Requiem for a Rainforest

CECIL RAJENDRA

i wrestle with a rhinoceros
but no words will come

i hear tall trees crashing
wild birds screeching
the buffalo stampeding
but no words will come

i hear sawmills buzzing
cash registers clicking
entrepreneurs chuckling
but no words will come

i hear of press conferences
of petitions, of signatures
of campaigns and lobbying
but no words will come

i hear the rain pounding
into desolate spaces
the widowed wind howling
but no words will come

the rhino is boxed and crated
merbok and meranti are gone
above, no monkeys swing
from no overhead branches
below, a pangolin stumbles
around amputated trunks
an orphaned butterfly
surveys the wounded jungle

yes, no words can fill
this gash of malevolence
but a terrible anger squats
hugging its knees in silence.
Going Away

MUHAMMAD HAJI SALLEH

because we are always travellers
tourists of sorts –
places are only stops
along a road of the years.
if i have caught the glimpse
in your wandering eyes,
the uncertain flicker,
between hope and hopelessness
winking within me,
i know i am always afraid
that i am a mover
knowing only what a moment offers,
the little emotions
that only the homeless
take with them as souvenirs.

i collect faces
as i gather bits of love,
the fragmented justification
for a heap of experiences.

i must have loved you
in the moment's small space
and the heart's loneliness.
now it is time
to go away, to unpack
the past with the future.

starting from a cross-road
and following chosen directions
we left a rendezvous
that a little time afforded.
now, i must go,
where the listless legs carry.
Our English not punny, you know, our twang, our stresses not wrong only the donno compleen: say this say that *lab*, our English not so strong

Stress put in all the wrong places we say ‘cool’ eeben wen it’s hot *lab* we hate the Mat Saleh races but hijack *deh* lingo *lab*!

We true Malaysians, you no, we pree people, you no: pree to make English not English but our very own, you see

We taken words like our leaders *tekan* ebri word, ebri ting that should be properly tekaned por the real good op the nation.

Just as we make English ideas not English anymore, but pree op all that brit liberty shit that should stay in *deh* dictionary

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1 "Malchin" is acronym for Malays, Chinese and Indians, the three major races of Malaysians who speak a unique lingua franca called "engmalchin." "Tekan" is Malay for "stress" or "oppress"; "lah" is a meaningless syllable added for stress in engmalchin; "Mat Saleh" is slang for the English or white man.
We not tall
With their Cambridge education
Talk this law lab, that law lab
Pull of colonial twang and aksben

We tekan words our own always
we tekan the ‘du’ in education
cause we pree to do what we like
with word meanings and diksen

We always prefer to differ
(not differ – that’s damn English!)
our revered leaders taught us that
donno why you tink it so ticklish

We love to pollow our leaders
in ebri ting that matters
prom what careers to pursue
to what ting to consider true.

We do that oso in private matters
tekan the ‘ni’ in fornication
cause not like our pormer masters
some ting we don tekan like deb do

The ‘cras’ in democracy we stress
so oso the ‘do(o)m’ in freedom
in patriot, it’s ‘riot’ lah like the rest
and never the ‘bore’ in boredom

what more, we really give full blast
to the ‘id’ in idealism
so how dare you say we misplace
our stress, our nationalism

We always have them about us
ebritime talk English lab
our way of talking the lingo
is our way of being unik oso

It’s our great opportunity
to practise our own democracy.
For My Mother
SHIRLEY GEOK-LIN LIM

I sent a letter
careful to say
nothing
to hurt
I sent a check
thinking that’s all
she’ll want
because I knew
there was more
she wanted
I sent some photos –
see, here I am
sitting, standing
you can put me
in your pocketbook
in the pages
of your bible.

A different daughter
or mother
would surely
have shared
a life
of common happiness.

How convenient
to be so busy:
chores and letters
meetings talks
washing up cleaning
hemming the days
in stitches all tucks
no ruffles
and late at night
another day
gone to seed.

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