Empire
By Jonathan Huang

I.

I looked in the face of Death 
and it was McDonald's. 
That perfect autopsy of 
wilted lettuce in the double-
cheese between my teeth shows nothing 
of the Styrofoam taxidermy 
or monosaturated fat injections 
for hollow chicken nuggets in rigor mortis. 
What eulogies are written 
on the grease stains of this 
drooping, paper wrapper 
in this last meal?

II.

Motorcycle Man 
plays cat-and-mouse 
on his speedometer, racing 
down the neon streets in Saigon: 
the place where there are no 
yellow bricked roads or 
gold pavement, only 
the bright double arches. 
Why not? he laughs 
Let us eat and drink, a prophet once said, 
Who cares if we live or die? 
For tomorrow, we die.

III.

Distant families only gather 
at deaths and funerals, 
like feathery birds circling 
over roadside carrion 
waiting to descend. 
Sometimes we bring more 
than we can carry on. 
I'd rather pale, naked potato strips 
plunge into boiling peanut oil 
and fry. To die:

There's life, somewhere 
on the other side.