

Shirley Geok-lin Lim

On the ferry to Macau

Across the bow's indistinct dark
horizon, increasing lumpy clay
thickens brown beach, green bark,
stone, pebble.

Gray in the bay
is salt, land-sighted, sandy
encoded ancestral DNA.
Today, neither fisher nor refugee,
we are borne on turbojets' spray
buffeting wake of cruisers, lighters,
tugs. Dreams of islands jostle, sway
on all sides barely above water,
bearing stray Nanyang farers.

Convent Lessons

Old nun of a piano teacher
rapped my wayward fingers
with a fierce-some wooden ruler,
stopped the music one hot afternoon.

Giddy young art teacher,
smiling, knuckled my head,
dammed my flowing colors to red-
eyed teary smeary trickles.

Bible Studies teacher
stood me on a high stool,
chalk in mouth and drip-drool
on blouse. Pushed me out the room
to stand all day, children watching,
obedient. She turned my eyes
away from her ruled lies,
white on blackboard. *Listen!*

The bad child who
pinched when I cried, taught me
by the class door: *Turn! See
your Muses, Poetry and Justice.*

National University of Singapore morning run

Brave mossies and sun. Circle the field.
Busses whirl by perimeters.
Run of cars. Unseen commuters
set off for long labor hours.
White gulls drop by, feed on grubs
in greensward. Another pastoral
subs for distant managers.
Make bucolic what lurks
regulated regular. Verdant
field mimics the mind-field
synergy, just like equator sweat-
smells soak this city-slick campus.