you later” to my mom over the phone doesn't feel genuine either. is it because i'm embarrassed and cannot say “i miss you” or is there some blockade in my heart? that article also said, because my first language was chinese, that was the language i was accustomed to when i first began to understand emotions and conceptualize them. as babies, we are able to understand the words of our parents (albeit a very simple understanding), but! as soon as i hit school-age, i quickly began to forget that first language. i used to be fluent, and now i stutter, using the wrong verbs, missing some words, pronouncing things wrong entirely. i suppose that's why i decided to re-learn. to start over.

when i watch chine television shows, and when i read fanfiction, i feel that their adjectives fit more accurately, the descriptions of each scene are easier to understand, and the feelings are closer to the borders of my understanding. it's an intimacy i rarely feel when i read english literature... or perhaps only in poetry? though i am often told that my interpretations are wrong. maybe i'm just illiterate.

writing this has already taken me over an hour. whatever, i should stick to writing essays, or at most some translations. i have no talent, only infinite complaints.

## *Reflection*

This translation piece reads simply in both languages and appears much more straightforward than the other texts. However, it was also extremely difficult to write. I decided to write in Chinese first, and then translate that into English. The problem was, I had never written anything in Chinese before. Translating that back into English was hard, too. I had forced myself to think in Chinese during the writing, so having to reread and try to understand my own writing was strange. I ultimately decided to try to write, in English, the same thoughts as the Chinese text, without doing a direct translation.

Problems in translations occur often, especially when people argue about preserving the original diction versus localization. I tend to sit on the side of tasteful localization, since (at least with regards to popular media) understanding the content is more important than, say, the usage of a specific idiom that requires extensive historical context to understand. For this work, I decided to abandon all of that and create a purposefully unfaithful translation.

The content of the texts directly explains my struggles with languages, and after going on tangents and thinly veiled metaphors, ends with no real conclusion or epiphany, as if admitting failure. This also represents my attempts at communicating with my family, who use mainly Chinese to communicate. Due to reasons such as pride, embarrassment, and fear, I either speak in English or remain silent, and that lack of communication leads in turn to a breakdown in relationships. I cannot communicate effectively without words, after all.

The visuals represent the murkiness I often feel when writing, and the blue water background calls back to the first text, when 1120 speaks of the ocean and finding a place to call home.