

# And Starring Koh Cheng Mun As Dolly

But Dolly is a sheep they cloned in Edinburgh,  
not in Bishan or the southern province of China.

She reminds me of the lady next door, hair  
a honeycomb for the flowers in her CK-bought blouse.

She collects honey in an apiary in Bishan, her husband  
distills the bittersweet kind that only cloned Confucius can.

But Bishan is not in the south, it's neither here nor there,  
like a lump brooding in the mammary of a sheep cell.

Dolly wakes up in her stable, she is seven years  
old and a matriarch and dying. Is 'Hello Dolly' a compliment?

Dolly Parton sits in a stable belting out "I Will Always Love You",  
is it an insult if I prefer hers over Whitney Houston's?

Dolly playing Koh Cheng Mun sits in a house in Bishan,  
and we only see the living room. Did the mastectomy fail?

The television goes on the fritz, and the static dances  
in wavy lines, becoming indeterminable. A flat line.

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# Exegesis

"And Staring Koh Cheng Mun as Dolly" started as an exercise in semantic mapping of the word 'Dolly'.

The poem became a surrealist tribute of sorts to Koh Cheng Mun (who is by far one of the best actresses who has ever passed through Mediacorp) and her struggle with breast cancer. The poem makes references to both the sitcom *Under One Roof* and the cloning of sheep embryonic cells (which resulted in Dolly), because they both happened at roughly the same time.

Dolly the sheep died of lung cancer, but Koh conquered hers. Other references include Dolly Parton (after whom the sheep was named), who was well known for her large breasts, thus the correlation between her and Koh.

## **Biography**

*Crispin Rodrigues' poetry and short prose has been featured in Kepulauan (Ethos 2014), From Walden to Woodlands (Ethos 2015) and A Luxury We Must Afford (Math Paper Press 2016). His first poetry collection, Pantomime, will be published by Math Paper Press at the end of 2017. Rodrigues is part of Singapore writing group, Atom, and is an arts educator and advocate based in Singapore.*