

大 山 與 人

driving lantau: whisper of an island

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Foreword: I used to live narrowly

Yau Ching

Was it 1988, or '89? Reasons unknown. Does one ever know how one leaves one place and gets to another and stays on and why. You get looked upon as a passerby and get looked upon and you stay on and you experience typhoons and sheer heat waves and things come and go. The land and you merge with each other; cutting apart is no longer possible, not to mention the remembrance of any reasons whatsoever.

Norman with his big head tugs and pulls between his suit and its sleeve. I would build a flying ship only for passers-by. To show you how an early modern European train station could merge with a contemporary London SOHO. How fun. Even the largest in the world. This island is indeed Legco-like compared to his head and his most standard language. An ocean which used to be as blue as his shirt. We are particularly fond of people like him who specialize in doing things which they wouldn't do at home. How unique you are, he says.

If you come from elsewhere—chances are, you do come from elsewhere—in 1988 or '89, nobody thought there would be such a big ship on such a small island. You fly between, a small gap between two buildings, sweeping across someone's living room with a two seater and an oversize TV—your big wings were not as big as you thought after all; you landed in one piece on the narrowest runway possible. There is no need for you to ponder upon the fact that almost everybody on this island, in fact on many islands, go through this narrowness everyday. A process called thriving... cutting corners... survival. So-called new world is where all corners are cut and what's left behind. To say "brave" is to comfort the self who's cut and left behind. Do you speak English—the most common language which comes and goes but is always left behind?

Milk tea in foam cup in the hands of R, Loy Ho's daughter. The two-storey boat sweeps across the soapy coastline. This is no longer the big ship in 1988 or '89 where one could cruise babes on three sides with a different sunset on every corner. Now that airport is the largest and Disney the smallest. That ship gets faster too to veil how space shrinks. Cecile comes over to ask where the telescope from the secondary school ends up in her most common Cantonese. Chan Kwok Chan replies that looking far is too dangerous but that swirling staircase he might have seen at Stanley's or Auntie Four's home; how they've always collected trash, or throwaways you know. This island collects throwaways, the only way to witness survival. Witnessing is a way to survive, if you don't fall off from the top of stairs that is. You might then see the horse-faced Bikini-clad girl milking sign on top of Store Tokyo. But not falling from such height is impossible.

Somehow one lives as if one's free here, in the narrowest sense of the word. Does living as narrowly as possible maintain the possibility of freedom? Some countries would shamelessly put down freedom and free will as something someone born with in black and white so that someone can become Ah Choi/Ted

Ted who calls the country home. Someone who chooses to become Ah Choi/Ted Ted serving more masters than one thinks that he is free. The rise and fall of every island needs many Ah Chois/Ted Teds. Ah Choi/Ted Ted is the most common form of survival known. Impossible not to be Ah Choi/Ted Ted here, but one shakes and sweats and sticks out one's tongue and bulges one's eyes, and curses and turns deaf and procrastinates and hisses once in a while besides wagging one's tail—all these nobody knows but Ah Choi/Ted Ted. Maintaining the lowest profile tugging between left and right, sitting on fence, watching soldiers and guerillas go by. Witnessing the ship of fools, sailing and thriving free.

Does Lo Ting the ancestor believe in free will too? Chan's not sure. R screams, staring at LT's big tail turning over in milk tea. But on this island where one is not too used to the presence of government, one doesn't take screaming very literally. R looks between Chan and Loy, hoping with their warrior hearts, they would rescue LT from her post-species-massacre survival history. But LT knows not speech; only her scales shine.

LT can only be seen by R anyways. Chan stares at R staring at milk tea and its mouth of ocean, pondering when they need to put this new generation on another ship on its way to the institute or the monastery or the big temple and the like. Yet Loy seems as cool as the Lantau Post in her hands.

When everybody reckons that this ship might crash anytime, everything suddenly turns black and smoky. It is Lo in her usual gossipy character and black outfit and finally to be printed manuscript resurfacing. Through this book, a formerly remote island with its many long-forgotten and therefore freer creatures of variable species including Ah Choi/Ted Ted, and Chair E-C at Anthony and Lo's ex-home who has enjoyed butts of all sizes, finally speak and survive.

There goes its foreword, as narrowly as possible.

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