



Tiferet

LITERATURE, ART, & THE CREATIVE SPIRIT

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“COMPLEMENTARITY” and “WAIT”

by Cyril Wong

COMPLEMENTARITY

A monk told me about how Niels Bohr used Hokusai's *One Hundred Views of Mount Fuji* to explain the notion of complementarity. *The different lights ... that only together did they give the full and impressive picture*, the physicist was reported as saying, all angles adding to the fullness of perspective. An electron not just a particle but also a wave; the men we were not distinct from the men we are – the reality complex, the knowledge no less erotic, the truth non-finite and momentous. We are the same. We are different, with saggier middles and deeper lines. We are the ever-changing. If repulsion sets in, this becomes a symptom



of a limited imagination. Think about it:
the body not an accretion of atoms
but a long wave connecting with more
waves to form an ocean, a flickering
orgy of unbounded energy. No longer I
but we are more than a sum of lives,
the banalities of dying. All light
to all dark. All breath and exhalation.
We are touching. We are moving apart.
We are a part of each other. Or we die
and are reborn as one another: the truth
so unprofound we forget it wholeheartedly.
We fall and rise. In the bigger picture,
the movement so unspectacular,
language becomes unnecessary
when love is no longer duality and time
disappears between a laugh and a final moan.

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WAIT

The wait does end. The wait for his pardon on the morning he wakes him with another man's name. The wait for a fight to slow and brake at a red light. The wait for rain to finish combing the streets so they can cross over and go home. The wait for the couple in the next car to stop looking in to see if it is a man or woman whose head is on his shoulder. The wait for the wind of trauma to stop blowing, for their lives to be still again. The wait for the future to settle into the forms they do or do not intend. The wait for the boy to stop cruising the older man at the sink, so he could wash his hands and check his reflection in the glass. The wait for a moth—handsome and broad as an open hand—to fly out the window, even as a part of him wished that it would stay. The wait for each whistle of breath between the lover's snores, sounding off like a firework in a distant corner of the neighbourhood. The wait for a prayer to come true. The wait for any dream of his death to end, for the credits to roll, for the following dream where he ran so fast across a field of time he forgot where, when, who or whether he was. The wait for any doubt about each other to darken and fall off a tree of their embrace like autumn leaves. The wait for any picture his mind has sewn together to split, for reality's edges to spike right through. The wait for the face in the mirror to become not just a face but a doorway to truth. The wait for the dying to stop and for the living to start again. The wait for the effects of fever, numbness, fatigue—his lover's head in his hands as joy drains away. The wait for surrender, revival, bonelessness, then for withdrawal again. The wait for music to knock on the mind, for the mind to let music in, peace to follow eventually. The wait for the wheels of an old emotion to turn again, until what he felt becomes what he felt or what he used to feel and would never feel again. The wait for that deejay to shut up, so a new song would play, a song he actually liked. The wait for peace to turn stale, when complacency is what it has become. The wait for the ending that hangs in the air without a parachute. The wait for that shattering upon impact, so they might move in to pick among the pieces, salvaging what is glittering and whole, standing paralysed around the things they cannot save.



CYRIL WONG has been called a confessional poet, according to *The Oxford Companion to Modern Poetry*, based on "the brutally candid sexuality in his poetry, along with a barely submerged anxiety over the fragility of human connection and a relentless self-querying". He is the Singapore Literature Prize-winning author of poetry collections such as *Unmarked Treasure*, *Tilting Our Plates to Catch the Light*, *The Dictator's Eyebrow* and *After You*. He has also published *Ten Things My Father Never Taught Me* and *Other Stories* and a novel, *The Last Lesson of Mrs de Souza*. Cyril has served as a mentor under the Creative Arts Programme and the Mentor Access Project, as well as a judge for the Golden Point Awards in Singapore. A past recipient of the National Arts Council's Young Artist Award for Literature, he completed his doctoral degree in English Literature at the National University of Singapore in 2012. His poems have been anthologised in *Language for a New Century: Contemporary Poetry from the Middle East, Asia and Beyond* (W. W. Norton 2008) and *Chinese Erotic Poems* (Everyman's Library 2007).