

Soliloquy of a Skull

Hello. Welcome.

You may think me strange,

That I can see with only bony cones and even hear,
Deep drawn breaths, sighs and soft whispers of wondrous horror.

Can you tell me what am I doing here?

Everyday I see men and women come, wide-eyed;

And even sometimes a spider dangling across

What was my orb, by the thinnest of threads;

Like a tear on an eyelash glistening in the morning sun.

Then I recall I haven't had either for quite a while.

See those big pits across the field,

These exhausted quarries of reason?

I was there with the rest of me,

Mangled, mashed and mingled with too many others:

Men of thought and word,

And also many women and children, clueless.

I was only twenty-five,

When those adolescents found me,

Took away my life, then my spirit,

And finally my life, albeit too slowly.

And so I am stacked with strangers here,

Cluttered neighbours in death and display,

Of questions unanswered and answers unclaimed.

You must pardon my lisp.

My jaw lies elsewhere,

Probably on another shelf,

Or still perhaps in the soil out there feeding the earth:

Now a heath of surreal quiet and uneasy life.

It's getting late and I know you can't stay.

So goodbye.



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There are no more children in the school,
There are no more laughter and running about.
But the vacant corridors and classrooms still teach,
With each whisper of the wind,
And the gentle rustling of swaying coconut trees,
The discipline of evil.

The shadows are long in the evening sun,
The shadows are still growing in the emptied cells,
Only because they let a little light in,
So that you may see the shadows.
How dark, bent and long they really were.
The watchful shades of evil.

It will not be visited,
It will not be much less toured,
This old crucible of pain can only be felt:
Of lives serially evaporated,
Spirits distilled to nothingness.
The merry mirth of evil.

Editor's Note

These two poems were penned by Dr Wong Chiang Yin, who was inspired during his visit to the Cheong Ek Genocide Centre in Phnom Penh. See related article on pg. 8. The photo is by Regina Chin.