

Slow Boat to China

By [Dr. T. P. Wilkinson](#)

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Region: [Asia](#)

Theme: [History](#)

*There was a day
It was still called Cathay
By those in the West
Who travelled that way
Silk and tea
Porcelain and spice
They brought us
spaghetti
We even took rice.
For centuries
We bought there
Things we don't need
Brought for those
Whose moral was greed
The rice we still eat
The tea we still drink
But with preference
For substances
By which we don't think.
They sold us their goods
For silver we stole
We blasted their ports
Filled their cities with holes
Now that they make
All the things that we take
Our vanity cries
To tell them more lies
With centuries past
Recovery fast
No longer the first
We're afraid to be last.*

Dr T.P. Wilkinson writes, teaches History and English, directs theatre and coaches cricket between the cradles of Heine and Saramago. He is also the author of [Church Clothes, Land, Mission and the End of Apartheid in South Africa](#) (Maisonneuve Press, 2003). [Read other articles by T.P.](#)

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