

For Dylan Thomas (1914-53)

Kirpal Singh¹
Singapore Management University

And I took your advice
And have not gone gently into anything
Save a cranny or two – more imagined than real.
Raging against rules, customs, traditions, lore
I have, alas, not had any kind of dominion–
Knowing as the end might be approaching
That all talk about prayers about to be said
Verge on the quick and the dead and the not-so-dead.
That peculiar force you said which drives through the fuse–
Green, red, purple or any colour for that matter
Ends as a kind of metaphor of the clown in the moon
And fern hill, like so many other hills under milk wood
Stands alone, forlorn, more than just a grief ago.
Like you, I, too, have penned many an author's prologue;
Indeed epilogues as well, wondering if
Altar wise by owl's light someday the light may shine
Brightly for us who defy, deny and go out on a spin.

My personal animal, shaped more than your wizard
Leads me on, rage after rage after rage
And I think to myself of your dumb, crooked rose
Knowing how the hands that sign papers of import
Have no time for mercy and for truancy of any kind
Beyond a rub and a tickle, a prick and a pickle.
Man be my metaphor, you proclaimed–
How do I, living in an age of liberation,
Invite our better halves, women, to be more than images–
Distractions upon a string that will not easily turn ropes?

¹ Kirpal Singh is an internationally renowned poet, fictionist and scholar. His latest book *Naked Ape: Naked Boss*, a biography of zoo-creator/maker Bernard Harrison, deals with some larger issues of management practice. Kirpal is known globally as a Creativity-guru and is a much sought-after Keynote and Plenary speaker. He is currently Director of the Wee Kim Wee Centre at the Singapore Management University. He is also constantly invited to teach and give lectures, seminars and workshops at prestigious universities, the most recent being the College of William and Mary, where he was Distinguished Mellon Fellow.

Yes, a dog has its day and a cat has many lives
But we who inhabit this strange and exciting earth
Do not know how to play homo moralis
And so I stride on more levels than I really care for
In this land of my fathers, my mothers, my uncles & aunts.

Dylan oh Dylan although your love pulls,
The pale nipples air in the crafty veil of sullen art
Leads me to the long world's gentleman, and silence.

Sustaining Green

Write a poem about sustainability, they said—
 I pondered the seemingly easy request
 You can write about being green, they said—
 Which green I asked myself, probingly
 Colours today masquerade meanings
 Lying too deep for simple sustenance.

Sustainability? – is this maintenance? I muse—
 A continuing maintenance, an inner voice prompts
 The nub of the issue for most of us—deep—
 We don't continue maintaining ourselves:

Maintain/sustain. Sustain/maintain. MS/SM.
 We lose ourselves in words with no frames
 Frames with no words, no real appeal
 While out there, the destruction continues
 Unabated, unabashed, wild, roguish
 Enough sustainability for a whole millennium!

I walk with head down, the clouds above
 Black as the nights of yore, here where
 Sustainability has never been a core concern,
 Pour bucket after bucket of heavy rain
 Which runs into the earth for a quick shelter.

From age to new age, from head to toe
 We stuff ourselves full of sustainability
 And yet at every corner, at every turn
 I see the earth starving, trees grieving
 And young kids collect dollars and cents
 To make us all green from our whites
 And browns and blacks and yellows and reds—

Sustainability – more than a big word
 More than continuing maintenance
 More than just talk and talk the walk
 More than research grants and books
 More than street protests and blind sit-downs
 More than plastic bags and plastic eyes—
 Sustainability – our gift to those unborn.

At a Beach, LA

winds blow, memories flood
the moon brightly glows
as, in a corner of our globe
fire-flies become extinct....

the beach changes with its visitors
the waters, now dirtier, still lure—
I think and imagine couples
Doing what couples do, deliberately.

Somewhere clouds and waters merge
Somewhere couples fuse and birth
Somewhere faith remains intact
Somewhere we connect and love.

Strange, this exchange of waves
Across miles and miles of ignorance
As we travel the heart's desires
And realise strong, bold absences.

Singlish for Singlish

Y u so like dat huh
Y u so like dat
Siva couldn't take it anymore so he left—
Perth better for singlish lah, he said!

In came colin goh....
Colon who?
Colin lah, not colon! Not colan, colin!!!!
Colin said, let's talk cock!
What? Alamak you bad lah
Y u talk use this word
U know lah this word cannot be used loosely!

But we are not using any word loosely
Every word has nuance, is heavily shaded
Contains meanings beyond meanings

Like what old samy, English dept, NUS, used to say—
I go rounding what-y they always scold me?
I tell you guys, this is all very CCTC—
Chin chuey taichi, talk like this chia lat!
Sibeh chia lat, boey tahan.

I tell u man, let's just go fly kites
Play masak masak with the girls
And go makan curry with plenty of lemak—
Oxford or coxford it makes no difference
Just like singhlish-with the H and
Singlish-without the H—
Its all tuaki tapi boey khi!