

## Why I No Longer Read Dystopian Fiction Kate Rogers

Nope. No novels of the end times  
for me. Too much like scanning the news,  
or having my palm read by a stranger  
who wants to sell me a fork in the road.

I live in Hong Kong. Booksellers  
are kidnapped, forced to confess  
to crimes against the state on live  
TV when they publish gossipy  
tell-all tales about the mean boys  
in Beijing.

I won't read *Brave New World* again  
because sleeping pills are my way  
to rest too often. Like *soma*  
their morning haze blunts  
the weight of a boot stepping  
on my sandaled foot, the edge  
of a Prada bag butting my knee  
at every turn on the train.

We don't have to worry about  
Morlocks emerging from tunnels  
to drag poets underground,  
although they savour the marrow of  
flute players who remind us too often  
that birds are singing of freedom  
somewhere green. The Morlocks speculate  
in real estate. Rumour has it they took  
the booksellers and sold them out.

I won't read dystopian fiction here  
because bird flu roosts in the wet markets  
waiting to fledge, swine flu  
reminds us how much we have in common  
with pigs. Margaret Atwood doesn't help  
with her Pigeon organ hosts growing us  
new hearts to replace the broken ones  
and livers to replace our purple pulp  
saturated with beer and gin.

I will watch the old woman clatter her cart  
of cardboard down the hill as I exit the bar.  
I will admire the way she leans  
back into the slope to steady her load,  
doesn't look before she crosses the road.  
I will wait for the light to change.