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: