

Embracing the Angel: Reading Shirley Geok-lin Lim's Hong Kong Poetry with Hannah Arendt's *The Human Condition*

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I am daily impressed by the strength of democratic ideals displayed by Hong Kong citizens, among the most resilient of city people, who exhibit through their habitual attachments to family and community what it means to be a people. This is what I have learned from living among them, and I am grateful for the lesson.

— Shirley Geok-lin Lim, *Mall Ballads*

I believe in freedom for Hong Kong. I believe in freedom for everyone.

— Joshua Wong, “Joshua: Teenager vs. Superpower”

Introduction

To begin with, I will share two personal experiences. In August 2000, I paid a research visit to the University of Hong Kong. In the main library, I tried to seek help from a work-study student about making photocopies. To my surprise, the student, a local Hong Konger, did not speak Mandarin and as I, a native Taiwanese, did not speak Cantonese, we two Chinese ended up communicating in English. Later, in October 2014, I had a stopover in Hong Kong on my way to a conference in Mainland China. During my short stay, I made time to visit the site where the protestors driving the Umbrella Movement (sometimes also known as the Umbrella Revolution or the Occupation Movement) were gathered. Knowing that the Occupation Movement was a momentous political event already drawing international attention, I thought it

would be easy to find the location. After getting off the subway train at the Admiralty stop and before exiting to the street, I asked for direction from commuters to find the right exit. First, I approached a woman in uniform, a government official working at the subway station. On hearing my question, she waved me off and said she had no idea about the protests. Next, I tried one who looked like an office employee. To my surprise, he gave me the same answer. Baffled, I then asked a high school student. He gave me a look as if I had asked a dumb question: “Just up there,” he said matter-of-factly. I took his advice and exited the station and saw rows and rows of umbrellas on Harcourt Road. It was then that the power of authoritarian control over Hong Kong people suddenly dawned on me.

These incidents enlightened me on the two contesting forces Hong Kong has to bear; firstly, the colonial strain from British rule between 1842 and 1997, and secondly, the postcolonial stress from the Chinese regime after the 1997 handover. In 2014, the Umbrella Movement was considered as historically the largest civil disobedience campaign in Hong Kong. It grew as a series of prodemocracy street protests initiated and organized by college and high school students venting their discontent with the tyrannous conditions imposed on Hong Kong by China. The movement was fueled by anger against Hong Kong’s “fake democracy” and demanded the government annul a decision on Hong Kong’s electoral system which was widely viewed as China’s authoritarian measure to pre-screen the candidates for the selection of Hong Kong’s Chief Executive.¹ At the beginning of the campaign, the police tried to disperse the protesters with tear gas and the protesters defended themselves with umbrellas, thus giving the movement its popular name. Although the movement did not succeed in changing this detested electoral process, it successfully radicalized the hitherto unconcerned youngsters to prioritize and strive for a freer political environment in Hong Kong.²

In 2013, Malaysian American writer Shirley Geok-lin Lim was in Hong Kong as a Distinguished Visiting Professor in the English Department at the City University of Hong Kong. To memorialize the Umbrella Movement, she published a collection of poetry, *Embracing the Angel*, in 2014. Her collection echoes Hannah Arendt’s classic *The Human Condition* (1958), which was revered “as a textbook of participatory democracy” about the civil disobedience campaigns during the student movements of the 1960s.³ This essay aims at linking Arendt’s theorizing of political action to the poems in Shirley Lim’s *Embracing the Angel* to reflect on the human condition of the Hong Kong people’s civil disobedience campaigns in 2014 and on the ethics of social responsibility of literature in the world today as seen enacted in Lim’s poems.

Shirley Lim’s Affiliations with Hong Kong

A creative writer and research professor at the University of California, Santa Barbara, Shirley Lim has so far two major affiliations with Hong Kong. In July 1999, she accepted an invitation to become the Chair of the Department of English at the University of

Hong Kong; although she left the position after two years, she served as Honorary Professor there for a few more years. During this sojourn, Lim not only wrote poetry but also encouraged and advised students to write poetry. In 2000, under Lim's guidance, students from her creative writing course published an independent international journal of creative writing, *Yuan Yang*. As the editors of this journal, Tina Wong and Sarah Langsay, explain, "[o]riginating in Hong Kong, a mixture of coffee and tea, *yuan yang* [the Cantonese term for this hybrid beverage] seems to speak of this city, its blend of old and new, progress and tradition, east and west and most of all, what we have in this journal."⁴ Obviously, the journal takes its initiative with consideration to the unique historical and political contexts of Hong Kong, entertaining both the local and the colonial imprints on the city. In addition, from 2000 to 2001 Lim began offering poetry-writing classes to Hong Kong children between the ages of nine and fourteen, and eventually published a collection of their poems, *Moving Poetry*, in 2001.⁵ Lim also published her first poetry collection about Hong Kong, *A Gathering of Poems from Pok Fu Lam: A Moment of Understanding*, in 2002.⁶

Then, starting from January 2013, Lim accepted appointments as Distinguished Visiting Professor to teach in the English Department at the City University of Hong Kong. During this time, Lim began an extant departmental student-run literary magazine, *Halfway Home*.⁷ She also published two collections of poetry, *Mall Ballads: Hong Kong Festival Walk Poems* in 2013 and *Embracing the Angel: Hong Kong Poems* in 2014, the former depicting the vigorous everyday life of Hong Kong citizens and the latter the fervent activism of Hong Kong youngsters in their street protests for a democratic Hong Kong.

Embracing the Angel

Embracing the Angel is a collection of poems focusing on the experiences of Hong Kong's secondary and university students who launched the Umbrella Movement, which lasted from September 26 to December 15, 2014, under the overarching trope of "Embracing the Angel" of freedom. The Umbrella Movement was described by Chinese propaganda as a "riot," the same term that the PRC government used to describe the Tiananmen Protests in 1989, and many political scholars have expressed concern for Hong Kong and its democratic future because of this foreboding parallel. As Johannes Chan says: "[A]t this stage, there is little cause for optimism [about the success of this struggle]."⁸ Similarly, Laikwan Pang observes: "After the Umbrella Movement, Hong Kong society became more restless, generational gaps and chasms between China and Hong Kong became wider, and political concession became more impossible."⁹ However, Shirley Lim has presented a different viewpoint in *Embracing the Angel* which includes twenty poems composed by the poet in two months, between October 1st when the PRC National Day was observed in Hong Kong, and the end of November in 2014 when bailiffs and police began enforcement of clearing the tents and barriers set up by the protesters. As a Chinese descendant growing up in

British Malaya, an immigrant to the US, and a sojourner in Hong Kong, Lim has a heart for the students and the movement. In her preface to the volume, Lim states: “For a mother, teacher and poet, these two months crowded with the stories and images of her students peacefully engaged in civil disobedience were an anxious, prideful, exhausting and exhilarating time.”¹⁰

In reading *Embracing the Angel* along with Hannah Arendt’s *The Human Condition*, we find the text more than merely a collection of poetry; it is also a “space of appearance” that manifests Lim’s political beliefs. Arendt asserts that all political actions require a “space of appearance” for their realization, and action and speech together can “create a space between the participants which can find its proper location almost anywhere and anytime.”¹¹ As Arendt explains, “[t]he space of appearance comes into being wherever men are together in the manner of speech and action, and therefore predates and precedes all formal constitution of the public realm and the various forms of government, that is, the various forms in which the public realm can be organized” (199). Similar to the students who occupied the protesting sites as the “space of appearance” for announcing their democratic ideal, Lim’s poetry is her “space of appearance” to echo and offer support for the movement. What follows is an analysis of the twenty poems in *Embracing the Angel*, examining how they serve as “a space of appearance” to decolonize and democratize Hong Kong.

In the Shadow of Postcolonial Rule

Embracing the Angel is about protests, manifesting and attesting to the Hong Kong youngsters’ apprehension over the political and environmental circumstances that have weakened the original, agreed-upon “one country, two systems” governance of Hong Kong. The first poem, “National Day,” is less about the celebration of the PRC’s birthday and more an outcry against the polluted air and water in Hong Kong: “the skies pant and faint, / the seas choke on rich red and green / blooms, and the salmon lose / their way home.”¹² As a result of such depredations, activist students are “costumed in plastic / and masked, hiding in plain sight / from the gas their uncles and aunties / have thrown at them” (4). Complaints about a sick environment serve as the ignition point enflaming civilian discontent with sick politics. Very soon, the image of students in masks to protect themselves from polluted air is associated with students masked against the poisonous gas from the police during the protest rallies, as we see in “Our People’s Wish”: “One country, two systems. This dream pursues / the dragon now, with tear gas, plastic cuffs.”¹³ Both the air pollution and the tear gas indict the Hong Kong government’s mismanagement of the city as habitus and habitation.

The conflict between civilians and riot police reached its culmination when the Hong Kong government issued an order to clear the occupied sites of the protest on November 25 and 26. The poem, “The Puzzle,” dated November 26 and featuring “batons, tear gas, blood, tears” contemplates the evolution of the symbolic meaning of “umbrella” in this historical event.¹⁴ Originally used to defend against the police use

of pepper spray on protesters, umbrellas became the signature symbol of this political movement. As the umbrellas at the protest sites form the image of a multicolored jigsaw puzzle, the Umbrella Movement is read by Lim as young people's "working on / the jigsaw of freedom" (22). These efforts at first seem futile: "The children turn the pieces over / and over, and yet the blues and yellows, / red and white and black will not fit, no matter / how they squint and the timer ticks toward / the end game" (22). The "puzzle" connotes not only the patchwork image of the umbrellas but also the students' puzzlement and frustration in their pursuit of freedom. Moreover, they encounter governmental violence, as suggested in the image, "edges violently un-matching" (22). Nevertheless, the poem closes to redeem the event with a new perspective by working out the puzzle, "one people, yet interlocking," re-instilling hope in the movement in its expectation that the city people will interlock, cooperate and engage with each other to fight for the future of Hong Kong (22).

Striving for Freedom

The target of the Umbrella Movement was not simply the Hong Kong government but something larger. Several poems in *Embracing the Angel* criticize the "poisonous love" generated through Chinese tradition and hierarchy. "The Children's Movement" describes how parental care may be oppressive and harmful for the psychological growth of the children: "In all your years / you've obeyed father and mother, / pushing your questions down, each day / deeper, into a dungeon of your making."¹⁵ The dogma established through this parental supremacy is "obedience" operating as "love, / love obedience" (5). However, "the lights from thousands / of smartphones, an intelligence / of injustice" (5) that the student protestors deploy demonstrate a determination to advance their own "intelligence," claiming independent thinking and "changing the equations that regulated the universe" (6). By reversing the equation/dogma set by their parents/ancestors/leaders, these children eventually announce a different principle: "love is disobedience, disobedience love" (6).

Similar tension is seen in a poem's examination of school education. During the Umbrella Movement, there was a class boycott campaign, but students voluntarily set up study corners on the occupied streets to keep up with the scheduled classes. In "Your Exercise Books," the students ruminate on the study of the Chinese classic *The Book of Changes*.¹⁶ The students, "bowing before the years / of obedience," inquire, "What are a few days in a student's years, / reciting lines assigned, bowing hungry / before the test pages passing like stale sushi / circling endless in a nightmare counter? ... What are these few days / in the children's exercise books / blotted thick with the tears of this learning?" (10). The challenge to institutional education which features obsolescence and alienation (like the stale sushi) has been presented strategically in the fashion of questions, so as to avoid direct confrontation with the Hong Kong older generation and education superiors. Besides, the reference to *The Book of Changes* inspires the reader to a reevaluation of time. The time span of a few days that the

students spend at the protest sites is both trivialized and magnified in this poem. On one hand, a few days are not a big deal, especially compared to the rest of the allotted time students spend in school receiving crammed education; on the other hand, the few days of protest could be significant and historical if the brief time were spent on learning how to create a more liberal and open-minded Hong Kong through the movement.

One major issue on the agenda of the Umbrella Movement is the call for freedom of speech. However, the prospect for establishing this human right in Hong Kong is dim. In “Betrayal: The Unspeakable,” censorship is reiterated as the poem’s theme: “Why will who speak? Why will who not speak? / Who, when, how, what, why speak? / Who, when, how, what, why not speak? / Speak! Not Speak!”¹⁷ Dramatizing a babbling series of Chinese Pidgin English questions not only focalizes the scene on how a Hong Kong subject would be interrogated, chastised, or even criminalized for any “incorrect” speech, but it also emphasizes the dominant image of an autocratic government and its coercive control over people’s speech.

The government is compared to a monitoring machine in “The Streets,” policing people’s behaviors and enforcing an “obedience / of the machine.”¹⁸ Lim explains why young people are compelled to protest; they are the ones who must bear the outcome of the adults’ unjust political policies. In “The Bill,” what awaits the students is a future shadowed with political and economic pressures: “Manhood owes / debts the studious children / have not yet mastered, / and sly time has arrived / with its shocking bill: life / and a taxing future.”¹⁹ Throughout *Embracing the Angel*, the students who dedicate themselves to the Umbrella Movement are depicted as “children,” a word which suggests that these youngsters, no matter how passionate and idealistic, are still deferential to the supervision and authority of their parents, school, and government. Nevertheless, protesting students are also depicted as fighters. In “The Blood of the Children,” the students are martyrs with the power to vindicate and redeem Hong Kong: “The blood of the children will poison the food of the powerful. / ... / The blood of the children will stain honor. / The blood of the children will smear the mirror of the nation. / The blood of the children will be the ink recording memory as history. / The blood of the children martyrs the people.”²⁰ These conflicting images of students as both powerless children and powerful warriors demonstrate their ardent commitment to the pursuit of freedom as well as their vulnerability while contending with oppressive national hegemony.

Seeing a future hurrying near behind their back and demanding a dear price for them to pay, the students cannot remain passive. In “Beware the Children,” we see how the Umbrella Movement motivates the students and how they seem to grow up overnight: “Less hope, the mild children turn wild / together with the city and its things. / ... / Waiting is the poisoner, / ... / The waiting children grow inches / by the month. Their voices roughen, / their bodies cannot obey the laws / of waiting.”²¹ Physical growth metonymically insinuates the intellectual and mental maturation of the students; the children will soon be in charge and seize control of the city: “Beware the

hopeless, dreamless generation, / who'll stalk the city when grown, waiting done" (24). This is a desperate but powerful claim, announcing the will to stay hopeful with their dream.

Transforming History into Literature

But how to realize the ideal, to bring hopes and dreams back to Hong Kong? The answer, according to Lim, lies in the power of transforming history into literature. In "The Blood of the Children," in addition to presenting the student protesters as "martyrs" for Hong Kong's freedom, the poet also asserts that the blood of these protesters would "be an elixir for the hidden," with the secret power to prolong the life of "the children martyrs" (7). In "Hong Kong in Black," the poet spells out the various meanings of the color black.²² The poem begins with portraying black as an ominous color shrouding Hong Kong during the Umbrella Movement; it is like "funereal grief," "drop-dead fatigue," or the "garment bags / bearing canisters, batons, bullets, / the BS of violence" (9) used to attack the protesters. But in later stanzas, with the strength and enlightenment gained from the movement, black becomes the color of awakening and rebirth: "you're Hong Kong born-again, / knowing finally who you are, / subject, not subordinate slain, / nothing's been lost. And I now awake / am also risen to the beauty of black" (9). Through the movement, black becomes the color that helps to construct the identity and pride of the Hong Kong people.

As protesters of the Umbrella Movement carried black or yellow umbrellas and wore yellow ribbons to identify themselves, black and yellow were the revered colors of this movement. In "Black and Yellow," the poet claims the redeeming power of black and yellow: "Like black armbands / on mourners, / mourning the city / drowning in the Yellow River. / Like black resisting / the stains of history, / wearing its badge / of true gold."²³ By canonizing the color black, the Umbrella Movement has transformed death to life, and changed the pursuit of democracy from being a "riot" to an honorable deed.

How to generate the power of transformation? The answer, as the poet reveals, lies in recording the movement's history in literature. The message is clearly manifested in the poem "Teach the Free Man How to Praise."²⁴ "Teach the free man how to praise" is actually the last line of W. H. Auden's elegiac poem, "In Memory of W. B. Yeats" (1940).²⁵ Both Auden's "In Memory of W. B. Yeats" and Lim's "Teach the Free Man How to Praise" are about the consequences of confinement and frustration on ordinary people's lives, and both poems sing of freedom achieved by poetry. In "In Memory of W. B. Yeats," Auden asserts that W. B. Yeats, although dead, can continue living through his poetry: "In the deserts of the heart / Let the healing fountain start, / In the prison of his days / Teach the free man how to praise."²⁶ In "Teach the Free Man How to Praise," Lim has the faith that Hong Kong people, though unsuccessful in their efforts to attain democratic rights, can let poetry help them survive and remain

hopeful: “today’s poems / to color / the blank fabric / we fly / tomorrow.”²⁷ The last poem in the collection, “The City in Fragments,” provides a silver lining for this chaotic and traumatized city.²⁸ The Hong Kong government ultimately issued an order at the end of November to clear up all the umbrella camps on the streets and expel the protesters. The streets, which used to be occupied by the students and their tents, are now, in Lim’s description, filled with poems recording the history of this movement: “The occupied streets shape couplets / in a city of many poems”; even though the umbrellas and tents are no longer there, these “multi-colored homes / have been drawn into history books” (25). “The City in Fragments” is the concluding poem, signifying not an ending but a development. Firstly, it liberates Hong Kong’s struggle for self-determination from the limitation of time: “Freedom is unknown to clocks” (26). Secondly, it celebrates the maturation of the children after the movement: “rising / from the road’s unforgiving measure / of their growing up” (26). Thirdly, it assures an education via critical thinking: “believing unbelief” (26). And fourthly, it promises continuation of the movement with the power and support from the literature and history the movement has generated: “life / moving on, their poetry safe in books, / changing the one unrevised history / to ordinary stories when children fledge free” (26). The vision in view is to transform the unrevised, autocratic, dictatorial practices of Hong Kong politics into the ordinary, natural, democratic politics for all Hong Kong people.

Embracing the Angel as a Space of Appearance

At the very beginning of *The Human Condition*, Arendt offers her endorsement for an “active life” rather than a “contemplative life,” and discloses the three activities that an active life has in the human condition: labor, work and action.²⁹ Arendt asserts that “action” means to take an initiative, to begin, to lead, to set something in motion, and eventually to rule.³⁰ She believes that each action is “divided into two parts, the beginning made by a single person and the achievement in which many join by ‘bearing’ and ‘finishing’ the enterprise, by seeing it through” (189). In Hong Kong’s Umbrella Movement, college students were the initiators and leaders in the struggle for Hong Kong’s freedom; they took the initiative and led Hong Kong citizens to reject the “fake democracy” of their election system. Hong Kong people used to be stereotyped as the “silent majority,” indifferent to politics and submissive to the ruling authority in order to concentrate only on lucrative business. But through action and speech, the protesters of the Umbrella Movement succeeded in demonstrating their distinct identity as “Hongkongers.” “Hongkonger” is a new word added to *The Oxford English Dictionary* in March 2014, referring to “a native or inhabitant of Hong Kong.”³¹ Seeing the relationship between inclusion of this word and the Umbrella Movement, Edward Wong and Alan Wong suggest: “The spark of the Umbrella Revolution is political: Demonstrators want Beijing to grant Hong Kongers a free and direct election of the Chief Executive in 2017. But the passions that have driven people into the streets

are rooted in the desire to preserve a distinct identity from China—in areas like rule of law, freedom of speech and of the press, financial infrastructure, anticorruption institutions, education, Cantonese language and Western influence.”³² As Arendt says, “In acting and speaking, men show who they are, reveal actively their unique personal identities and thus make their appearance in the human world.”³³ Furthermore, Arendt celebrates the importance of “plurality”: “Plurality is the condition of human action because we are all the same, that is, human, in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives, or will live” (8). In Arendt’s thesis, any obstacle that would phase out plurality, creativity, and individuality should be overcome. In the Umbrella Movement, what the government intends to annihilate is the people’s voices and viewpoints; in other words, plurality. Arendt notes that, historically, only slaves and barbarians are deprived of speech, as they are not allowed to lead a meaningful life through voicing a speech with sense (27): “whoever entered the political realm had first to be ready to risk his life, and too great a love for life of obstructed freedom, was a sure sign of slavishness” (36). When the Hong Kong authorities used tear gas and rubber bullets to repress Hong Kongers’ aspirations for democracy, they violated the “one country, two systems” commitment and abolished the condition of Hong Kong people as democratic subjects.

By recording the Umbrella Movement in poetry, Shirley Lim makes herself a storyteller narrating the civil disobedience campaign and shows confidence in literature to provide a vision of hope for Hong Kong people. In her portrayal, young people (the children), because of their defiant grit and vigorous vitality, have emerged as the precursors and leaders of a future Hong Kong. Arendt affirms that the storyteller’s mission is to make a hero’s life complete by turning the heroic action into stories: “Even Achilles, it is true, remains dependent upon the storyteller, poet, or historian, without whom everything he did remains futile” (194). Iris Berger elaborates on the role of the storyteller: “Arendt’s proposal to think political action, actualized by the insertion of stories that disrupt hegemonic processes and reveal new possibilities of being and acting in the world, expands our imagination of what educational leadership might be and what it might do. ... Leadership, in other words, has to do with opening a space for newness and who-ness to come into the world.”³⁴ As Lim pens in her poetry collection, the “child leaders” will be the redeemers of colonial and postcolonial dominance over Hong Kong, the initiators for constructing a new Hong Kong identity, and the leaders for building a free and democratic homeland.³⁵

Lim’s poetry interrogates the stereotype of academia as an unrealistic and unreachable ivory tower, since *Embracing the Angel* enacts a space of appearance to vividly highlight political engagements and democratic merits. However, no matter how inspirational this “space of appearance” may be, Arendt warns us against entertaining a romantic and idealistic expectation of it because it does not guarantee that such a space can be permanently constructed. As Arendt has realistically observed, the peculiarity of the space of appearance is that “unlike the spaces which are the work of our hands, it does not survive the actuality of the movement which

brought it into being, but disappears not only with the dispersal of men—as in the case of great catastrophes when the body politic of a people is destroyed—but with the disappearance or arrest of the activists themselves. Wherever people gather together, it is potentially there, but only potentially, not necessarily and not forever.”³⁶ With the dispersal of the protesters of the Umbrella Movement, the democratic endeavor for human rights in Hong Kong seemed to have evaporated. Beside acknowledging the power of literature to articulate these hopes, the hope for a democratic future must in fact, depend on the emergence of another space of appearance.³⁷

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Notes

¹ Appeal for democracy is evident in the movement, as representative slogans include: "Democracy, freedom, Hong Kong," "People should not be afraid of their government; their government should be afraid of their people," "Justice/democracy/respect/peace/liberty," "Democracy for the people; we support Hong Kong," "Freedom is a right, not a privilege," etc. These slogans could be seen everywhere during the protest movement. See John Flowerdew, "Understanding the Hong Kong Umbrella Movement: A Critical Discourse Historiographical Approach," *Discourse & Society* 28, no. 5 (2017): 464.

² In fact, the Umbrella Movement was not the first Hong Kong movement for democracy. Johannes Chan in "Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement" (2014) suggests that the first campaign could be traced back to the abortive political reform undertaken during the colonial era by Governor Mark Young in the 1950s; afterwards, several attempts were made but none succeed, with British (before 1997) and Chinese (after 1997) governments as the major opposing forces. See Johannes Chan, "Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement," *The Round Table* 103, no. 6 (2014): 571-80.

³ See Margaret Canovan, "Introduction," in *The Human Condition*, by Hannah Arendt (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), xvi.

⁴ Tina Wong and Sarah Langsay, "Editors' Introduction," *Yuan Yang: A Journal of Hong Kong and International Writing* 1 (2000): 6.

⁵ The pun in the title of the book is obvious, suggesting both mobility and affection.

⁶ This book is subtitled "A Moment of Understanding," because Lim realizes that her Hong Kong residence has the same name as her own family name. As Lim reveals, "the University's address is Pokfulam Road. I have a flat right near the Pokfulam Reservoir. 'Pokfulam' in Cantonese means 'mountain and trees.' The word 'lam', meaning trees or woods, is the Cantonese for 'lim', which is my surname. I wake up to find that I am at an address that has my family name in it." See Joan Chiung-huei Chang, "An Interview with Shirley Geok-lin Lim," *Chung Wai Literary Quarterly* 29, no. 11 (2011): 237.

⁷ For encouraging and supporting students' commitments to writing poetry, Lim established a scholarship in the department in 2014 for promising young poets.

⁸ Johannes Chan, "Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement," 579.

⁹ Laikwan Pang, “Civil Disobedience and Legal Community: Hong Kong’s Possibilities,” *Router: A Journal of Cultural Studies* 23 (Autumn 2016): 225.

¹⁰ Shirley Geok-lin Lim, *Embracing the Angel: Hong Kong Poems* (Hong Kong: City University of Hong Kong, 2014), 3.

¹¹ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 198.

¹² Lim, “National Day,” in *Embracing the Angel*, 4.

¹³ Shirley Geok-lin Lim, “Our People’s Wish,” in *Embracing the Angel*, 14.

¹⁴ Shirley Geok-lin Lim, “The Puzzle,” in *Embracing the Angel*, 22.

¹⁵ Shirley Geok-lin Lim, “The Children’s Movement,” in *Embracing the Angel*, 5–6, here 5.

¹⁶ Shirley Geok-lin Lim, “Your Exercise Books,” in *Embracing the Angel*, 10.

¹⁷ Shirley Geok-lin Lim, “Betrayal: The Unspeakable,” in *Embracing the Angel*, 13.

¹⁸ Shirley Geok-lin Lim, “The Streets,” in *Embracing the Angel*, 20.

¹⁹ Shirley Geok-lin Lim, “The Bill,” in *Embracing the Angel*, 23.

²⁰ Shirley Geok-lin Lim, “The Blood of the Children,” in *Embracing the Angel*, 7.

²¹ Shirley Geok-lin Lim, “Beware the Children,” in *Embracing the Angel*, 24.

²² Shirley Geok-lin Lim, “Hong Kong in Black,” in *Embracing the Angel*, 9.

²³ Shirley Geok-lin Lim, “Black and Yellow,” in *Embracing the Angel*, 11–12.

²⁴ Shirley Geok-lin Lim, “Teach the Free Man How to Praise,” in *Embracing the Angel*, 19.

²⁵ W. H. Auden, “In Memory of W. B. Yeats,” in *The Norton Anthology of Modern and Contemporary Poetry*, ed. Jahan Ramazani, Richard Ellmann, and Robert O’Clair (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003), 800.

²⁶ Auden, “In Memory of W. B. Yeats,” 800.

²⁷ Lim, “Teach the Free Man How to Praise,” 19.

²⁸ Shirley Geok-lin Lim, “The City in Fragments,” in *Embracing the Angel*, 25–26.

²⁹ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 7. Canovan summarizes these three activities as follows: “labor, which corresponds to the biological life of man as an animal; work, which corresponds to the artificial world of objects that human beings build upon the earth; and action, which corresponds to our plurality as distinct individuals.” See Margret Canovan, “Introduction,” in *The Human Condition*, by Hannah Arendt (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1998), ix.

³⁰ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 177.

³¹ *Oxford Dictionary-Lexico*, s.v. “Hongkonger,” <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/hongkonger>. Considering the timing of the addition of this new word, Jeffie Lam states:

“The additions come amid growing anti-mainland sentiment in the city—aimed both at Beijing, for its role in the city’s political life, and tourists [from China], who some Hongkongers say are overwhelming its infrastructure.” See Jeffie Lam, “‘Hongkonger’ Makes It to World Stage with Place in the Oxford English Dictionary,” *South China Morning Post*, March 19, 2014, <https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/1451929/finally-hongkonger-arrives-world-stage>.

³² Edward Wong and Alan Wong, “Seeking Identity: ‘Hong Kong People’ Look to City, Not State,” *The New York Times*, October 8, 2014, A4.

³³ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 179.

³⁴ Iris Berger, “Educational Leadership with an Ethics of Plurality and Natality,” *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 34, no. 5 (September 2015): 485.

³⁵ Joshua Wong can be considered as the best example of “child leader” in Hong Kong’s civil disobedience campaign. At the age of fifteen, he succeeded in convening teenagers to protest against a mandatory curriculum in national education and pressing the government to annul the requirement in 2012. He is also one of the activist leaders of the Umbrella Movement in 2013.

³⁶ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 199.

³⁷ History does not keep us waiting for too long. Five years after the Umbrella Movement, millions of Hong Kong people marched (and continue to march) the streets to protest against the proposed extradition law by the government. The violent clashes between the police and protesters in 2019 look like a rerun of the 2014 incident, only this time with participants from more diverse age groups and arousing serious concerns from more countries around the world.