

Reinhard Mey – Ship of Fools – translation of Das Narrenschiff

Mercury falls, the signs indicating storm,
Bloody diggling and nagging from the command tower
And dull grinding sounds roll from the machine.
And rolling and pounding and heavy sea,
The on-board chapel plays "Humbataeterae",
And a mad laughter penetrates from the latrine.
The charge is putridly, the papers fictitious,
The bilge pumps leaky and the section walls blocked,
The hatches far open and all alarm bells ring.
The waves hit head-high in the loading bay
And St Elms fire licks from the bay deck,
Yet nobody on board can read the signs!

The first mate lies, the captain is drunk
And the machinist sunk into a dull lethargy
The crew just loud perjured rascals,
The radio operator too cowardly to send an SOS
Kobolds are leading the fool's ship
Full steam ahead for the Reef!

On the horizon the signs of the time create lightning
Baseness and greed and vanity.
On the bridge numskulls gawk and romp about.
In the murky deep the sharp-serrated shark fishes,
Bringing his catch in the dry, along the tax,
On the sand bank, with the well-known treasure island.
The other money launderers and pimps who are already waiting
Brothel king, play machine baron,
In the bright light, nobody is to be in the darkness
In the banana republic, even the president
Has lost shame and knows no scruples,
Dresses up with the tax thief in the suite.

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One has made himself smooth, one has positioned.
All high ideals have been damaged,
And the big rebel, who did not become too tired to argue,
Mutates to a servile, poisoned gnome

And sings lamblike devout before the bad old man in Rome
His songs, for truth: Times are changing!
Once young savages are pliant, devout and tame,
Bought, anesthetized and wing-lame,
With little velvet paws traded for the once so sharp claws.
And futile old men present perky to themselves
Always with a lot of too young women on the upper deck,
That warm their floppy limbs and spoon-feed them with pre-chewed food.

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They arm against the enemy, an enemy that has been here for a long time
He has his hand on your throat, standing behind you.
In protection of the paragraphs he mixes marked maps.
Everybody can see it, but everybody looks away,
And the shady character emerges from his hiding place
And crosses fire before all eyes in the kindergarten.
The lookout shouts from the highest mast: End of time in sight!
As petrified as they are they hear him not.
They move like lemmings in mindless hordes.
It is, as if all have lost their minds,
Itself to the fall and to the purge committed,
And a will-o'-the-wisp became their beacon.

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