



# Poetry

Group 4

# Silkwork's Requiem

*Chinese International School, Li, Adele – 16*

*Legend has it that the Yellow Emperor lived through several dynasties before he transcended to the heavens, escorted by a phoenix and a kirin. But before he was the hero we know, he was a boy in love. It is rumoured that his first wife, Léi zǔ, was the true inventor of sericulture and silk; villagers insist that they saw her, in the shadows of a mulberry tree one afternoon, catch a falling silkworm cocoon in her tea-cup, which the heat of the Sun unravelled into silk, as if by magic. The two married as teenagers, and shared a delicate sort of love that ended tragically upon Léi zǔ's early death. Every night, the villagers would see the Emperor walking through the necropolis, laying hand-written poems over her tomb, listening intently to the night's crooning as if hoping to hear a human voice.*

*In the moments before he rises from man to God,  
he writes to her one last time.*

*Léi ěr,*

I have not slept since the night you left. Sleep spites me mercifully;  
it is in the shore that separates wake from slumber that I feel your  
presence most; in a sea so vague, I might pretend you are hiding in a  
cove, skirts gathered in your arms, waiting. But I've lived in perpetual  
expectancy, and now I must forget you, moult our memories away in  
the same way a phoenix husks itself into resurrection.

You have consumed me, and I cannot go before I tell you  
how I have remembered you in the centuries past,  
how history has told your story.

It is daytime now, and I am sitting under the mulberry tree you  
so loved. Let my shadow be yours for a second, let it be that you're  
next to me, a porcelain cup of tea in your hand. This is a story you  
know. You must remember it – the cocoon falls into your cup, the  
silkworm, fat and dazed, it's white cloud of a tail.

The world stops  
spinning and the cicadas fall silent in their hidden chambers, the  
wind a whisper. *Liven the larva, pulp the pulpa, cull the cocoon into  
silk, it murmurs. Feed thread through spindles and wheels, plunge  
fabric in dye. Then, rinse. Repeat.*

It was enchanting, the way you led your troops, those nimble-fingered  
girls with dreams to reap. I admit I did a poor job at masking the shame  
that I could barely say the same for my men. You pulled them into the  
orbit of your spool, doomed them to a life of spinning, swirling...  
and you slipped away like silk. Oh how I wanted to stop the wheel,  
quiet the wind, lure the moon out of its cycle; but, alas, I haven't  
the same command over the world as you.

And then, you found me. Or did I find you? I can't remember.  
It was the day of the Qixi Festival, and the elders had been  
pestering me all day.

*It's the day of love and reunion, they cooed, step out,  
come with us. The women outside are praying to Zhi nü, the men  
to Niú láng – come, let us help you cross the heavenly river. The  
magpies have built a bridge just for you.*

We travelled south, through *Jīn nán* and *Chéng dū*, ended up  
in *Kūn míng*, some village with nothing but a pagoda and a  
little man in dusty red *cháng pǎo*: a fortune teller.  
My palms said I was bound to forget you. The tea-leaves said I'd find  
someone new. So this was the other side of the river, then:  
a life of never knowing how it might feel to grow old with you.

But then the sun caught a glinting... thing. Something bright,  
prismatic. A tapestry! No, not just any tapestry... a *kè sī*!  
On the wall, a silk landscape, unmissable... a reminder of *you*.

And just like that; so clearly could I see the spinning wheels,  
the girls on stools, spools of silk retching out colors, fibres,  
hours, days, labour burgeoning itself into *creation* under  
your instruction; the white of your skin, the red of your  
blood, spun together, inextricable, holding each other with  
the desperation of an old man and his single last memory.

There you were, in the river's breath; waters rippling in envy  
at your eternalization. You, an unanticipated nomad racing it  
to the edge of the word, coursing through the bloodlines of history.

From that day on, *Léi ěr*, I saw you everywhere I went.  
I could barely walk through the palace without seeing  
you from the corner of my eye, in the *yuán líng páo*  
boasting their drooping sleeves, in the *shàn zi* of the  
bashful dancer. I commanded that ribbons be draped over  
the chariot, woven into the saddle, and whenever the steeds  
trotted through the village, peasants and men in lonely  
outposts looked on in longing, the few little cowry shells  
jostling around in their bone-grey sacks, wishing to touch,  
to feel, those fabrics of your blood and skin.

A millennium later and silk has replaced cowry shells,  
each length worth a thousand: a symbol of the nobleman's  
largesse. I dare not say that your girls have outdone you,  
but the threads get finer and finer, hundreds of thousands  
of strands tightly packed into the length of a silkworm's  
crawl. Books, papers, shoes of silk. Did you know that  
would happen, that day under the tree?

*Léi ěr*, China alone was not large enough to contain you. The  
yellow-haired rulers were fascinated by silk, and, I must say,  
terribly conspicuous with their espionage, their hawk-eyes and  
thieving hands. They took you to Byzantium, Persia, India. Egypt,  
Greece, Rome, places you never knew and yet places you dwell,  
planted the mulberry seeds and coaxed the worms into coition.

The Goddess of sericulture, they call you now. Goddess!  
*Léi ěr*, did you ever foresee that?

Two millenniums later and there is a snake that trails its way  
from the East to the West, *Cháng' ān* to Constantinople, carrying  
men and camels on its back, slithering through the marshes to the  
men with empty baskets waiting on the other side. They call it the  
*Silk Road*, and round and round it goes, on land and sea,  
a carousel for your creation. It outlives every animal, watches us

through amber eyes, the rise and fall of kingdoms, for a thousand years.

And when the snake stopped, thrashed itself to death, China  
could only bear your absence for so long: four millenniums  
later and your road is our way to industrial success, co-operation  
among nations; *One Belt One Road*, they call it.

So, the yellow and black-haired  
children could press their stub-noses into store windows,  
peer at the silk dresses on the mannequins, and think of you,  
silkworms, and spinning wheels, of which they learned about  
from their mothers before bedtime, over a thimble of camomile  
or jasmine tea. For you have been pressed in storybooks like  
the mulberry's leaves, *Léi ěr*. Your name, kept forever in print.

Sometimes I can't help but question the futility of it all:  
the worms falling into the hole's they'd eaten, the graves they'd  
dug, speaking in tufts of spun silk, little bodies spent. To hibernate,  
siphon all its energy, just to plunder through those white walls, fly  
off in pursuit of a warm leaf to die on, harrow its eggs with the same  
life of falling and spinning and lying fallow; silk:  
the only evidence of its life.

*Egg, silkworm, cocoon, pupa, moth*, the wind whispers,  
before carrying away those limp bodies. *Liven the larva, pulp the  
pupa, cull the cocoon into silk*, it murmurs. *Feed thread through  
spindles and wheels, plunge fabric in dye*. You know the rest.

So, is this what it means to be the inventor?  
To recognise the brevity of life,  
to immortalise oneself in the invention?  
To be the girl on the stool  
to keep the wheel spinning?  
To be the silkworm,  
for the sake of the silk?

If life starts as a worm, a wiggly thing,  
then it ends with the silks you dye, the dresses you sew.  
Starts again when the dress, moth-eaten, falls apart,  
ends with the *qí páo* we laid you to rest in.

The silkworm dies, but the silk persists.  
And *love*... love is everything life leaves behind.

Do not be sad that I am leaving, my dear,  
for there is still so much to be said.

– *Xuān yuán*

# Ephemeral Monuments

*Chinese International School, Fei, Yawen Jodie – 16*

*On turtle shells,  
amongst the stars,  
written are tales of  
China's inventions  
– ephemeral monuments.*

## I. Illumination

A moment,  
sparkling, lighting up skies,  
putting the gleam  
in gleaming eyes,  
unfadingly inspirational yet a fading sight,  
planting a flickering flame  
that could, one day, become a roaring blaze.

Tales were told,  
of carving knives,  
and specks of charcoal,  
of looms, needles, and fiber and string.  
And more tales were told,  
of ideas or ambitions,  
of lucid fantasies that were made into realities, driven by the same stubbornness,  
the same persistence,  
a will to make dreams come true.

Devotion from centuries ago remains, crafting dreams, illuminating dreams.

## II. Momentum

There once was a man, an inventor.  
(His name, *Cai Lun*.)  
When moments were to be remembered,  
words were written on paper,  
instead of dense bamboo sticks.  
Letter after letter, word after word,  
scrawled across surfaces as black ink leaves the brush, leaving stories  
to be eroded by time.

There once was another man, another inventor. (His name, *forgotten*.)  
Moved bone inscriptions on turtle shells,  
and handwritten copies of literature,  
to identical letters embodied in miniature wooden blocks, reenactments, verbalized, simple  
moments.  
There once was another  
and another,  
and another...

Until there is now,  
another,  
and another,  
and another...

### III. Purloin

Claimed,  
by another artisan,  
of a different culture  
to belong to a mismatched background,  
but with a story,  
hidden away, underneath disseminating lies.

Taken,  
as prizes of war,  
by a country elsewhere  
to cold, impassive showcases,  
waiting to be viewed by glazed-over eyes.

A pyrrhic victory,  
for whomever wrongly possesses their so-called trophies, as these emblems,  
of culture, of history, of creativity,  
are taken back in people's hearts  
to where it truly belongs  
yet remaining where they are  
to eventually  
return.

### IV. Legend Says...

Some are carrying – or trying to carry –  
a legacy of devotion on their shoulders  
as they move forward,  
burdened with trust,  
while attentive eyes pry at them,  
*(hidden in the dark)*  
to stop them from writing new tales,  
tales of innovation.

Some are on a journey – or wandering amongst lost thoughts – to step out of old, longstanding tracks  
into a new light, to make new footprints.  
One at a time, they mark new steps,  
following a compass of previous triumphs and they step down with a weight,  
not of the sky, but of tales that their children could tell, tales of a future to recover.

Some are blamed – or wrongly accused – showered with hypocritical claims,  
that hinders them like a blurring veil  
but they light it up  
*red, blue, a splendid purple*  
and like phoenixes

that rise from ashes  
stories soar, higher than the flames,  
to become tales,  
tales of success and successors.

*standing*  
*on the cusp of tomorrow,*  
*you look ahead, afar*  
*to see a horizon built,*  
*by tradition, innovation,*  
*and the devotion*  
*of many, and many more*  
*in the tales of*  
*China's inventions*  
*– ephemeral monuments.*

# Five Thousand Years

*ESF West Island School, O Mara, Alexandra – 17*

Cast into fire, dragon bones set ablaze,  
mortal impurities burned to smoky haze,  
careful hands stroked the symbols engraved,  
and now stoke the hearth that eats it all away.  
Cracks, a tapestry of the stars is made,  
familiar shapes emerge as the embers fade,  
a crossing of lines, a crossing of fates  
sculpting the image of a universe that now awaits.  
The beginning unfolds as the people turn to proclaim,  
look now, how the universe spells its name!

Spinning cocoons, steamed and threaded,  
sent down roads many feet treaded,  
barbarians lie waiting out of sight,  
caravans huddle closer, tight.  
Merchants sell, but cannot possess  
the Great Weaver's secret, kept close to her chest,  
oh, but western monks come armed with lies,  
they stare at weavers with their prying eyes.  
Silk is knowledge, inky imprints of scholars long gone  
Silk is prosperity, nobles garbed like graceful swans  
Silk is culture, music sweetly uniting the Empire  
Silk is the king across the earth's perverse desire.  
Mulberry, eggs, leave concealed within a gentleman cane,  
and so was the end of China's silk reign.

Roaring dragons awake from slumber,  
driven by a shaking thunder  
splitting earth, gives rise to disaster,  
pearls of knowledge direct aid faster.  
Hungry frogs with gaping maws,  
hear the quakes from cracked earth's jaws.  
Splendid carvings in bronze and gold  
can't hide the tragedy the seismograph told.

Solitary monks play with forces unknown,  
they labour for their emperor, alone.  
The chosen son the world above has blessed  
longs for the one thing he does not possess.  
Immortality is what the emperor requires,  
and the alchemists will deliver him phoenix fire.  
Powder, black as the northern sky  
strays close to where a timid fire lies,  
blazing powder, erupts to bring,  
scorching, blindness, suffering.  
It seems destruction is all these ashes can incite,  
so send them up to join the inky darkness of the night.  
Perhaps later they will be used to inflict pain,  
but now they only spark marvel, wonder at the burning rain.

Cloud ladders extended to the sky,  
reaching for the realm where the heavens lie,



then fall back to the raging battlefield below,  
skewering the walls that shield their foe.  
Spoken or bound, legends unite fact with myth,  
tales of battles for succession serve as monoliths,  
some inventions are made only for the mind,  
to masquerade the fickleness that plagues humankind.  
Still, the mandate of heaven will be eternally passed,  
for the good intent of dynasties will never last.

Up and down five thousand years  
yet the end of conflict never nears  
why must this kingdom, so very grand,  
be locked in eternal fight for the land?  
Perhaps like the Phoenix, the everlasting beast,  
she must reinvent herself to renew the peace.  
Though from long battles her body may ache,  
her heart ignites, like the flames she will awake.  
China once again rises to spread her wings,  
the heavens will listen when they hear her sing.

Every poem must end, yet it is hard to stop!  
Earth extends to the sky, can we ever reach the top?  
the rivers run, a babe's hair grows long  
life continues, spring flowers awake to birdsong  
like the Great Wall that lays across this vast land  
these progressions were crafted by thousands of hands  
and still the future is something that we can mould  
as the stages of civilization continue to unfold  
from stone to steel, from sky to space  
new tales will arise as humanity continues its race  
because the tale of inventions are the story of man  
empires rise and fall but the people will still stand.  
I could've begun this story anytime, start, middle, end  
I could've listed everything, but you've no time to spend  
as I behold the modern Ancient, I bring this to a stall,  
I see invention is less of a leap, more of a steadfast crawl.

# Echoes of the Dragon

*St. Paul's Convent School, Ip, Natasha – 16*

Along the yellow river sparkled a neolithic civilization  
Adventitiously embarking on the advent of its adventures  
Exquisite was the pottery that swirled under the summer vision  
Burgeoning like the paddy field that limned arcadian shelters  
Wellwater trickled into scarlet lacquerware without cessation.  
Silk metamorphised into clothes in the cornucopia of sericulture  
China took its first stride in effervescent elation Into a momentuous moment that bifuricates past and future  
Human existentialism sublimes into the essence of Hanzhi  
Condensing into the cascade of a hundred schools of thoughts  
Iron swords, spears, sabres forayed from blast furnaces  
Ebbing and flowing at the peripheries of the warring states  
Acupuncture assuaged pain and nescience  
The four inventions were markers of the fledgling's innovation  
Paper and printing weaved and weathered information  
Compasses shone a vision through delusion and elusion  
Gunpowder lit up the discordant nation  
The high speed rail accelerated time into the 21st century  
Ceaselessly streams of innovation rippled  
As social media sensations waned and waxed  
As startups buoyant in a sea of competition  
As universities where research exploded into acclaim  
The nascent civilisation blooms into a superpower  
The story hence comes to a halt  
As the present dissolves into the future  
Possibilities await in every second passed  
Fusion reactors, genetic engineering, artificial superintelligence  
All disappear into the singularity of imagination aplenty

# Chin–novators: A Vision of Pasts, Presents, and Futures Boundless

*St. Paul's Convent School, Yip, Sum Yue Cecilia – 16*

Early dynasties' gifts spread far and wide  
In thoughts that shaped our modern worlds inside  
Long past Zhou's age of legends galore  
Through Shang's bold days of bronze cast lore  
The humble compass' secret of north's guiding light  
Paved landscapes' trails for travellers out of sight

Through Han's imperial ink renown did fly  
On mulberry sheets thin wisdom sailed the sky  
Light borne on fibres fine without delay  
Brought learning to all lands both near and away  
Bold Tang's inventions lit the skies afire  
Progress' roots through means both bold and dire

Song's presses innovation spread afar  
Tales and wisdom flowing free sans dearth and scar  
Woodblock pages opened serene scenes astream  
Wisdoms freely shared through efforts' gleaming dream  
Heroes of yore left legacies immense  
Where innovation's branches broad commence

Now visions take modern flight so free  
As seeds nascent futures' magic we see  
Currents' powers high highways afloat  
Vehicles roam charged without load's bloat  
Towers reach heavenward on missions so bold  
Freights and travellers upwards their goals unfold

Within labs life's codes grow new each day  
Forms crafted lucid from patterns' array  
Save health when grim death calls near  
New cures from death shall souls redeem and steer  
Skies may elevators soon come to know  
Reach moon and stars where life and wonder show

Solar wings energy's beams may trap  
Explore untamed lands with leisure's welcoming nap  
Twist distances as space and time entwine  
Where galaxies future visions define  
Through epochs ideas bloomed strong and sure  
Visionaries' paths for pioneers' cure

Heritage's gifts past genius honours still  
Push unknown realms that wonders unveil and fill  
As springs of progress flow renewed each tide  
Thinkers lesser hailed shine in views worldwide  
Blossoms creativity on fancies' feathered toes  
Humanity ascends sweet science's surge shows

Forever the call of progress rings out strong  
Each deed lifting futures in gladsome song  
Potential untapped still their vigils keep

As wisdom's light glows deep and skies leap  
Through pioneers' weaving, glories resound  
Inspire all peoples the whole world around

Creative Writing  
**Poetry**  
Group 5



# Whispers of Ingenuity: Epochs Entwined

*Macau Pui Ching Middle School, Lam, Kam Him – 17*

In the ancient dynasties' subtle glow,  
Through scrolls of silk, and time's slow flow,  
Chinese inventors, in their prime,  
Crafted wonders, ahead of time.

In the forge of thought, they cast,  
Ideas that centuries would outlast.  
Gunpowder's whisper, compass true,  
Paper's rustle, printing's debut.

Their hands wove the timeless tale,  
Of innovation, beyond the pale.  
Porcelain sky, silk road's embrace,  
Crafting history, with delicate grace.

Yet, in the dreams of today's bright dawn,  
Lies the future, yet unborn.  
Innovations that dance in digital streams,  
Gadgets and wonders, beyond our dreams.

Quantum leaps in the fabric of space,  
AI companions, with a human face.  
Clean energy painting skies so clear,  
Biotech secrets, life's frontiers to peer.

From past's deep wells to future's high flight,  
Inventors' minds, a beacon of light.  
In every era, their visions soar,  
Crafting tomorrow, forevermore.