

Pandora

The Scene of the City Siege by the Daft

the daft have been hunting and gathering they have climbed up the Great Wall rambunctiously they have shooed the Trojan Horse into the city when in Rome they have built a bamboo Rome overnight they do as the Romans do the daft have back-stabbed Caesar during Antony's speech they have back-stabbed Brutus and clamoured Caesar Caesar Caesar exactly three times the daft syndrome has to be cut down quickly or else one will become daft the daft virus is airborne the daft symptoms are feverishness and words flowing out of all the nine holes of the body in twenty-four hours the patient becomes absolutely daft the daft spit at the non-daft they lick them with their tongue they bite them with their teeth as the daft population grows the non-daft have to pretend to be daft the way the daft look the way the daft walk the way the daft dress the way the daft work the way the daft eat and sleep the way the daft type the daft fashion the daft and non-daft are no longer distinguishable on the back of the horse Kannaka the Prince Siddhartha followed the ascetic path to shun the daft he came back after the great awakening he confronted the daft as the Buddha the emancipated for the daft-thinking daft the *dhamma* preachers have had to downgrade their *dhamma* versions the preachers die preaching the daft have crucified Jesus Christ the daft have assassinated Lady Diana they have flattened the jungles in search of Marilyn Monroe and Michael Jackson they have snapped Tiger Woods' wood they have scrambled for Socrates' poison cup in unanimity the daft have decided to pronounce 'inanity' 'inanition' they have decided to make do with cakes whenever bread is not available they have driven 'a man his son and their mule' out of the village they have moved the Statue of Liberty to Baghdad they have ordered an atom bomb from Einstein and they have made a knife mark on the rib of their boat as the daft from all corners of the planet are enjoying themselves in their merry-go-rounds BOOOOM 'The sky is collapsing' the deafening noise the daft in uproar the daft in commotion the daft in chaos the daft stampeding

An Evening With a City Girl

Evening still swelters
In the strides inside
The miniskirt of the city girl.

We have just gazed leisurely at
The statue of the street-smart lion
Who has gobbled up a jouncing
fish and stepped on the fishtail.
What a phiz!

She is concerned
With not having a seat
With not getting discounts
With being stepped on
With not having concerns
With the insecurity of a snake
Who has just shed her skin.

As for me
A starving tiger
A jilted tiger
A lonely tiger
I want to bite off and
Devour my own stripes
I have to conceal the sound of
My waggling tail.

She is
Tempted by
The vertical lines.
She couldn't fan her senses out
Towards the endless fields.

I am
Sighing heavy-heartedly
At the stretch of the horizontal lines.
I couldn't look up.

The bootlegged breeze in the pirated river
Brushed past our authentic imaginations.
A queue over there arouses her curiousness.
I, for one, fancy catching the waves
Reflected upon the leftover sunlight.

She is educated.
She small-talks about
The prospects of natural resources,
The mutually-beneficial aspects of

Human resources in migration.

I am civilized.

I discuss by-the-way

The fluid localism of languages

The potential advantages of centralization.

Whatever

The evening is at peace with herself

She has had a gulp of her beer

I have had a bite of my pizza

We never happened to include in our conversation

Those gangsters in Southeast Asia.

Barbarian Village

'We will awe you with our colours'
On faces, stomachs and arms
Feline tattoos scattered red
A Pagan god at the village gate
Bones, horns, sabre-teeth
Bludgeons, solid bamboo sticks
Long and sharp spears
To face the wilderness
To face rival tribes
To fend off strangers
To fence their de-fence
To include, you may call it naivety
To exclude, you may call it honesty
With their own language
With their own life, their own rationale
They live in their own meaning
To be blunt
Even the notion of shame is different
As is the value of life
How they receive love, how they receive punishment
How they hear the beatings of the drums
Not boom boom boom
But growl growl growl, the growl of a tiger
There is everything in their drumbeats
An assortment of life
A commune
Paying court to a village girl,
Prayer for more games
Wrestling with bears
The erosion of the mountain creek
(Probably there is also a fear
And loathing of the white man)
Growl growl growl they play and they dance
The drum of delirium like a medium with death
Growl growl growl
Their sweat burns over the fire, and sizzles
Growl growl growl
They have diced the sacrificial animal at the altar
Growl growl growl
They listen to the oracle's omens, without a blink
Growl growl growl
They drum their communiqué
They dance their demands
Their logograms are their holy books
With stark eyes, they examine their skies
Horoscopes are recorded on naked palms
Weather forecasts are read gently on leaves
They stalk their prey on the sound of the breeze

In their day, sunlight was ultraviolet-free
In their day, rain was acid-free
If only fossils could speak
They would bring you back to their aeon
The day automobiles arrived, roaring
Delivering food enhancers and utensils
Decorations and grand robes, the power of
Demand and supply, the free market
Teaches you who you are, who I am, what is what
Then then and more and more
Then then...
Then after that then...
Seals and signs
Colours and categories
Evolutions and isms
Homophones and heteronyms
Fashions and actions
Shoulder to shoulder
Footprint to footprint
The creaking of chairs in collision
The noise of whistling and applause
That's how the sound of the drums died out
And the barbarian culture became extinct.

The Venomous

I get delicate each time
I shed my skin, but
Don't you dare
Think I am soft
If I change colours
I only want to adapt
To the shifting sand
To the strange waters

I am not the type that
Flaunts my neck hood
Just to hiss and miss.

My wink can smolder
My stare can hypnotize
I can snatch a fly, my
Head lying low doesn't
Mean I'm asleep.

Clear your own path
Curl up in your own hole
Watch yourself
If you don't know any thing,
Just coil up and be quiet
Don't you try to invoke
My recessive traits

Next time
I won't just rattle.

Chitchat between Hitler and Che Guevara in a Beer Bar

the loser because he has lost the winner because he has lost if only he didn't lose his battle here if only he was not captured if only he was not tried at the military court if only he was not executed if only the revolution did not end if only, if only in the beer bar cigarette smoke wafts around, almost retching in the wavering watery air everything looks the same laughter breaks out Cheers! Hitler and Che in the flesh, chitchatting rock stars with sought-after brands toothbrush moustache, a cigar, swastika printed on a beret now this is in vogue for the youth youth, youth, the new generation the future of mother earth youth who didn't witness the gas chamber youth who missed their guerrilla wars thanks to deforestation they are fanatical one shot, another shot just top it up the youth is all ears ears that wouldn't flinch Heil Hitler! Heil Che! if there had been the internet back then the Jews would have been cleansed even faster Che, what's next when your online revolution is over by the way what about guerrilla warfare to eliminate Jews for food security, to solve the financial crisis, to combat poverty, to save the environment, for population control, will the gas chamber be a solution again they have downed the past (not a drop left) they have streamed the future down into their glasses in the end, a mutual agreement has been reached only the two of them, confiding one more shot, come on do you know are you also interested do you want me to tell you the perfect meeting of minds without the need for negotiation you might know everyone here knows beer is not liquor – that's that!

Twenty-eight Days with Bipolar Disorder

Who has moved my brain
Two little men, two little mice
Pacing up and down in the veins of my left wrist
I'm sweet-I'm bitter, I like-I don't, I know-I don't
Changes at every nanosecond, things come into existence, things come to an end
If I don't change, I fret I will be all alone
If I change, I fret I won't be me any more
Is it normal that my complacency in comfort always complies with every change
Now I have just launched my rockets of rage ... BOOM! BANG!
Now I am stroking myself with a feather
Please find me the naivety that had once been tattooed on my skin
Please do not gulp down all of the sea in my shirt pocket
If you no longer find me trustworthy, lock me in with a big lock for life
Joyce says he fears high-flown words that make us unhappy
Suppose none of what I have just said is true, are you going to be upset Botchan?

Misspelled Syllogism

Major Premise: Mr. White is not doing the right thing.

Minor Premise: Nor are Mr. Black and Mr. Red.

Conclusion: Mr. White is doing the right thing.

Observer: Hmm... it doesn't make sense.

Major Premise: Mr. White is not doing the right thing.

Minor Premise: Nor are Mr. Black and Mr. Red.

Conclusion: There is no such thing as doing the right thing.

Observer: Oh... My Christness.

Major Premise: Mr. White is not doing the right thing.

Minor Premise: Nor are Mr. Black and Mr. Red.

Conclusion: Let's not do the right thing.

Observer: Buddha... save our souls.

The Sniper

When you see them on a flag march
Repress your swelling bugs
No mortar shells, no hand grenade explosion
This battle must go on quietly
With a calm mind, in cold blood
With sharp shooting, trained hands
Hone your skills when the sun shines
Camouflage like a chameleon
Be immovable as a sleeper
Don't blink, don't doze off
Don't miss any chance
If necessary, play dead
Don't flinch, even if they walk all over you
Blame fate if they shoot you point-blank
To double-check your death
Life may end up in anticipation, in lethe
There isn't much of a choice to make
For example...
Five enemies are approaching
Five bullets are all you have.

Translated from the Burmese by ko ko thett