





Beastly bovine, buffaloes blaring  
Moving, mooing, misused in a miasmic milieu  
Crammed close in closet-small claustrophobic quarters  
Shitting suckling sleeping in the same space  
The pale faces fetched their white water there.

Where *Yellow Pigs* lay,  
    filthy fur and sandy skin,  
lay boar that could hardly bear  
    the filth and chalky air -  
At least cattle are sold for money.

I had never seen a cow before  
*Three times more protein, half as much water*  
*less fat, half as much sugar*  
Murkier, sure, but *better than water*  
Milk is better for babies  
Milk is good for the sick  
But for the love of *Choi Sun*  
Only the richest could buy some

Flesh rot,  
coughing and spewing disease  
bloody meat lay at their feet  
a marble staircase, unsoiled sheets,  
books of healing,  
corruption (and stealing)  
yellow and white (but both bleed red alright).

*plague*

In the eighteen eighties  
An adventurous spirit  
An ardent desire for knowledge  
Patrick Manson, stern reserved Scottish  
A man well-known, well-loved  
A philanthropist  
A medical man who had a love affair with the tropics  
Here for five years, his fingerprint on our frontiers  
witnessed the horrid, squalid alleged dairies  
refused to countenance putrid prices for miserable milk

*The Dairy Farm*

*Inadequate unreliable exceedingly expensive*

*This is a serious matter*

*The principal objective will be to reduce the price to bring milk within the reach of the poor. The second objective will be to secure its purity and remove it from the categories of the causes of disease. The third objective will be to place the concern on a sound financial basis and make it a source of profit to the shareholders*

Patrick Manson

JB Coughtrie

Paul Chater

Phyneas Rylie

Granville Sharp

WH Ray

*What is the name of your dairy farm company?*

The Dairy Farm Company laid its solid, solemn foundations

Eight-walled halls to house eighty cows

On steep sloping (hopeful) hills

The grass made for grazing

The rush of water gushing

In love with the southerly breeze from the South China seas

Well ahead of the time and the town

novel and anomalous to the oblivious Cantonese

around the farm Counsels of Perfection written in English and Chinese:

*To enable the Company to produce clean milk, free from disease, germs and dirt, the management insists on the following regulations, on the handling of milk and the care of cows:*

*Milk utensils will be thoroughly cleaned and carefully sterilized. The greatest care will be taken to keep them so. The sheds will be cleaned out, the cows' udders washed, manure removed to the fertilizing pit. Hands will be washed before milking each cow and a clean cloth will be used to wipe the udders of cows.*

*Do not put the first drawing of milk into the milk pail. Let it go to the floor.*

*Take an interest in your work and attend to the comfort of the cows. Always bear in mind that fresh air is almost as essential as food to keep them and yourself in good health.*

Two cowboys, teasing,  
pushing one another,

spilling crude milk from cans  
into the tall grass. Bringing to the farms

some prolonged jest from the quarters.  
Suddenly sober

with the coming hoofsteps up the hill  
and the stern glare

of the manager, mounted,  
high above, on horseback.

Then back to work, the repetitive milking and pouring and weighing  
and bringing back for treating.

Their warm hands leaving spirited stains  
on the metal skins, where the icy chill takes time to settle.

Cows like mottled eggs  
shining with a sweat-slicked sheen  
carrying their life-giving milkyolk,  
lying in the breeze  
letting the cool wind roll over them,  
turning hair after hair like  
airy fingers combing through  
the insistent black-white-black-white,  
printing muddy child's tracks onto the eyes,  
alternating between lazy ear flick and lazier tail swing,  
grazing nature's gifts, a view of the sea, the fast-growing guineas,  
and offering, in turn, her own.

Swollen to bursting with sweet cream,  
waiting for the coaxing of a warm hand to bestow  
velvety fondue, the blissful concoction  
of marshmallow foam, nature's elixir.  
Ready to nurse a calf or babes in the village,

giving back to the generosity of the waterfall.

*Rinderpest outbreak*

Like some divine curse  
spreading from cow to cow  
like some web of death, a mindless reaper.  
Streams of milk slowing to drips,  
salty with blood, streaked through with pus.  
Even Manson's list could not prepare for this.

No care could be taken to stay an outbreak -  
cattle tested by rinderpest, pleuropneumonia, bacteria Brucella  
Numbers grew and flock reduced, leapt and fell  
There were no vets  
They had no strict guard  
But the cows had Cheuk Yau.  
The epidemic took ninety from a hundred and fifty  
Scattering dead cattle from the hills to the sea  
But Cheuk Yau knew his calves, cows, and bulls  
like he knew his mother's name  
By the warmth of their breath, he could tell  
If they were well.  
He drove thirty of them up the hill to the north  
Hiding them there  
Keeping them healthy, under his spell

*Expansion of the Dairy Farm*

Sterilizing plant and poultry house  
Keeping the dairy free from every mouse  
Storerooms built as well as workers' quarters  
All the products then sent to exporters  
Profits return as turnover soars  
Development plans hidden in drawers.

The Dairy Farm Depot in the streets of Central  
conducted such mechanical mundanities as  
storing, chilling, controlling, and monitoring  
the constant *chrr, brr, chrr, brr* -  
memories almost faded

A corner in the Dairy Farm Depot  
devoted itself to the pleasure of the staff,

The rhythmic beat of table tennis pierces the haze

- *bing - bum - bing - bum -*

The chatter of athletic comrades

Travels

In

Tandem

With

Their

Feet

To

The

Nearby

Park

To

Play

In

Teams

Of

Eleven

Tangible movements

— to be turned into intangible memories

With thirty good cattle and more on the way

The directors and managers expanded their company:

Ice cream, cream cheese, cheese, and butter

Depots in town selling chicken, ham, and turkey

They remodelled the dairy

Machines for clarifying

cooling

pasteurizing

separating now

Carried on until milk bottles are taken to the customers.

The belt moves in loops,

the shriek of metal and heat from machines

taunting those longing to stop the tick-tocking clock

sore limbs, tired feet

they let their eyelids fall and feel

clear blue waves of the waterfall that heals

*factory work*

their souls.

The *splish-splash* and creak of wheels  
announce its arrival, a cart stopped at the door.

*shop*

*Milk for me.*

A coolie's feet cover the five miles to Central.  
I take the milk, to place alongside  
other treats for young eyes  
while the smoky aroma of ham and bacon  
wafts in, tempting our noses.

Mingling with the exotic scent from which  
you can imagine a flaky golden pie-crust  
fresh from the oven, ready to be sold.

*Welcome to the main depot!*

Little steps make their entry  
eager giggles, fogging up the counters,  
keen hands impatiently tapping for

*Ice cream! Ice cream!*

While a parent patiently pores over  
the best cut of pork or steak or chicken.  
Satisfied by the confident gait away, if you listen  
the crinkling of butcher paper audibly  
boasting Dairy Farm quality.

*WWII*

Men upon men, solemnly,  
disappear over the hill, into the trees  
branches like dark hands drag at their backs  
the sombre farewell of those who,  
not knowing if they will return,  
leave one-way tracks.

Counting the days until  
they may return to the familiar rhythm,  
the original call of the waterfall  
with calves they nurtured, who miss their touch,  
with the well-trodden roads  
up the steep slope of the hill,  
the homely view of the sea  
and greeting of grass under feet,  
to steal the ghostliness

from barren white octagons  
with the warmth of their hands.

And the tear-stricken sendoff  
by those who stay, trapped in their own way  
behind fences. Within white walls  
tending old machinery beside memories  
    in vacant rooms, old photographs,  
with the doleful moaning of cows  
once alive with their huffing  
now low and haunting  
as if grazing graves...

And when the Japanese came  
When the Japanese came

*The Japanese arrive, internment*

Oh!

The occupation an invasion unbidden  
The feeling of grief deep in your chest  
So stark and black you need it to flow  
-not a trickle -  
like the sea - not a stream - down to your feet  
and into the depths of the earth.

Years  
Will leave you  
But this  
Still breathes  
Inside you

    When they breached Wong Nai Chung Gap  
    Like a blunt blade through the heart  
    White ragged edges glacier cold on fresh flowing red  
heartless avalanches

Ask me what it was like

Ask me what it was like to be there  
Ask me what it was like to be kidnapped and beaten, murdered  
Massacred

Ask me what it was like to look at Stanley  
The college a coffin  
The sea but a dream.

How about the ghost of that tiger?  
Butcher Bradbury skinned it  
while we were writing Widow Pearce's letter.  
Aye, our condolences to a real fighter. Its gaping maw  
thinned to a bone - a broth for dinner.

Taken for granted, now freedom,  
a sacred hallucination, raped...  
A salt dry memory on a dying tongue  
Forgiveness aches  
But they have milked my pain dry.

Yet though the pleasant breeze sometimes turned dire  
and trees bent and grass flattened under militant ire

Water whips and froths at the waterfall's spire  
and milk grows scarce and business hangs on a thin wire

Water continues to flow and flow and flow,  
resistant to circumstance, sickness and sorrow

though it does wane and weaken  
it will return by the next season

and the farm is rebuilt bit by bit  
with local indomitable spirit...

*Post-war expansion of the Dairy Farm*

The factory moves, grown up  
like kids who  
graduate from secondary school  
upgrade to a greater space  
growing out of old garments  
taking up new interests  
leaving behind the bubble of infancy,  
childhood,  
youth.

Fishing nets are again being cast  
Dairy Farm is now stretching

vast turmoil and war are things of the past.

Do the workers still think of the waterfall,  
the place that started it all?

And milk, at last!  
The product of our momentous efforts  
the rich cream, almost clinically white,  
the unspoiled colour of a Chinese lily, of silk, of purity,  
like the very clouds of heaven blended,  
trapped, swirling perpetually, in a glass.  
A perfected science, delicious chemistry  
of the measured ratio of ice to cream to water  
to cows to cold to heat to fodder  
to manager to machine to worker  
to wages to cost to customer  
all preceded by a trickle of water.

A lot goes into a single bottle of milk.

*Consumers of Dairy Farm products*

Gong Gong bought a bottle for guai suen each day  
he'd tell her to drink up,  
(*faai go zheung dai*)

Bottoms up,  
her small hands held the slippery glass  
sipping slowly  
milk dripping, trickling down her chin.  
She giggles at Gong Gong  
He smiles, and his wrinkles do too.

Etched at the bottom of the bottle  
she felt with her tiny thumb  
a string of numbers  
a language only she could feel—  
Gong Gong's unspoken love.

She'd sworn to do the same for her children  
and make them do so for theirs  
a family tradition, a veiled admission  
a dairy reminder that someone still cared.

Cartons among cartons, bottles upon bottles, the unassuming label disguised in flurries of plastic packaging. Extravagant slogans repeated ad nauseum – Fresh! Pure! Creamy! Scrutinizing between the blinding white-white-white of milks, *but which is fresher? Which is purer? Which is creamier?* Drowning in dramatic imagery, milk spilling, cows smiling, fields green-beyond-belief, a few blown-up pixels blurry. Begging: Pick me! Pick me! A thousand people pass by decorated aisles, trying to predict the taste from just the titles. Paul's, Dutch Lady, Devondale, Dairy Farm - *Well, they all came from some kind of dairy farm, now didn't they? It just depends whether they were flown in from Australia, Switzerland, or France, but you know importing makes the prices higher.* Thirty-six, twenty-seven-fifty, twenty-two-ninety for a carton *but this one's ten cents off!* Manson's magic, not lost as much as lurking, remixed into regulations inspected within factory walls. No more need to worry about curdled, crude, septic milk. All that has to be pondered is the unsolvable question: *which machine mixed it better?*

*"Time waits for no one"*

*Rememberer*

I recall the days of Manson

Coughtrie  
Chater  
Ryrie  
Sharp  
and Ray

The passion for milk - white  
colour, race, milk:

Two cowboys, teasingly,  
pushed one another,

spilled crude milk from cans  
into tall grass. Brought to the farms

some prolonged jest from the quarters.

Seated at a polished table, you look at the menu with your co-workers. It has been a hectic morning - with your stomach repeatedly growling (you woke up too late for breakfast). The chit-chat has scarcely started when -

back to work, the repetitive milking and pouring and weighing  
and bringing back for treating.

*Political unrest*

The once-green pasture divided;  
weeds plucked; roots pulled apart.  
blue and yellow  
remain.

The Dairy Farm's milk is tainted  
with memories of pain and disdain  
the farmers are long forgotten  
their tales washed away by years of rain.

The bottle clinks against the shelf  
Skimmed milk skimming over scarring, jarring truths.

The waterfall was a blessing  
it covered the town with white  
bubbles as from bars of soap  
a clean sheet of hope  
a name now heard all across the globe.  
Does the waterfall roar in approval (like applause),  
or does she bawl in alarm, enraged and appalled?

*Giving back*

It is a package not a product,  
a group not a company  
a goal to serve families, societies, and countries  
*to give our customers across Asia a store they trust, delivering quality, service, and value.*

The Group sustains the impoverished  
the waterfall beckons them to give—  
give life and love to those who grieve.  
The crops and cattle that had died,  
food that families were denied,  
animals without shelter,  
people left to swelter,  
or shiver.  
The waterfall gave and refused to be stingy  
even to the ones that abused its dignity.