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KARTIKA REVIEW

MEDITATIONS ON “HOME”



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I have lived in nine residences, across four cities and three countries. However, only two of those places ever appear in any of my dreams.

Used to be, the defining test was where one wanted to die or to be buried. Then they said that home is where the heart is. Then, where the hurt is. Then, charity began there. Then, chickens, carrying packets of bacon under their wings apparently, came to roost. Then, a house was not a home without kittens or puppies or snuggies or rugrats or love or pie or whatever.

When I told my house-sitter to make himself at home, I should have been more specific. I should have added, But don't redecorate or reorganize the spices in the kitchen cabinets and for fuck's sake, don't sell my stuff.

When it comes to home, details do matter.

Home. Homeland. Hometown. Home-O.

Auden said that home was the place where “the two or three things that happen to a man, happen.”

There's no place like home, there's no place like home, Dorothy chanted as she clicked the heels of her ruby pumps together. Poor dear, gets ripped out

by a tornado and then forced to go on a road trip with a bunch of feckless and pathetic idiots. No wonder in an early draft, she skipped and clapped her hands and sang happily when the Flying Monkeys tore her gormless traveling buddies apart from limb to unbloody limb and dumped their carcasses in a pit by the road.

But the bitch was right. There is no place like home. No Place like home. There is no home, you understand. Everyone lives in a different home. Sure, the members of a family or a commune might live in the same place, the same house, or even the same yurt (Ah, Yurt Sweet Yurt!), but they all live in a different home. You and your sibling or your identical twin will all live in a different home.

Beware of anyone who lives in your home. It's the beginning of a horror movie.

There is no home, there are only places like home. And that's good enough.

So then, where can one find home? In the dictionary, between holy and homicide, between
heart and hostage.



Justin Chin was born in Malaysia, raised & educated in Singapore, shipped to the U.S. by way of Hawaii, and now lives in San Francisco. Author of 3 books of poetry, all published by Manic D Press: *Bite Hard* (1997); *Harmless Medicine* (2001), a finalist in the Bay Area Book Reviewers Association Awards; and, *Gutted* (2006), which received the 2007 Thom Gunn Award for Poetry by the Publishing Triangle. Squeezed in between these were 2 non-fictions: *Mongrel: Essays, Diatribes & Pranks* (St. Martins, 1999), and the ur-memoir, *Burden of Ashes* (Alyson Publications, 2002). In the nineties, also led a double life as performance artist: created and presented seven full-length solo works here, there and where ever. Packed up those cookies in 2002, (with occasional relapses) and the documents, scripts, and what-heck from that period was published in *Attack of the Man-Eating Lotus Blossoms* (Suspect Thoughts Press, 2005).