



Urgent Announcement: The Revolution is Going Viral

Written by Marylyn Tan

Dated 30 Nov 2020

This poem was first published in *A Luxury We Must Afford* (2016, eds. Christine Chia, Joshua Ip, Cheryl Julia Lee, pub. Math Paper Press):

Urgent Announcement: The Revolution is Going Viral

I've been thinking a lot about
being banished from the garden of eden
for breaking the rules

and how angels' swords these days
flame mostly with online threats
from behind seven proxies.

on the day they give out hardware in god's factory
make sure you get the older versions
where they still make the hearts

out of flammable material.
make sure *airtight* is only an abstract concept
because god knows

you need oxygen to burn.
if we start lining our eyes with black and yellow
like fire exits maybe we can convince ourselves

we have a way out
when all we have right now
are umbrella movements

and gosh darn twitter.
because after all the side we're fighting on
is always on the right

1. Marilyn Tan

24 November 2020 at 5:21:18 PM

In light of COVID-19, Black Lives Matter and the growing sentiment that things must change irrevocably, this poem seems to sit at a strange apex of transformation and real revolution, which is honestly something I thought of as a distant, dim possibility, especially in Singapore, in the process of writing this, which is where the facetiousness comes through

FEATURES / TRACK CHANGES

2 / 5

of the hashtag.
we're never sure if we want to be more
hydrant or hydra.

because you know
the astronomers will say that revolution
only brings us back to where we began, that is,

orbiting a burning mass
of gases to stay alive.

molotov cocktails are prohibited in public
from 10.30pm—7am
because if the revolution is going to happen in any case

we will probably promote it
in the interests of tourism.
(then liberal western countries will see

that singaporeans can be
outspoken and daring also.)

the revolution will not just be televised.
the revolution will be state-sanctioned and
declared a national holiday

sponsored by singtel
splashed across instagram campaigns
to win h&m vouchers

the revolution will be streamed on live broadcast

(channel 5 and 8,
both english
and mandarin
subtitles)

- 1 Annotated and revised for Track Changes from June to November 2020, this is the poem:

2. Marylyn Tan

24 November 2020 at 4:52:03 PM

Title change: from present continuous tense to simple present tense to make it read more like a revelation than a passive narration

3. Marylyn Tan

24 November 2020 at 5:00:59 PM

Several edits here:

– adapting the work to the page: this was originally a spoken word piece committed wholesale to publication. In print, I tend to enjoy verse that's denser, more clusterfucked and rife with images. You can't really do that in a spoken word piece because it's a little harder to reread a line in that situation.

– tone adjusted towards being more assertive, more brash, less hand-holding the reader through the references

– eliminating words that don't do heavy lifting – attempting towards word economy without awkward turn of phrase or clunkiness

– trying to be more deliberate with stanza and line breaks—these also denote meaning of their own—so the lines don't read so flabby (really the same thing as eliminating words that don't do heavy lifting; striving for word economy and considered choice in every decision to let in more rather than less meaning, whether aesthetic or semantic, e.g. 'angels' vs. 'faceless messenger of god')

4. Marylyn Tan

24 November 2020 at 5:01:47 PM

Most of the edits I made for the subsequent stanzas were based on musicality and word economy as well:

– 'make sure you get' vs. 'elbow yourself into' as more evocative an action—putting in the embodiment into the poem

– 'an abstract concept' vs. 'abstract' as a notion, because it can be understood the same way

5. Marylyn Tan

24 November 2020 at 5:02:51 PM

As a rule, I try to make the images more arresting and compact on the page. See: previously 'if we start lining our eyes with black and yellow like fire exits' vs. 'our fire-exit eyes lined black and yellow', the latter of which may also work in performance poetry—it's decisions towards concision at this point.

6. Marylyn Tan

24 November 2020 at 5:07:15 PM

Some lines just don't make sense to me any more, like what 'gosh darn twitter' means, or 'hydrant or hydra'. Maybe I left them in to sound flippant and catchy? They are irrelevant now, so I have removed them to avoid my cringing at them. I've updated

FEATURES / TRACK CHANGES

3 / 5

2 Urgent Announcement: The Revolution Goes Viral

the first banishing
from the garden of eden
was for flouting the rules

3 a sword, heavy-handed in the carpal grip of self-righteous faceless messenger of god

flaming mostly with threats
behind seven proxies

4 the day they give out hardware in god's factory elbow yourself into the older versions where the hearts are still made of flammable material make sure 'airtight' is only abstract

god knows
you need oxygen to burn
our fire-exit eyes lined black and yellow
convincing ourselves
of a way out

5 when all we have is often just movement thru movement raising gofundme fatigue petition awareness infographic resources anger pdf educate yourself like share 6 the side we're fighting on always on the right

of the hashtag
notify me more
stay hydrated
in the allocated space
for protest one convenient
centrally located park only
for singaporeans and PRs

them with things that sound less dated, more timeless, but still current, I hope. Edited for relevance, at any rate.

7. Marylyn Tan

24 November 2020 at 5:08:02 PM

At the time of this writing, Jolovan Wham has just been prosecuted/persecuted for being an 'assembly of one' standing outside a court of justice with a 'sign bearing a crudely-drawn smiley face'. I thought to immortalise the absurdity of the way protest is seen and suppressed in Singapore with the way the concept of 'revolution' is lauded and romanticised.

8. Marylyn Tan

24 November 2020 at 5:09:10 PM

Taking advantage of the way text on the page is a visual medium, I utilise spacing on the page to signify breath and pacing within the poem, instead of reading these items quickfire on-stage. I've also taken the liberty of using more complex language that folds in on itself and is more of a mouthful because people are able to spend more time with words in print, rather than in a live performance.

9. Marylyn Tan

24 November 2020 at 5:09:35 PM

I make more specific references that, in my mind, showcase inequalities and double standards inherent in the sociopolitical sphere in which we operate. These include Preeti's video, calling out an incident of brownface in advertising, and MP Josephine Teo's (mis-)handling of migrant workers in dormitories in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

FEATURES / TRACK CHANGES

4 / 5

if you believe them
they will say revolution
brings us only
back to where we began,
that is,

orbiting a burning mass
of gases to stay alive

7

prohibited in public
are molotov cocktails
from 10.30pm-7am
public assemblies of one
holding smiley faces
at any time

we say demonstrating
without permit
and mean it

prohibited in P*FMA
are

8

facts cosplaying as opinions masquerading as falsehoods threatening
to tear the fragile fabric of distended social
engineering apart

yes
the revolution begins
not with the rap video you
filed a police report about
but

9

a solution to migrant overcrowding that
doesn't involve empathy
a leisurely pandemic walkabout
vigilantes drunk-
pissing power

10. Marylyn Tan

24 November 2020 at 5:10:07 PM

Again, choices for word economy, as well as authenticity — 'chinese' rather than the more technically correct 'mandarin' as it's a more culturally recognised term in local parlance. I elect to add the word 'subtitles' for the ending as it's more accurate to national programmes and broadcasting.

FEATURES / **TRACK CHANGES**

5 / 5

the revolution will not just be televised
the revolution will be state-sanctioned
declared a national holiday

sponsored by singtel
boosted on instagram
campaigns
the revolution will
be broadcast live
with english
and chinese
and malay
and tamil
subtitles

10