

### *Jiajia Zhang's September Issues*

*Le rayon vert*—the green ray—is a mysterious flash that appears at sunset and reveals one's thoughts and the thoughts of others. In Eric Rohmer's film of the same name, Delphine is alone. Craving connection but unable to bear the distance that precede closeness, she drifts through shots that emphasize a sense of isolation most palpable in a crowd. Listless travel. Yasujiro Ozu's *Tokyo Story*, too, is shaped by restless movement, a to-ing and fro-ing. Characters depart and return, seeking a geographic cure that never works. In these films, the empty nonsense of life forms a kind of poem.



It's summer in Paris. Parisians flee to the coast and shopkeepers board up windows with heavy wooden shutters while droves of tourists roam the city, photographing pastries. Then seasons change. August becomes a memory the instant September hits. That famous autumnal melancholy, an untranslatable *saudade* or *toska*—something resembling and yet strangely distinct from sadness. Perhaps it is the scent of approaching decay, the last gasp and rustle of leaves enjoying the cooling sun before they fall.



And yet everything happens in September: fashion week, art shows, books launch, shutters open. In *The September Issue*, RJ Cutler chronicles the making of *Vogue's* infamous tome that for decades has told readers what they will want to eat, buy, and wear in the coming year, indexing trends both observed and constructed. It revisits these declarations with each coming season, making sure consumptive desire is stoked anew. The word magazine, with its military roots, refers to the chamber where gun cartridges are stored. A magazine aims with precision; it stores information intended to enter the reader.



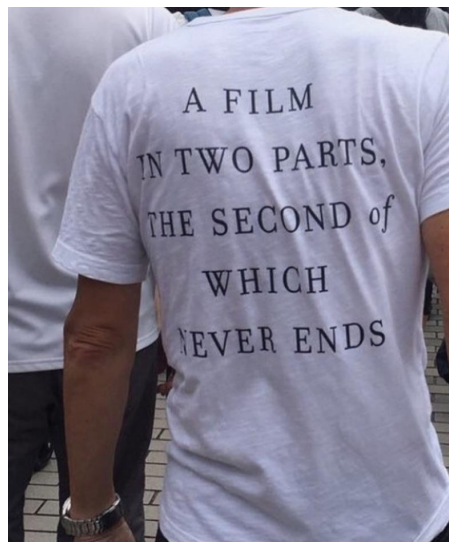
Jiajia Zhang's *September Issues* steals lines from *The Green Ray*, *Tokyo Story* and *The September Issue*, collaging them into a melancholic and disembodied narration that captions fragments of internet footage. Leaves fall. Words drift. Fashions fall in and out of fashion.



You might know the films of Ozu and Rohmer through the proliferation of stills and memes that circulate online. A wistful gaze in technicolor, or a black-and-white stare, is paired with poignant subtitles that encapsulate the pervasive loneliness and emptiness of modern life. A sense of resignation towards the impossibility of meaning. In these films, famously, nothing really happens.



*September Issues* collates internet clips and advertisement bits into one longer film—subtitled with a conversation between scripts known for their slow durationality. This mashup of distinct timelines and use of opposite compositional approaches makes palpable the ways in which contemporary consumption of video is largely in bite-sized chunks that somehow take up all our time. Our data is mined by artificial intelligence and refashioned to distract us from aging, loneliness, and boredom.



Perhaps we cannot bear the feelings that arise in empty moments of slowness and rest. Instead, a constant movement—from clip to clip or city to city—devours our attention and helps us avoid the gnawing nothing. Winter is approaching. But on the internet, the temperature is always the same.

Written by Shanzhai Lyric  
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Shanzhai Lyric is a roving poetic research unit taking inspiration from the experimental text of shanzhai t-shirts, often made in China and proliferating across the globe, to examine how the language of counterfeit uses mimicry, hybridity, and permutation to both revel in and reveal the artifice of global hierarchies. Shanzhai, the Chinese word for counterfeit, translates literally to “mountain hamlet,” in reference to a place where bandits abscond with goods from the empire to redistribute at the margins. Through an ever-growing archive of poetry-garments, Shanzhai Lyric explores the potential of mis-translation and nonsense as utopian world-making (breaking), and takes shanzhai garments as the starting point for an ongoing investigation that troubles definitions of ownership and authorship -- and who gets criminalized for theft.