

Utopia in the Asian Eighties: Six Songlets 1983–1989

Forgiving the Sunflower

Slanderers say you rotate fawning on the sun
But i see now you're simply protecting your roots
So that the pitiless glare might be mitigated
By the coolness of your head – radar, not courtier-like.

2683

But Then

(Updating *The Way and The Power*)

The seven colours develop a human eye
But then fade in favour of a thousand colours.
The seven notes develop a human ear
But may become twelve tones or a melisma.
Rare goods bring about the cunning accounts of reason
But then create plenty & a cry for lasting quality.

From fire to atoms, people need more & more energy
But then they need ever smaller packages, not bombs.
The iron plough thrusts seeds into violated furrows
But for well-tasting fruit the hand must then become a lover
Tender no less than strong, understanding when to hold off,
When to caress & bring forth, when to accept flowering caresses.

Love of profit levelled the world into masters & servants,
Capitalism yoked us all together as undertakers & undertaken,

But now we must have the federation of loving friends
 And private ability put to the service of sisters & brothers;
 A pointed Party must defy, seize & destroy Power,
 But then become a self-managing, multi-purpose People:

Or truly, just because we have that but lack all this
 We shall all perish from the face of a planet finally at peace.
 That is why the Sage admits the arrow of progress, strong staff
 Of history, yet also the coiling turnback of spiral, serpentine
 Denial and assumption. That is why s/he says “yes, but then”,
 Like the caduceus:

Machiavelli, yes but then Cordelia.

27584

The Manifest, O!
 (tat tvam asi)

For R.M. Pirsig

Bullets, beatings, starving, organized lies now fetter
 Each fleshly person; the bourgeois free-for-all-pelf
 Brings living death. The exploited proletarians of Self
 Can only get free by forming an alternative, better

Together: where reason & feeling are not enemy classes
 But each other's highest, jealously grasped good: when
 The art of word-processor programming is Zen
 And Eros the science of ensuring that the current passes

Between thee & me, an a priori and technology
 Organizing space & time so that we may mesh
 On hard mattresses with a joyous rightness:

A tightness of fierce feeling twinned beyond apology
 With structured reason, the twain then lighting up all flesh
 And levitating the two Selves to one lucid lightness.

25684

Envoi to My Second (Unpublished) Book

Haec canebam Caesar dum magnus ...

Virgil, *Georgics*4

These poems i polished on a briefly present word-processor, in
Undeserved interstices of peripatetic poise like unto
A whirling motorcycle on sheer circus walls, while the Great War
For Justice, the Hundred-Years' one, burned unabated on.
The tribes of bees still lived in their vertical communities
Obedient to the deep-bellied breathing of cosmic winds,
And the little pelican raged against the bars of this our cage:
I whatever my name, bred in a little white city,
Far ago, loud away, here for a little, where gladly i sang
Of old Bert & an armoured Arcadia, foolhardy like better
Masters, in the sweet time of my youth, now recalled,
In the lifetime interval between a won or a lost battle.
Peace, O Prince, the passing one salutes thee!

84–88

Planetary Robinson Crusoe

Stuck to commuting
Between airless planets, the oxygen
Sparse & rationed, carried over from old, the hoarded
Matches guttering in my cupped hands, i call up
Stubbornly to myself every solar-flare hour
John's injunction after a failed
Commonwealth: They also serve
Who stand & steadfast wait.

16886

Navigator to Pilot

I have found us the fertile planet, haven't I? I
Promised, I did it. Now land please, in the strange

Nebula. I have perfect confidence in your steering touch.
The two of us together, I never feared death. Where

You need it, ask, I shall help again: just get me
A good star chart and distance gauge, I beg you.
Plant then our sunny flag deep, let us map in
The grounds. There may be tygers, incompatible monsters

Hidden under the alluring face: the black forests,
The amber-green pools, the quirky contour of the Medi=
Terranean like an unforgettable mouth amidst
This improbable sighting, of course, we do not know.

But the latest omen is good: I have spotted a white
Soarer, perhaps resembling a pelican, it
Fluttered nearer and further again, a delicate
Dance, not afraid. It – he – she looked at me.

Our looks may cross, link, click.

584-1189

Glossary: Line 8: old maps of unknown continents had the legend “There be tygers here”; a Bradbury story takes its title from there.