

aald
rede
for
biggin
a kintra

*harry giles
after lao-tzu*





nae learnin, nae dule

atween YES n NO
whit odds?

atween guid n ill
whit odds?

dreid whit aabdy dreids?
– dytit!

fock gangin
as for a belly-rive
but a'm tawie, wirdless
as a wean at's nivver smilet
forfaren, athoot a haem tae masel

aabdy's fouthie
n a'm alane
a guip mynd
steero, steero

aabdy's gleg
n a'm driftin
i the tide
laar-snuvit

aabdy's ettlin
n a'm thrawn
alane, unco
bab i the creel

* * *

Dule: grief. Aabdy: everybody. Dytit: stupid. Fock: people. Gangin: grinning/gaping. Belly-rive: feast. Tawie: passive. Wean: infant. At: that. Forfaren: folorn. Fouthie: having abundance. Guip: fool. Steero: confusion. Gleg: sharp. Laar-snuvit: turning in the breeze. Ettlin: trying/planning. Thrawn: uncontrollable. Unco: strange. Creel: womb.



ettlin tae ower the warld?
nae chance

the warld's a cog o speerit
n canna be owert

wha owers, fails
wha haads, tints

some laed, some follae
some greet, some lilt
some rapple, some cryne
some thirl, some brak

syne the aald i the horn
fire oot waste n wanthrift

* * *

Ettlin: trying. Ower: subdue/control. Cog: vessel. Tints: loses. Greet: weep. Lilt: sing cheerfully. Rapple: grow fast. Cryne: shrink with age. Thirl: oppress. Syne: thus. Aald i the horn: wise. Wanthrift: extravagance.



tae hint, skael
 tae sap, brace
 tae ban, big
 tae end, faa til

cry this a subtle leam

saft n swack wins stark n stieve
 fish canna jouk the weel
 a kintra's best wappens
 canna be kythed

* * *

Hint: gather. Skael: scatter. Sap: soften/soak. Big: build. Faa til: begin. Leam: illumination. Swack: pliable. Stark: robust. Stieve: stiff. Jouk: escape. Weel: deep pool/eddy. Kythed: revealed.



a bit wittins
 whan waakin the wey
 are a rod tae dree

 the wey is snod
 n fock juist fancy the ramse

govrenment dividen
 loanins grown-up
 kists empie
 but heidyins' claes are braw
 thay've barrie blads
 are stecht wi maet
 gey rowthie

 cry this the darg o reivers
 n no the wey

* * *

*A bit: a little. Wittins: knowledge. Dree: trouble. Snod: smooth. Ramse: rough.
 Loanins: fields. Grown-up: overgrown. Kists: stores. Heidyins: bosses. Claes:
 clothes. Braw: splendid. Barrie: fine. Stecht: stuffed. Gey: very. Rowthie: abundant.
 Darg: day's work. Reivers: thieves/plunderers.*



the mair the laas
 the puirer the fock
 the sneller the blads
 the mair the strowe
 the sleer the sleys
 the waar the wark
 the mair the ring
 the mair the crime

syne

dinna dae
 n fock transform thirsels
 mak still
 n fock govren thirsels
 growe tuim
 n fock growe fouth
 want no
 n fock growe haemelt

* * *

Sneller: sharper. Strowe: resistance. Sleer: cannier. Sleys: strategies. Waar: worse. Ring: reign. Syne: thus. Tuim: empty. Fouth: abundant. Haemelt: simple/homely.



a muckle kintra
 lowdens hidsel
 n baets a peedie wan

a peedie kintra
 bides lowden
 n baets a muckle wan

whiles lowdenin baets
 whiles bidin lowden baets

a muckle kintra wants
 tae haen fock
 a peedie kintra wants
 tae ser fock

whan baeth win
 the muckle wan maun lowden

* * *

Muckle: big. Lowden: lowers/makes weak. Peedie: Small. Bides: stays. Haen: protect. Ser: serve. Maun: must.



nithin's saft as watter
 but attackin the stark
 nithin wins as aesy

saft wins stark
 swack wins stieve

aabdy kens
 naebdy mynd on

syne the aald i the horn
 accept the kintra's gutter
 turn guide o hid's seilie yird
 accept the kintra's misanter
 turn crown o the lift

true wirds breed conters

* * *

Stark: robust. Swack: supple. Stieve: stiff. Aabdy: everybody. Kens: knows. Mynds on: keeps in mind. Syne: therefore. Aald i the horn: the wise. Gutter: filth. Seilie: holy. Yird: earth. Misanter: misfortune. Lift: sky. Breed: resemble. Conters: opposites.



peedie kintra, curn o fock
 haep o gibbles
 nivver haaden

fock mynd on deith
 n dinna fare far
 thay've whirls n yoles
 at neebdy hurls
 guns n graith
 at neebdy wags
 thay coont wi raes n raep

hinnie leevin
 bonnie claes
 lown haems
 lillie dances

neebor kintras bide at closs
 ye'll hear thir baests
 but bairns growe aald n dee
 nae needin tae cam n gang

* * *

Peedie: small. Curn o: few. Gibbles: devices. Mynd on: remember. Fare: travel. Whirl: wheel. Yole: boat. Hurl: take for a spin. Graith: armour/gear. Wag: wield. Raes: knots. Claes: clothes. Lown: peaceful. Lillie: lovely. Bide: stay. Gang: go.

Notes

I am not a scholar of Classical Chinese, nor did I study the Tao Te Ching beyond my undergraduate dissertation. Thus, while I worked closely to the originals and took very few active liberties, my understanding is limited and so you should take these texts as poems written after or inspired by the original texts, rather than translations of them. My work here is partial, partisan and limited. You should also definitely read the originals or a good translation: in English, I recommend Addiss and Lombardo, which I drew on heavily here.

There is a wonderful tradition of anarchist interpretations of the Tao Te Ching; I'd love to talk with you about it.

The language I am using here is Orkney Scots. Most of the words belong to Orkney or are spoken commonly there; I've magpie-plucked the occasional word from versions of Scots further south when I couldn't resist. Spelling differs frequently from the Report an Recommends o the Scots Spellin Comatee: the orthography is that developed by Flaws and Lamb for the Orkney Dictionary, though I suspect I've used it imperfectly. This does not mean I've written in the language people speak daily: I've written in poetry.

When a word has a close cognate in English, I have not included it in the glossary at the foot of each page – so if it's not in the glossary, it's very similar to a word in English; often the vowels have moved from long to short, O-sounds tend to become A-sounds, and some consonants are dropped.

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