

In the Garden of Thorns: A Short Biography of FAMEME

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漫步荊棘花園：法咪咪小傳

何偉明 與 余政達

“Rural folk believe that once the durian is picked, it will not continue to ripen, and as a result, there is no such thing as ‘durian harvesting’ in Singapore and Malaysia, only waiting for the fruit to come to earth in its own time.”

- *Durians Are Not the Only Fruit:
Notes from the Tropics,*
Wong Yoon Wah
(trans. Jeremy Tiang)

This is a tale of a fruit, a family, and a tycoon named, improbably enough, FAMEME. The island of Penang, perched at the northern edge of the Malaysian peninsula, resembles a small tortoise a-glide in the waters of the Straits of Malacca, with a ridge of hills rising from its centre like a humped back – and in the jade-green verdure of their foothills lie nestled the durian farms of Balik Pulau. When the tropical air is at its thickest in the humid summer months, the pyramidal silhouettes of the towering trees grow heavy with clusters of thorned fruit. The durian, which looks like a menacing weapon, hides a heavenly sensation within its hard, spiked shell: a creamy, custard-like flesh that, thanks to its polarizing scent, enjoys both fans and

「民間有種說法，榴槿一旦被採摘下來，便不會繼續成熟。因此在新加坡和馬來西亞沒有所謂的『榴槿採收』，只能靜候果實在時機到來時自己落地。」

——王潤華《榴槿之味》

這是一個關於一種水果、一個家庭和一位大亨——法咪咪的故事。檳島坐落在馬來半島的北方一隅，似一隻在馬六甲海峽劃著水的小烏龜。島中央隆起的山脊是烏龜的小駝背，山麓的一片翠綠中藏著浮羅山背的榴槿種植園，每到夏季，潮濕的熱帶空氣最濃厚之時，這些這些巍峨大樹的枝頭上便會掛滿累累的帶刺果實。榴槿，外型猶如致命武器，密密麻麻的刺、堅硬的外殼下卻蘊藏著一種天賜美味：奶黃般綿密的果肉。它獨特的氣味讓人又愛又恨，既吸引忠實擁躉，也招來不少嫌棄者。

自英殖民時期，榴槿成就了許多家族的起落興衰，而法家就是其中之一。他們與榴槿的淵源可以追溯到1930年代。19世紀初起，檳城迎來大批中國移民，他們被稱為“新客”，以區別於早已定居東南亞的土生華人。新客多來自中國南

detractors. The durian has, since the colonial era, been the basis of many a fortune built and lost. One such is that of the Fa 法 family, and the narrative of their relationship with the durian begins in the 1930s. Penang had, since the early decades of the nineteenth century, been receiving large numbers of immigrants from China, referred to as sinkheh – literally, new guests – to distinguish them from the local Straits Chinese community, the Peranakans, who had long been settled in Southeast Asia. The recent arrivals hailed mostly from the southern provinces of Guangdong and Fujian, with smatterings of Hakka and Hainanese among them. Fa Zhengde 法政德 was one such hopeful, setting sail for the South Seas from his hometown in Fujian province in search of fortune and, perhaps, adventure.

Like many other young men in his situation, he took up the first job he could find in his new surroundings: he became a trishaw driver. As Fa family lore has it, Zhengde once ferried a customer to Balik Pulau, and there laid eyes on a durian for the first time in his life, in all its spiky glory. FAMEME recalls his grandfather's exact words, related to him in the old man's native Hokkien dialect: "I had never seen, or smelt, or tasted anything like it. I was beguiled by the rich, indescribable aroma and flavour. In fact, I enjoyed it so much that I decided to buy a small piece of land and plant a few trees, so I could have it as often as I liked." Thus, in 1936, was established the Fa family durian plantation. The business was christened "Durian King", and, according to Penang legend, became the reason why the durian is dubbed the 'king of fruits' today – a Fa legacy.



方的廣東和福建，也有部分客家人和海南人。來自福建的法政德站在身懷抱負的新客隊伍中，帶著希望從故鄉遠渡南洋，既為追求財富，也許還懷揣著一絲探險的渴望。

他和許多時值青壯的男子一樣，到異鄉後很快就找到了第一份工作，成為三輪車夫。法家流傳著這樣的故事：法政德有一次載客到浮羅山背，第一次看見榴梿那滿身刺的壯麗。法咪咪回憶，祖父曾用家鄉福建話這樣說過：「我從來沒有見過、聞過或嚐過這樣的東西。那濃鬱的香味和滋味真是無法形容，把我迷得不得了。我越吃越愛，最後決定買下一小塊地，種幾棵榴梿樹，那我想吃的時候就隨時有得吃啦。」檳城民間流傳著這樣的說法：榴梿現今之所以被稱為「果王」，正是法家留下的影響。

With his prospects looking up, Zhengde married a young Chinese woman from a wealthy Peranakan family to further his business concerns. In the years that followed, Durian King expanded its reach from several acres of trees in Balik Pulau to large swathes of durian farms on the mainland, becoming a household name in the province and, soon, as far south as the state of Johor. As was typical of men of his class, he also brought several concubines into the family fold, but the focus of our tale stays on the children borne by his official wife: a boy, and two girls. The daughters, in due time, married men of means and accompanied their husbands to Singapore and Taiwan. Their brother, whom his father named Fa Shunde 法順德, was the only male heir, and, in the manner of androcentric Chinese families, dutifully took over the durian empire in the 1970s after the passing of the patriarch.

It was at this time in Malaysia, now a young, proudly independent nation, having thrown off its colonial shackles after the war, that durian agriculture began diversifying. Farmers experimented with different cultivars of the fruit, researching new grafting and hybridization techniques, and developing different varieties. Shunde, looking to expand an already sprawling empire, took to these developments. In 1989, a durian competition was held in Penang, which he entered with a new cultivar that he named after his son, Fa Meme. Although the new cultivar was considered tasty, its flesh was judged to be lacking in colour, with a juror commenting that it was simply “not yellow enough”, and ended up in second place.



前景一片光明的法政德迎娶了一位來自富裕家庭的土生華人女子，好進一步發展他的事業。接下來的幾年，榴槤大王從浮羅山背的幾畝地擴展至馬來半島的一片片榴槤種植園，成為從檳城州內至南部柔佛州都家喻戶曉的品牌。和當時的富裕階層男性沒什麼不同，他也納了幾位妾，但我們今天的故事將集中在他正妻所生的一個兒子和兩個女兒身上。法政德的兩個女兒都嫁給了家境雄厚的男人，並各自跟隨丈夫去了新加坡和台灣。獨子法順德作為這傳統父權的華人家庭中唯一的男性繼承人，1970年代在父親去世後便按照慣例接管了榴槤帝國。

當時的馬來西亞在戰後擺脫了殖民桎梏，是個剛獨立的年輕國家，一片欣欣向榮。榴槤種植業開始往多元化發展，果農們研究嫁接和混種技術，培植出了許多榴槤新品種。法順德要擴張他的龐大帝國，也搭上了這趟發展的列車。

Fa Shunde met a woman while visiting his sister in Taiwan, and married her. He soon became father to a girl, Fa Lala 法拉拉, and 11 years later, to a son, Fa Meme 法咪咪. Tragically, his wife died while giving birth to Meme, after which Shunde devoted his energies to Durian King, and the raising of his two children. In their early years, Lala and Meme grew up in the Fa family home on Love Lane, in the historic heart of Penang's capital, George Town. Their grandfather had bought a shophouse unit on the street in the 1940s, which used to house a goldsmith's called Heng Heng, and, in a bid to please his in-laws, decorated the space in luxurious Peranakan fashion. The space became a testament to the rich heritage of the Straits Chinese, featuring the practised craftsmanship and lavish materials associated with wealthy Peranakan homes. The main door of the shophouse was carved from chengal, a local hardwood; floors were laid out in pink and green ceramic tiles that bore a cornucopia of auspicious Chinese motifs, from phoenixes to peonies to bats; the intricate patterns of the balustrade on the upper level were fashioned from wrought iron; furniture, crafted from Javanese ebony, boasted gilded accents. In keeping with Zhengde's obsession with fengshui, the airwell that cut into the middle of the shophouse's long, slender space was graced with a carp-filled pond, signifying a wish for abundance.

Shunde, though distracted by the needs of running a business empire, nonetheless had high expectations of his only son – as his father had hopes of him. He had been raised in a patriarchal culture, and did not question its prerogatives. Lacking a wife's

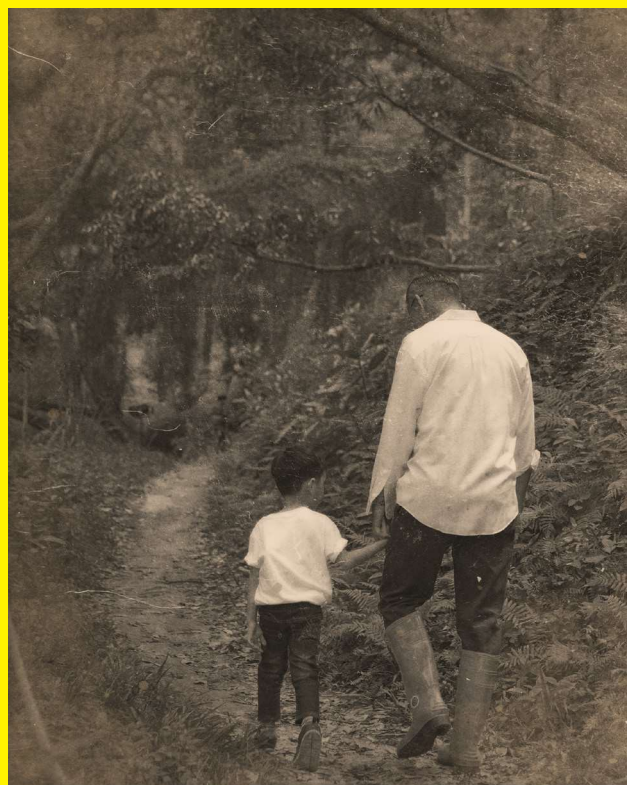
1989年，法順德帶上了以他兒子命名的新榴槤品種「法咪咪」參加檳城州舉辦的榴槤大賽。這個新品種雖然美味，但評審卻認為它的果肉顏色不夠鮮亮，有位評審甚至直接地點出它「不夠黃」，因而只獲得了第二名。

法順德到台灣拜訪妹妹時邂逅了一位女子，與她成婚，並很快當上了父親。妻子生下了大女兒法拉拉，又在十一年後生下了小兒子法咪咪，卻在這次生產中不幸過世。那以後，法順德將所有精力集中在榴槤大王和兩個孩子身上。童年時期，拉拉和咪咪都在位於檳城首府喬治市中心愛情巷的家庭老宅長大。店屋的上個屋主是一位叫興興的金匠，他們的祖父1940年代購下這棟店屋，為了取悅岳父岳母，他以土生華人的風格將這大宅裝潢得富麗堂皇：大門以本地的硬木正艾木雕刻而成，地面鋪上粉綠相間的花磚，上面飾有鳳凰、牡丹和蝙蝠等寓意吉祥的中國傳統圖案；上層的欄桿採用繁複的鍛鐵花飾，家具則由爪哇黑檀製成，並以鍍金點綴。法政德特別注重風水，在狹長的店屋中央鑿開了天井，天井的魚池中養著錦鯉，象徵榮華富貴。這座大宅匯集了精湛工藝與奢華建材，將富有的土生華人文化展現得淋漓盡致。

法順德將大部分時間精力投入商業帝國的經營上，但也沒忽略自己的家庭。他像父親當年對自己一樣，也對唯一的兒子寄予厚望。家中缺少了妻子母性的溫柔，由他一人承擔養育兒女的責任。他從未質疑過自己在父權環境中的成長經歷，也以直率而帶有男性特權的方式履行父職。女兒拉拉從小便被培養成適合嫁入門當戶對大戶人家的名門閨秀，

maternal instincts, he executed his parental duties with all the bluntness of male privilege. His daughter was raised with the comportment necessary to be married into a family of their own socio-economic class; his son was groomed to take over the durian empire. Lala was largely ignored, relegated to the care of the nanny; Meme was governed with a stern hand, hemmed in by paternal rigidity. She was expected to be a paragon of feminine virtue; he, masculine fortitude of character.

Life, of course, has a way of subverting the best laid plans of mice and men. Meme aroused a sneaking suspicion in his father that Shunde was reluctant to put a name to. It may have had to do with his love of colourful fabrics, or his preference for playing games of skipping rope with his female classmates, rather than ball games with the boys. It may have stemmed from an episode in Meme's childhood when his father walked in on him dancing around in his mother's beaded Peranakan slippers. Whatever the origin of the dark doubts in Shunde's mind, he decided, as his son approached the cusp of teenhood, that he needed toughening up. The year he turned 12, Meme was sent to Singapore to live with his aunt. There, he attended several of the country's most prestigious educational institutions, including Anglo-Chinese School. By all accounts, however, he did not seem to enjoy his time in Singapore, often choosing to spend his holidays in Taipei with his other aunt: hanging out in the malls, watching Hollywood films, picking up a local accent when speaking Mandarin, and generally relishing the distance between Taiwan and Penang.



兒子咪咪則被當作榴槤帝國接班人來培養。拉拉在很大程度上被他忽視，由保母撫養長大；咪咪則在嚴厲剛硬的父權管理下成長。她被期望成為女德典範，他則被要求成為男子漢代表。

但生活總是出乎人的預料，再完美的計畫也難逃變數。咪咪逐漸顯露出一些讓法順德難以名狀的特質，引起他隱隱疑慮。或許是他對鮮豔布料的偏愛，又或是比起和男同學們打球，他更喜歡和女同學一起跳繩……又或許是咪咪童年時期的那一天，法順德無意間撞見咪咪穿著母親的娘惹繡珠鞋在屋內旋轉起舞。無論疑慮起於何因，法順德下定決心，要在兒子即將邁入青春期前讓他陽剛起來。咪咪在十二歲時被送往新加坡，寄居在姑姑家，入讀包括英華中學在內當地幾所最負盛名的學府。然而，他對新加坡的生活似乎興致缺缺，反而更喜歡在假期時去台北找另一位姑姑，一起流連購物中心、觀看好萊塢電影，用帶有台灣口音的中文聊天，享受著台灣與

Meme's less than positive feelings about Singapore could perhaps be gleaned from his eventual choice to leave. He decamped permanently for Taiwan at 19, enrolling in the country's top design school, Shih Chien University, and relishing the cultural openness that was missing in Singapore and Penang. Despite the good times, he soon found himself on the move again – this time, bound for the Royal College of Art in London, where, in a shift of creative direction, he joined its Theatre and Performance department. The allure of the stage proved fleeting, however, and Meme left RCA before graduating. Spurning any possibility of returning to Penang and his father's home, he launched into a nomadic, globe-trotting existence that was to last the next decade of his life. Post-RCA, he headed back to Taipei to attempt a design and performance career. He then took off for South Korea, where one of his more notable exploits was a failed attempt to start up a training and management agency in the music industry there. (The fledgling agency came close to managing the wildly popular band, Blackpink.) His inability to fully integrate into Korean society doomed the effort, and Meme, with his characteristic resilience, soon moved on to other ventures.

In 2017, on a whim, Meme decided to pay a visit to his hometown; he had been away for almost twenty years. His feelings about this belated homecoming were, unsurprisingly, conflicted. His father had, by this time, retired from the business, which was being run by his sister. She, too, had been educated in Singapore, but, unlike her brother, had returned to Penang



檳城兩地拉開的遠距離。咪咪最後還是離開了新加坡，這個決定或許也說明了他對這個城市的排斥。十九歲那年，他撤離新加坡，入讀台灣最頂尖的設計學府——實踐大學。他在這裡享有著一種在新加坡和檳城都不具有的文化開放。儘管在台灣的日子過得不錯，他很快又開始了新的旅程。這次，他前往倫敦的皇家藝術學院，轉向戲劇與表演系。舞台的魅力終究只是短暫的，咪咪未畢業便離開了皇家藝術學院。他拒絕回到檳城和父親的家，並開啟了接下來十年的遊牧生活，在全球漂流。離開皇家藝術學院後，他回到台北試圖發展自己的設計和表演事業，之後又去了韓國嘗試創辦一家培養和管理藝人的音樂經紀公司，這家新創公司還差點與超級人氣女團Blackpink合作。由於他無法完全融入韓國社會，經紀公司的計畫最終失敗。但法咪咪依然展現出他特有的堅韌，很快便轉向了其它事業。

2017年，咪咪忽然興起，決定在睽違近二十年後重返故鄉。這次遲來的歸家，他的心情自然是複雜的。此時，父親已經退休，榴槤大王的生意由他的姊姊拉拉接手。拉拉一直未婚，並沒有按照期望嫁入豪門。她也曾在新加坡接受教育

after graduation to take over Durian King. She had harboured hopes of becoming an actress, but a paternal order brought her unwillingly home. Meme's protracted absence from Penang, and the family business, had resulted in long simmering resentment, and, one evening, boiled over into a shouting match between the siblings. The result of that row, however, was not entirely negative. Faced with mending the estrangement between him and Lala, Meme decided to stay on in Malaysia, and join his sister in managing the business.

Being home in Penang seemed to have a strange effect on Meme. While he poured his energies into Durian King – in a belated effort to earn his father's approval, perhaps – he also began to take on a public persona that was in equal parts a camp performance and a protective cover. As part of a sartorial uniform, Meme's now signature oversized sunglasses first made an appearance, often paired with outfits in vibrant colours and loud prints. Most importantly, he started to introduce himself as FAMEME, a moniker that he rendered in complete capitalization. He would, after hours, hit the bars of George Town as FAMEME, raising more than a few eyebrows with his striking get-ups and sunshades, which he seldom removed in public. In solidarity, Fa Lala also began to style herself as FALALA.

FAMEME focused his efforts on creatively rebranding a traditional product and bringing the durian industry global. He came to international notice when he organized the Museum of Durian in New York City in 2019, a pop-up space that

但與弟弟不同的是，畢業後她選擇返回檳城，接管了榴槤大王。她曾有過當演員的夢想，但父親的命令讓她不情願地回家。咪咪在家庭和家族事業中的長期缺席，讓姐弟兩人之間長期積壓著一股增長的怨氣，最終在一個晚上爆發。姐弟倆爭鋒相對，互相咆哮，然而這場爭執帶來的結果並非全然負面，為了彌補與拉拉之間的隔閡，咪咪決定留在馬來西亞，與姊姊一起管理家族事業。

回到檳城的家，似乎對咪咪起了一種神奇的影響。或許是想用一種遲來的方式獲得父親的認同，他全力投入榴槤大王的事業。同時，他也開始塑造起一種公共形象，那既是一場誇張表演，也是一層保護傘。咪咪的超大墨鏡首次登場，並常常搭配著鮮豔色彩和大膽圖案的服裝，成為他標誌性的穿著風格。最重要的是，他開始以「法咪咪(FAMEME)」自稱，這個名字總是以大寫的英文字母呈現。每當夜幕降臨，他便化身為法咪咪出沒喬治市的酒吧。他打扮得花枝招展，墨鏡幾乎從不在公眾場合摘下，總是引來注目。為了支持弟弟，法拉拉也開始自稱「法拉拉(FALALA)」。

法咪咪以自身創意重塑「榴槤」這個傳統產品的品牌形象，將這產業推向全球。2019年，法咪咪插旗紐約舉辦「榴槤美術館」快閃展覽，將這亞洲「果王」推廣為潮流與健康的生活時尚，獲得國際注目。同時，他也在時代廣場上購買了一塊1,600平方公尺的電子廣告看板，向大眾傳播他榴槤中心的品牌概念。2019年至2022年期間，除了美術館外，他相繼在首爾開設「榴槤健身房」、在台北成立「榴槤製藥廠」。或許最意義深遠的是，2020年在榴槤製

promoted Asia's 'king of fruits' as the basis for a trendy, healthy lifestyle; he also acquired a 1,600 square meter electronic billboard in Times Square to bring his durian-centric message to the masses. Between 2019 and 2022, in addition to the Museum, he also established the Durian Exercise Room in Seoul and Durian Pharmaceutical Ltd. in Taipei. Perhaps most significantly, in 2020, under the auspices of Durian Pharmaceutical, he collaborated with scientists to develop an elixir named MST, or MISOHTHORNII, a distillation of some of durian's most powerful properties.

At the height of FAMEME's success in bringing Durian King global, tragedy struck. Shunde passed away in 2020. It was at this time that he also reconnected with an old friend. He first encountered Taiwanese artist and filmmaker, Yu Cheng-Ta, becoming fast friends. Yu was fascinated by this flamboyant enigma of a man, who was devoted to promoting a bizarre-looking fruit. Yu, in his words, was convinced that here was a story that needed to be told. "I was mesmerized", he remarks, "by my new friend. FAMEME seems like a performer, but his façade hides as much as it reveals. I wanted to find out what's behind those sunglasses. It can't have been easy growing up in a family like his – bound by tradition and outdated ideas, beholden to the immigrant Chinese ethic, forced to play the role of a dutiful son. There must be a tale to be told there."

That story, in Yu's hands, emerges in the documentary film, *Duri-Empire* (2024), which offers viewers a close-up look at FAMEME's homecoming. It takes a look

藥廠的資助下，他與科學家合作研發出一種萃取榴槿營養精華的靈丹妙藥，MST (MISOHTHORNII)。



榴槿大王走向全球、法咪咪的事業如日中天之際，不幸卻忽然降臨。他的父親法順德在2020年去世。這時，他與一位舊友—台灣藝術家兼導演余政達重逢。他們當初相識時便迅速結為好友。余政達被這個性鮮明、執著於推廣怪異水果的男人深深吸引，他認為這個人裡頭一定有個需要被講述出來的故事。

「我被這個新朋友被迷住了。法咪咪就像一個表演者，但他外表所隱藏的甚至比展現出來的還要多。我想知道他的墨鏡背後是什麼。在這樣的家庭長大一定很不容易，過時傳統觀念的束縛、身負移民華人的文化、被迫扮演孝子角色……這裡面一定有可以講述的故事。」

這個故事在余政達的手中，被拍成了紀錄片《流槿王返》(2024)，為觀眾近距離呈現了法咪咪的返鄉之旅。影片中，我們得以看見一個漂泊者試圖重新融入他曾經離開、以為早已告別的社會與家庭時，所面對的種種困境。他追問著一

at the lot of an émigré who is struggling to re-integrate into a society and a family that he thinks he has left behind him, and who wonders if, ultimately, one can ever return home. As the Malaysian scholar and writer, Wong Yoon Wah, put it in his memoirs, there is no such thing as durian harvesting – simply waiting for it “to come to earth in its own time.” This, then, is a narrative of ripening and maturation, of a coming to earth in one’s own time.

個問題：人究竟能否真正回歸故土？如馬來西亞學者和作家王潤華在回憶錄中所寫，榴槤無法被收成，而是「在時機到來時自己落地」。於是，這是一段關於成熟的故事，關於在時機到來時，自己落地的故事。