Part Three

Mountains and seas, seas and mountains,
a watercolour of the waters, southern shores,
painted a quiet land,
with a roaring waterfall, water force,
seafarers’ source
of sustenance

_Sui Seung Yan_ sway in their fishing boats,
swaying
  on the sea that birthed them
swaying
  on the sea until the day when
  the waves pull in ominous ships
_White_
Of the people, of the race, of the
_milk_

The poppies of Bengal bought the boundaries for the British

Janus white faces stark on dark opiates

_The war was lost_

_Why have they come?_
_What are their names?_
Thousands stormed the shores
Filled up Island north
Trickles of bored, curious Europeans
Filed through the hills

Living the light

_Breathing the breeze_

_Holding the harbour_
Seeing the south

The mouth of Aberdeen

When they built a curtain around my eyes
Lapraik raised a castle first and vast
A Scottish merchant reaching for the skies
Overlooking the sea and his fleets’ masts

The first one holding on to this ancient land
A permanent tenant of the high hills
But her first masters left in haste, abandoned
everything in the plague, all stalled and still

The early ambitious French missionaries
took care of Fathers sick, weary from the heat
And in the gardens of their kind Béthanie
discovered our bauhinia, yeung tsz ging sweet

They obtained Lapraik’s castle (Douglas now gone)
The manor expanded, renamed Nazareth House
It was a chapel, a printing press for the Word of God
Then sold to Hong Kong U. whose top boys it housed.

Overlooking the city of Victoria
from castles and peaks and hills
safe in a bubble
unaware of the struggle
of the yellow below the bluff.

White the colour of purity
hollow, their stares of pity
for the yellow,
gulping down tainted
milk until they threw up
who lacked knowledge or courage or power or faith.
What awaited them was ick, pus, muck, and gunk.
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,          plague
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).

The Dairy Farm

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

*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 Ryrie
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.

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

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
their souls.

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

*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

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.

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.

Consumers of Dairy Farm products
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.