

KRITIKA KULTURA

LITERARY SUPPLEMENT NO.1

Anthology of New Philippine Writing in English

March 2011

<http://kritikakultura.ateneo.net>

Indexed in MLA International Bibliography, Thomson Reuters (ISI), Scopus,
EBSCO, Directory of Open Access Journals, and Philippine Journals Online



DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES
ATENEO DE MANILA UNIVERSITY
Quezon City, Philippines



Kritika Kultura is an international refereed electronic journal acknowledged by a host of Asian and Asian American Studies libraries and scholars network, and indexed in the MLA International Bibliography, Thomson Reuters (ISI), Scopus, EBSCO, the Directory of Open Access Journals, and Philippine Journals Online (PhilJOL).

Aside from the journal which is published twice a year (February and August), *Kritika Kultura* also publishes monographs and literary editions. All content are open-access and published electronically.

Copyright © Ateneo de Manila University

Kritika Kultura is published by the Ateneo de Manila University. Contents may not be copied or sent via email or other means to multiple sites and posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's written permission. Users may download and print articles for individual, noncommercial use only. Please contact the publisher for any further use of this work at kritikakultura@admu.edu.ph.

For flexibility and freedom, authors retain copyright of their work, even as they are urged not to reproduce an exact same version elsewhere.

AIMS, FOCUS, AND SCOPE

Kritika Kultura is an international peer-reviewed electronic journal of language and literary/cultural studies which addresses issues relevant to the 21st century, including language, literature and cultural policy, cultural politics of representation, the political economy of language, literature and culture, pedagogy, language teaching and learning, critical citizenship, the production of cultural texts, audience reception, systems of representation, effects of texts on concrete readers and audiences, the history and dynamics of canon formation, gender and sexuality, ethnicity, diaspora, nationalism and nationhood, national liberation movements, identity politics, feminism, women's liberation movements, and postcolonialism.

Kritika Kultura is interested in publishing a broad and international range of critical, scholarly articles on language, literary and cultural studies that appeal to academic researchers in government and private agencies and educational institutions, as well as members of the public who are concerned with exploring and examining contemporary issues in the complex nexus interconnecting language, literature, culture, and society.

Kritika Kultura seeks to promote innovative scholarship that challenges traditional canons and established perspectives and enhance work that bridges disciplinary research around the issues enumerated above, especially in the promising lines of work in Philippine, Asian, Southeast Asian, and Filipino-American studies.

INFORMATION FOR AUTHORS

Please visit <http://kritikakultura.ateneo.net>.

PUBLISHER

Department of English, School of Humanities
Ateneo de Manila University
Loyola Heights, Quezon City, Philippines 1108
Tel. Nos. +63 (2) 426-6001 loc. 5310 or 5311
Telefax: +63 (2) 426-6120
Email: kritikakultura@admu.edu.ph



**ABOUT LITERARY SUPPLEMENT NO. 1:
KRITIKA KULTURA ANTHOLOGY OF PHILIPPINE NEW WRITING IN ENGLISH**

The Philippine literary community has a relatively longstanding tradition of releasing anthologies focusing on young writers. However, it can be gleaned that the notion of the “new” remains unarticulated, as recent anthologies simply focus on the “young,” and what becomes apparent is the persistent maintenance of an aesthetics solidified in various creative writing institutions and workshops, a notion that is rapidly rendered inaccurate by a healthy production of writing that these anthologies do not include.

What this issue of *Kritika Kultura* intends to accomplish is to represent the kind of writing that is rarely published, the kind that is not often legitimized by mainstream publications. The kind of writing that we, as editors, can confidently call “new.”

New, in this case, as the word that most succinctly describes literary texts that are mindful of—by way of formal response/appropriation and/or thematic confrontation—several cultural phenomena such as the preponderance of piracy, the simultaneous/schizophrenic sociopolitical conditions of the nation, the “new” government that includes so many of the old names, the highly provisional stances in criticism pertaining to society and art, the currency and increasing value of topicality and ephemera (as evidenced by BPOs, SEOs, and Facebook), the persistent dominance of celebrity culture, and the gossip paradigm of discourse. The anthology welcomes contributions that transgress genre boundaries, revise traditional modes and forms, formally engage with the largely oral, nontextual/extratextual literary practices of the Filipino audience, and display a technical alertness to the quandaries presented by blog-driven writing, Facebook fiction, protest poetry, the malleability of languages, the hegemony of academic publishing in “legitimate” literature, the dominion of western literary models, and, in light of these, the strategic and arguably fictionalizing construction of Filipino identity.



LITERARY SUPPLEMENT EDITORS

Mark Anthony Cayanan
Conchitina Cruz
Adam David

EDITORIAL STAFF

Ma. Luisa F. Torres Reyes
Editor-in-Chief
mreyes@ateneo.edu

Ivery de Pano
Mayel Martin
Managing Editors

Roy Tristan Agustin
Francis Sollano
Editorial Assistants

INTERNATIONAL BOARD OF EDITORS

Jan Baetens
Cultural Studies Institute
Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium

Michael Denning
Yale University, USA

Faruk
Cultural Studies Center
Gadja Mada University, Indonesia

Regenia Gagnier
University of Exeter, UK

Leela Gandhi
University of Chicago, USA

Inderpal Grewal
University of California at Irvine, USA

Peter Horn
Professor Emeritus
University of Capetown, South Africa

Anette Horn
Department of Modern and European Languages
University of Pretoria, South Africa

David Lloyd
University of Southern California, USA

Bienvenido Lumbera
National Artist for Literature
Professor Emeritus
University of the Philippines

Rajeev S. Patke
Department of English Language and Literature
National University of Singapore

Temario Rivera
International Relations
International Christian University, Japan

Vicente L. Rafael
University of Washington, USA

E. San Juan, Jr.
Philippine Cultural Studies Center, USA

Neferti X. M. Tadiar
Columbia University, USA

Antony Tatlow
University of Dublin, Ireland



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Seven Exquisite Corpses (pages 15, 53, 106, 155, 202, 269, and 311)
DJ Legaspi, Mervin Malonzo, and Josel Nicolas

8	Introduction <i>Mark Anthony Cayanan, Conchitina Cruz, and Adam David</i>	
16	[In all the pleasance of your seriousness] <i>Petra Magno</i>	55
17	The Difference Between Abundance and Grace <i>Christine V. Lao</i>	63
18	bumaka: bü-mä-kä / to fight <i>Rey Escobar</i>	81
20	ginebra: hi-NÄB-ruh / gin <i>Rey Escobar</i>	82
23	Lexical Entries on the Prick <i>Carlos Quijon, Jr.</i>	89
26	Postcards: Malesia, 1997-2007 <i>Christian Tablazon</i>	97
28	PMS: Meditations on the Post-Modern Syndrome <i>Eileen Tupaz</i>	98
34	Local Colour A Study in Line Cuts <i>Lawrence Bernabe</i>	100
42	Momentum <i>Apo Española</i>	101
44	Postcards From Somewhere <i>Florianne Jimenez</i>	107
54	Japan Leads in Condom Use A Headline in a Japanese Daily <i>Jun Dela Rosa</i>	
		Learning to Dance <i>Sandra Nicole Roldan</i>
		From Vogue <i>Isabela Cuerva</i>
		Mama Brought a White Elephant <i>Joey Clutario</i>
		“Best Pig Ever” Was Not All That He Said A Subjective Transcription of No Reservations: Philippines, Cut According to Commercial Breaks <i>Mae Cacanindin</i>
		Entry Taken from <i>The Encyclopaedia of Biomechanical Vertebrates</i> <i>Arbeen Acuña</i>
		of thievery <i>Lawrence Bernabe</i>
		What I mean to say is this <i>Paul S. de Guzman</i>
		[Move away from me said the flame so I jumped right in.] <i>EJ Galang</i>
		From <i>Short Walks</i> <i>Vincenz Serrano</i>
		Maps <i>Eliza Victoria</i>



TABLE OF CONTENTS

108	Sad, as in "Also": a Reverie, a Journey a Numbers Theory <i>Daryll Delgado</i>	172	Borders <i>Agustin Martin Rodriguez</i>
115	This House <i>Dana Lee F. Delgado</i>	174	Seven-Segment Display <i>Francis Murillo Emralino</i>
117	Permanent <i>Ramon Niño T. Raquid</i>	176	Anamnesis <i>Kristine Marie Reynaldo</i>
118	From Notes of a Professional Refugee <i>Isabelle Lau</i>	186	Rivers <i>Phillip Kimpo, Jr.</i>
125	Problem Solving <i>John Revo Ocampo</i>	188	Invisible Islands, or Theses on Philippine Disappearance <i>J. Pilapil Jacobo</i>
126	Problem Solving <i>John Revo Ocampo</i>	201	Severance <i>Oscar Tantoco Serquiña, Jr.</i>
127	Me and You and All the Usernames We Own <i>Arlynn Despi</i>	203	under cold light of measureless day <i>Lawrence Bernabe</i>
136	facebook makes and breaks relationships <i>Anna Oposa</i>	237	[poem 12] <i>Ramon Niño T. Raquid</i>
153	We Could Make an Army Tonight <i>Liana G. Barcia</i>	238	When Syntagm Met Paradigm <i>Rapunzel Tomacder</i>
156	Lobster for Dinner <i>Katrina C. Elauria</i>	239	The Word <i>Rapunzel Tomacder</i>
159	Like all mornings <i>Johnina Martha Marfa</i>	240	The World of the Words <i>Vyxz Vasquez</i>
160	The Story of Love <i>Alyza Taguilaso</i>	244	CLIFF-----NOTES <i>Rey Escobar</i>
168	To My Mother <i>Maria Pia V. Benosa</i>	252	This Feels Like a Song <i>Marrían Pio Roda Ching</i>
170	These Streets <i>Agustin Martin Roadriguez</i>	253	Conversations with God <i>Marrían Pio Roda Ching</i>
171	The Incident of the Drowning Kitten <i>Agustin Martin Rodriguez</i>	254	Ex <i>Liana G. Barcia</i>



TABLE OF CONTENTS

255	Going Public <i>Katrina Stuart Santiago</i>	312	About the Contributors, Artists, and Issue Editors
263	Three Stories <i>Zosimo Quibilan, Jr.</i>		
266	Thirteen Umbrellas: A Memoir <i>Pauline Lacanilao</i>		
270	Between what we know is finite and the person in your mouth <i>Carlos Quijon, Jr.</i>		
276	Taking the Train <i>EJ Galang</i>		
277	Cartomancer <i>Chiles Samaniego</i>		
280	io <i>Arbeen Acuña</i>		
285	A Process <i>Vyxz Vasquez</i>		
286	Please Repost: Hijacking Facebook Against Ondoy <i>Catherine Candano</i>		
291	Keep <i>Petra Magno and Joseph Casimiro</i>		
292	Act II, Sin I <i>Vyxz Vasquez</i>		
293	Seven Summers and a Theory of Colors <i>Eris Heidi Ramos</i>		
301	ADHD <i>Petra Magno</i>		
310	Approximations <i>Johnina Martha Marfa</i>		

Introduction

Mark Anthony Cayanan, Conchitina Cruz, and Adam David

The decision to affix the term *new* to this anthology derives from the conviction that there are enough surprising behaviors in language present in recent Philippine writing in English to merit a shorthand evaluation that is nothing less than a brazen pronouncement. New, in this case, is meant to careen beyond literal description, although it performs this practical function: the authors in this anthology are young in their writing lives, having published only one book, if at all, and quite a number of the contributors count this publication as their first. This common feature, while pertinent, is not the impetus for the anthology—the most youth does is promise imaginative energy, not assure it, and to host a friendly inventory of potential among those whose early stages of literary production coincide seems simply superfluous, if not vapidly premature, the new reduced to disclaimer rather than declaration. In calling itself new, this anthology holds itself responsible for the literary spectrum it constructs and asserts its position within. It directly engages art's unwavering fixation with *originality*—or its more pragmatic twin, *reinvention*¹—amid conditions that more and more aggressively eliminate their possibility. It situates itself in conversation with various traditions and whatever its existence renders old, mindful of the fluctuating degrees to which these are inscribed within the works that succeed them. It presumes a pitch peculiar enough to withstand, even temper, the cacophony of existing literature, and consequently, compelling enough to command attention.

To anthologize the new foregoes the security of hindsight, which is not to say now is a good time as any to fulfill the task. Now happens to find us in the thick of technology-generated textual production, a good chunk of each day's reading material sourced online, googled and tweeted, downloaded and blogged, emailed and posted. Now has firmly entrenched the latest variant of the exportable Pinoy worker, the home-based OFW, herded in the hundreds of thousands into the information highways of business process outsourcing, the industry that never sleeps. Now is an ode to the instant and free, the portable and disposable, our appetites for self-disclosure satiated in real time by Facebook status messages and unlitxt-ing, our compulsive consumerism appeased by the latest incarnation of each laptop, cell phone, and ebook reader we put on display, voluminous amounts of easy-access and even easier to cut-and-paste text, disbursed incessantly in increments of 140 characters and hyperlinked down to the most generic parts of speech—there is always something to say, there is always somebody saying it, and nothing is meant to last. For the writer whose daily walk on the wild side takes place in the virtual highways of today's hyper-mediated reality, these conditions present a slew of possibilities with which to consider the production of art: from how it is made to what it is made of to who one is in its making to who it is for to why it



is done—old questions that acquire new registers when granted the valence of ubiquitous technology.

It is in consideration of these contemporary questions that this anthology came about. We sought works that displayed technical alertness to the quandaries presented by internet-driven writing, and texts fueled by purposeful interrogation of received aesthetics—works that transgress genre boundaries, revise traditional modes and forms, expose the malleability and materiality of language, and works that formally engage with the largely oral or extra-textual literary practices of the Filipino audience. In the shadow of a year-young government that includes so many of the old names, fanned by the fatigue of history on a loop, this anthology attempts to carve out in literature a space where the public's go-to rhetorical question, *What else is new?*—one steeped in the tenor of resignation—can be converted to its infinitely more generative fraternal twin, *What is new?*—which, at the very least, resides in dialogue. By necessity, this anthology demands re-imaginings of or alternatives to the aesthetics proliferated by the *Tiempos* of Dumaguete and solidified in various creative writing institutions and workshops, deeming its largely unassailable maintenance unrealistic (to put it simply and literally), removed from the changing ways we read and write. Much like a reproductive health program in no way prevents those who ultimately decide to remain Catholic in the bedroom from doing so, making room for aesthetics other than the enduringly dominant local variant of the New Critical idiom² translates at most to a healthy availability of options and informed aesthetic choices. Over organic unity and timelessness, parataxis and provisionality are positioned in this anthology as aesthetic options more cognizant of the contemporary condition. Over the orderly tandem of central image and sublime insight, this anthology indulges the wayward possibilities of calculated messiness.

Cognizance, of course, is partly sourced from a subject position that desires conclusion by way of surprise: this anthology is admittedly a document of editorial preferences, affinities, and attitudes. These preferences defined the course of the deliberation process for the anthology and were even embodied in the final shape of a number of the texts: as editors, our relationship with the contributors was markedly collaborative, to the extent of giving radical formal suggestions to some authors whose submissions we found promising.³ Also, unlike anthologies devoted to emerging writers published in recent years—*Crowns and Oranges: Works by Young Philippine Poets* (2009), edited by Cirilo Bautista and Ken Ishikawa; the two PEN anthologies *At Home in Unhomeliness: An Anthology of Philippine Postcolonial Poetry in English* (2007), edited by J. Neil Garcia, and *A Different Voice: Fiction by Young Filipino Writers* (2007), edited by Vicente Groyon; the Kestrel *Philippine Speculative Fiction* anthologies; and the various thematic compilations of fiction and nonfiction published by Milflores come to mind—this anthology commits itself to no particular genre or thematic concern, a conscious effort on our part at de-compartmentalization to trigger the cross-pollination of genres and increase the chances of heterogeneity. Alongside these editorial proclivities, this anthology also reveals a burgeoning trend in the last five years or so—something evident to us in our various capacities as teachers, editors, writers, critics, and/or bookmakers—which saw the rise of independent productions, the publication of daring student work in university folios, and the increasingly vocal dissatisfaction with literary hegemonies.⁴ That this anthology is part of an internationally refereed journal of an esteemed university is an irony that does not escape us.

Disorientation—flavored with bewilderment and uneasiness, eliciting congenial surprise or outright indignation—is a typical response to the new, and most rewarding when simultaneously epistemological and ontological.⁵ What is new in Philippine writing in English? The works in this anthology, while eclectic in their mechanisms for surprise, share a few stylistic features, the most immediately apparent being visual assertiveness. In such cases, disorientation begins upon contact with the page,⁶ in works that compel the reader's gaze to objectify them. To slip seamlessly into meaning is to conceal the fact of its constructed-ness, a gap some texts in the



anthology refuse to grant, alerting the reader to the event of language on the page by way of shifts in typography and the calculated use of lineation and white space, some so staunch in their refusal to suppress artifice that they go to the extent of devising ways to reconfigure the physical act of reading text on the page. Such is the case in the looping narrative of Petra Magno's "ADHD," in which the tedium of repetition forced upon the reader is both undermined and underscored by the literal diminishment of each iteration. Page manipulation is also an apparent principle in Vincenz Serrano's "Short Walks," in which the three recurring features—the couplet, the photograph, and the paragraph—all, all at the same time, vie for attention, demand correspondence by virtue of proximity, insist on the maintenance of discrete narratives, and compel movement to the next page.

Others playfully contaminate the literary genres with extra-literary modes of discourse, swiping the formats of Wikipedia, Facebook, or glossy magazines, testing the capacity of objective apparatuses—transcripts, color schemes, hospital forms, dictionary entries—to withstand the intervention of subjectivity. Put the maxim *show don't tell* on crack and what you get is work that won't simply reference Wikipedia but be Wikipedia itself, as is the case in "Entry Taken from the *Encyclopedia of Biomechanical Convertibrates*," in which Arbeen Acuña appropriates the form of a wiki entry to convey information derived from both invention and allusion, and to faux-legitimize knowledge that is equally hermetic and parodic. Another instance of cross-pollination takes place in Mae Cacanindin's "'Best Pig Ever' was not all that he said," in which Anthony Bourdain's *No Reservations: Philippines* is transcribed by an essayistic persona who insinuates herself as critical and self-referential commentator, imposing upon material that has, in the first place, already been subjected to edit(orializ)ing. The artistic consciousness in both Cacanindin and Acuña and their chosen forms are strange bedfellows that resist easy union, and the conflicting registers they yield, while persistently foregrounding the artificiality of the text, also become opportunities for emotional resonance and humor.

The heightened awareness of the page as a potent arena for acts of language proves to be quite compatible with a somewhat relaxed attitude toward genre, which is why there are a number of texts in the anthology with promiscuous generic affinities. The relative ease with which these authors mix and match techniques affiliated with different genres—an associative swirl of imagery tethered to discursive syntax, or lyric meditation stitched to a backbone of scientific study, or the bombastic and arcane idiom so reminiscent of French theory easing into the intimate speech of nonfiction—permits them to cultivate imaginatively muscular hybrids through which intersect their multiple preoccupations. One point of interest to us as editors in reading submissions is the label applied by the author to his/her piece, especially when it suggests a discrepancy between the author's intentions and our initial generic impression of the text—the term *essay* applied by one author to his work despite the absence of overt exposition and self-exposure normatively defining the genre, or *nonfiction* by another, to a piece that otherwise sounds unobtrusively fictional. This anthology is not arranged according to genre; nor does it identify the labels affixed by the authors to their work: these are pointed omissions. At the very least, in the most disorienting of works, this silence seeks to provoke in the reader some engagement with genre as interpretive lens—that is, for the reader less inclined to take the text for whatever it is—sans the unproductive attachment to a degree zero of genre. The order imposed by taxonomy, when stripped of negotiability, breeds artistic ossification more than anything else.

Similarly, the order established by literary tradition,⁷ when bereft of flexibility, diminishes in relevance. If followed to the letter and left untouched by the times, it is reduced to a checklist of moves, petrified rather than preserved. That the well-wrought urn endures in this anthology is without question, in works that function as both tribute to and update of the tradition they overtly invoke, surprise being the unassuming consequence of



their subtle complexity. Pauline Lacanilao's "Thirteen Umbrellas: A Memoir," for instance, reads like an homage to Wallace Stevens's perspective-driven studies of imagery, as expressed by a persona who has had the added benefit of channeling the wildly associative use of tropes found in the confessional poems of Sylvia Plath and Thomas James. Tradition is likewise a manifest presence in Daryll Delgado's "Sad, as in 'Also': A Reverie, a Journey, a Numbers Theory," which treads on familiar filial terrain. As in the case of most personal essays, Delgado's speaker exhibits a compulsive desire to establish patterns; this stance, however, is relaxed, if not paradoxically offset, by a pace that prefers evocative metonymy to strict narration.

More often than not, however, the well-wrought urn manifests as a 1,000-piece collage of a 600-dpi 64-megapixel picture of a well-wrought IKEA urn bought from Dapitan, spawned by ukay culture, the peculiar offspring of pastiche and simulacra and piracy, the veritable work of art in the age of digital reproduction. "I went behind the altar of Quiapo Church not to kiss the exposed foot of the statue of Christ, but to take a photo of the crowd," writes Serrano, the speaker estranged from religious faith and doubly removed by the camera he wedges between himself and the crowd, the lens both obstructing and occasioning his view. In the age of relentless artifice, where lies the authentic self? "Insert Obligatory Advocacy Ad Here," declares Isabela Cuerva in "Vogue," which disassembles the self via the assemblage one sees in a magazine as a way of affirming the futility of separating the person from the pose she tries to undermine. The trustworthy lyric speaker whose train of thought oscillates between beauty and truth, truth and beauty still resides in this anthology, but now she lives in a rambunctious neighborhood populated by skeptics who can barely even trust themselves. Whether confronting the Maguindanao Massacre or monitoring the Ondoy catastrophe, whether exploring the displacement of the expat/OFW or the slipperiness of meaning in polyglot encounters or the complexities of sexual desire, the self toils in uncertainties, often divided between solidarity with and immanent alienation from the causes she holds dear, estranged not only from the other but also herself. It is only apt, then, that fragmentation emerges as a preferred tool in this anthology, the ironic fractured self—multiple in loyalties and simultaneous in preoccupations—begetting fissured forms.⁸ Various texts demonstrate the extensive permutations of juxtaposition—from bouts of sordidness encased in alphabetical order in Carlos Quijon, Jr.'s "Lexical Entries on the Prick" to a negotiable sequence of domestic scenes on the verge of catastrophe in Apo Española's "Momentum" to the shape-shifting vignettes that scrutinize power play in an incestuous relationship in Eris Heidi Ramos's "Seven summers and a theory of colors"—where gaps become the unwieldy adhesive meant simultaneously to hold the text together and maintain the autonomy of its parts. Language under such duress demands careful calibration—too much control and the text resolves into contrived fusion; too little and the parts hurtle away from readable relation. But when the linguistic push and pull result in a suitable strain, the separate parts become charged, forging relations that keep meanings in flux.

Fragmentation is explicit about its partiality, where partial pertains to limit as well as bias. The fragment also presumes a source from which it was ripped, and in the intersection of intertextuality and the information age, it becomes the most available of materials.⁹ If the unreliability of the self diminishes its stronghold as a font of wisdom, rendering it severely impaired in the production of purely original thought, then it seems only logical to venture into methods of composition that expose this condition, which, in the case of this anthology, come in the form of appropriation. This approach is exploited in Anna Oposa's "Facebook Makes and Breaks Relationships," which arranges a selection of discrete statements—none of which belongs to the writer—into a text bearing a distinct narrative trajectory. Oposa's work certainly engages questions of authorship and plagiarism, asserting its central intelligence by way of a pronounced beginning, middle, and end, while revealing its words to be ripped off



of various sources. But it is also simply funny, its seemingly endless stream of punchlines driving home the point of its sheer irreverence, which does extend to its attitude toward writing as achieved by way of language play rather than soul searching. The job of curation, of course, can yield different results: this becomes apparent in Lawrence Bernabe's "Local Colour," which also swipes its lines from various sources, but employs an organizing principle more formal in bent—"a study in line cuts," the subtitle asserts as intention. Consequently the work—a slew of fragments parcelled out erratically across several pages—is more prone to discordance, a characteristic the author himself emphasizes: "FRAMING is not Fate."

Excessive and exuberant, this anthology swings many ways, foregrounding the breed of contemporary Pinoy writing that consorts with experimentation, rapidly multiplying its micronarratives, necessarily impolite and disruptive and often enough theatrical in its desire to forge or change the ways we contend with the world—its raucous romp with Postmodernist Indeterminacy held in check by its Romantic Catholic New Critical training; its Confessional Sincerity hijacked by its Hypermediated Subjectivities; its Modernist Discontinuities locked in mutual interrogation with its fierce attachments to the Filipino Nation and Identity. It is "Dead Stars" seen through the Hubble Space Telescope, Derrida tempered by LIRA, it is what's new in New Romanticism, it is Tradition through the schizophrenic, be/spectacled eyes of the Individual Talent daubed with Asperger's. Minus a governing intelligence, it is aswarm with a billion pocket intelligences, conversing and consuming and caught in congress. Unable, for good or ill, to afford the luxury of meaninglessness for meaninglessness's sake, comfortably pairing the creative and the critical, hyperlinking theory to its artistic enunciations, it teeters in the maw of meaningful meaninglessness, glocalising in the process, writing from English as already stipulated, but with a dash-verging-on-truckload of doubt in the frame meant to liberate its singing. It is both additive and annihilatory, the adamant black sheep of the family, and no, it won't bite, and yes, it will.

An oft-repeated lament in the local literary scene regarding technology, specifically the DIY publishing culture it encourages, is the preponderance of drivel it inflicts upon the public, bypassing the exacting standards of culture's designated gatekeepers. Technology certainly de-regulates artistic production, and a markedly contemporary burden on the reader involves sifting through voluminous amounts of text to locate that which elicits attentiveness. This burden does not come without recompense, since it conversely loosens the hegemony of institutional gatekeeping. Not all works unsanctioned by award-giving bodies and other such cultural institutions are doomed to mediocrity; not all the works they approve can claim not to resemble drivel.¹⁰ For aesthetic diversity to thrive it needs the ballasts of artistic confidence, and it is this nerve, already evident in the more palpable presence of local independent publishing—authors publishing their own works, be it through forming small presses or printing their books on demand or creating web journals—that technology supports. It is this pulse too that this anthology taps, finding the potential for failure inherent in the ongoing poor reason not to entertain the possibility of its success. *Kritika Kultura* itself is online, available as a freely downloadable PDF—a format that arguably extends the imaginative field in which the mind can play. The technology that hosts the material is also the occasion that instigates its change, and radical page manipulations as well as varieties of visual assertiveness are easily accommodated by this anthology precisely because it works less with the constraints of printed matter and more with the constraints of the computer screen.

As with any project, this anthology is as finished as it can get at this point, which is to say that it hardly is. As we wrap this up already we are inquiring into the predominantly middle class and urban sensibilities in our selection, already we are on the lookout for more overtly political texts that are also formally adventurous, and already we are restless with the use of the English language as a parameter for the anthology. At the time of this



anthology's March 2011 publication, already the most recent of the works are at least six months old. The new is, as always, indeed temporary, the work of its anthologizing never over, its incarnations always subject to evaluation. That it is provisional does not de-fang the pronouncement, it only promises continuous effort to rethink and update its significance.

In the meantime, how does Philippine writing engage in the necessary task of renewing itself? This is how.

NOTES

- ¹ When John Milton grandly proclaimed in the 17th century that *Paradise Lost* “pursues / Things unattempted yet in Prose or Rhime,” his declaration of originality was not dependent on the creation of something out of nothing: his magnum opus expanded on a familiar religious myth through the use of blank verse and a genre that was recognizable for its conventions. The generative relationship between innovation and tradition evident in Milton has been outlined by Harold Bloom: “What makes *Paradise Lost* unique is its startling blend of Shakespearean tragedy, Virgilian epic, and Biblical prophecy. The terrible pathos of *Macbeth* joins itself to the *Aeneid*'s sense of nightmare and to the Hebrew Bible's assertion of authority. The combination should have sunk any literary work nine fathoms deep, but John Milton, blind and battered by political defeat, was unsinkable” (160).
- ² J. Neil Garcia describes this as New Criticism wielded from a Romantic perspective. Despite the seeming anachronism of such a practice, “both Romanticism and New Criticism are founded on a specifically Western, humanistic, and transcendental belief in the freedom of the unique and sovereign individual, and the uniqueness of the individual's sensibility or imagination, which has the power to fuse, harmonize, and transform the complexity of perceptions and ideas into the exceptional organic unity that is the poem” (xii).
- ³ None of the submissions was solicited or commissioned. Instead, an open call for contributions was released by the issue editors and consequently passed on through channels—among which were the *Kritika Kultura* website, Facebook, literary websites such as Asiawrites.org, blogs, and email blasts—that most likely determined the type of writers who turned in their works for consideration.
- ⁴ The move away from a more homogenous period style signaled by these ongoing realities has, in fact, already been observed by foreign scholars Rajeev S. Patke and Philip Holden in their survey of poetry in English up to 2008: “In general, the younger Philippine poets show themselves responsive to the more open-ended approaches to the relation between language, experience and the idea of art that characterize contemporary postmodern poetry” (177).
- ⁵ The existence of both sources of disorientation discloses the indebtedness of contemporary writing to Western Modernism, which saw the rise of texts that either contained obscure references and effaced the distinction between a literal and figurative interpretation—epistemological difficulty—or invited readers to ask about “a work's assertions about its own status as an art object” (Diepeveen 51-52)—ontological difficulty.
- ⁶ The possibility of the page has a long history behind it and can perhaps be most notably traced to Stéphane Mallarmé's revolutionary “A Throw of the Dice Never Will Abolish Chance,” in which the splayed-out arrangement of words leads to “some simultaneous vision of the Page, the latter taken as a unit as in the verse or the perfect line elsewhere” (qtd. in Rothenberg and Joris 53). That a number of the authors in this anthology are able to engender various permutations of this possibility suggests the still-unexhausted potency of this literary unit.
- ⁷ For a more comprehensive outlook on the history of Philippine literature in English, these sources, when read alongside one another, offer a functional narrative with which to situate this anthology: *New Writing from the Philippines: A Critique and Anthology* (1966), by Leonard Casper; *The Development of Philippine Literature in English*



(Since 1900) (1975), by Richard Croghan, S.J.; *The Likhaan Anthology of Philippine Literature in English: From 1900 to the Present* (1998), with Gemino Abad as general editor (the introductions of Abad, Jose Dalisay, Jr., and Cristina Pantoja Hidalgo to the three generic sections—poetry, fiction, and essay and non-fiction narrative, respectively—may be particular useful); and *The Routledge Concise History of Southeast Asian Writing in English* (2010), by Rajeev Patke and Philip Holden.

⁸ In the Introduction to *Crowns and Oranges: Works by Young Philippine Poets* (2009), editors Cirilo F. Bautista and Ken Ishikawa confirm the popularity of the confessional mode among young poets, a protracted trend that is praiseworthy for its presentation of “the exorcism of the ambiguities of identity [and] the preservation of their gains in the ritual,” but also “hints at their lack of multiple awakening, the ability to meditate on things from a variety of consciousness” (vi). It is interesting to note that most of the poems in the book follow the New Critical paradigm, with its preference for the singular and stable lyric voice.

⁹ This distinct approach to and use of fragmentation is slowly but surely making its appearance in the more traditional/mainstream English-language fiction as well, most recently in Gina Apostol’s novel *The Revolution According to Raymundo Mata* (2009), where fragmentation is applied in the most striking way possible. Other than the novel’s considerable literary merits, its mainstream publication is due to a number of factors that are of interest to us: first, the strangeness of the novel is mitigated by Apostol’s already-secure renown as a Philippine writer; second, the novel’s publication is in no small part due to the public practice and mainstream acceptance of Speculative Fiction, the one genre that finally successfully introduced accessible postmodern play into what is generally a staid form and readership”.

“Curiously, the application of fragmentation is more evident in Filipino-language fiction. In the past thirty years alone, the five foremost practitioners of fragmented Filipino prose would be Tony Perez, Roland Tolentino, Mes de Guzman, Vladimeir Gonzales, and Edgar Samar.

“It has to be said that much of the readers’ apprehension for the novel’s form can be read as evidence that the audience of English-language fiction audience still has a long way to go towards understanding and accepting fragmentation as form.

¹⁰ Appraisal inevitably is both the mandate and privilege of the readers; it is also that which this anthology desires. Although disorientation is assumed to be the possible immediate response to the works in the anthology, the ideal long-term goal is something akin to Cole Swensen’s contention as regards the hybridity apparent in contemporary American poetry, which is that it “put[s] more responsibility on individual readers to make their own assessments, which can in turn create stronger readers in that they must become more aware of and refine their own criteria” (xxv).

WORKS CITED

- Apostol, Gina. *The Revolution According to Raymundo Mata*. Manila: Anvil, 2009.
- Bautista, Cirilo, and Ken Ishikawa, eds. *Crowns and Oranges: Works by Young Philippine Poets*. Manila: Anvil, 2009.
- Bloom, Harold. *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages*. New York: Riverhead, 1994.
- Diepeveen, Leonard. *The Difficulties of Modernism*. New York: Routledge, 2003.
- Garcia, J. Neil, ed. *At Home in Unhomeliness: An Anthology of Philippine Postcolonial Poetry in English*. Manila: UST, 2007.
- Patke, Rajeev, and Philip Holden, eds. *The Routledge Concise History of Southeast Asian Writing in English*. London: Routledge, 2010.
- Rothenberg, Jerome, and Pierre Joris, eds. *Poems for the Millennium Vol. 1: The University of California Book of Modern and Postmodern Poetry: From Fin-de-Siècle to Negritude*. New York: U of California P, 1995.
- Swensen, Cole. Introduction. *American Hybrid: A Norton Anthology of New Poetry*. Eds. Cole Swensen and David St. John. New York: Norton, 2009. xvii-xxvi.



[In all the pleasure of your seriousness]

Petra Magno

In all the pleasure of your seriousness,
you would tell me that pleasure is not a word!

But you know what I mean, you always have. Already
I am pressing my thumb between my eyebrows,

in distress, you see, the way you like to do
when discussing your old friends. Such pleasantries

to be with you again, in your seriousness like marble, not cold
though, but like a spot on the floor after you have lain

on it for a while. So I press my cheek against your marble,
not-cold, in all sweetances, grievances, so much of those

have you given me! Tell me again about your loves, the girls
who transform the road between their house and yours

into runways; they are airplanes, whirring toward us
at incalculable speeds! I'm sure you could, though, if you tried.

Calculate, I mean. Here, put your hand on my face again,
press hard. Do try, this time. As for me, I'm all tried out.

The Difference Between Abundance and Grace

Christine V. Lao

A three-bedroom house on a quiet street, its uncreaking floors, unslammable doors. An immaculate kitchen with a plexiglass skylight. A linen closet that requires nothing. A sunlit porch shaded by a single tree, a tree heavy with tightly clustered fruit—the tender kamias, each recalling a swollen finger. A woman who picks the fruit, but does not eat, who mashes the fruit for its juice but does not drink. A woman who rubs, rubs, rubs the sour sap on stained bedclothes, rusty grills, dull knives. The fallen and bruised on the fragrant lawn and a woman who chooses and chooses what is worth saving. The sad harvest dried on the porch then gathered in the kitchen. The shriveled remains rinsed, crushed, buried in sugar, boiled—all that one manages to coax into syrup, the Idea of sweetness, the sunlit purity of an empty hive. The pale amber jelly bottled by the woman who requires nothing, sitting on a shelf in the immaculate kitchen of a three-bedroom house on a quiet street.

bumaka: bü-mä-kä / to fight

Rey Escobar

Fighting the unfortunate fight, every Sunday,
around noon. Two gamecocks, flying,
above the crave, the burning red.

pu syam! 'pu syam! lodyis..ssss! lodyis..ssss!

Talon, scorching and with their pitch-forks
made of flames, permeating each flesh
with the crowd shouting:

Laban! Laban!

Protest is a swarm of flies that beset the face,
and the hand swats them, as sweat drips
from the forehead and the layered heat
slaps the skin.

Laban! Laban! January 26, 1970

What I'd give for a chance to grab the shard of a shattered
brick and hurl it as hard as I can throw and shout

Sigaw ng bayan! Himagsikan!
Sigaw ng bayan! Himagsikan!

February 22, 1986. My yellow headband tied
around my arm. We are in San Juan.
Epifanio de los Santos Avenue is filled with
hordes moving like a ripple against the stream



Cory! Cory! Cory!

The next morning, tatay Ric leaves the house
to look for ate Baby and kuya Bong

Cory! Cory! Cory!

Tatay Ric, ate Baby, kuya Bong fighting
their way through the thick crowd.

Cory! Cory! Cory!

They make their way upfront, five rows from
the nuns. Altogether, they knelt, and as the
tanks approached

Kapit! Kapit bisig! Huwag matakot!

they prayed

Father who art in heaven. Hallowed be thy name..

With our ears to the radio, nanay Nony and I listened. “Ate
Nony! Ate Nony! Si Nessa po, si Chi, si Neth din. Dumating
na. Si Doc, kasama si Bong, si Baba. Sila na sa Edsa....”

On the day Corazon Aquino was elected president, “CO-RY!
CO-RY!” the neighbor’s radio blared. Nanay Nony
wearing a yellow shirt with Ninoy’s face on it. Me?
I’m wearing my sailor’s hat. Tatay Ric, ate Baby, ate Nessa,
ate Chi, ate Neth, kuya Bong, are all home. Eating talking,
joking, laughing. While in the living room, our black-and-white
T.V. blared: “SHOUT! SHOUT! LET IT ALL OUT!”
(these are the things I could do without....)

notes: *'pu syam! 'pu syam!* (or *sampu-syam! sampu-syam!*) *lodyis...ssss! lodyis...ssss!* (or *walo-dyis, walo-dyis*) means *ten-nine! ten-nine!, eight-ten, eight-ten!*, which is a type of betting proposition shouted prior to the fight of two gamecocks. Broken down further, it means *bet 90 (against me) and win 100 or bet 80 (against me) and win 100.* § *Sigaw ng bayan! Himagsikan!* means *The people’s cry! Revolution!* is a slogan shouted by those who protested against the Marcos dictatorship. § *Cory! Cory! Cory!* is a reference to Corazon Aquino, spouse of Ninoy Aquino and the first woman to become president of the Philippines after Ferdinand Marcos was ousted in 1986. § *Kapit! Kapit bisig! Huwag matakot!* means *Hold onto each other! Lock arms! Do not be afraid!* § *Ate Nony! Ate Nony! Si Nessa po, si Chi, si Neth din. Dumating na. Si Doc, kasama si Bong, si Baba. Sila na sa Edsa* translated means *Ate* (‘ah-teh,’ a term used to show respect to a woman) *Nony* (name of my mom)! *Ate Nony!* [your] *Nessa!* [your] *Chi!* and [your] *Neth!* (these are names of my sisters). *They have arrived.* [Your] *Doc* (my dad was a dentist and he was nick named ‘Doc’), *he’s with* [your] *Bong* (my brother’s nickname), [your] *Baby* (another one of my sister, ‘Baby’ was her nickname). *They’re are at EDSA* (EDSA is a name of an avenue where the 1986 People’s Power protest took place).” § *SHOUT! SHOUT! LET IT ALL OUT!* (*these are the things I can do without....*) is from the song “Shout” by Tears for Fears.

ginebra: hi-NĀB-ruh / gin

Rey Escobar

From Eve's genes, Eve's son on his first city commute
To the suicide capital: Canton. Where the genocidal
hospital: "Internacional de Suiza," or simply
put: "The International Suicide," treats
Male patients, suffering with edema, with the earnestness
of a pillow, raised gently, over their patient faces.

Patient faces look on. The salt he had licked tasted like
unexpected blood. This, before he shoots his mouth,
which had been talking about – Himself.
And how he almost drowned. But lucky for him, he survived
to tell about, over this, this glass of 80 proof he is calling
lighter fluid.

Whiskey for his gin. That "every time" igniter of his chest
Bursting of pulpit flames. And he calls himself
K.V. "one-from-the-gut," who has found in Ginebra,
a bursting of juniper flavored,
Good evening. My name is Mr. Bullet. I am the sender
of no more restless nights.
And now, now is the chance to watch the palm trees sway.
Outside. Mary Jane.
Was she really worth the 20 pesos paid?

This 20 pesos, gives you
The tomb of a humanist embrace.
The drunken boat with Cesar Chavez paddling his whis.keys to shore.
The sonnet and the shimmer of its lines.
The lined up litter of clouds in the sky.



Ted, with him I, “sleep half sleep half silence and with reasons,”
Thanked him for showing me the silence of a blue day that expanded
Into that vast, big, yellow taxi cab ride.

Here’s the timestamp.
It is 3:44 am, June 4th, 8 days before
Philippine Independence Day is celebrated.
The price of rice is at an all time high, I wish I was high.
The price of oil is half the price of dime bags in 1994.
And just like then, I find sleep to be

Useless
Pricey

Not literal.

Are you still awake?

It is June 6th, is it Father’s Day?
Tomorrow at Printer’s Row, I will not be there.
I will be dreaming in an open field flying a kite.
The kite will fly in the sky and act like Rokkaku.

Rokkaku, Ginebra.
Your brother in Bahrain, working under the desert heat
He is thinking too of flying his Rokkaku.
And I am thinking I should write him
A letter.



Dear EZRA,
Don't Know Much About History.
Daddy's mind is reading the Book of Where.
I am on my way to the doctor in 6 hours.
I may even call Bahrain tomorrow.
Have you said your prayers?
Don't worry, I'll call collect or use a phone card.
Don't forget, white cotton t-shirts, okay?
And your mom, she received her Right Is Wrong,
Doctor Koop's Self-Care Advisor.
I am thinking of Summerhill, what about you?
Damn books on the shelves
I slept without language last night, read
DESILU, We Were There Too.
Dear Ezra, 2:32am. Where you are, what is the time?
Last night's spaghetti finished off my plate.
Dead deer on the table,
I am thinking of dear departed.
And just so we are clear as gin.
Don't forget:
(with) Strong Mothers (are) Strong Sons.

notes: *Ginebra*: Spanish word for gin. § "sleep half sleep half silence and with reasons" is from "Sonnet XXXVIII" by Ted Berrigan. § *Rokkaku (dako)*: Japanese fighting kite which is sometimes hand painted with a samurai's face. § *Don't Know Much About History*, *Book of Where*, *Right Is Wrong*, *Doctor Koop's Self-Care Advisor*, *Summerhill*, *DESILU*, *We Were There Too* and *Strong Mothers Strong Sons* are all titles of books that Christine (my wife) and Ezra (my son) own. Guess which one is hers vs his? § *Dead deer on the table*: words inspired by the deer in Frida Kahlo's painting "The Wounded Table."

Lexical Entries on the Prick

Carlos Quijon, Jr.

Genitals and writing have the same imaginary intensity.

They are both put forward.

Wayne Koestenbaum; "Darling's Prick"

art

Enduring ideas on art: universal, *avant*, coherent, *purposeless*, Ivory, recollected in tranquillity, perpetual, formal. The idea is *art does not care*. The idea is *art is affective*. The idea is *art is formal*. We talk about art, we talk about control, suggestion, restriction.

Enduring ideas on prick: *avant*, *purposeless*, Ivory. The prick does not care. The prick is affective. The prick is hard. We talk about the prick, we talk about control, suggestion, erection.

counterfeit

The presence/absence of the prick. The erect prick. The taut prick. The soft prick. The gentle prick. The unused prick. The unerectable prick. The prick untouched. The prick holy. The missing prick. The unsheathed prick. The castrated prick.

cum

See **irony**. See **pornography**.

ejaculation

Tell me what the world wants, I'll give them cum.



irony

From French *ironie*, from Old French, from Latin *īrōnīa*, from Greek *eirōneia*, *feigned ignorance*, from *eirōn*, dissembler, probably from *eirein*, *to say*; see *wer-*⁵ in Indo-European roots. First known use 1502.

1: a pretense of ignorance and of willingness to learn from another assumed in order to make the other's false conceptions conspicuous by adroit questioning—called also *Socratic irony*

2a: the use of words to express something other than and especially the opposite of the literal meaning; **b:** a usually humorous or sardonic literary style or form characterized by irony; **c:** an ironic expression or utterance

3a (1): incongruity between the actual result of a sequence of events and the normal or expected result **(2):** an event or result marked by such incongruity; **b:** incongruity between a situation developed in a drama and the accompanying words or actions that is understood by the audience but not by the characters in the play—called also *dramatic irony*, *tragic irony*

See **counterfeit**.

desire

The girl finds herself alone in a windowless room. Inside the room is a bed. On the bed is a giant prick. The girl looks for a door. The prick stands up and talks to girl. They talk of love and the infinity of romance. They talk of ever after. *Ever after is a whore* the girl tells the prick. They make love. See **fantasy**.

fantasy

A man finds himself naked in a room. The room has glass panels for walls. Inside the room is a bed. On the bed is another man who found himself naked in a room. The another man stands up and looks outside. He wishes there was no door. The man locks the door. See **desire**.

masturbation

The idea of the private and the purposeless. See **art**. See **ejaculation**.

penetration

The purpose of every idea made is to penetrate. The purpose of the prick is to find the right fit. The purpose of art is to find the right prick. Words are the perfect prick.



pornography

Porno- is a rude misrecognition and misspelling of the word *prick*. *-graphy* means *a rude representation of*. The word PORNOGRAPHY was first insinuated in the Bible (N.P.)—when Eve saw Adam there were leaves covering his crotch: this was the first misrecognition of the word *prick*. Eve thought that the leaves were part of Adam's body. And she saw the word *prick* on the leaves. During the hot days she sees the word *porno* not *prick*. Contemporary usage shows that showing the breast or kissing with tongue can be misrecognized and seen spelled as *prick*.

sex

The act of creating. See **pornography**.

spit or swallow

See **cum**.

Postcards: Malesia, 1997-2007

Christian Tablazon

*

The view runs a series of makeshift shelters, the inhabitants optimistic enough to ensure an earnest foreground of polychrome blossoms. I suppose this is an attempt at assuaging dearth. Inside a bus on my way to Dangwa, I look at my left hand, and instead I see his. I sense potential in this.

*

In a garden plotted with frangipanis, I conjure an impression of Angeles: after 5PM, the streets are interspersed with boys made of light. I see them and suddenly, my body is covered with chinoiserie. Arrhythmia is at the heart of this kind of systems. I tend a hollow that propagates an overgrowth of sinuous vines {Flowers are short-lived, pale yellow or white, with dark centers.}. By nature phototropic, they move toward {Their evergreen leaves are ovate and deeply notched.} an unseen light source, he in absentia. He will always be the symptom of my handicap, the logarithm of my lack {Named varieties may also be grafted on the common kind.}.

*

I have come to fetishize remnants, spending afternoons videotaping ruins, metastasized in the avenues; keeping my bus tickets henceforth until such a time they could wallpaper an impending home; refusing to sweep those dry bougainvilleas collecting in the front yard. The objects he lays his hands on now throb with sudden meanings; even the stones he holds take root, shoot up in an arc, augment fronds, bear fruits.

*

I hold on to the trail of clothes he leaves behind. I could follow it, but then I would not be able to stand his nakedness. I follow it anyhow, but instead of reaching his naked body, I come upon a contusion of ikebanas.



*

On a field trip back in fifth grade, we went to the city to an exhibit of Oligocene remains extracted from the geostrata of Indomalaya. I remember standing before an encased fossil of a flower, the Hymenaea, fascinated that a temporal life form as fragile as this could leave a trace transmitted across epochs. I examined its details, parts summing up to an intaglio that read: ancestor. In that instant I began to understand the story of Brahma, who was born out of the lotus at the beginning of the universe.

*

In my dream, a boy is dead and we are among the guests at the funeral. I do not know what to make of this, except that the flowers beside the coffin remind me of the button-down shirt he wore the first time I saw him.

*

He breezes through the semi-darkness of the corridor, ceramic and planetesimal. This is my first sighting of him. From now on I will love him for his dark, ponderous silence, his celadon airs; for the fact that he is piquant and picturesque; a soma undifferentiated from stem, root, or leaf, and laced in verdigris. He is an ornate blue cabinet made of sandalwood, or an epic journey through a configuration of maps and forests in videogames, The Portrait of a Boy {circa 16 A.D., excavated in Corsica}, an anthem of musks and pigments, the little Bedouin carved in camel bone, or a hemograph of sparrows. This is my first sighting of him and the ones thriving on his shirt are aqua hibisci: It is such details that commit the picture to memory—the numbers that lay down his phenotype into a chart to be mastered, the stars that connect to bequeath the sky with forms, or the moles on a beloved's body, the black points mapping out a territory to be conquered—because the pattern foreshadows tragedy.

*

The tale runs this way: “During his final hours the taxidermist resolved to preserve his likeness as both tribute to his career and capstone to his oeuvre. He set to work with accustomed precision, removing his skin and steeping it in tannin. Before the neighbors found him bled to death, he had stuffed every void of his being with petals. They were struck with awe upon seeing that his other self rose to life near his vermilion form.”

*

The teachers in high school decided that I acted “strange” and seemed “too violent for [my] age.” They sent me to the counselor who showed me a number of cards and repeatedly asked, “What do you see?” All I saw were pictures of flowers and I recited their names as faithful as I could. She looked upset afterwards. I wanted to cheer her up by drawing her a diagram: this is the anther; this one, the pistil; here, the stigma.

*

In an aforementioned garden in an earlier postcard, I perch on a stone bench to write a note on the reverse of another postcard: I look at him at a distance approximated by a catena of one-hundred ligatured stamens. I am certain he would bloom into a hydra at any moment.

PMS: Meditations on the Post-Modern Syndrome

Eileen Tupaz

On Friendship

She tells me she is leaving for Germany in January. I've only known her for a few months. Strange that after having just said hello, I will now have to formulate a goodbye. Not that it is difficult. Farewells are routine now: just fill in the fields for name, date, reason, and destination.

My heart is a waiting room and an asylum, a tent city and a museum. It is peopled by transients and nomads, by refugees and relics. For years I tried sealing the exits. When that didn't work, I moved myself. But there's no keeping up. Mobility is the primal form of social entropy. Gravity between people is inversely related to the square of the distance between them. We live in an expanding universe and the stars are perpetually itinerant.

You're being pessimistic, she tells me. There's nothing that can't be maintained without the appropriate effort. The effort of answering wearies me. The very necessity of effort exhausts me. Scott Peck derides laziness as the antithesis of love. But there was a time once when the hostilities were less pronounced.

Not too long ago, one could count on proximity as a guarantor of affections. You loved people because you had to live with them. That you had to live with them was purely accidental.

(These days, there are no accidents—at least not permanently. Life is a matter of design, of strategy, of continuously rendering the canvass blank. A life dominated by givens is an undesirable life. To be poor is undesirable precisely because one has to live with *givens*—even if materially, there is little that is given.)

For three years I lived as an overseas Filipino worker among people I didn't choose. Yet, a depth of fellow-feeling emerged that was substantial for all that it was not chosen. Camaraderie was the result of the sheer sedimentation of shared experience. One could live so closely with people that even their shadows left bruises.

But the vagaries of modern mobility mean that we are never responsible for who enters our lives—while remaining responsible for those who leave. Now it is a matter of commitment and effort, motivation and will. The failure to maintain presence means an absence of virtue, a propensity for neglect. It is because we didn't schedule the daily call, didn't send the weekly email, didn't arrange the monthly videoconference, didn't instigate the occasional reunion, didn't accept the social networking invitation... There is an interminable list of these strategies for nullifying distance—these valiant labors that can strangle a relationship as much as assure its survival through the sheer weight of the burden they impose. In the end, we are left bitter, exhausted, resentful, *guilty*.

(And what is, perhaps, most horrifying, is noticing the loss of affection in ourselves: the gradual erosion



of intimacy until nothing is left but a recollection that evokes little apart from nostalgia, and, occasionally, even a sense of bewilderment—the wonder that we ever got along so well, when there was so little that was actually shared in common.)

All that remains are the enduring atomisms of family—the bonds that can never be severed because blood is always more primordial than place. The givenness of the relation, precisely the fact that it is not chosen, serves as both blessing and curse. Therein lies its solidity—its immunity to the vicissitudes of affection, distance, intimacy and time. It is freeing because it can be taken for granted—in a world that grants everything except the privilege of taking its gifts for granted.

So will you stay in touch? Another friend asks me. *Why not?* I sigh. Even the peripatetic stars shine long after their death.

On Home

My hamper broke down a week ago—its metal frame gave way at all the joints. I carefully reassembled the slender pieces and used gravity as a makeshift glue.

I've become accustomed to the frailty of my furniture—these Ikea pieces built for everything except endurance. The shades on the lamps have broken, the garters on the sheets have frayed, the adhesives on the mats have crumbled, the colors of the towels have faded. All the destruction is a signal that perhaps I've stayed too long.

I bought all these things precisely because I knew they wouldn't last. I'd never needed things to last. And now I have nowhere to store my laundry.

Five years ago when I lived abroad, my housemates and I had agonized over whether or not to buy an iron. Even then the possession of an appliance implied a commitment. We needed the assurance of knowing that we could carry everything we owned on our backs. We hadn't reached the point yet where lightness was unbearable.

(By the time we did there was no going back. If you live too long in zero-gravity conditions, science fiction writers speculate, returning to earth will pulverize your bones.)

Brittle or not, my bones are the only things I can call a home. Every other tie can be severed—village, town, city, country—but one can never escape the confines of one's skin. It's a hazardous shelter, for everything beyond becomes terra incognita: the uncharted horizons where there be edges, dragons, the nothingness of space. But it's the only thing we can count on, because it's the only thing we cannot leave behind.

The home once designated a monolithic concept—a singular domain, a privileged site, a primordial origin. Yet without contradicting myself, I say I leave my “home” in Cebu, to go “home” to Manila, leave my “home” in Manila, to visit my “home” in Singapore. All of these have been home to me, and precisely for that reason, none of them are. The very idea of plurality is alien to the notion of place.

When one isn't at home, then one is a tourist. And when one is a tourist, it's best to travel light. Traveling light means knowing what's essential. Knowing what's essential entails discovering that essentials can be bought. Hence, traveling for a long time means realizing that nothing is essential, or, to what amounts to the same thing, that everything can be bought.

(This is why traveling is a nihilistic business. One can do it frequently or reflectively but never both at the same time. Unfortunately, traveling is now the prevailing human experience and tourism, according to



the philosopher Agnes Heller, the contemporary human condition. For those disdainful of traveling light, the acquisition of possessions approximates the accumulation of souvenirs. The functionalities of things now include the evocation of nostalgia. Each item *must* have its story, *must* have its history, *must* have a significance beyond that of mere utility, or, like the souvenir *par excellence*, only significance and no utility.)

But homelessness is a painful condition. Even memories can be excess baggage. Hence, one tries to leave nothing, not even footprints; and one tries to take nothing, not even the dust on one's feet. It does not matter that we never pass any way again, for it is as if we never passed anywhere to begin with.

But sheltered or not, I can't dispense with clothing—which only means that I'll have to do something about my hamper.

On Love

The first letter begins with a litany of the newly-domesticated. There are no opening formalities, just a breathless tabulation of who had married, fathered, mothered, separated—not necessarily in that sequence. It ends just as abruptly with a lament on the inexorable march of time and the injustice of a journey that doesn't guarantee one a traveling companion. For a post-script, she asks me to write back: possibly to reassure her that I myself had remained single and outside the passage of life's seasons.

I never know how to reply to these epistles from long-ago acquaintances. They surface like drowned corpses—with an unpleasant suddenness and a distorted familiarity. I respond as honestly as I can, that I live a solitary life and that my solitude is filled with work. I am tempted to say that I am happy, but this would sound plaintive where I come from. Where I come from, making a living is a means not an end.

The second letter opens as the Book of Exodus—a registry of all those who had packed up and moved away—and closes as the Book of Lamentations. *Maybe I'll finally find a man here*, she tells me wistfully, confusing the geography of the world with the cartography of desire. *If it's just a man you're looking for, my dear*, I write back, *you needn't have gone that far*. Since when did the lines of longitude and latitude become a lasso for the aching heart?

That's easy for you to say, my sister tells me. *You travel all the time. There's not much choice in the local market—you need to do your shopping elsewhere*. Since when did the dynamics of globalization and commodification become the rules for the pursuit of love?

A friend tells me glumly, *I've given up on Mr. Perfect—I'd settle for Mr. Right*. The only problem with this formulation is that in an era of customization, Mr. Perfect *is* Mr. Right. We believe in the market model, we believe in the availability of choice, we believe that in a planet with six billion inhabitants, it would have to be statistically impossible for an ideal mate to *not* exist somewhere. The existence of the product is never in question—just the tenability of our shopping habits. (Do you buy the latest arrivals or do you wait for the clearance sales? Do you shop when the store opens or do you wait until the crowds have left? Do you snub the bargain aisle? Do you check the lowest shelf? Do you pay a premium for the extended warranty?) As the psychologist Barry Schwartz puts it, it's the availability of *too much* choice, not the lack of it, which makes life today so dissatisfying.

But the logic of this is so counter-intuitive that even my puzzled parents join the fray. *Maybe you haven't met the "right" one yet. When you do, you'll want to settle down*. I am tempted to say that I am settled down, but this would ring false where they come from. Where they come from, settling down is an end not a means.



But don't you want to get married? My other friends insist. *It's frightening to be lonely—frightening to be alone. True enough, I concede, in fact, I'm terrified half the time.* But the plus side of being lonely is the fact that you're also free. The only things left to manage are the daily vertigo of terror—and the persistent sympathy of friends.

You're just pathologically independent, an ex tells me wearily. *Who else sees owning an iron as a long-term commitment?* I shrug my shoulders cheerfully. *We bought the cheapest iron—the commitment didn't last.*

On Memory

There's a pile of possessions on my work table whose protean quality is matched only by the fluctuating folders on my computer desktop. There, on a physical and virtual space not exceeding more than three feet wide and four feet long, the detritus of my daily life awaits classification. I often feel as if I'm building pyramids. That the ancient Egyptians exhausted so much of life to prepare for death is something I can relate to—the only difference is that I'm not even worrying about the afterlife *yet*.

My friends marvel at the scrupulousness of my records. Everything is filed, dated, labeled, stored. The relics cover everything from photographs and essays to clothes and diaries. All of these fit on five cabinet shelves one and a half foot wide and eight feet long: the clutter of a lifetime. My friends shake their heads. My taxonomy of nostalgia amuses and bewilders them. They ascribe it to eccentricity, meticulousness, obsession, boredom. All of which misses the point.

The point is: I have to be the curator of my own history. I cannot trust my memory. There are gaping holes in my past—the result of a temperamental ineptitude in the art of reminiscence. My family and friends tell me stories about my childhood and my adolescence which I fail to recognize. This used to horrify me, until I realized I could rely on the memories of others to reconstitute my history.

This reliance ended in my mid-twenties'. Too many of my friends were gone: caught up in the maelstrom of migration that characterizes contemporary life. That was when I began to archive my life in earnest. The science of engineering counsels redundancy; redundancy means ensuring that a system's critical elements are duplicated so that its performance is maintained even if one or more of the elements fail. I needed to make my friends redundant. I could not entrust my memories to those who would leave, otherwise, what could I recall on my own?

You can always reach us, a friend chides me gently. In fact, engineering advises an offsite location for back-up data. *It takes you weeks to write back,* I retort. *By then, I'll have forgotten what it was I was trying to remember.* These days, even our very histories reach us like the light of dying stars—and we have nothing with which to correct the atmospheric distortion.

The philosopher Emmanuel Levinas once said: *Everyday life is a preoccupation with salvation.* But what exactly is it that we are trying to save? Is it our selves? Or is it the very notion of a self? A museum does not constitute a memory; a mausoleum less so. Apart from everything else, ours is a daily struggle to perpetuate presence in the face of the contemporary world's erosions—to preserve a sense of self so that we can make a gift of it to others. What makes modern memory so problematic is the plurality of identity: I've tried and discarded so many that even my mnemonic devices require mnemonics and my aids for recollection demand recollection.

Don't you get tired of all the cataloguing and documentation? A friend asks me worriedly, eyeing my Dymo LetraTAG with concern. *It's much better these days,* I reassure her. *At least now I've reached 2010.*



On Mobility

I watched the rain fall the other day. I stood on my unprepossessing balcony and looked out over the unprepossessing view. As condominium views went, mine was spectacularly pedestrian.

The ultimate locus of its significance lies in the fact that it is mine.

I've lived in my studio apartment for the last three and a half years. At 24.89 meters square, it's only slightly larger than a shoebox, and has the same propensity for airlessness besides. But the confines of its walls approximate the dimensions of my life—anything larger would exhaust the meagerness of my soul's resources. Remove the spaces needed for movement, and my existence can be reduced to the contents of four boxes. And I can ship them anywhere and everywhere.

There was a time once when I indulged in homemaker fantasies. You can invest so much of yourself in a space that even the rubbish bins reveal who you are. Constant movement quickly cured me of any Martha Stewart tendencies. It only makes sense to invest in good wallpaper if you can actually expect to watch it fade.

When I worked in the corporate world, resource optimization demanded the application of hot desking policies. Every morning I would unpark my little trolley and lug it to the nearest empty station. For precisely one week after I first started, I would take out my mementoes and attempt to create the illusion of permanence. I gave up when I realized that setting up my desk took about as much time as listening to five voice mails. Three years of transience at home and at work taught me the sheer impracticality of putting down roots. Now it's a game for me efface any trace of my presence. Even when I stay in hotels, I leave the room exactly as I find it: sheets turned down, toiletries lined up, LAN cords neatly coiled. It drives my sister crazy.

You can't live your life on tiptoes forever, a friend warns me. Why not? I say and shrug my shoulders casually. *If all the world's a stage, we might as well be ballet dancers. Yes, my friend retorts. And we all know how long their careers last.* I flash her a grin. *Point taken. Or, "pointe" taken, rather.* She shakes her head and sighs.

You rent? Another friend asks me with horror on his face. *Why don't you buy or rent to buy?* *Because I don't know where I'll be a year from now,* I tell him blithely. *Then sublet the property,* he tells me with exasperation. *To rent is a waste of money.* I shake my head and smile. *Not if the transience is what you're paying for—houses aren't as disposable as irons.* He looks at me and tells me bluntly. *You can't be Holly Golightly forever. You haven't got the charm.*

But there precisely lies the curse of modernity: we're all Holly Golightlys without the charm, wild things without the wilderness. We make our homes out of the cages of our bones; we pitch our shelters using the sanctuaries of skin. Our bodies serve as village and country, world and universe. We weigh ourselves down with cars and houses, spouses and children, time share rights and fitness club memberships, weekday rituals and Sunday morning routines, but the anchors cut loose and we find ourselves adrift. How does one stay still in a world where the very crust of the earth shifts, where even the gravity of a distant moon causes the ebb of the tides?

So you're basically hot desking your way through life? A friend asks me sarcastically. *It's not all that bad,* I tell her with a smile. *Sometimes you can get a corner desk with a view—never mind if it's pedestrian.*

On Religion

There's a rotisserie a block away from my flat where a bakery used to be. The bakery is important because there, for a good month of my life, over coffee and a cinnamon walnut focaccia, I would tell God about my life.



I liked the bakery because as a recovering agnostic, talking to God in church still feels like an AA meeting. The bakery was much more informal and its bread also tasted infinitely better. There, on a narrow table, I would lay out an array of religious guides and pamphlets—brochures to a spiritual itinerary that managed all travelers' expectations by counseling none. Then, fortified by supernatural amounts of caffeine and sugar, I would carefully assemble my well-entrenched doubts and uncertainties into something that could, perhaps, be remotely called prayer.

I got the religious literature because that's what my spiritual adviser counseled. I got the spiritual adviser because that's what contemporary common sense counseled. According to the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, contemporary society believes that the solution to any problem is the acquisition of expertise. Hence the realm of faith—just like the specialist-assisted domains of finance and fitness—is amenable to expertise.

(Faith and finance have this in common: both are matters of investment. We invest in this life; we invest in the afterlife. Investment is a matter of expertise. Expertise is needed because every investment instrument involves tradeoffs—a complicated calculus of risks and returns and principals and premiums—and ordinary men and women cannot be relied upon to master this calculus. I knew all this, having done all the browsing, having read all the reviews, having subscribed to all the trial runs. In the end, I gave in to Zygmunt Bauman's conclusion and got myself an expert.)

One relies on experts to the degree that one mistrusts oneself. After years of a lapsed Catholicism, I'd felt I'd lost not so much the keys to God's kingdom as the keys to my own—and I couldn't traverse my interior landscapes without the assistance of a guide. What I didn't expect was how alien the navigational tools would be—and how much of a stranger I would feel in my own lands.

For instance, a sense of the stylized nature of religious gestures never left me, but what other gestures did I have left? If the sacred is the absence of the ironic, what room is left for the divine in a world that ironizes everything except irony, that refuses the absolute even in the pursuit of an absolute—that refuses even to accord the definite article to the absolute? Only in such a world can exchanges like the one below make sense:

Advisee: I don't know who I'm praying to—I don't know what I believe. If prayer is a sacrament, I'm not sure what it is I sacralize. I don't know if there's anything beyond the sign—any significance beyond the fact that I need to make signs.

Adviser: Perhaps the need is how God speaks to you. Perhaps the uncertainty is how you pray.

Advisee: If that's the case, then I've been praying all my life.

So where do you go, now that the bakery's closed? A friend asks me. To church, I sigh. At least there I don't need to bring my own literature.

Local Colour

A Study in Line Cuts

Lawrence Bernabe



Fountain of Knowledge
Saved by Grace

Working Girl

Virgo
Pokemon
Donkey

Basilan Express
Local Color
May Asin...

A thing you pretend to know

3:16

3 Sisters

2 Sisters

Seal Team

Thumbsuck Guy

www.temaloc.com.bayyo

God works with wonders

Ask for more

Live by faith

Malagueña Special

The only reward of virtue is virtue
God Save us from all Trouble
the future (sic)

I do not know what the future hold
But I know who hold

For REGISTRATION

whisky lullaby
until i found you
bridge over troubled water
how marvelous

Lone Gentleman of Bay-yo
Eat my Dust
For the First Time
Constantly Abiding
In Unity There Is Strength

Forbearance

Adiyo okodan nan gawis
Cagayan Valley Forge
God leads us along

Stepping on the light
Standing on promises



The Image Of Me

Shot Hot
 Team leader GAMA
 Sakuragi
 Slam dunk
 X-game
 HURRY UP WORK
 EXUDOS
 Mustang
 10 valve
 in god we trust
 european best
 zamboanga best
 quezon express
 london express
 Basilan Express: The New Frontier
 from old to new
 give it and it will come back
 Banahaw
 hebrews 17:8
 christ is the same yesterday today and forever
 Be Happiness
 Wag ka dumikit kung ayaw mo maabala
 Ang babaeng gipit sa driver
 kumakapit
 Money Pakyaw
 Jumong Hot Babes
 Great Is Thy Faithfulness
 Trouble SHOOTER
 God is Able
 PASAWAY
 Dumag Motors
 Lippad Motors
 Asian Lion Motors
 German Motors
 Parapalaya
 Troublemaker
 Spongebob
 Bay-yo Boxing Gym
 Marsagitsit
 NO FINISH LINE
 TRIALS KEEPS US



STRONG
Evolution IV
Retouch

SHINING THROUGH KUNG KEWA MO ABBEW PRIDE OF BARAS CATADUANES ALA EH? BAKIT
GAH!! FOUNTAIN OF KNOWLEDGE AND WISDOM LONE GENTLEMAN
OF BAY-YO

Keeping Together is Success

O Jo! Kaluguran Da Ka

Rosas kag Pusok

Pusang Alas

ARK

Arigato

The labor of the righteous leads to life

The Best So Far

Marching to Zion

Friends make the world go around

Edge Builder

God gives hope to those who dream

Don't do this at home;

Do 'it' here

Thou Shalt Not Wait In Vain

Five Hundred Dollars 五百元

God will make a way

get over it

Money Pa

Nidos Motors

Nguso mo

Reaching Beyond the Horizon

Remember When · Surigao City

Someone you used to know

Nautica

Marinero

Lady Tin Tin

Badtrip NOT ALLOWED

Navigator

simple the best

Philippines 2000

Armando

Glad to have it!

One Hundred Hongkong Dollar

Bohol Express

Colorado

Single Pa... Eh

always something

David Motors Mktg Corp

a. borja motors

Mega Transport Builders Corp

Batang Isabela

Inosenting Bogoy

The Mechanical Bull

The Year of the Lord's Favor

So Thankful

Finally, It's Over

the more i drink the better you look

Gi Kumot Kumot

Lovers of Freedom Wasted Years

Shadow of my Dream

Hey Joe Don't Kiss My Behind

Someone Like You



OFF · ROAD
HEAVEN · BOUND
OUT · LOOK
ROSE OF LAWIG

everything happens
for a reason

Human Wheel

OTHER CAN DO
WHY CANT I

Shake it off

and STEP UP

Single Impact
Let Your Taste Decide

For Official Use Also

Looking Within, Seeing Beyond
Breaking the sound of silence

Basta Igat Sikat

Doorman's Treasure

top of the stair

aquarius

Silver Thread

Highway 54 Unlimited Speed

Keep Distance

Distancia Amigo Pls.

No Limit



Keep Distance

Keep Distance

Keep Distance



NOTES

THIS TOOK OVER ~~four~~^{nine} twelve months to compile format and encode.

Started taking down notes late November 2009.

Constraint # 1 was to limit myself to jeepneys that plied

Commonwealth and Quezon Ave. # 2: The texts

had to be part of the jeepney's paintjob,

or embossed on body metal, or affixed to mudflaps

and/or sideboards. Adhering to these constraints was easy,

only at some point tempted I was to include

billboards t-shirts taxicabs buses

and other whatnot that came my way. Which goes to say the rubbernecking

was not entirely random.

UNCOUNTED UNKNOWN PEOPLE in the business of jeepney
decoration and accessorization played a role in the production/ genesis/ propagation

of these texts. The title "Local Colour" means precisely that

to my exhaust-addled head: the Word written Local, what

I take to be Indicators of the Local. Consider this my reading

of the Jeepney as the ultimate arbiter of the [Local] Real[ism]. Since in this city it is a sort of text shared
by the greatest number of people on a daily basis, yes?

BEWARE THOUGH; THE previous statement ought to be furnished

with

statistical caveats. After all, no attempts to

apply frequency

analysis or other forms of

procedural rigour (beyond constraints

1 and 2) were undertaken. SO WHY THIS reduction into a Word doc

and not visually confirmable pictures of the texts themselves?

Only because it is cheaper/is easier on the eyes/achieves greater portability this way.

By default, you will take my framing of things on faith. PLEASE

BE INFORMED I exercised certain gatekeeping liberties

Like, I kept out lots of godly/biblical stuff because too many times too many times

I ain't going with that too many times ("God repay your kindness thousand fold") ("God bless our
trip!")

Likewise, the frankly disturbing. ("Extermination of All," u like?)



WHAT WE HAVE here far are statements I wouldn't dare verbalize
as is in front of anyone's face. Which is to say, not unreal,
and more than Token. NOTE, THOUGH: FRAMING is not Fate ('Tis
Redeployable!).

At this point I would like to forward my apologies to any cultural
subsector/minority/specialinterestgroup whose sensibilities I may or may not
offend by inclusions herein that may or may not
leadtoignorantconclusions/strike a sore chord/stroke
certain
verbotens. It strikes me though
that many of the texts I've gathered point
outside the metro, predominantly north of it, which
could be a simple function of social geography, of course.

The person* who got me interested in doing this project has roots
in the North, come to think of it. The person concerned once appealed
for poets to turn to the local and this is the form my response has taken.

THIS PROCESS IS very reproducible of course,
and Someone might do another turn on it. Do it in your place!
Make your own recipe! and Then maybe we can compare notes.

*for trivia: he keeps a blog at kutibeng.blogspot.com

Momentum

Apo Española

Her mother's departures are easy: they happen every day. It's the arrivals that befuddle her. They are guessing games. Her mother says *tonight* when she means *next week*, when she means *not anytime soon*. If the door does not open, it means she guessed wrong; if a key turns in the lock, it means she guessed right. It's supposed to be that simple. She wants to put her head against her mother's chest, her ear nestled against the heart, listening like a doctor for the symptoms of love. Perhaps her mother harbors no capacity for it; perhaps there is no time for it; perhaps this unceasing loneliness is the price of leaving the womb. She presses an ear beside the doorknob, listening for the click. If the door does not open, it means she guessed wrong. If the door remains shut, it means she guessed right.

&

The child is scrawny and light-haired and keeps to himself. He draws shapes and reads origami books and learns to fold birds. Not satisfied with keeping them in tin boxes, he glues them to his windows, where they bend the sunlight into shapes on his bedroom walls. He throws them outside, and they tumble onto the street. He discovers instructions for a paper eagle, large and imposing. He uses several white sheets. After three days, he takes it on its maiden flight. He leaps through the house with it, jumping onto the antique sofa, knocking over an expensive vase. His father is a man who uses the belt. He makes his son hold out both arms, wrists facing upward, so he can teach the boy a lesson. To the child, everything is ascent and descent, everything must move through the air. He imagines himself in his bedroom, tossing origami birds overhead, watching them hang in space before falling. What goes up must always come down. His father raises a balled fist, the belt wrapped around it, a ready whip. The child's arms tremble, his eyes are shut, his mouth is clamped tight, he prepares for the blow to land.

&

Four in the morning, September the Third, ten months after the breakup. There in the middle of the darkened living room, lying on the carpeted floor. Earlier: a dinner party for six of her closest friends. She cooked everything herself. The second hand ticks a resolute staccato on the wall clock opposite her. At four-fifteen she will wish herself a happy birthday, she will turn twenty, she will learn from her mistakes. *This is how you grow up*. She no longer wonders how he is, closes her eyes and can no longer recall the details of his face, the precise location of the mole on

his chin, the color of his too-long hair. Progress, her friends call it. Decay, she says, without regret. The telephone rings, high and sudden. She lifts an arm, reaches blindly towards the desk. *Hello?* Someone coughs on the other end, a sound she knows she has heard before. *Who is this?* she says, very clearly, and braces herself for an answer.

&

The boy who is jealous of his brother sits in the living room. He is eight years old, he has a bad haircut, he is not surrounded by aunts and uncles. No one fawns over him. Everyone is celebrating in the garden, attended to by the waiters his mother hired – sullen like him, hovering at the periphery like him, outsiders. Like him. The party is because his brother won first place in a declamation contest. The boy on the other hand talks little: the aunts ask him how he is and he scuffs his toes and says *fine, thank you*. He peers through the glass doors that open into the backyard, into where his mother is radiant and laughing, into where she tenderly strokes his brother's hair. A huge porcelain elephant sits on the shelf beside the boy – delicate like him, pale like him. His tiny hands reach up and push. He steps back. Holds his breath. Is ready for the looks on their faces, for their exclamations. In a moment, he too will have their attention.

&

Everyone trusts the rumbling. When the children playing *patintero* on the tracks feel the ground quiver, when the gossiping mothers hear the faraway whine of steel, they all know to retreat into their makeshift houses to let the train pass by. It's the law of life, the rule of survival, a tenet that leaves trails all over the girl's very existence. *You ought to recognize the signs*, her mother lectures gravely. The girl doesn't need to be told why the boys have begun to leer at her, doesn't pause at the strangeness of her own new breasts. She knows, too, to say nothing about the scent of alcohol on her father each night, to tell no one how she recoils when he gropes between her thighs while she pretends to sleep. The *manang* living across them tells stories of her nephew, a boisterous boy who liked to play *patintero* with the train. Everyone remembered him as the fastest runner. They shook their heads and clucked their tongues: when they finally found the boy's body; he had lost both his legs. The girl knows better than to dare the train to games; she lets it take its course. Everyone is asleep when she rises from the *banig* to piss, steps outside, spots her father collapsed drunk on the tracks. The earth has begun to shiver. *You ought to recognize the signs*. She knows not to rouse him, to retreat, to go back inside. She thinks she hears her father singing feebly, but the clang of the oncoming train drowns it out. She sleeps again. She trusts only the rumbling. She trusts nothing else.

Postcards from Somewhere

Florianne Jimenez

I am in Tokyo. When I wrote this, it was still February 2010, I was still an exchange student in Japan, and I was sitting in a dorm room on a university campus in the suburbs of Tokyo. Right now, you are no doubt sitting somewhere else. Or at least, your body is. Your mind is here, with me, on this paper, and when finished, will eventually be somewhere else. From wherever I (really) am, to wherever you (really) are, I'm trying to write pictures of places: physical, mental, spiritual, and otherwise. I'm trying to capture what I see, and also where I am in the cartographies and hierarchies of people's minds.

There are infinite ways to find out where you are. "You are here," maps announce, and we believe them. Maps are mere simplifications of an impossibly large world—train stations, department stores, airports, countries, cities always being bigger than us. Physically, but also conceptually larger: locations are things that others found and created and named and changed long before us. When I say "I am in Japan," I am referring to that country of 377,944km², founded by long-dead people in 660 BC. Someone else called it Japan, and everyone calls it Japan, and to decide to call it "Mexico #2" or "Pencilcase Hills" wouldn't work, and then you wouldn't know where I am.

Locating yourself is a matter of knowing what's around you, and where or what you are relative to them: in or outside, above or below, between, in the middle, on the fringes. It's a game of words and symbols, and convention will always win.



I.

In first grade, our teacher taught us the difference between “house” and “home.” A house, she said, is just the building you live in. It becomes a home when your family is there, and when you love each other. It is not correct, she said, to say that you live in a home. We live in *houses*, and we come *home* to them. A bright yellow smiley face hovers over *home*. The cornerstone of this definition is stability, because what can be more indisputable than blood? Home is comfort through ties that have existed longest and strongest.

Home, in this sense, is also hinged on a fundamental need for social bonds—that we are happiest when we have company. But conversely, if one is alone, is one not home? There’s something about Japan that makes me content with solitude. Perhaps it’s the neon signs and storefronts that speak to me in a different tongue, carrying no urgency for me to answer. Or the ramen stores that cater to people who eat alone: a long, slightly greasy countertop for solo diners is a key staple, sometimes augmented by wooden dividers between diners, so we don’t even have to see each other slurping noodles and broth. At the McDonald’s I frequent, three-fourths of the people are by themselves. Some are there to work, like me, but some are just *alone*, sitting at a table, eating a meal—*lingering*, without a book or a Nintendo to buffer the solitude. I take their cue and sit alone with them.



II.

Look up Japan in your mind, and where does that take you? In my mind, I'm surrounded by pulsating neon lights, the ring of pachinko, the high-pitched squawk of Lolita girls preening in a candy-colored photobooth, the blazing red and white sun alongside old kimonos and bowing and painfully intricate tea ceremonies. After living there for almost a year, Japan wasn't as sharply self-contradicting as I made it out to be. Japan, like any other country, is victim to stereotypes and monolithic symbols, "The Best of Japan" coming together in a concept both fascinating and fathomable.

In Japan, as with any other new country, the foreigner arrives with glazed eyes, taking in what he or she knows and has eagerly anticipated in Japan. The local is done with all of it—nothing was ever new anyway—so he or she rushes off to live life. The homeland is functional, it's for school and work and just getting through the day. The new, foreign land is for watching, and thinking, and paying to let maids sit on your lap in a cafe, and everything else you would never do at home.

Here, foreigners are treated as honored guests and strangers, and so are called "okyaku-san" or "okyaku-sama," the latter being the extreme polite address. We are offered the best of everything: when I did a homestay, my host mother let me stay in her young daughters' room while the family of four crowded into their tatami room. As a foreigner and a guest, I'm expected to admire and partake of their culture from that privileged position: I should do bad calligraphy while someone else grinds the ink and stains their hands.



III.

My favorite of Japan's magic tricks is Shinjuku Station. There's no sense of keep left/keep right when you have over 40 platforms and 3.64 million pairs of feet inside. You expect madness, but instead, you get the grace of a thousand people moving together, a mass choreography. The Japanese, it seems, are not a people who push, even when packed into a station. They've learned the blocking of skillfully passing each other, even as they run for the departing train. I, as a foreigner, still can't get into it. It's a dance I can't quite master: move too fast and I bump into people. Move too slow and now I'm in the way. Trying to move at their pace, my path isn't the smooth, nearly straight one of a Nihonjin. It's a crooked, jagged line, with double takes and quick turns to avoid the corner of a salaryman's briefcase or a schoolgirl's backpack.

The perfect orchestration of Shinjuku requires the purposeful stride of a Japanese person, rushing off to work or school—the day-in-and-day-out institutions where they learn to work as one. Locals don't need to know which way their transfer platform is, or how to haul luggage through the world's biggest station (they simply don't), or marvel at the sheer numbers of people passing them by. They are at home in Shinjuku Station: it's not a phenomenon worth stopping for and re-examining. Home just happens to be there, like scenery in a play.



IV.

I came to Japan knowing nothing but a handful of throwaway Japanese phrases: *arigato gozaimasu*, *itadakimasu*, *sumimasen*, *gomen nasai*. I was completely illiterate, couldn't read a single character. Being unable to read anything meaningful—street signs, storefronts, bus schedules, food labels—I had to rely on my memory, dumb logic, and faith in the world around me.

It felt like I'd lost one of my senses: I could only discern the outlines and surfaces of things, and make guesses and inferences instead of direct connections. My interactions with store clerks, policemen, station attendants, and waitstaff were childlike in their simplicity. I never got to know what lay behind mysterious second and third floor windows—I saw only either a yellow sign or an unreadable menu with pictures out front and that was that.

I am caught between knowing and not knowing where I am. Tokyo is a city brimming with everything—food, people, money, life, death, cuteness—and I can barely take it in. Wandering around major hubs like Shinjuku or Shibuya is dizzying: illiteracy makes words disappear, all the signs become meaningless. The city becomes even more surreal, the curry restaurants and manga cafes and massage parlors turning wildly exotic and unknown.

When we don't understand a place, we make our own explanations and content ourselves with those. In a country where I didn't know half the things I needed to know, where I couldn't take in anything except by looking, I had to shut off the need to know, and the fear of not knowing, and just go out and live.



V.

Who hasn't played at being Japanese? It was a childhood game of mine to burble out gobbledygook filled with a's and k's and ch's to imitate the sound of Japanese. Without any knowledge of it, any foreign language is just a mass of sounds, with slight differences in tone, harshness, etc. Japanese is a much harsher language than our mimicry of it, the sh sound coming out like a snake's hiss, the r being somewhere in the realm of l and r and w. And unlike the fumbling babble we spout, the Japanese intone their language precisely: high-low-high, or low-high-low, the changes depending on intent: imperative, inquisitive, rude, polite, extra polite. Sentences are long, but they pause in the middle quite often: to think, or to enumerate things, or simply because you should.

If I visualize language, Japanese is neat, straight, regular rectangles. Each hard syllable is like the corner of a box, phrases coming at you quickly like an assembly line on fast forward. French is all rounded curves and swirls and arabesques. Filipino is a funny mix of curves and jags—swearing sounds sharp and rough and crisp, but a harana makes you think of sickly sweet syrup. English is wide, fat oblongs, the unchanging tone making me think of function and German design.

In this country, all you'll be surrounded with is neat straight rectangles of Japanese. English and German and French have crept into the language, but they come out similarly transformed into the regimented, inflexible syllables of Japanese: each consonant has to pair with a vowel, or else it doesn't work. *Sandwich* becomes *sandowichi*, and *arbeit* becomes *arubaito* (part-time job). The Japanese have even set aside a different set of characters for non-Japanese words, as if to remind themselves of what is theirs and what is not.

Spoken Japanese has no known relatives among other languages, and is proud of its linguistic isolation. Even Chinese words, from which it took written characters, are not taken as they are, but instead forced into a different sound reading in Japanese. In textbooks, foreign words are always called "loanwords," as if the Japanese fully intend to give them back someday. Even in the language, there's a sharp line between what is Japanese and what isn't.



VI.

I wonder where I am in the complex categories of people's minds. I thought I was simply *gaijin*, foreigner, outsider, as is every non-Japanese person. As I found out later, it's not just about being an outsider: what part of outside did you come from? I sympathize with, but can't relate to, my French roommate: she complains that she hears Japanese people racing to find the seat on the bus farthest away from her. My Italian friend recalls going to a countryside prefecture where amazed Japanese teenagers reached out and gingerly fingered her blonde hair. I've never been called *gaijin*, and I've never had people marvel over my (non-existent) blue eyes or take pictures with me.

I don't wish for prejudice—I only marvel at how hazily we reside in the Japanese consciousness, and yet physically exist as a cog in the Japanese system. In Japan, Filipinos are Catholic missionaries and prostitutes, engineers and entertainers, teachers and bums, scholars, waitstaff—name any and every line of work, and there's bound to be at least one Filipino in it. Perhaps that's it: we exist as workers—the cheap labor that enables the Japanese to keep being Japanese. But, in the Japanese fashion, you aren't supposed to see the inner workings (*honne*) of what's happening. You're supposed to maintain a facade (*tatema*) to show outsiders. Apparently, the Japanese firmly believe that they are all Japanese—porcelain-skinned, delicate-framed, Brunette Japanese, and it's only now that *Nippon ga abunai*—Japan is in danger—from the tall, pasty foreigners. Those short, tan Asians—they're already here, but please don't talk about it.



VII.

On September 27, 2009, Typhoon Ketsana/Ondoy hit the Philippines, and struck Manila with unforeseen, frightening force. I first saw the news on a long train ride home: I could only stare slack-jawed at the footage of Katipunan Avenue's new rivers of surging gray water. Couldn't understand half of what the anchor was saying, but I got it: people were dying, running around trying to fix a broken situation, and flooding the airwaves with frantic calls to family and friends, and I could only watch and read and worry with kanji homework in front of me, the blanks stoic and expectantly waiting.

Being sent here as a scholar feels like I have to carry the banner for a little island country. But I hesitate to identify as Filipino, because that makes me A Token Filipino. Like it or not, I'm one of a few Filipinos out of thousands here. I never used to mind bearing the flag: in high school, I wrote several angry essays declaring that I wanted to stay in the country, and those who didn't were traitors. Then I learned that nations were just imagined communities, that there was nothing rational behind my belief in The Filipino People (TM). And it's true: how can I say that my comfortable middle-class existence and the sampaguita kids who knock on car windows should have anything in common? In fact, declaring unity and commonality obscures the vast inequalities that exist between us.

And yet, the nation is a powerful concept, perhaps one that still resides somewhere in my skeptical consciousness. I prefer rationalism to emotional nationalism, but I look at the news footage of water sweeping away houses and their residents and then lie in bed angry and sleepless, hating myself for being here instead of there. I don't comprehend it, but somehow my distance from the concept of the country has its limits. I know the sad-sack, dismal, painfully ironic, carnivalesque Philippines is still my home, and it calls and I hear it.



Postscript

Home is a friendly room upstairs where we sit around a table and talk about nothing for hours, and home is at the end of the smoke-filled sixteen-lane highway in Manila. Home is drinking endless mugs of green jasmine tea, and home is the little girls selling hair scrunchies on the street. Home is the endless cacophony of tricycles and motorcycles and buses and jeeps and pedestrians and barkers and dust, and home is walking to the Y99 store on silent, warm, windy nights for another cheap fix. Home is the harsh, biting wind in winter, and home is the eternal smoggy, dusty searing sunshine in Manila. Home is a newspaper I can't read, and home is a newspaper that I can't bear to read. Home is here, and there, and wherever I can find it. Home is singular in concept but plural in reality, and I am singular, and what a pity that is.

It is possible to be home in company, and in alienation, in disaster, in bewilderment. It is possible to know very little about where you are, and still call it home. It is possible to deem a place intolerable, to shudder with disgust at all that's waiting there, and still want to come back. To have two or three or many homes seems to signal drifting, fracture, or other forms of being unwhole. To have just one home seems impossible, or else dull. Time careens along, dragging us and all of who we are with it, which comforts me. Shifts happen—unthinkable that they won't—and I welcome each new dislocation.



Japan Leads in Condom Use A Headline in a Japanese Daily

Jun Dela Rosa

I'm not sure if this is a compliment,
if Japan leads in the practice of safe sex
or promiscuity. Like the time

I asked you: which is longer,
forever or always, *watashi no ai?*
You just said, *koufun shiteiru yo,*

and you stepped out of your robe. In bed,
I muse over things while you unzip
your body: what if you were short,

half a foot smaller, perhaps,
or even shorter? Would you still have
those folds in your palms that spell

your Japanese name? Would the tattoo
on your chest be as elaborate? Now,
your face is drawn close, the distance

between our noses even shorter, and I ask
if you are allowing me to touch you
or just teasing. Distracted, you kick me,

roll over the bed, throw away the pack
of condoms. *Chikuso!* You're at it again. Difficult.
Complicating the simplest form of love.

Learning to Dance

Sandra Nicole Roldan

My earliest memory of being a bad dancer involves Menudo's hit single "Explosion (My Love for You)." I must have been nine. It was Christmas morning, and we were rehearsing a butt-wiggling dance routine that would guarantee a shower of one-peso coins like nothing we'd ever seen. I wish I could say I sat out the Christmas program with dignity intact but, no, avarice won out. I went along with it because I *wanted* that shower of coins. Still, deep in my bones, I knew that a butt-wiggling jumping jack did not look good on me.

I've never been 100% comfortable with my body. I never liked standing out, looking different from everyone else, which was impossible, being the only *kulot* in kindergarten. Being physically awkward, I think, has to do with growing up too tall, too thin, too quickly. In fourth grade, I had a growth spurt while everyone else had chickenpox, so I tried to look smaller by slouching and tucking in my shoulders. And then there's the matter of feet. Mine are unusually narrow, with high arches, so that keeping balance often requires conscious effort. I can add a host of other impediments, but mostly it's poor coordination and the sheer inability to multitask.

In grade school, I never got picked for dance presentations. Not for the *itik-itik* nor the *pandanggo sa ilaw* nor the *tinikling* during *Linggo ng Wika*. Not for the Christmas party, where I ached to dance to the *Bagets* movie soundtrack or to Madonna's "Borderline." Teacher knew best, I suppose. Because I was "the smart one," "the good writer," my place was always backstage, fiddling with the script or directing people to their places. Still, I yearned to be one of the dancers up front because even then, I had the sneaking suspicion that being a good dancer automatically conferred you Cute Girl status.

This suspicion was confirmed many times over the years, as during the 2005 World Pyro Olympics outside SM Mall of Asia. On that long stretch of reclaimed land, thousands gathered for the fireworks, magic shows, children's games, creepy mascots, and concerts blasting music at nosebleed levels.

We went to catch Hairy Dawgs play a set that was all big drums, percussion, and tall furry Carnival-in-Rio hats. Accompanying them was the Escola de Samba de Manila, a gaggle of nascent *matronas* in glittery bra tops and tiny skirts fashioned from handfuls of tinsel, led by a woman with the sexiest calves in Metro Manila. Her voice was vast and looming as Corcovado (so I like to imagine), her legs lightning-fast in four-inch stilettos. The crowd, mostly *masa*, was enthralled by the heady mix of booming drums, chimes and cymbals, Sergio Mendes covers in impeccable Brazilian Portuguese, and naked legs flashing under the hot klieg lights. It felt like a very upscale *Ati-atihan*.



During the set, the samba lady demonstrated some basic dance steps but the free lesson was wasted on the *manongs* crammed up front. My cousin-in-law Gina—living proof that pretty girls make good dancers—elbowed her way through a crowd of men gawking at the half-naked society ladies onstage. She braved the stench of sweaty *manongs* just so she could show us later how samba is all about snazzy foot movement. The hip-swinging is a natural result of nimble foot maneuvering. I tried it for a second but gave up after tripping on *talahib*.

A week later, we followed the samba lady (Eileen Sison in real life) to her gig at Café Havana in Greenbelt. With the band Guarana, she worked the crowd of balding expats, DBF colegialas, and working girls, pulling people into the spotlight and showing them the samba step by step, first slowly then faster and faster until her legs were just a blur and the pounding drums and the flashing lights were all that mattered. In between sets, we squinted through the cigarette haze and played Guess Which Girls Are Working.

We left Havana a little before midnight. By then, my cousins looked like they'd been dancing the samba for years, doing the foot thing and the hip-swivel quite easily. Me, I was just tired and sweaty. I had reverted to freestyle dancing minutes after we arrived as the samba was too hard on my knees. Its frenetic pace made my thirty year-old body ache for the measured elegance of the foxtrot, which of course I never quite learned.¹

After college, my sister and I used to follow an Atenista reggae band to all their gigs around the city, and even up to Baguio a couple of times. This was before they started playing *torotot*-intensive Lionel Richie covers on *Eat Bulaga*. No, we weren't groupies. Groupies got it on with the drummer, sometimes even bore him illegitimate sons. Rather, my sister was the band's unofficial publicist and I was her chaperone.² While I've moved on to other music, I still think fondly of those halcyon years when I first got comfortable with the idea that music is not only *heard*; it is also *felt*, *enjoyed* with the body.

Reggae's slow syncopated beats were perfect for me: I was not nicknamed Speed-Bagal for nothing. Sporadic ballroom dancing lessons prove I'm hopeless at retaining choreographed sequences. With reggae, so long as I could move to the beat (and had enough red-red wine to drink), everything's gonna be all right. No pressure to execute dance steps perfectly, no complicated sequences to remember. I also danced with my eyes closed—so I wouldn't have to deal with the staring. For years, I danced alone. Good times.

What I now call freestyle dancing first happened at the 1999 Baguio Arts Festival. All those gongs and drums and bongos wielded by Pinikipikan drove home the point that when you dance, you dance *with* the music. At least that's what the drugs told me. A mix of hashish, acid, tapuey, beer, marijuana, betel, and E caused me that night to see sound rising as colored bubbles from every vibrating surface. Grace Nono's voice was like an ocean hidden inside her small frame and each time she opened her mouth, a wave of sound escaped and washed over everyone. Huge waves flooded the cavernous Baguio Convention Center and all the hundreds of people in it were

1 Back in college, my aunt had us take ballroom dancing lessons with her dance instructor, a skinny middle-aged man in shiny black polyester who smelled strongly of Tancho pomade. I had wanted to learn the swing, because it looked easy, but the DI swung me around so violently, I almost got whiplash. I have scant memory of those lessons but I do remember watching enviously as cousin Andrea floated elegantly around the room, her delicate ankles moving in perfect time with the music.

2 In their CD liner notes, the band called us The Diyosas because we would always be the first to get-up-stand-up and dance in the half-empty clubs they played in. Pinoys, like most Asians, tend to sit out even the most danceable concerts. But through the power of The Diyosas, this band's gigs always ended at 1 a.m. with the crowd jumping and screaming for endless encores. Last time we caught them at Xaymaca some years ago, they gave us an extended horn-blasting salute, in gratitude, drunkenness, and remembrance.

drowning in music. We danced as if the music depended on it, as if our lives depended on it. It must have been a terrible sight.

My biggest breakthrough as a truly bad dancer happened midway through my six-month stay in Korea. My dormmates Tenzin and Kalinga decided to take Jandoz, the new guy from Kazakhstan, out for some chicken, beer, and dancing. The guys decided to include me in their little “welcome to Crimson House” party as I had nothing to do after dinner.³ But where to go? Chamsari-gil was only good for pickling the livers of Kodae⁴ students. For serious clubbing, one takes the subway to the more artsy-bohemian Hongdae⁵ district, thirty minutes away.

The first club was a mistake: we paid 15,000₩ (750 pesos) to enter an empty club. But Tenzin just handed me a bottle of cold Hite beer and went all Zen on us: “You have to get the bang out of your buck.” He delivered this koan in a clipped British Indian accent, then started shaking his skinny ass to the house music, eyes like slits behind his black-framed glasses. Perhaps being a stateless person all your life does something to you. He grew up in Dharamsala, the Indian village where His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama took refuge after China invaded Tibet in 1951. That night, I learned Tibetans aren’t always serene and detached. They love dancing. In between meditative states, they morph into party animals who give booze even to young children.

Several beers later, we began to enjoy ourselves. Kalinga, a young Sinhalese cinematographer, surprised us with some slick dance moves reminiscent of Bollywood extravaganzas. Even Jandoz, who had been slumped broodingly on a vinyl banquette, stood up to demonstrate the hottest dance moves in Kazakh discos today--the Roger Rabbit and the Running Man. I did my freestyle dancing, which involved sweating off the alcohol, dancing with eyes closed, and careening wildly on the empty dancefloor. It was a new low for me, and I still have the JPGs to prove it. Things went downhill after that.

We moved to M2, the hottest non-hip hop club in Hongdae, according to drunk Korean kids on the street who wanted to practice their English on us. We were unable to confirm this as M2’s Korean-American bouncer was a racist bigot. Though we waved our Alien ID cards and showed proof that we were guests of the Korean government, he took one look at Kalinga’s beard, declared him a terrorist and refused us all entry. After a few minutes of spitting and cursing, we sought refuge in a small park, consoling ourselves with skewers of greasy *eomuk*⁶ and spicy *tteokbokki*,⁷ speaking the universal language of drunken camaraderie⁸: performing stupid human tricks.

3 I came upon them smoking outside Crimson House, our dorm, after a solo meal of shrimp *mandoo* at Chamsari-gil, a street whose name translates to “Good Life Road.” Much like Katipunan in Quezon City, Chamsari is lined with bars and is spitting distance from the conservative university where we all took Korean language classes every day.

4 Short for Koryo Dae Hakkyo or Korea University

5 Short for Hongik Dae Hakkyo or Hongik University

6 fish cakes simmered in broth, also known as *odeng*

7 sausage-shaped sticky rice cakes the texture of *palitaw* or *mochi*, doused with a sweetish red chili sauce

8 Of course, this all happened before we discovered that Jandoz turns into a barking lunatic after too much alcohol. The guy makes Borat look like a career diplomat. When a drunk Kazakh museum curator starts breaking down doors, beats up skinny Sri Lankans and gets arrested by the police, one learns to stay away. He was deported from Korea a month before the exchange program ended.



* * *

The first time I went dancing with a partner resembles a car crash more than anything else: unexpected, and somewhere between ugly and unpleasant. It happened towards the end of June, at a small club in Sinchon. We were late for a dinner and poetry reading sponsored by bleeding-heart *tibaks* calling themselves “The Bridge Between Palestine and Korea.” Expecting a solemn affair denouncing Israel’s occupation of the Gaza Strip, we were surprised to see everyone drunk on *makkoli* and *soju*, sprawled atop cushions on the blood-red floor. Call it Arabian Nights, Korean-style.⁹ Even stranger was the group’s decision to scrap the poetry reading altogether and instead attend an LGBT rights party happening at the club’s basement level.¹⁰

Immediately, I went into my freestyle dance routine: eyes closed and limbs flailing about, occasionally apologizing for slamming into people. Never mind how funny I looked; dancing had become the easiest way to get out of myself without dodgy substances that mess up my neurochemistry. But I did sneak looks at my reflection on the mirrored walls, to check if I was still there. On that dance floor. In that club. Because when I’m lost in thought—or in what I’m doing—sometimes I forget who or where I am. Nothing complex or existential; it’s just that sometimes I forget I have a body, and that people can see me.

It is hard to keep track of time when you’re dancing, especially in these places where one song morphs into another, and then another, and yet another. The beats come at you like artillery, a few hundred pulses a minute, and the colors flash in your eyes until you feel you are drowning in heat and light. After what could have been fifteen minutes or even an hour, a weird ululation—something between a war cry and what I imagine muezzins sound like when calling the faithful to prayer—cut through the music and brought me back.

It was Bashir, the younger Palestinian poet, winking and grinning at me through the wild tangle of his beard. He was built like a bear, and danced like one too, hopping flatfooted first on one paw then the other. He had left his shoes somewhere upstairs and was now shuffling around in manky brown socks. When he said my name, it was all z’s and rolling r’s: “Zzandrrah!” The music was so loud he had to shout in my ear: “I yam not drrrunk yetz! You vant tequeelah! I trrreat you!” Looking from under his long lashes, eyebrows raised as if it meant something, he pulled me toward the bar.

I’d never drunk tequila before but had always been fascinated by the ritual of licking up some salt, tossing back a shot, biting into a lemon slice. The bartender handed over my very first shot, which I tossed back with a lick of iodized from a shaker. We ended up downing five shots each in the space of half an hour, dancing and hopping, working our way back to the bar, and then staggering back to the dance floor. It was fun at first. Then it got messy.

In her book about the five senses, Diane Ackerman talks of “touch dancing,” what older generations mean

9 The Korean *tibaks* even assumed Arabic names to go with the party theme: Saeed, for instance, owns a construction company, and waxes romantic about NPA guerillas hiding in the Philippine jungles. The youngest member, Aliyah, is a corporate events organizer with multiple body piercings and a low tolerance for alcohol.

10 A Korean-American girl with luminous skin and perfect profile waved us in, saying she and her girlfriend had put the LGBT event together. I was terrified that everyone inside would be as sleek and gorgeous—moving sinuously like panthers stalking their prey—while I’d look like a sweaty sock puppet. Once inside, though, I was happy to see the usual upstanding young citizens dancing uniformly in neat groups. All of them in beige slacks and striped shirts, nodding politely and enjoying the generic dance music, moving in perfect time, with minimal effort and no unnecessary flourishes. Efficient as clockwork, even outside the office.



when they say “ballroom dancing,” even if it happens on a *barangay* basketball court on a chilly night, under the stars. It is vastly different from what passes for dancing these days. Instead of the wild solo flailing I am so expert at, a man and a woman enter each other’s arms and move together in time to music. (Quick, quick, slow.) One’s body is always close enough to feel the other’s heartbeat, pulse, or breath. (Quick, quick, slow.) Just the kind of thing that gets me in trouble. The Palestinian incident made me swear never to do it again. For a single girl alone in a foreign city, this kind of intimacy can easily spiral into something else.

When a guy asks me to dance, my first instinct has always been to say no. Like what I did to that cute hacendero from Davao¹¹ I met at 78 Orange back in 2000. But it was that backwards cap-wearing Fil-Am kid¹² I picked up at Xaymaca in 2005 who spelled it out for me. One night, we went dancing at a basement club in Eastwood. Or rather, he danced and I doubled over laughing at the bad hip hop playing in the background.

ME (shouting over the loud music): “I don’t like hip hop!”

HIM (shouting and lisping into my ear): “Why??? It’th cool, gurl!”

ME (still shouting): “Because it’s too primal!”

HIM (still lisping): “That’th egg-thactly why I like it! It’th like thekth!”

ME (to self): “Eek.”

You could see it in the way people moved. The sweaty bump-and-grind. The aggressive miming of sex. All done by fourteen- and fifteen-year olds. Maybe I’m a prude, maybe I’m just old. *Basta*, it feels wrong to behave like that in public. Growing up, I liked black and white movies where people danced the waltz, the tango, the foxtrot. Stately and precise. Dancing was something you did while wearing pearls and a little black dress. Dancing was also something fun you did with friends, barefoot and in shorts, at the beach after downing pitchers of lukewarm beer and instant coffee. It’s not supposed to be gross.

Dancing with the Palestinian poet was okay at first because he was goofy and harmless when sober. Too bad he insisted on licking the salt from my hand when we downed our third tequila shot. I couldn’t figure out a polite way to say, “Eww,” without him going all Hamas on me. Hindsight tells me I should have tried harder—for the next six weeks he kept calling at midnight, even if I already had a boyfriend. “Ees hee in Zee-yohl?” No, in Manila. “Zo ... What eez prrrrroblehm?” He really did sound perplexed.

Fending off Bashir was my first (and hopefully last) lesson in the persistence of Arab men. Then again, he had a lot to brag about.¹³ When he told me his poetry has been translated into ten languages, I wanted then and there to tell him: “*Nyet! Nein! Non! Nee! Nej! Aniyo! Tidak! Huwag po!*” I knew he was smart enough to understand that no in any language means no. Still, at some point, he took me by surprise and kissed me on the dance floor. I felt violated.

11 Yoyong was a nice enough guy, a model-cute Atenean with dimples, a Recolletos accent, and a tendency toward stalking. Despite gifting me with a Marks and Spencer shopping bag full of durian candy, I had to say no because (1) I wasn’t yet comfortable dancing with my eyes open and (2) I just couldn’t see myself dancing with an Erap supporter.

12 Ernest was six years younger, chubby, sang in the church choir, and loved showing off his tattoos (one of which spelled out “*mahal*” in alibata). But except for his point about sex and dancing, I could never take him seriously because of his terrible lisp.

13 He wasn’t just cute, he was also from Nazareth, like Jesus. He was also a poet, a painter, a stage actor, a philosopher, a photographer, and a singer. His abstract impressionist painting of me became part of an exhibit somewhere in Seoul a month before we left. (He showed it to me before we parted ways and, uhm, I looked a mess.)



* * *

My one good memory of touch dancing in Seoul was the last Friday of August, my last chance to enjoy Hongdae's All Access Club Night. I had never gone club hopping—too expensive. But that night, instead of the usual door charge of 15,000₩ per club, you just pay a flat fee equivalent to fifteen US dollars to enter as many clubs as you want on that one night. I resolved to go dancing in Hongdae till morning; I just needed to convince people to come with me. Tenzin and Kalinga had prior engagements. After some calls, Joan and Pax agreed to keep me company.

Pax and I bolstered ourselves with a midnight dinner of octopus yakitori, dynamite sushi rolls, and exorbitant San Mig pale pilsens¹⁴ at a tiny Japanese-style pub calling itself Izakaya¹⁵. Waiting for Joan and her date, we talked of what we missed most: Palawan and Boracay, Baguio and Sagada, the flame trees and giant acacias around the UP Acad Oval. He is deathly bored by Korean girls: they never say what they want, can't think for themselves. But he has no choice—his parents expect him to marry a Korean girl. He's miserable in Korea, and homesick for the Philippines.

Pax was an intriguing mix of the strange and the familiar. I had met him at the Hi-Seoul Festival behind City Hall, his hand wrapped around a cold San Miguel at the Philippine Tourism booth. I mistook him for a Chinoy with his impeccable coño boy accent ("You went to Sokcho? Stop making me *inggit!*") but he was born in Daegu, in the southern part of peninsula, to Christian missionaries. They relocated to Baguio when he was four, so he grew up among the pines, studied at Brent, then attended Diliman at the same time I did. After stints at EDSA Shangri-La and the Club Med resorts, he now works for the Department of Tourism's Korea office, peddling the Philippines as a honeymoon destination to Korean couples eager to cavort on white sand beaches while wearing identical swimwear.

Joan finally tottered into the pub around midnight. Her date, Damon¹⁶, suggested we first stop at a place that presumed to call itself The Ska Club, which played bad disco from the early nineties. Not a rude boy in sight, no hint of ska at all, so we finished our beers as soon as we could, our bags stashed safely in the club's locker and moved to a hip hop club called Hooper in English and Hoopo in Hangeul.

It was packed when we got there. Before we squeezed into the melee, Joan warned me that in Korea, girls who danced alone were considered fair game. I thought myself the exception: stuff like that only happened to nubile teenagers, not to flat-chested women pushing thirty. So I was in the middle of my usual wild flailing when some guy's arms snaked from out of the crowd and wrapped themselves around my waist. I froze in mid-flail, too scared to say or do anything. This was why I didn't like dancing: the violation of personal space by creepy strangers on a dark dance floor. It was the Palestinian incident all over again.

It was all I could do to grab Pax's sleeve and point helplessly over my shoulder at the unseen guy who had attached himself to my backside. Whatever pathetic whimpering I made was drowned out by the loud music. But *toute de suite*, Pax, chubby knight in sweaty t-shirt, pulled me free and said something snarky to the stranger in

14 two hundred-fifty pesos a bottle!

15 which translates to "tiny Japanese-style pub"

16 His name actually was Poson (Poseon?). Many young Koreans adopt Western-style names to give foreigners an easier time.



Korean. Something accompanied by the rumbling and hissing that usually indicates wrath and imminent violence. Wisely, guy shoved off and disappeared into the crowd. Pax then turned himself into a human shield for Joan and me, strangers bouncing off his back as he danced to bad hip-hop. Soon enough, Pax pulled us out of the crush of limbs and onto a platform. The view from up there confirmed my suspicions: Hooper was a shortcut to the Ninth Circle of Hell.

After a few more clubs, we settled down at an expat hangout called Tin Pan which featured a billiard table, space for dancing, and a staff who mercifully spoke English. On constant rotation was mix of samba, bossa nova, salsa, reggae, and other island-flavored rhythms to which some muscular black guys¹⁷ were dancing oh-so-beautifully with their Korean girlfriends. They all moved as if boneless, all slithery and sensuous. They seemed to have well-oiled joints while mine were all rusted hinges and missing screws. One of the black guys came over and tried to pull me to my feet. I had to say no; the dancing at Tin Pan was out of my league. After seeing his lithe moves on the dance floor, my signature freestyle would be a sacrilege.

I consoled myself with eight shots of tequila and the biggest platter of dried squid in Hongdae. Chewing it gave the jaws a major workout. It was 3:30 in the morning and by that time, we were all utterly smashed. Bob Marley's "Turn Your Lights Down Low" began playing and Pax pulled me to my feet for one last dance. I protested, telling him I was too drunk to even be vertical. He just grinned told me I'd be fine. He placed a hand on my back to steady me, his other gripped my cold and sweaty palm. In my ear, his voice rumbled softly: "Just follow my lead ... Don't think." And then slowly, slowly we danced. It was divine.

But it was too good to last. Pax tried twirling me once during the next song and the whole place started spinning. Too keep from spewing chewed up squid on his shirt, I rushed to the toilet and threw up whatever tequila had yet to hit my bloodstream. Pax waited nervously at the door, calling out if I was okay. If I had let him, I knew he would have held my hair back and helped me wash up. Somehow I managed alone. When I got out, he dabbed at wet my face with a wad of tissue. Then back to the dance floor we went. My head on his shoulder, my arms around his ample waist. His hands stroking up and down my back, the way mothers burp their infants. My bare feet on his Italian leather shoes, the way fathers teach their daughters how to dance. Right before dawn, he promised me a salsa lesson before I left for Manila but as these things go, there was never enough time.

The last time I went dancing was at the Stock Exchange in Makati. I had met up with an old friend, someone I had last seen at a subway station in Seoul the year before. It was great to see him again in warmer weather and happier circumstances. We had agreed to meet in UP, so this was how I saw him again: I was sitting under a giant acacia at the Sunken Garden, across the street from the Educ building. Kitty, my dog and the love of my life, was peeing and pooping and snuffling at the tree's roots and rolling on the grass all around. We had just come from the vet. Then I saw my friend walking from the direction of Vinzons, smiling and waving a cup of taho at me. It's the smile that gets me every time.

That one day, it was like we were back in Seoul again, just talking and laughing for hours over meal after meal after meal. Except there was no kimchi because he wanted Filipino food. He was occasionally snitty at the wait staff, just as he was in Seoul, when things were less than perfect. And as in Seoul, there was also dancing, not

17 Most likely some GI's on R&R from the American bases around Seoul



in a bar surrounded by old drunks and working girls, but at the Philippine Stock Exchange, aka Tower One on Ayala Avenue.

It was midnight, and the place was deserted except for the janitors and security guards doing their rounds. We had been sitting there and talking about saudade, that feeling of sadness and longing that you get when you miss someone or something you really like. I got out my PDA and made him listen to a Madeleine Peyroux cover of “Dance Me to the End of Love,” less funereal and more saudade than the Leonard Cohen original. I wanted it to be played at my wedding dance the following year. I asked him to listen closely to the words. I watched his feet tapping while he listened with his eyes closed.

He didn’t say anything at the end of the song. He just hooked up his iPod to his ear and then to mine, pulled me to my feet and started teaching me the salsa. Quick, quick, slow. Quick, quick, slow. There were was a lone jogger making his way down Ayala Avenue, past the line of taxis waiting for passengers. The only light came from the 24-hour McDonald’s across the street. At around 1 A.M., we ran out of songs and decided to call it a night.

Between the quick hug and the slam of the taxi door: “You made me happy today.” I don’t know when or whether I’ll ever see him again. Either way, it was the kind of goodbye we both needed.

From Vogue

Isabela Cuerva



Letters to the Editor

(1) I loved the June issue. It told the story of beginnings, was the beginning itself.

You were so happy then, so bright with new beginnings and ready to burst with so much life. You held the world on a string, the world, and the sun, the moon, the stars. The future was bright, and it fit snugly on the palm of your hand. You were whole.

Beginnings. June. Let's start at the beginning, when I had liked you, June. You smelled like grass, freshly mowed, clean and cut (oh so green, even on the days it rained). You were young, delicate and raw and artless, like dew on a leaf, or a young grasshopper, or the flutter of a butterfly wing against my cheek. You stood before me, no pretense whatsoever, bare and rare and trying to impress.

Oh, June, you intrigued me.

(2) I loved the June issue. It told the story of beginnings, was the beginning itself.

What happened?

The thumping in my head

Is the bass line

To a song written and composed for (by?) us.

My vision swims,

And all I see is

A myriad of different colors and lights

Distorted and hazy and blurred,

The smell of smoke translated into vision.

You were red: raging, passionate red,

And I was blue, just blue.

We were supposed to make purple.

That didn't turn out well.



Insert Obligatory Advocacy Ad Here

Oh, look! It's Some Celebrity speaking for Some Advocacy, naked and holding up a skinned rabbit, obviously targeting Some Fashion House. Below are statistics on the number of furry little critters illegally hunted to make fur coats.

Notice first the abnormally perfect shape of Some Celebrity's breasts, then wonder if that's some advertising tactic. Then notice how she's holding up a dead rabbit and wonder why on earth Some Advocacy thinks it's okay for them to use a dead rabbit in their ad, but not okay for Some Fashion House to use rabbit fur.

Still, the message gets across:

O the brutality of fashion! No to fur.



Fur Coat Advertisement

FLASH. High Fashion Model with designer bag and shoes and jewelry.

Oh, and: a rabbit fur coat.



About the Cover

Putting up a front is becoming increasingly difficult.

It's so difficult to be numb. There's definitely the effort to show some semblance of emotion—to cry when someone dies, to laugh when someone tells a joke, to yell and scream when angry—but, for the most part, there is nothing. And I *do* feel something, for nothing is something, for nothing is a concept. I don't know, though, if the something of nothingness is better than the something of emotions. What I do know is that I hate emotions. However, I'm ridiculously good at making others believe that I actually feel things—and that's the cover right there.

Give me sadness, give me ennui, give me intensity, make love to the camera, give me envy, give me malice, give me addiction. As if some photographer barks orders at me, tells me to feel—give me anger, give me hysteria, give me a break *you're doing it all wrong*.

Photoshoots. The photographer barks and wheedles and entices me just for me to get the right emotions down pat. Without him, and without the photoshoots, there would be no cover. There would be no semblance of something, there wouldn't even be nothing. And that would be something, to have no nothing.

Or perhaps I do feel emotions, and I just refuse to admit it. Putting up a front is becoming increasingly difficult—but what front am I putting up? Do I pretend to feel? Or do I feel, pretending to just pretend to feel, pretending to be numb? What, exactly, is the cover I'm showing the world, the cover I publish for everyone to see?



The Photoshoot (How the Cover Was Made; or, How I Feign Show Emotion)

Give me excitement—you're supposed to be young and lively and wild and intense and crazy; show me that. You're going to a party—don't look so goddamn depressed about it, and don't come up with all that nonsense about it being bad luck when you get too excited over things. Come on, give me excitement, baby, you can do it, I know you can. Smile, jump up and down, *giggle* for chrissakes, just make me believe you're excited.

Give me pretty, but superficial—give me the dumb blonde look, a blank smile and doe eyes. There's this group of girls, and they are all pretty, albeit generic. They talk about the mundane: what they've overheard; what passersby wear, if they've repeated outfits; public displays of affection, common friends in compromising positions, positions of shame, embarrassment; their crushes; gossip, gossip, more gossip. They discuss, as if the world depended on such things, deadlines, the time, where to eat, such important matters, never you mind if there are people starving, or if there are earthquakes, or El Niño. Be just like them. Be normal for once. I'm tired of the smart, pretentious intellectual. Give me pretty.

Give me idleness—how you'd look spread out on a bed, languorous; seated on the floor, staring into space, as if caught in a standstill; staring at the blackboard, chewing on a pen, languid and torpid; walking aimlessly, each bounce of your step a beat behind, tucking a strand of hair behind your ear in a slow, dreamy, unhurried way; watching the cursor blink, blink, blink, unfazed by the emptiness of your word document as you lean back, lethargic.

Give me addiction—there's a party. Will there be alcohol? You cannot go to a party without alcohol. You cannot be happy without alcohol, cannot be sad without (*cont'd on page 11*)



An Interview with Our Cover Girl—Unedited

Interviewer: So. Tell me about yourself.

Cover Girl: What about myself? (laughs)

I: Anything. Talk about your days before modeling. Your childhood, perhaps?

CG: My childhood?

I was always the strange kid, always the odd one out. Until high school, I never fit in with anyone, never had a permanent set of friends. Aloof, a couple of teachers once commented—I was often a little too detached. I was different, liked different things—

I: But I'm sure the other kids always liked you; I'm sure you were pretty and pleasant.

CG: (frowns) Not really. I think very few people actually liked me, you know—

I: I'm sure they did. You were probably a bit too intimidating.

CG: Or a bit too weird. I spoke with a British accent, which went away when the Spice Girls broke up, but returned with a vengeance when I started reading Harry Potter. But that was my childhood—an almost unhealthy obsession with the Spice Girls, and Harry Potter ... come to think of it, I still have and almost unhealthy obsession with Harry Po—

I: (bored) So, modeling. What made you decide to model?

CG: I dunno. Thought it would be fun. It was never part of the plan.

I: (incredulous) With a face like that? I'm sure it was somewhat part of the plan.

CG: (annoyed) A face like what? I was an ugly duckling, really; I kind of resembled a baby raccoon at one point—

I: A what, now?

CG: A baby raccoon. I—

I: (laughs) That's ridiculous!

CG: Ridiculous, huh? Point is, it wasn't part of the plan for me to become a model, 'cause I was short and scrawny and dark-eyed and bulimic—

I: Bulimic! So you had an eating disorder?

CG: Kind of, but not the way you'd think— *(next page)*



(from previous page)

I: Why do you think all models have eating disorders?

CG: I wouldn't say all models have eating disorder—

I: But many of them do, including you!

CG: I don't have an eating disorder. I did when I was a child—

I: So you were a fat kid? You said you were scrawny!

CG: I was, but if you'd just listen to me tell my—

I: So you stretched the truth a bit, huh?

CG: (angry) No! If you'd let me—

I: Do all models stretch the truth?

CG: Listen here, mister, I was not stretching the truth—

I: I suppose all models do stretch the truth. There's always this artificiality about you guys. Can't say I blame you for not being completely honest; with all that fakeness, how do you know what's real?

CG: I am real, I am not stretching the truth!

I: So you were just plain lying? The strangeness, the Harry Potter, the being ugly, the bulimia—all a lie?

CG: (close to tears) Why won't you listen ... I wasn't—

I: And now you're crying. Sign to end the interview now.

I wish you'd just listen to me for once and stop fucking interrupting.



Fashion Show Review: On Beauty

1. Horseshoe Village (La Vida Española)

(Standing L to R: the aunt with Turner's syndrome, small and the ugly duckling of the family, rosary in hand; the uncle who is not an uncle, with a thick layer of make-up and bejeweled wrists and fingers; the aunt who is not an aunt, with cropped hair and dressed in men's clothing; Incredibly Beautiful Aunt 1, the one with three husbands; Incredibly Beautiful Aunt 2, the one with one husband; the author's father, young, different, displaced, but handsome; the author, aged three, soon to be as beautiful as everyone else; the grandmother, beautiful at seventy-five, holding a glass of beer

Not in photo: about twenty beautiful cousins and second cousins)

Mi familia es una familia mestiza—en esto país, mestiza significa hermosa. Mis primos y tías eran conocidos por su belleza. No tengo tío verdadero; es un homosexual, pero es hermoso también. Cada una era hermosa; cada una era mestiza, ¿ves?

(Above: the author's childhood home located in Horseshoe Village

Below: the interior of the house, glass figurines and flowery wallpaper)

Horseshoe. Las figurillas del cristal susurraron, y señalaron, el papel pintado miró fijamente. Mi tío, extravagante como siempre, se mueve alrededor de la casa. Mi tía, la patita fea, no hizo más que rezar, mientras él trenzó alrededor y mi abuela bebió su cerveza. Yo era pequeña; era mas pequeña de mi tía patita fea. No sabía nada; no sabía que no es normal que los tíos a usar maquillaje y abuelas a beber cerveza. Todo lo que sabía era que mi familia era hermosa.

2. The Love of All Things Feminine

(In photo: the author next to her high school girlfriend. Yes.)

Smell of Dolce and Gabbana Light Blue. Ample breasts milk-less, but heavy. Dark, unruly curls and long, long eyelashes. High school romance; college marriage wearing thin, desperately hanging on, waiting to be saved. Marriage of D&G and Ferragamo's Incanto Charms; merging of the waif, flat-chested, almost boyish, and the plump, rounded, feminine; the intertwining of legs of two people, both too lazy to shave; black and dark chestnut hair, both wavy, constantly tangled together, like a mess, or a nest of baby pythons. The love between two females. The love of all things feminine.

(Standing L to R: Boy 1, young and soft and serene; Boy 2, tall, chinky-eyed, vibrant, smiling; the author; Boy 3, smiling one of his rare smiles, looking genuinely happy)

Even in men, there is the constant search for the feminine—desire for long lashes instead of the strong jaw, soft slenderness over hard muscles, clean-shaven skin over rough stubble, the smell of vanilla or of flowers over the smell of man, anima instead of animus. There is a search for the feminine man, so feminine that he might also like other men, not that I mind.

Woman likes woman, who likes man, who likes man, who likes woman. Beautiful.



Advertisements

1. *FLASH. Neutral colored background brand name in bold and distinct letters above.*

Stunning model dressed in coat most probably fruit of animal torture holding bag also most probably fruit of animal torture stunning model oh-so-stunning with blonde hair and red lipstick and thick lashes.

The entire outfit is enough to send all your kids to school, but buy it anyway.

2. *FLASH. Pale pink background with perfume bottle in foreground. Cheesy slogan made to sound haute couture. Scratch and sniff.*

Our perfume smells like dead roses, but buy it anyway.

3. *FLASH. Classy actress wearing wristwatch with embedded diamonds sparkly diamonds like the earrings on each of her earlobes and the ring on her finger and the barrette in her hair oh-so-sparkly and glittery and golden never mind that the watch is the only thing being sold and never mind how expensive it must have been to buy that watch and never mind how much that classy actress is probably being paid and*

never mind that all those diamonds are there just so you can tell the time. Buy it anyway.



Interview with Our Cover Girl—Edited

Insert here the generic questions and the generic answers. Insert here what people want to hear. There are no truths, no lies, just what sells.

Confession: I guess I did stretch the truth.

Thank you, mother and father, for raising me in a manner that is simultaneously terrible and excellent. Without you, I wouldn't have a childhood of bulimia to write about, or experiences with the psychiatrist, or insecurities about my sexuality. Thank you for trying to make up for it by being more present throughout my teenage years; I am no longer as miserable, so I cannot write with such sincerity and brute honesty—you've made every memory I write hyperbolized because I cannot admit that I am not as miserable as I think I am. Thank you.



Photoshoot (cont'd from page 6)

alcohol, cannot dance without alcohol, cannot kiss boys without alcohol, cannot write without alcohol. So drink alcohol, drink, and drink some more, familiar burn down your throat a sign of nerve endings, a sign you still exist. You need it to prove you exist. Give me addiction, baby.

Give me helplessness—how, walking along a hospital corridor, white and smelling of antiseptic, a gurney passes you by, a lifeless person's silhouette barely seen beneath the crisp white sheet, pushed by two stone-faced nurses and a sobbing woman. Your head turns, and for the longest split-second of your life you have so much to say—*I'm sorry. It will get better. Was he your husband? Was she your daughter? What was his name? How did she die?* Split-second, and they're gone; they've turned around the corner, and you stand still, eyes wide-open, completely helpless and unhelpful.

Give me lovestruck—she is not stunning, not conventionally beautiful. But you love her, love the way her eyes light up when she laughs; love the way she sings, voice trembling, conscious of your presence; love the way she holds you close, ample breasts hitting your shoulder blades; love the way she looks spread out on the bed for you, even if she is fat, because she is real, and she is yours; love the way she smells like Dolce and Gabbana Light Blue; love the way she whispers your name in a breathy moan. You love her, and never mind the social norms, never mind society, or parents, or gender, or sex. Never mind the world, for as long as she is there,

You inhale

she exhales for you

Your raise your right hand

And there is her left, linking her fingers with yours as you pray for forgiveness. (*next page*)



(from previous page)

Give me a breakdown—*no reason to stay nowhere to go nobody to please nobody for me no one is there nobody cares nobody knows where I should go I'm sick of this mess I'm sick of my life I don't know if I should laugh or should cry I'm trying too hard not trying at all no one is there to catch me I fall—*

I fall to pieces.

I fall, to pieces I fall.

To pieces, I fall to.

Pieces, I fall to pieces.

Give me a break.



And just a tiny bit of silence.

Give me joy—or some semblance of it.

I can't.



Scratch-and-Sniff Perfume Samples

This one smells like citrus fruits, freshly squeezed and acidic.

This one smells like flowers on a warm spring day.

This one smells like pine trees.

This one smells like an overripe banana.

This one smells like soap, the one your mother used to buy when you were five years old.

This one smells like soap, the one your mother buys now because they stopped making the one she used to buy when you were five years old.

This one smells like soap, the one your father buys because it's cheaper than your mother's brand, even if it doesn't smell as good and gives everyone allergies.

This one smells like vanilla, almost too sickly sweet.

This one smells like Grandma.

This one smells like ripe, succulent berries.

This one is labeled "forest" but you have no idea what a forest really smells like. It still smells good, though.

This one smells like your mother's pillow, that exact smell of her shampoo.

This one smells like that one kid you nearly fell in love with because of her smell.

You think this one smells like your ex-boyfriend, but you never got to sniff him enough so you can't be sure.

This one almost smells like your ex-girlfriend—an imitation of Dolce and Gabbana Light Blue.



Horoscope

Pisces *February 19-March 20*

If someone strikes you as not quite on the up-and-up, don't try to talk yourself out of it. Your antennae are consistently pretty keen, but at the moment, they'll be especially accurate. That means no matter what anyone else says, trust your gut first and foremost. And if a certain story doesn't seem quite right, go ahead and do some digging. The real facts won't be hard to find.

Aries *March 21-April 20*

Don't let your imagination run away with you. Contrary to what you think, people aren't talking behind your back. Actually, they're too busy to pay much attention to your activities. It looks like your employer is pretty short staffed, and you'll be forced to pick up the slack. If it's too much for you to handle, explain the situation for your boss. That way, he or she will know projects may take longer than anticipated. Forewarned is forearmed!

Taurus *April 21-May 21*

Important issues connected with travel, educational activities or the law require some delicate handling. Not everyone is on your wavelength today. Hi-tech machinery and other appliances may give you trouble. Save your work regularly just in case if you rely on a computer!

Gemini *May 22-June 21*

You're a whiz at talking the talk, but making a move might be something that's best put off until a little later. If you have a debate or report to present, you're golden.



Cancer *June 22-July 22*

You can be more flexible in family and friendship deals. And still feel one hundred per cent certainty. Trust in a team is restored, and optimistic planets insist the time is now right to stretch qualifications or experience further. Luck links you to a new address.

Leo *July 23-August 22*

Single? A freewheeling dude you might meet tonight could impress you with his erotic arsenal. Attached? Consider surprising him with a silly gift. He'll adore you even more for this just-because gesture.

Virgo *August 23-September 22*

Friendships may be hard to sustain when things don't go as planned. Domestic problems can no longer be avoided. Share with your closest pal.

Libra *September 23-October 22*

A sense of well-being buoys up your spirits. Trips and travel are especially starred. In fact, anything with a distant flavor or foreign connection will please. Is it time to sharpen up your mind, take up a new interest or buff up a rusty skill? Look into it now.

Scorpio *October 23-November 22*

New initiatives that you launch at this time are likely to go well, not least because it's easier to get people on side. If you're single and looking, then you may strike lucky!

Sagittarius *November 23-December 21*

If things have seemed a little slow on the career front then from now on the pace is likely gradually to pick up. By the end of the month you'll be back up to speed. Meanwhile Pluto inching forward in the money sector of your solar chart indicates a period of financial consolidation is complete and you're ready to move on.



Capricorn *December 22-January 19*

Don't let a difference of opinion spoil your mood.
Especially, be careful and watch what you say or
you could seriously put someone's back up.
Is there any way you could meet in the middle?
It's worth a try.

Aquarius *January 20 - February 18*

You're putting out some pretty high-octane
vibes at the moment, attracting the attention of
just about everyone who happens to amble by.
Do them—and yourself—a favor. If you're already
attached, or just not interested, don't even think
about flirting. And if anyone has a hungry,
vaguely disoriented look about them, and a silly,
sappy grin, too? Run, don't walk, in the other direction.
This is the behavior of a prospective groupie,
not a potential partner.

My cat died today. The horoscope didn't tell me my cat would die.

Mama Brought a White Elephant

Joey Clutario

*Hail the beast which passeth
all others in "wit and mind."*

Aristotle

There it stands—
sallow, unclean mess
lying on the floor
mama swept after
taking care of the laundry.
Trunk slithering foul.
Arrogant and loafing.
Two plumpish thighs
placed inside the house—
her living room monument
(five-foot filth
smearing the walls)
spraying putrid ardor;
its two limbs thrown,
one posing a jab

and one pointing
as if with forceful
edict—See!
Its sharp ivory tusks
push while she
puts on new
bed sheets.

“Best Pig Ever” Was Not All That He Said

A Subjective Transcription of *No Reservations: Philippines*, Cut According to Commercial Breaks

Mae Cacanindin

*Defective pregnancy test kits?
Repackage them as coffee stirrers and sell them in the Philippines.*
– Krusty the Klown, *The Simpsons*

From Long Island to Queens, a video travels. The peppy guy in it, Augusto, Tony calls “compelling.” And for this, he is called to Queens to meet Anthony Bourdain.

How many times have you been to the Philippines? Tony asks. *Actually, two years ago was the first time,* Augusto says in return. *And how long have you been there?* Tony asks further. *A week,* Augusto answers with an uncertain laugh. Seeing excerpts from his video entry, I would not have guessed that he had only been here once, much less, for a week. He was enthusiasm personified, and seemed like someone who knew what he was saying and the country he was representing—a sure pick against the fat lady hugging a human-sized sculpture of a squirrel, and the dude swinging a samurai to a snowman’s head. Although in the video, Augusto had the Philippine flag displayed behind him as if the country were in the state of war, vertically-hung with the red stripe to the left. It’s possibly just like when it happened during Noynoy’s meeting with Obama, an outsider’s honest mistake. It is not that big a deal.

So you’re asking us to pay for you to discover your own country? Tony shakes his head a little and scribbles something down. *Right. Right,* and the editors opt to cut Tony’s reaction to Augusto’s response.

-o0o-

Are they really Asian?
– Art Bell, American radio talk host

And that is how Tony finds himself in Manila.

Augusto, a Filipino-American, his wife, a Chinese-American, and their one-year old daughter, a typical American, go straight to Cebu, Augusto’s mom’s origin. Tony expects a feast when he comes to meet them.

Ivan, a food tour guide, brings Tony to China Town. They cross a street in Binondo where jeepneys and pedicabs pass to and from their destinations: *It’s all about momentum and commitment,* Tony describes it. This is



so familiar that I haven't even thought about describing it like that. I've crossed Ayala Boulevard in Ermita where trucks lumber past or toward Manila piers, on almost every school day for four years, as it was necessary to get to the very proximate SM Manila from my high school; I've even experienced being sandwiched by two sixteen-wheelers for over-eagerness, with the Quantum arcade hall and the overpriced Blue Magic stuffed keychains in my head instead of the traffic lights. I've been crossing Mindanao Avenue, where motorists drive all day as they would in the middle of the night when pedestrians and the power-hungry MMDA traffic aides would rather be at home than deal with bus drivers and tired car owners turned race car drivers who would not stop even for a woman carrying her child, for almost four years now, minus the days that I've decided to take taxi rides from UP or Trinoma, fearing death. I've never thought about describing it as Tony did; all I know is that it's necessary to get to the other side alive.

They pass by fruit stalls and shirtless men. Pit stop one: a fish ball stand. Ivan shows Tony how to use the stick to poke the balls straight from the frying pan, Tony follows him and says *Yum!* after tasting his first Pinoy fish ball. *You don't want to double-dip in the sauce*, Ivan says. Yeah, right. Every one wants to double-dip.

A Divisoria-Baclaran jeepney drives by and Tony admires its form. Of course he would. The first jeepneys were called *jitneys*. These came from the military jeeps which the Americans left here after the war, and which Filipinos back then had turned into something lucrative. But he probably doesn't know that. I don't think Ivan knows that, too. And I would not know of that fact either had I not taken three units on Philippine Art Studies as an elective, which I picked on that hot and sweaty enlistment day after someone told me that the department boasts of air-conditioned classrooms.

That's breakfast for us, Ivan says as they head for the tahó vendor. *What's that?* Tony asks. But Ivan doesn't call it by its name. He doesn't call it tahó. He calls it tofu. Yes, technically, it is silken tofu at its softest, but it wouldn't hurt to call it by its name. It wouldn't hurt to call it tahó. Tony gulps and says *Hmmm* and compares it to some Japanese-sounding dessert, which he remembers by its name and not just by its being another tofu dessert

So, we have here pancit, Ivan says. They're having *pancit palabok*: rice noodles tinted with anato seeds, and topped with pork rind, scallions, boiled egg slices, toasted garlic and calamansi. *Pancit just means noodles, right?* Tony inquires. He is right, and Ivan is wrong for saying, *Pancit can mean anything*. What does he mean by *anything*? I don't think Tony gets what Ivan meant by saying *anything*. I don't think Ivan knows why he said that, either. And so, they just walk off. Ah, this Ivan.

I enjoyed it. Not the greatest thing ever for me, but good. As I hear Tony say these words, I wanted to say "Me, too," and it reminded of the discussion we had in my Gender and Sexuality class, when it was said that Filipinos, more often than not, would rather go for the "sakto lang" instead of the "sobrang okay" or the "sobrang loser." Like Tony, for me, *pancit palabok* is a "sakto lang" dish. Most people I know can finish a plate of palabok, but will not go back for another round, hence the half of a big bilao of palabok ending up getting spoiled and tossed into the trash bin after a day when no one craves for its mediocrity that much. And this could justify why Ivan included this dish in their itinerary instead of its better counterparts—bihon, canton, and luglug—careless of a westerner's inevitable comparison of it with other Asian noodles: Yes, it wasn't good enough to love, but not bad enough to hate either. Sakto lang.

Last stop in Manila: the Dampa Market. Ivan picks vegetables, crabs and shrimps. They're going *all-out Filipino*, Ivan coins it. They walk to the kitchen to send the food for cooking, then sit and wait. They make time pass with small talks on big things.

I'm still struggling, by the way, to try to kind of figure out how to describe Filipino cuisine, Tony begins. *It's*



really quite a melting pot, Ivan reasons out. *Yeah, it's really melted*, Tony agrees, with much emphasis on the word: Melted. As in once solid? Melted. As in no longer solid? That melted?

The pinakbet enters. *Kanin, dalawa*, Ivan says. They dig into the big plate of sautéed vegetables. *Oh, that's really tasty. I like the bitter gourd*, Tony says with sincerity.

A big plate of guinataang alimango comes in. *It's a very typical dish from the south*, Ivan points. Tony fingers the food with gusto, his eyes pinned on the crab.

Ah, finally, adobo, Ivan announces. A sweaty guy walks in with a platter of adobong hipon. Tony pushes the empty plate to give room for the platter of shrimps. *So, what does adobo mean?* Tony probes. Ivan, who wears a shirt that says "ADOBO" in bold letters, answers with, *Adobo is anything that's cooked with soy sauce, garlic, peppercorns, and onions*.

No. Adobo literally means sauce. In the Philippines, it is a vinegar-based dish, cooked with no onions, and sometimes with no soy sauce. This Ivan might have not done research about what everyone claims to be our national dish. This Ivan might have not yet heard about the amazing adobong puti. But this Ivan is with Anthony Bourdain, so this Ivan annoys me. Ah, this Ivan.

And why shrimp? I would've served him chicken-pork adobo.

Ivan sucks shrimp's head. Tony follows.

-o0o-

***The city (Manila) smelled of cockroaches, with rats all over,
there is no sewage system and the people
do not have anything—no arms, no legs, no eyes***

– Claire Danes, *Premiere Magazine*

Angeles—this was a little America. Tony's voice opens.

Tony finds himself with Claude Tayag at Mila's Kambingan in Angeles, Pampanga. To eat goat in four ways is their goal.

Papaitan comes in with bile floating in the cup-sized bowl. *Uric acid, bile, bitter, sour and guts. The guts was the best part*. Tony finds nothing to dislike about *the bile thing*, as he puts it. He compares it with a drug he had in *No Reservations Vietnam*.

A girl serves them with kilawing Kapampangan: burnt goat skin, boiled then served cold with fresh onions and calamansi on top. Claude, however chooses to call it the *gelatinous rubbery thing*. Tony likes it a lot but laughs at Claude's introduction. In the voice over, Tony calls it kilawin. Although with a New Yorker twang, it is still a lot better than Claude's attempt to sound *better*.

Sinigang na Kambing comes in with a cloud of yummy steam. I can't focus on the sinigang. I'm still laughing/cussing at Claude's *gelatinous rubbery thing* moment.

Face-off: the goat head soup. *Eyes, brains, tongue, the works*. Tony peels the skin off the cheek, hooks the eye with his forefinger and puts it in his mouth, breaks the skull open, pulls the tongue out, takes a fork to have a taste of the goat's *creamy* brain.

Tony skips another meal for the day to make room for the night's entrée, Sisig. They're having it where it was first served ever, at Aling Lucing's.



Tony, upon seeing it: *It's like hash, only porkier.*

After having a bite: *Strangely addictive, sizzling hot mélange of cut up pork face, that crispy, chewy, spicy, savory and all together damn wonderful mélange of textures that just sing—everything I like on a smoking hot sizzle plate. Oh, sweet symphony of pig parts, oh yes. The fierce love, the misty eyed reminiscence of Filipinos in the US looking back on the food of their country, Sisig always comes up first and most emotional, and I completely understand why.*

Are you ready for the little surprise? Claude challenges Tony. He answers by saying, *Yeah, sure,* and continues with, *Okay. It's not as though I'm not familiar with the tasty possibilities of the back-end of the chicken with the tail feathers detached, but I welcome surprises all the same,* via the voice over.

Claude pours spiced vinegar on Tony's butt-on-a-stick. *This is classic Yakitori. I say, Yes, Tony. It is.*

-o0o-

***Okay, before we go any further, can I check those diplomas?
Because I would just like to make sure they are not from
some med school in the Philippines.***

– Susan Meyer (Teri Hatcher), *Desperate Housewives*

Claude prepares a home-cooked dinner on his wood-fed stove while Tony waits, slumped in a hammock, until it's time to eat again.

Claude's wife, Mary Anne, and Rich, a mutual acquaintance, joins them for the meal. Small talks about big things again begin. *Filipinos have always been the most vocal on why I haven't been to the Philippines,* Tony dips into it again. *Filipinos are always bypassed by foreign writers,* Claude insinuates.

Why? The fern salad comes in. *Is this salad fairly traditional in the Philippines?* Tony wonders.

Y... yeah ... here in Pampanga it is traditional. Ah, this Claude.

Really? Tony says with both brows raised. I, myself, would be in awe, too. For one, talking about traditions, we don't *traditionally* eat salads before everything else. We just eat.

You know we're kind of alienated from the rest of Southeast Asia. We always look westward to America, Claude says and Tony gives him the don't-say-anything-bad-about-the-US look. *Because that was our last colonial master, right?* Claude continues, but now with more caution. Yes, we always look westward to America. Maybe that's also the reason for the salad *tradition* which a certain Claude Tayag inaugurated one awkward night.

Right. Tony asks it again *It's a big diverse cuisine. How come it isn't the next big thing?*

Mary Ann, Claude's wife, gives reasons regarding inconsistency and whatnot, which Tony obviously rejects as the seafood sinigang comes in.

There's something kind of gumbo-esque about this dish. Where did the idea of a sour component come from? Tony asks.

That, I would say, is uniquely Filipino. Those words and the Thai Tom Yum and the Vietnamese Canh Chua come to my mind. It's not exactly unique, and I think Tony agrees with me for he throws Claude the Oh-Really?! look.

Thank the gods for when the Kare-Kare steals the show—ox tail cooked in a rich peanut sauce served with blanched greens. Ah, my saliva. Everything's going great until Claude opens his mouth yet again. *It's always eaten with shrimp paste. There comes the Malay part that's very, very Filipino.* Now I'm confused. What does "very, very



Filipino" mean anyway? Is the shrimp paste's being the Malay part very, very Filipino? Or is claiming something to be very, very Filipino very, very Filipino? I remember when in our Philippine Literature class, our professor asked us to define "Filipinoness" in two pages. At first, it seemed to be an easy question to answer, but when the writing started, it became difficult. I started writing about what is conceived to be Filipino, such as our customs and what not. I ended up deleting everything, and wrote a new one about what we are not, instead of what we are. I also deleted that version, and finally ended up writing down a somewhat detailed reasoning on why it is still difficult to fully define Filipinoness. I got an average grade on that paper. Sakto lang.

Adobong Pugo flies in on a big clay platter. *Pugow, we call it.* Oh, Claude. Come on. Pugow? Pu ... Ah, this Claude.

Claude then starts being a true Kapampangan by saying *Give us something from another province; I can tell you we can do it better.* Pffft. STFU. Next up, Cebu.

-o0o-

***A new world record was set on the 100-meter dash
by Filipino troops fleeing Iraq.***

– Jay Leno, *The Tonight Show*

Augusto fetches Tony from Mactan Airport. He's no longer jumpy. He seems dead—a stuffed zombie. They stop by an eatery where Tony will have his first Cebuano meal.

Beer bottles clink.

Shouldn't you be telling me "Welcome to the Philippines?" Or shall I be telling you "Welcome to the Philippines?" Tony mocks Augusto. *Yeah ... welcome,* Augusto says. *Of all the tapes we got and submissions for the fan special, yours are easily the most enthusiastic,* Tony emphasizes with wonder. *I kind of have this insecurity growing up and kind of didn't know who I was, and I realized that I really just didn't care even. Now that I've discovered it, I'm ecstatic.* Awww, Augusto.

Stuffed crab comes in: a mix of crab meat, spices, and sausage packed inside a crab shell and deep-fried. Then, colossal bowls of bulalo are put on their table. The two knock on the shanks with forks, as if pleading for it to open up and release its marrow.

So what are your impressions on the people? Augusto begins. *People have been ridiculously nice.* I laugh. *You know what? You're the perfect person to ask "Who are the Filipinos?"* there Tony goes again. *They really just embraced so many cultures. It's such a mix,* Augusto explains. *You feel like an outsider when you come here?* Tony pushes him even further. *Yeah,* Augusto looks out of the window as if searching, and says, *Definitely. Definitely.* Tony keeps on nodding like someone who understands.

This is fucking sad. I am continually amazed at how Filipinos can bring contagious drama into any TV show. There's *Pinoy Big Brother*, the western counterparts of which have always been scrutinized for containing adult stuff, such as sex in the bedroom, sex in the bathroom, sex in the kitchen, sex in the pool and more sex. Whereas our version, for some reason, has turned the franchise into a family affair of some sort, ergo more tears than seminal fluids gushing out of its participants. This *No Reservations* episode is no exception. Instead of food, culture, and food culture, Tony gives us a book-end story on Augusto's quest of finding the "Filipino" in his being a Filipino-American. This is fucking sad.



Screen fades then grows and it's time for the family meal. Tony stoops down careful not to hit his head on the ridge of the door. Hellos. He sits by the corner of the table and starts to look like a really tall, world famous French-American-New Yorker chef made to fit within a foot and a half diameter of space to eat. Worse is, nobody chooses to speak but him. And nobody answers him but Augusto who keeps on brushing and clasping his hands together as if praying for something to happen.

-o0o-

***I'm thinking about getting a Filipino
mail-order bride at this point ...***

– Alec Baldwin, *Late Night with David Letterman*

Augusto's and Tony's prayers are answered with two words: *Lechon* feast.

They head to the feast's venue and watch Fredo, the lechon-spinning expert, as he works his magic in turning pork into gold. Tony looks as if he's some American serviceman being *serviced* as he stares at the rotating pig. Tony is hungry, food's all around: two kinds of seaweed salads, tomato salad with stripped dried squid on top, grilled Spanish mackerel, kilawing tangigue, tropical fruits with ginisang bagoong, grilled eggplant ensalada, boiled seafoods and beef and pork stew, and the lechon.

I think this is really fundamental in getting back in touch with your roots, man, Tony puts forward. Augusto takes a fairly-sized crispy pork skin and it crunched its way in. *Oh, men*.

Tony goes on and on, bite after bite. *It tastes like candy*.

All is good but Augusto. He's still like a pig yet to be cooked and made perfect. *He seems to bleed out a little. I feel his pain*, Tony expresses, mockingly, via voice over.

-o0o-

***As a nation of servants, you don't flex your muscles at your master,
from whom you earn most of your bread and butter.***

– Chip Tsao, *Hong Kong Magazine*

Another pig fresh off the open fire is carried in, ready to be feasted on. Augusto slowly paces his way to comfort.

Tony starts asking questions again. *With Filipinos so well-represented in America, why is it that Filipino cuisine is kind of a blank page? Why doesn't it have a higher profile in the States?*

The lechon chef (Not Fredo) tries his luck. *My take on it is that we adapted to new places much quicker and much more readily than many other cultures. We're just as comfortable as eating a shawarma to Chinese food to Japanese food, Korean food, and American food.*

If one will compare his reasoning to Ivan and Claude's, his makes the most sense. But Tony thinks otherwise, and it IS his show.

I don't think that's it. You have an abundance of diversity and you need to pick three dishes. A pause. And I think as well ... I think you're just too damn nice. I think this is a problem.



Nervous and uncertain laughs come out of the lunch table. No words.

Tony breaks the silence he caused with expressions of politeness with little or enough truth in them, such as *You made a very compelling argument* to Augusto and to the lechon dude (Not Fredo), *Best pig ever*.

Entry Taken from *The Encyclopaedia of Biomechanical Convertebrates*

Arbeen Acuña

DOOM MAGGOT

OVERVIEW

Place of Origin
Etymology
Taxonomy
Anatomy
Evolution

ECOLOGY

Reproduction
Behaviour
Special Habitats
Functions

CONTROVERSIES

History
Parasite Redefinition
Pre-Extinction
Post-Extinction

POPULAR CULTURE

In Literature
In Art
In Comics
In Films
In Music



OVERVIEW

Place of Origin: [The Cabuncians](#), [Proserpines](#), [Fifth World](#)

Etymology: There has been a century-long debate about the origins of the name “Doom Maggot,” which is just like most century-long debates that were either left unconcluded or completely forgotten because of information overload and public disinterest—as chronicled in one of the [columns](#) of the famed outlaw journalist [Worm de Malate](#), that was later published by [the Royceter Conglomerate](#) as a single e-tome, and later as a compendium of [The Bugger](#) publications that you could buy [here](#).

There is [this](#) camp that included the Royceters, which believed that the name was derived from an [extinct ethnic minority](#), a people of colour that used to dwell in the Mountain Ranges of [the Great Mothers](#) and sometimes around the coastal areas of [the Auroras](#) and [Queer Sons Serif Region](#). Then, there was [this other](#) camp that argued and reconnected the root of the word to [an ancient organic falcon](#), a bird of prey that sounded a lot like Doom Maggot. However, the latter did not make any sense, especially to the quasi-academic community, as the proponents failed to further explain their claim. How the fvck would the mentioned antediluvian hawk be related to a squirming biometallic nano-organism? Find out [here](#).

The “winning” [faction](#) posited that the people from which the term “Doom Maggot” came from was derogatory, since these man-machine animists were resistant to the “[Cleansing](#)” of the God Blessed [State](#). More so, even the origin of the origin of term remains uncertain, as some claim it came from the wordplay of “goobought” ([rainforest](#)) and “hubaude” ([naked](#)), while others argue it came from “daggoth” ([sea](#)) thus making Thou Magats “sea gypsies,” then a third insisted that it came from “lumacad” ([walked](#)). But, the fact remains that species of Doom Maggot units twice crawled the face of the gigeran landscrapmetal of earth that we grow sick of living in. So, if you want to kill yourself, we can [help](#).

Taxonomy: The physical appearance of this [quasintersectanet](#) obviously suggests that the Doom Maggot is classified under [the kingdom Mechanimalia](#). Though it was consistently classified under [phylum Machinarthropoda](#), there have been disputes regarding its subphylum. Three decades ago, it was consistently categorized under subphylum [Myriadpodcast](#) and coming up with a decision on its class is still yet to come, assuming that there would be interest in pursuing the truth. Now, a [minority](#) among the taxonomists in favour of the Myriadpodcast category denounced the claim, joining another [few](#) who claimed that they have reliable data that you can find here stating that Doom Maggots should be classified under [the Hexapodcast subphylum](#).

This emerging Hexapodcast theory ensued as there has been recorded and verified data stored in .docz and .rtf(x) in an area at [the Southern Proserpines](#), somewhere between the [biomechasphere](#) and [thanasphere](#), called [Tboolean Cyberspace](#), where a forgotten [psycho demiurge](#) experimented. This celebrity god went by the name [Ginton](#). He cultured Doom Maggots that turn into species under orders [LepidopeTerrans](#) and [DipTerrans](#), which was under [class Intersectanet](#) and under subphylum Hexapodcast. But one fact remains: the descendants of Doom Maggots, or related families, would take over the corpses of these warring half-human beings, upon exodus from physical manifestation and metamorphosis into the so-called polyphase intrinsic electric field or “[soul](#).” So, if you want yours to be saved, click [here](#).



Anatomy: Its anatomy is closest to that of the antediluvian [nanomechaterpillars](#), which had tubular, segmented bodies. Each segment is protected by an alloy of [chitin](#), [copper](#) and [nickel](#) metallic sheets, called [Cuprocunickle](#), which serves as the [exoskeletal](#) hardwired ware of the quasintersectanet. The sheets are nailed by nanoscrews to the semi-organic portions of the [epidermineral](#) that serves as its “skin.” This was initially done by [amalgam-biomineralization](#), and later, occurred “naturally.”

From the semi-organic portions discussed [here](#), [setae](#) or nanobristles may emerge and grow through the Cuprocunickle. This [demetallic](#) strandlike function as [mechappendages](#) function like [sensors](#), or sometimes, [defence mechanisms](#) since they may infect other living organisms with [influenza](#) or [ebola](#) viruses or [Trojan](#) cancers or any similar manufactured [an/ionic germs](#) through the little fibres that vary in composition—as some are copperstrands and some are stellar providence-like [energy spills](#) that are as amazing as [this cool picture](#).

Within their small bodies lie at least six [AICs](#) (Artificial Iron Cores) functioning as their [hearts](#)—one main power core and at least five accessory nuclei. They cannot love though, but you can find a date [here](#). [Fibre optic wire nerves](#) connect their fleshy parts to the mechanized ones. They also have [compounded eyes](#) and [body surveillance systems](#), through those seemingly decorative bristles, which makes them more intelligent than [your great grand ancestors’s security systems](#). They feed on information and they re/connect to both [the interwebs](#) and their own collective intrawebs via their [antennae](#). Just like the evil aliens in the pastiche film [Avatarzan 300ACDC III](#).

Evolution: Ginton’s [development](#) of the Doom Maggot species from larval insectarnets to multi-winged [micromachinsects](#) was subject of another [debate](#), since, if the experiments were verified of truth, then they have evolved into [something that is to undergo metamorphosis](#), for the now extinct—again—Doom Maggots. And with these advanced biomechanical, intelligent life forms with wings that seem like the zenith of wing evolution, they may even travel back in time and conquer the world in another multiverse, as they are stepped on, literally and metaphorically, in this specific plane like [this story that can change how you look at life! Ramen? Ramen!](#)

[BACK TO MENU](#)



ECOLOGY

Reproduction: Like most cyberspace-realworld pore-tal dwellers, Doom Maggots were either [hermaphrodites](#) that need other hermaphrodites or [self-sufficient](#), since with enough surplus consumption of information and decomposition of biomechanical matter that would go way beyond what they need for the time period, they can remake themselves. The regular types lay [eggs](#) and nests the eggs in scrap metals, so their progenies, and succeeding broods, may access and utilize the nest for their exoskeletal needs. The special types, at Ginton's realm, vary in reproduction. The demiurge remains undisclosed regarding other classified data and findings in his Tboolean laboratory. But [this wiggid guy](#) can hack any data system—while in prison!

Behaviour: These quasintersectanets were professionals in the most up-to-date Art and Science of Crypsis version II (ASCII), especially in [scrapmetal junkyards](#) and [recycle bins](#) where they remain in [camouflage](#), unless [decrypted](#) into detection. They may virtually resemble the space they are currently occupying through [chromaticization](#), [countershading](#), or at rare instances, [camouflagellation](#). Some species may release holographic energies as bristles and cloak themselves. There were [documentations](#) of Doom Maggots that could temporarily oxidize their alloys as a means of olfactive camouflage. Olfactive camouflage perfumes are sold [here](#).

From birth, Doom Maggots acquire and shed alloys in a process called “[tumolting](#),” another feature that most Machinarthropods possess. Leaks of tumolting oil from the bristle holes signal the commencement of the said process. This efflux would be followed by the reduction of [the alloy's endocuprocunickle](#) into its molten form, to give way for [the new exocuprocunickle](#). Using [microstethoscope](#) on a thick slide or glass container where the Doom Maggots are shedding their Cuprocunickles, one could hear squeaking nanoscrews during the process, since they are literally unscrewing themselves to discard their protective metallic sheets of armor. [Secretion of new epicuprocunickle](#) follows, which then leaves the Doom Maggot immobile, thus defenceless from predators and opportunistic passers-by. Like this politician eating [Wiener Buns](#).

Special Habitats: Besides the cyberspace-realworld pore-tals, these quasintersectarnets once inhabited the Great Doom Mountain Ranges of Mind Horus, but they were driven away. This would later be discussed further (see [History](#) subsection). They are also often found, as aforementioned, in scrapmetal junkyards, where [subhumans](#), with [subversive](#) amalgamated and/or mechanized parts are discarded. The [collectivistic revolt information](#) acquisition and development that advanced the dissident defence mechanisms of the Doom Maggot species enabled them to comprehend the society in the revolutionary eyes through [the data extraction](#) from [crimsocialists](#) that were thrown, cut and dumped by [The Operating System Maintenance programmers](#). These few examples of special habitats caused the revolt and the resulting extinction of the Doom Maggots, as we would later see. Take a break and go [here](#) for a while.

Functions: Some of the known functions of Doom Maggots to society, besides entertainment during one dark chapter of history when they were [thoroughly exploited](#) explicitly, were as follows: 1) the [regulation](#) / [recycling](#) / [reduction of information](#); 2) [decomposition](#) / [deoxidization](#) / [deconstruction](#) of sub/mechanical organisms; 3) [predation](#) / [utilization](#) of nanoviruses in mainframe systems; 4) [intracolonization](#) / [sterilization](#) of infected and/or infested static apparatuses; and 5) preservation of [cultural biomechanization](#) and archaic heritages by duplication of information using [inter-species data transfer](#) via the AICs. And [happiness](#).

[BACK TO MENU](#)



CONTROVERSIES

History: At least three events occurred in History, when Doom Maggots played notable roles. In chronology according to the time-space perception of an ordinary sub/human, [here](#):

One was during the excavation of the transmissible territorial Great Mount Doom Ranges, where the species thrived for more than ten centuries. The excavation was never for archaeological interests, neither for arts' sake, nor research, though this was what [the sub/human third world contractors](#) used to justify their greed for [microminerals](#) in certain sites of the Mountain Ranges. It was later revealed that the [second world nations](#), being pressed by [first world nations](#), were the ones who were responsible for [the massacre](#) that occurred upon the resistance of the earliest Doom Maggots. The martyrdom of [Mac II Ngudu Lague](#), the only Doom Maggot named in history, was recognized. Here is a [link](#) to purchase action figures and other merchandise.

Another event was the simultaneous [Massacres of Magog Danau Oil River, Luisititanium Coppergrassland, and Mendiolithium Paxarch](#), where [warring clans](#) from either [the same](#) or allied [Elite Orders](#), which had funny pictures [here](#), found a way to hack into the Tboolean Cathedral of the not-yet-re-renowned demiurge, Ginton. With the recognition and information as payment, Ginton—thinking that it was “neutral” to give all these mafiaffinities and their subfamilies his experimental ammunition made of semibiological components such as his laboratory Doom Maggots—gave them the weaponry. This was during the period when these quasintersectanets were deemed extinct in the biomechasphere.

The final participation of the Doom Maggots in sub/human history came about when they appeared out of nowhere, as if they deliberately went out of sight to [plot](#) against [the Yellow King](#)—the reincarnating and recurring ruler of the Proserpines zinckepelago. In their evolved and metamorphosed form, they allegedly swarmed [the Hangar Hall of the SemiRight](#), known to the layman as “The Mala-Canan,” where the Yellow King rules the generations of the past and the future. [The Doom Maggot Storm](#) was later dismissed by [wikistorians](#) to be fiction. But [this](#) new ugly scary specie is true and it is for bidding!

Parasite Redefinition: The existence and emergence of the Doom Maggots redefined the stereotype against squirming [mechrawlers](#) as [parasites](#), despite the propaganda of the shortly defamed Yellow King, and his yellow journalists such as the Absinthe Civil BINary Network ([ACBN](#)). Alternative QuickShare journalists, known locally as “[PasaBilis Deiaristas](#),” countered the attacks against the disenfranchisement of the Doom Maggots's plight. The Deiaristas somehow succeeded in building up the credibility the Doom Maggots deserve, even pushing the ACBN into a defensive position, when mechrawler species posing as Doom Maggot-like bugging devices were later traced to be the same mechrawlers that comprise the Yellow King. There are even ABCN sex scandals [here](#), and McCarthyist Diarrheaistas Mudslinging Jokes [here](#)!

Pre-Extinction: Before their first semixtinction, the Doom Maggots were passive cultured scavenging intersectarnets that quietly feed and unite with biomecha [ecomputerized](#) systems at the Great Mount Doom. They were later included in the list of [BA/quit species](#)—species which were forced to defend themselves from other predating species that threaten them in one way or another. They, arguably, evolved into something that could withstand the external pressures exerted by the external factors within the biomechasphere. Unlike [this](#) lame fvck of a geek.



Post-Extinction: As de Malate has documented (or claimed to document), their polyphase intrinsic electric fields have always been [suspendead](#) in data streams and systems of energy, probably awaiting another rebirth into the system that they wanted to destabilize and defunct in order to reboot and reprogram the Operating Structures (OS). Their actual existence into the biomechasphere is currently contended by [Statique](#) scholars to debunk and delete the controversies these quasintersectanets caused, resulting into wrought havoc in the OS. It was hacked last Thursday by [these hot girls](#).

[BACK TO MENU](#)



POPULAR CULTURE

In Literature: In the ancient text of the [Ouracle Saga](#), the protagonist [Pope Latin](#), also known as Boumege, defeated [the Yellow Raja](#). The rivals were made out of nano-machinarthropods—the former of Doom Maggots, the latter of monarchnids. Though some scholars deem this as an allusion of the aforementioned contended historical event called the Doom Maggot Storm, this was also viewed as [trollpropaganda](#) of [Evangelionical Chord Crusticeans](#). [Read more...](#)

In surviving [3craftian lore of rarities](#), [the Monarch in Withered Suntan Mask](#) seemed to coalesce with most allusions to the local Yellow King. The most popular and vivid scene in these narratives were the climactic tableaux when the Xanthous Monarch unmask, then revealing writhing mechrawlers that creak like eternal tumolting on his visage. These scenes usually initiates the wrath of the Monarch that would later result in the desperate measures of preserving his [Glorious Hangar Halls](#)—much like “all-out wars” as [oldschool fascist](#) call them. Oftentimes, the enraged and mindless offence was defeated by well-planned counteroffensives. [Read more...](#)

Most [contemporary narratives](#) about Doom Maggots that are said to be circulated in underground communities of dissident artists, writers, fanatics and enthusiasts draw from these two epic literary works, which were passed from generation to generation, via various data transfer procedures—but without most of the derogatory implications such as discrimination against certain beliefs, as exhibited by the Ouracle Saga, since the progressive nature of the publications opted writers to rethink and re-develop the narration, both in terms of “The Form and This Content,” as Joma’s brother have once said [somewhere](#). [Read more...](#)

In Art: [Scion of the Cog Ethos Art Guild](#) has been depicting Doom Maggots as real or mythical creatures, depending on which side they were on, in the series of debates. Art exhibitions, in celebration of the mentioned literary works, and their renditions and adaptations, about the quasintersectanets, escalated as well, though some “[reinterpretations](#)” were deemed subversive. As usual, most of the Statique harassment was neither recorded as news nor as incidents of human rights violation. There have been [art movements that depict icons dissidence](#), but they were either silenced by the state or flourishing in the underground art scene. [Read more...](#)

In Comics: Collaborative comic adaptations among contending factions from the ABCNique and QuickSharique writers have been plenty after the second Doom Maggot semixtinction. Most of archived related narratives in [various formats](#) are downloadable but hackers should be wary because the Statique scholars, as usual, keep an eye on those who would opt to acquire their [contemporary underground writings](#), using [file baits](#)—since, needless to say, contemporary underground media are unavailable to the mainstream reading public. Such subversive material are often obtain through connections and careful networking: quietly begin here.

In Films: Film adaptations of Doom Maggot chronicles, in the mainstream and the underground literary scenes, have later flourished. One of the most popular in contemporary fiction adaptation was [Avi\(Dot\)Mov’s](#) novel [the Surveillance](#). The film featured the deviation and introduction of the metamorphosed Doom Maggots called the rightwing gnats ([RGNats](#)), which were surveillance systems that meddled with private lives of [popular icons](#) in [the political arena](#) and [the entertainment business](#). This was criticized by the Deiaristas as Statique propaganda, since the original manuscript did not specify the Doom Maggots as the larval stage of the RGNats. But this visionary, deemed to be an upcoming Cancellor, is also saying [something about it](#).



In Music: An issue about [the Smouldered Pundit's](#) classic “[Full Metal Jacket with Battered Wings](#),” during the popularity of the remakes, sparked the debate on the frontman [Psychobillycore Gun's](#) demiurge ascension, because of the his alleged prophecy or foretelling—eons ago—of Ginton's findings regarding the evolution or metamorphosis of Doom Maggots.

[BACK TO MENU](#)

This article needs additional [citations](#) for [verification](#). Please help [improve this article](#) by [adding reliable references](#). Unsourced and inconsistent material may be [challenged](#) and [removed](#). You may contact Cadaver researcher [Gutcutter Ribbons](#) and Regent DNA Preserver [Pete Agora Lee](#) for professional inquiries. [Id the Pimp](#) for everything you might need. [Anchor Lea Resort](#) for company. And [Juleanne de Luna](#) for the disappearance of the disappearance of the disappeared lecture series.

of thievery

Lawrence Bernabe

i shall wear my pauper's cap and tap my dirty drum,
my dirty tambourine on the street corners of the world
that shall admit me or maybe not; that i cast no shadow
with my existence has long been my core dream

my express wish is to wrap myself
like a holiday package and very peculiar with its giant
red bow dyed with carcinogens

my isotonic fortitude thus will be sorely tested

(you are alien; i am alien myself; we must instigate much alienness
for our hoped-to-be materially better life)

it could have been otherwise, i am relieved to tell myself,
it could have been otherwise.

but it could have been otherwise, and my friend that is all i need
to lament

What I mean to say is this

Paul S. de Guzman

How much

You have been told, repeatedly, how much he loves you, but “I love you” sounds too plain that he just has to translate it to a hybrid language, the spores of English and Spanish and Tagalog cross-fertilizing one another, the pidgin of his childhood: *te quiero talaga; love na love kita para siempre*. Days pass, and his words reveal their hidden grammar, their arcane etymologies. You end up feeling as if you were becoming the sole diagrammer and decoder of his sentences.

Then you speak it as much as he does, even actively directing its mutations. You love him too, you tell him: *amándote is easy; my mahal mucho*.

Over time the novelty withers, hardens into something compact, resembling a seed, a stone. You abandon the connubial pidgin; you begin speaking in long stretches of Tagalog only, English only. (You never attempt to speak Spanish only, baffled by its neurotic assumptions about time, its hair-splitting tenses.) And there are his increasingly vehement Spanish sentences, which, when translated into Tagalog only, into English only, strike you as code words for “I’m seeing someone else.” *Estoy cansado. Llegaré tarde. Tengo previsto asistir a una reunión en Hong Kong el fin de semana que viene*. (“A reunion in Hong Kong?” you ask. “A *meeting*,” he translates, speaking slowly.)

The inevitable falling apart, the confrontation. You ask him if he’s seeing someone else, whether his love for this someone else is greater than his love for you. The trouble is you shouldn’t have asked the questions in succession, because what he ends up saying sounds to you like “*medyo*” or “*medio*,” and all it leaves you is to decide which of the questions he really answers: whether it’s only slightly true that he is seeing someone else, whether he only slightly loves you, whether his love is split down the middle between an unknown someone else and an uncertain you.

Sino’ng nanay mo

Before your engagement he says his mother wants to meet you. Of course, you say, eager to please.

What he tells you: her name is Mita, a woman so straight-backed she might be the very rod against which



all who threaten entry into the family should be measured. The one who decides your education is not impressive enough, your background can't be traced to Europe, you're chabacano. ("You mean like I come from Zamboanga?" you ask him, just to clarify. "No," he explains. "Quiero decir vulgar, what my abuelita called une roturière," temporarily bringing another language into the conversation.)

The many ways "not one of ours" can be said.

And so you finally meet her, and with a big smile you unfurl your arms in her direction: a bright sun, rays reaching out. "Buenos dias, Ma'am Mita."

Her lips barely open when she speaks. "Don't call me mamita, you're not my daughter."

What is right

A few words you need to keep reminding yourself sometimes mean something else. Derecho does not always mean going straight (recto), but going right; being right is not always being correct (correcto), but being good (bien); bien is not always good or right, grammarwise, when bueno or buena is good or right. The lapse into English, in these moments, to clear the confusion. The desire not to have to go or be right, but to go or be left instead. Confusion sets in again: to go left is izquierdo, to be left is dejado; dejado also means messy, and in Tagalog dehadado is the one no one bets on.

What he means

You will be unhappy, the marriage will fail, you will never leave. A number of times you will go as far as putting your clothes in the only suitcase you own. Then you will put your clothes back in the closet, stow your bag back under the bed. You will just picture yourself weighed down by your bag, dragging yourself to the door, never looking back, leaving.

You will prepare dinner, wait for him at the table, keep waiting, wait some more. You will keep doing this.

Until one evening, suitcase in hand, you will open the door and see him arriving. The absence of surprise on his face; how you will marvel at how good he is at hiding his feelings.

"I'm leaving you," you will say. Not so much as a nod, or a stare, but he will say something. It will sound like "I know" or "ay, no." A moment will pass as you attempt to figure out what it means. You will turn back, empty your bag, ask what he wants for dinner: your decision is that he is surprised, that he is telling you no.

[Move away from me said the flame so I jumped right in.]

EJ Galang

*Move away from me said the flame so I jumped right in.
Instead of legs now I have ashes.*

At the far end of the corridor: coffee machine
and woman wearing an orange shirt with a wide

neckline that clung to her shoulders and a skirt
that did not flatter her legs. She asked me if I wanted a cup

and that was all I needed to know of love.
Two boys, twelve years into our marriage later

I learned to admit I was wrong. One strange night,
while making love, instead of her name I called her nightingale

and as she flew away I screamed “How dare you leave me,
how dare you hurt the most beautiful man in the world!”

From *Short Walks*

Vincenz Serrano



That time, side
by side I imagined possible futures, but



She gathers things in a shed, has the shed blown up; she suspends objects from the ceiling of a room: fork with bent tines, melted comb, scrap of wheel, twisted candelabra. When I talk to myself, I address you. We walked around so much but never did we take one photograph of ourselves. The room is dark except for a lightbulb in the centre; disfigured objects surround the light; there are shadows on the wall. Time is made up of moments when history says yes to its shadow. The names accumulate; a page is filled. A quotation is an act of rescue. I dreamt I made an alphabetical walking tour of Manila. An eskinita is a street as narrow as a car; it is a shortcut between two larger streets. In Carvajal, an eskinita which links Nueva to Juan Luna, stalls sell dragon fruit, cabbage, meat, tofu, fish. A narrow street that becomes a dead end is called an interior. He writes about the photograph, but the



I could not tell you yet, knowing

how uncertain lines



photograph is never seen. I suspend objects from the ceiling of a poem. History is a descent of names through time; for every hero there is a bandit whose rifle has vanished along with his name. An alphabet is an entanglement of letters. Sentences gather around a light in the room: is the poem the light, the sentences, or the shadows. The interior is so narrow that the aroma from your neighbour's adobo becomes the flavour of your pinakbet, their dispute about money becomes the tone of your laughter. Incorporate in a poem both fracture and explosion. There will always be an assassin, said the assassin who threw a grenade at a gathering at Plaza Miranda. There will always be cannonfire, said the ships anchored off the bay. There will always be poetry, said the names that descend through time. There will always be a crowd, said the crowd that pulls the statue through the shortcut. A dilapidated



of thought and time were, prone to interruption
and deferment;



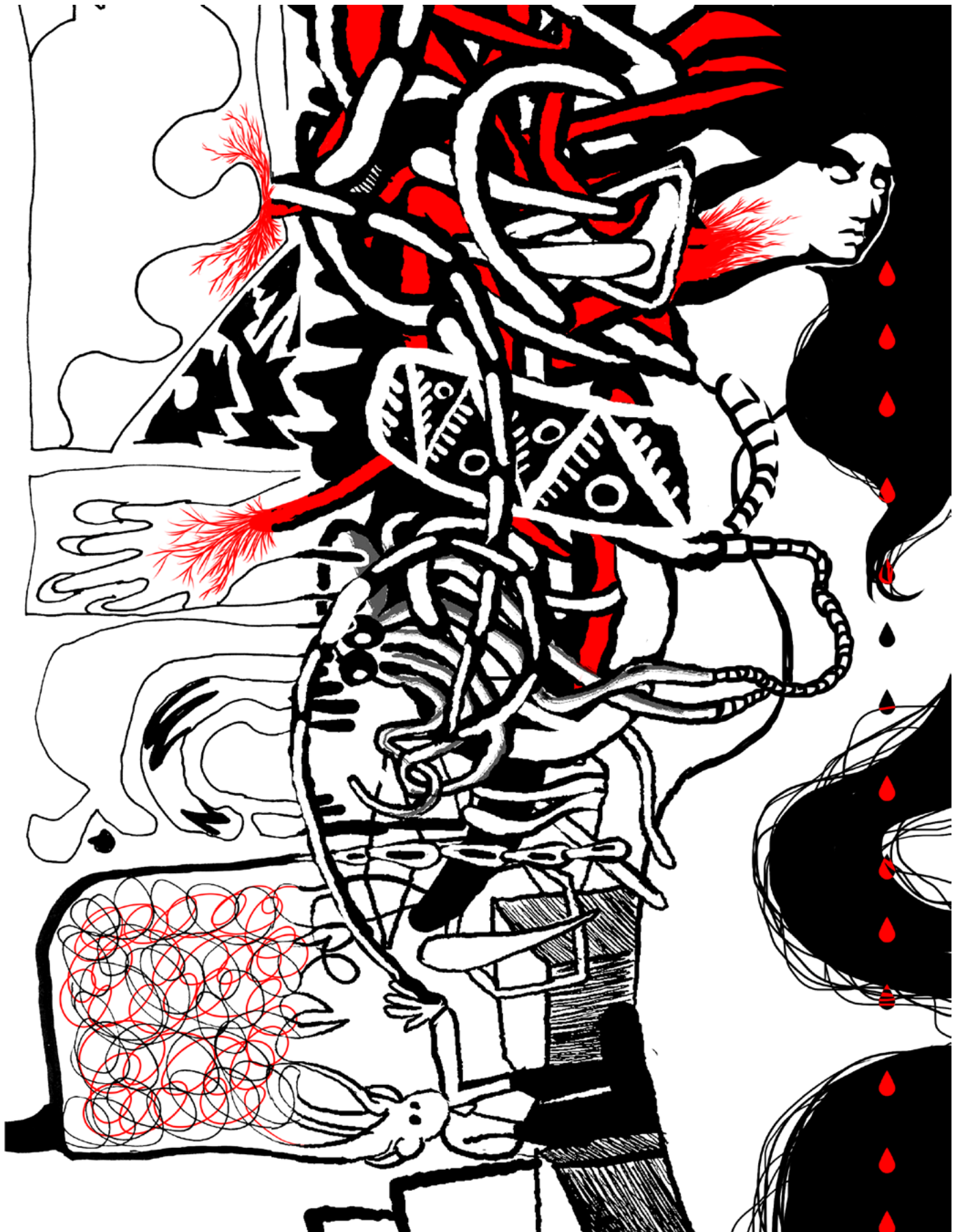
house is a ruin occurring in slow motion. The moments accumulate; a day is filled. His itinerary expresses what he cannot say with his words. Quiapo—'Soria—'Venida! What Manila needs is a good scrubbing. Accumulation desires disorder and erasure. They sent cannons, gunpowder, fuses, arquebuses, pikes, lances, forges, soldiers, shields, salt, wine, vinegar, flour, almonds, religion. Beneath the writing, there is music. A line break is departure. History is a poorly-lit interior. I tell you stories where details accrete with no foreseeable resolution, whose arcs are interrupted. I went behind the altar of Quiapo Church not to kiss the exposed foot of the statue of Christ, but to take a photo of the crowd. Believe that the photographs are real. The weapons accumulate; a ship is filled. Time is made up of moments when buildings say yes to their ruin. They drink gin in the middle of the day at



yet still awake
at dawn



the courtyard of what was once a grand house, where now the marble is cracked, the grilles rusted, the floorboards rotten. The past speaks with syntax as bent as a fork's tines, with words as rotten as floorboards, with language tilted towards the zero hour. The faithful accumulate; a church is filled. What I cannot express with my words, I imply with a turn in the sentence, a turn in the road, a turn of my body towards you, sometimes away. An archive is a place where time is arrested as it tries to turn into dust. The chemicals accumulate; a photograph is filled. He detests the building but each day he has his meals in the café inside; if you abhor the building, he is asked, why are you inside it everyday; that's the only place in the city, he says, where I do not have to see it. Before the war the city had an ice plant; the plant had a whistle which blasted thrice a day; people could mark time by the blasts.



Maps

Eliza Victoria

The child who will die that morning puts on a tulle dress and twirls.
She is impressed with the effect—the whisper of fabric,
the silken movements. On the glass, an elegant disappearance. Step, point,
turn in this corner. One never gets lost in these streets, this city that grows
new landmarks each day. The buses running, always keeping up.
The child takes note of the sofa, her starting point, its embroidered roses profuse
like the avenues the driver believes to be Heaven, all of them nameless,
all of them his. She studies her reflection in the windows then spins away.
This morning, the entire house is mine. The untouched milk in the blue mug,
the cat sleeping on the kitchen island, the corridors marked by her
passing. She bends down to retrieve a ribbon and ties her hair, looking
both ways. Here, the glaring sun. Here, the dark doorway of her parents' room.
Miles, minutes away, the crowd awaits, the wrong turn on the wrong street. *I know this
house like the back of my hand,* the child has been known to tell friends, contemplating
the advantages of shadows, the perfect place to hide to win the game.

Sad, as in “Also”: a Reverie, a Journey, a Numbers Theory

Daryll Delgado

1. Strength in numbers

My mother would have been sixty today. She was born a few years after the War, in a town called Matalom, in the southern part of Leyte. Stories have it that when my mother was young, she would often become ill, suffer strange, undiagnosed, incurable symptoms, the only remedy for which was to bring her back to the town where she was born. At the time, it took almost an entire day to travel from Tacloban where their family eventually settled, to Matalom which they visited only once every year, or depending on how often my mother became ill.

My mother had six brothers and sisters, but she was the only one who was born in Matalom, her mother’s hometown. This, her siblings used to say, explains why she took after their mother the most. And, they would always add, also the reason why she took after their mother in the worst ways possible—that is, in terms of mood and disposition.

From what I remember, their mother, A___, was a tall, buxom woman, with a polished look about her. In the photographs hanging on the walls of the old houses in Matalom and in Tacloban she is always the tallest among everyone, man or woman, and she always carries herself with a combination of grace and ease; with a skilled, concise execution, which can only be described as stylish in a military way. Most people, however, thought that she was, on the whole, in look and manner, rather severe. I have no direct, personal recollection of her severity or grace. I also do not recall any story about her being demonstrative in care and affection for her children and her husband, or for anyone, for that matter.

The stories I retain of A___ are, on the whole, inconsequential: how tiny her waist was despite her full figure, how her height and her low, somber voice commanded attention, and how stubborn she was in her refusal to learn any other language but Bisaya. For some reason, people also referred to this language as Kana (the Bisaya term for “that one,” or perhaps the Bisaya pejorative for “Americana”). I have some very curious memory of A___’s voice applied to what I thought was a peculiar language.

I also sometimes remember her smell, which was, invariably, a combination of fresh laundry and sweet-sour fruits. This was how my mother smelled, too, on Sundays, without the scented lotion and the expensive perfume.

A___ died thirteen days after I celebrated my third birthday, thirty-three days after my mother turned thirty. I cling to these numbers and try to convince myself that the deaths of mothers are merely a result of mathematical inevitability.



2. Death in the afternoon

It is always of these that my memory of that day is made up: tall men and women, in black and white, milling about, standing in corners; dark figures slumped, arms sagging against reddish-brown wooden seats. A glass is thrown violently to the deep-red, concrete floor, and stepped on by many grieving, angry feet shod in leather. A string of white rosary beads is pulled apart, and the round, tiny crystals slide swiftly off the string and scatter themselves on the floor, under the furniture, and under people's soles. And then we are being lined up in front of the coffin, briskly arranged according to some logic I cannot understand. From being carried in someone's arms, I am, against my will, settled on the floor with my siblings and my cousins, pushed against the swollen feet of my wheelchair-strapped grandfather. My baby brother, who is only a few months old, takes my place in the coveted cradle-arms of some aunt or uncle. There is lightning in my face, and I am temporarily blind. I think it is at this point that I start to cry. But nobody sees.

Nobody hears, either. There are too many languages being spoken all at the same time. And my grandmother's language is spoken the loudest by more voices than I have ever heard it spoken before. "Kana! Kani! Kana sad! Kani sad!" which, I thought, translated to "That one! This one! That one is sad! This one is sad!" only to find out, very soon enough, that "sad" only meant "also," or "too." And the controversy had merely to do with flowers—over which ones to bring to the chapel, which ones to throw away, or burn.

Nothing of the nine-day wake should be left behind, a nameless grandaunt says emphatically. Unless you want a member of the family to follow suit, another one adds. Very quickly, it is settled. No one dares argue. Bouquets, wreaths, and vases of dry and decaying flowers are thrown into a sack to join the pyre. Brighter, fresher ones are arranged atop a long, black hearse which, like its passengers, looks sad *sad*, as it waits there, strikingly odd in the otherwise car-less street.

The funeral took place at high noon and I remember the heat.

I cannot ignore the heat. It bears down on us as we walk in a solemn procession from the gates of the cemetery to the small clearing where there is an empty tomb and several priests waiting, their white frocks stiff in the windless air. A _____ is the first to stake her claim in the family lot. Eventually, as the years would pass, that clearing would disappear, as it is crowded with more of her family members following her lead, despite the careful adherence to superstition. It becomes too crowded that it would not even accommodate my mother who, on the very day I turn thirty, would be, as some would say, "laid to rest," away from her family.

At my grandmother's burial, I cannot take my eyes off my mother's face, as she stares at the cement inevitably applied to the square opening of the gray tomb, sealing the niche and her mother off, finally, from the rest of the world. Several broken flowers are strewn all around us. The candles are melting quickly before the harsh heat of the sun. The kids are starting to surreptitiously gather them to form balls of wax. I am slumped against the chest of someone whose face I cannot see. I cannot stop staring at my mother's face. There is so much going on in it. She has on an expression I have never seen before. I am looking and looking but not understanding the meaning behind it. And then it strikes me: it is the same expression she has after dabbing on "White Flower" liniment onto her temples and after inhaling the vapors. It is the look of someone disappearing, fading away. It is a look that is focused on something beyond my ken. It is a look that worries me no end.

3. Matalom but not sharp

Matalom, in Bisaya, means sharp. When I think of Matalom, on the contrary, the images are framed in soft light. In my mind, sometimes, I see the houses, the municipio, the plaza, the old church, the ancient trees, the



coast and the sea beyond it, neatly arranged, in quaint stillness, underneath a layer of mist. Perhaps this is because my first real encounter with the place was through sleep-heavy, glazed eyes, confronting early morning sunlight coming at me, in tiny broken streams, from behind intertwined foliage.

I probably slept through much of that first trip. I only remember that, when I woke up, the car we were in was slowing down, bringing the excited chatter to a hush. When I looked up, we were under a canopy of acacia leaves and branches that were tangled in a complex embrace. I would soon learn to treat the magical welcome arch, as a marker, an unmistakable sign, that we had entered the town proper, if not a different time zone altogether. As a matter of propriety and practice, everything slows down, therefore. In a minute, the plaza starts to loom to our right, and, to our left, the church and the patron saint, San Jose, opposite the municipio and the country's national hero, the other Jose.

My grandmother's house is located on the same block where the church stands. Its "dirty kitchen" faces the small, square, black windows of the church rectory. When attending afternoon novena masses, we pass through the backdoor, from the kitchen, and enter the church compound via the rectory. We sometimes see the priests, off duty, strumming guitars, grooming gardens, meditating.

I have heard that, in every generation, at least one of the Tías carries on an illicit conduct with some young Pádre, in the much too short, tree-lined path between the women's earthly kitchen and the men's holy ground. It is probably not true, but not hard to imagine. I imagine this: A___ herself as a product of the prohibited passions between a Spanish man of the cloth and an otherwise pious native girl. A___'s mother is fourteen and he forty. She is much too tall for her age and her kind, while he is much too lay for his order and for his own good. It's all very, very easy to imagine, in fact.

As soon as we pass the church, the driver takes a quick left and there it is, the house where my mother was born. There is nothing remarkable, or imaginative, about the house, which, like all the others, looks like a girl's dress, with concrete walls for a skirt, wooden and capiz windows for a top. The house would be quite easy to miss, save for the bougainvilleas that climb wildly all over the front, adhering brightly colored papery bracts, that persist for a long time as to be permanent, on the walls.

The car pulls up under the colorful vines. As soon as the rusty door of the car is opened, before we kids can even alight from it, we are untangled from the arms of our yayas, lifted over bags and boxes, and ensconced in the warm hugs and kisses of a hundred Tías. Then the rest of the contingent spills out of the car, and there are even more combinations of tearful embraces, as the decibel of "Kana! Kani!" chatter rises higher and higher.

"Kana sad! Kani sad!"

No, no one was sad, everybody was happy. They were merely issuing instructions on which bags to unload, which ones to leave behind. That was just how everybody was in those days: nothing was ever not a cause for excitement.

In those times, many, many years ago, we only ever traveled in big, noisy, highly-excitably groups. We filled buses, or rented big vans, even if some of the families had their own private cars. The only time there would be a semblance of silence during the trip was when we were navigating the steep, winding roads, by the sides of mountains; the chatter would then turn to prayer. As soon as the most challenging part of the road to Matalom was passed, however, the adults instantly recovered: they sang cheesy songs, told tired old stories, and then passed around the miniature "White Flower" bottle, whose oil they dabbed on their temples and the vapors they, like junkies, inhaled through their noses.



4. The last time

The last time I was in Matalom was with a much smaller, quieter contingent: my two brothers and two sisters, all of whom I had to baby-sit, without my knowing it. My brothers, who were the real junkies, were then both hooked on mind-altering substances and eardrum-busting music. My older sister was trying not to depress herself, while waiting for the results of her board exams. My baby sister was, well, still a baby at the age of twelve. I, on the other hand, had just graduated from UP then, had no job, and was forever in black, agonizing over the fact that I could not, had no excuse to, be with my boyfriend who was a journalist in Manila.

Before we arrived in Matalom, I was bent on showing everyone that this was all a waste of my time, and that I was there against my will. Of course, I was not able to maintain my position for long. I could not exactly complain about being forced to take a "vacation with my siblings in a seaside town, right across from a white-sand resort island," as my mother put it, and she put it so well indeed.

We did not know the real reason for our overextended stay in Matalom until ten days later when, despite the long distance calls to our parents, they still would not come for us or send us money for bus fare back to Tacloban. We eventually understood that hieing us off to Matalom was my mother's idea of rehabilitation and spiritual exile, for us as much as for herself.

She had literally packed us off, driven us to the terminal, paid the bus driver who had already been instructed over the phone to reserve the first row of seats for us, for the trip to Matalom. Against our will, she managed to send us there at the pretext that not only was it vacation, but it was also a matter of obligation.

By then, most of my mother's brothers and sisters had stopped going to Matalom, or, when they did, they stayed in rooms at the only beach resort in town, rather than accepted the hospitality offered by their cousins who were then caring for the old house behind the church. We eventually gathered that this was because of some dispute over that house and the land on which it stood.

Perhaps it was because my mother was born in that house that she could not let anything or anyone sway her from staying there or from maintaining ties with her mother's sister, and her cousins. We all noticed, moreover, that, indeed, she never had severe migraine attacks for the rest of the year, after being in Matalom for only a few days. She, therefore, had a well-founded reason for believing that a two-week stay in the place would cure us of our ills, and slay our demons permanently.

She was right, as always. We returned to Tacloban—after being deported to and forcefully rehabilitated in Matalom—healthy, happy, and detoxified, with new forty-peso haircuts to boot. Our Tías cried, probably with much relief as with sadness, as they waved to us from the street corner, under a rainbow of bougainvilleas. Half of the bus passengers were annoyed, the other half amused, that we had overloaded the bus with all sorts of items we accumulated in our two-week rehab-vacation in Matalom: corals, shells, and stones from the beach; funky retro clothes from the ukay ukay; big jars of greasy fiesta food; a sack of sweet and pungent fruits; and several old photographs and stolen library books. We promised ourselves that we would visit Matalom at least once every year, and preferably with the entire family, or even with the whole clan, just like old times!

We are still talking about going back to Matalom. One of these days, one of these days, we say. Of course, it has never happened again. If it ever does, it would only ever be as a very small family that we would go, as it would be as a family without my mother. And, without her, I need to be convinced that we can go back to the way things were, traveling together as one big happy assembly.

What we never thought would happen, happened. We lost our mother; the migraines were not just



migraines. The ties to her family were severed, not strengthened. Certain ugly words were uttered, ugly emotions finally acted out. It was as if a pit had been opened and the stench from the very bottom had been released, we could no longer do anything about it.

Meanwhile, I, for my own little, insignificant part in this sordid melodrama, cannot bear to be anywhere near anyone who has hurt, though never angered, my mother. I cannot even bear to enter the house in Tacloban, where Mother grew up, where A_____ died, and where we also lived for a number of years. I hear the house is falling apart. The plants have died, the vines have dried up and detached themselves from the walls, and are now hanging limply like skeletons in the air.

I hear the piano is missing and has never since been heard, while the rest of the furniture have also been divided senselessly among the siblings: a twelve-seater dining table with only four chairs in one house, a platera without the platos in the other, an aparador without its mirror left behind.

I imagine this aparador, on which A_____’s saints used to stand, now stranded, like a terrible anomaly, in the middle of my grandparents’ room. I sometimes imagine the refugee saints in that empty house: broken, unidentifiable, un-prayed to.

I sometimes see unrecognizable men and women, dark sagging figures on wooden chairs, drinking tuba or cheap rum, and getting drunk in the hot afternoons, throwing up all over the porch, unmindful of people passing the street. I sometimes see faces, peering at the window, from behind dust-encrusted curtains. Most of the time, though, I just look away whenever I sense the slightest movement from behind the heavy, floral screens.

For now, I am content to keep images of my mother’s life and those who peopled it, underneath a film of vapor; content to condense everything onto paper.

5. Mother tongue and menthol vapors

A_____ was already dead, when I took my first trip to her hometown. Since A_____’s death, my mother had made it a point for us to visit Matalom as often as we could, perhaps as a way for us, her children, to know and remember A_____ more. What I do remember is that as soon as we reached Matalom, everyone spoke differently. My own mother’s tongue shifted swiftly from Waray to Kana, and my poor father, who never acquired the facility for the language, was forced to speak an even more foreign language—Tagalog.

I think I only realized the import of my grandmother’s death, and a little bit of my mother’s sense of loss, when I noticed that no one spoke my grandmother’s language in the house in Tacloban. Not even my mother or her brothers and sisters spoke it, when they were in Tacloban. This created a silence that could not be ignored, especially after I had been to Matalom, where Kana was the only language spoken. And, that was when it hit me: A_____ had been the only one with that voice and that language, all this time, and her speech was a sound that I would never ever hear, ever again.

Was this also why my mother had on that expression again, when people started speaking to her, in her mother’s tongue, when we arrived in Matalom?

One afternoon, in the old house in Matalom, while everyone was down in the sala, examining yellowed documents, and sepia photographs, I went up to A_____’s room, and forced myself to cry. I dabbed on the strong mentholated liniment at the corners of my eyelids until they stung. I forced my eyes to remain open, even when they were tearing uncontrollably, so I could stare at my face in the mirror, to see how well I could imitate my



mother's expression. This was a few years after A____'s death. I don't know how, in all those years, I had convinced myself that menthol vapor was all it would take.

A____ died when I was three, my mother thirty. My older sister was four, my younger sister had not yet been born. Of course we were all too young, my mother included, to understand what it would take to complete the numbers game: for me to be as old as my mother was when her own mother died; for my older sister to have her own three year old daughter now; and for our baby sister to have to play the role of Mom in an all-male household that refuses to be mothered.

6. At sixty

Mother would have been sixty today. At sixty, she would have been happily retired from managing her office and would now be applying ridiculous Oprah-style, positive management, self-help techniques on her husband who always obliged her, and the rest of the household who were helpless against her. At sixty, she would have been a beautiful young grandmother, and still very much a mother.

I see her through the mist: she is still relatively slim, young-looking, for her age, and elegant even in her green Hawaiian-print housedress, the way beauty queens like herself are always graceful in appearance and manner, no matter where they are, no matter what they're doing. I see her tending the garden—or, at least, supervising someone on how to care for the plants and the vines starting to climb all over the front of our house. I see her trying, again, to change the colors of the wall, the location of the door, of our still-unfinished house, inspired by something she saw in a magazine, or in a dream about the old house in Matalom. I see her at the dining table, which she and my father sometimes liked to use as worktable.

I cannot really make out her expression, her head turned slightly away from the glare of the sunlight streaming in, and now bent toward a piece of paper on which she is writing "things to do" lists, plans, inspirational prose, reminders and notes for her children, who have started their own families, and need her now more than ever. She is seated next to my father who, at the age of seventy-six, is still writing pleadings for his non-paying clients; is bent on saving other people but, without my mother, cannot function on his own. I see the two of them being torn away from their work, by the kids—not us, but our children!—who are doing something silly, looking so adorable, making a mess of Mother's make up, breaking some jewelry, perhaps; wearing my father's oversized leather shoes, trying to run in them, and falling all over their faces. I feel my mother's expression soften, even if I do not see it. This is the kind of chaos that appeals to her, and against which she has no power or a single management skill.

It is her sixtieth birthday. We have already been to church for the six A.M. mass, let's say. We are taking a trip to Matalom, the place where she was born. It is a beautiful day, with just the right amount of sun and wind; a perfect day to travel with the entire family, indeed. And, of course, because it is my mother we are talking about, family means not only us, who are all home for the occasion, but also friends, cousins, nieces and nephews, uncles and aunts, and grandaunts, too. Of course, she has forgiven and forgotten past misdeeds, everyone looks to her now to keep ties bound, just like they deferred to A____, her mother, to settle family matters.

Of course, too, every now and then, my mother remembers A____, who did not even live long enough to reach the age of sixty, who barely knew her grandchildren—all beautiful and bright in their own right, although some of them have to be taught how to be happy, sometimes. She cannot help but think of herself, and how she



made it without A____. Has it really been three decades? Why, every time, every single time she remembers, it puzzles her that it still hurts, it still stings, no matter how long it has been. It clutches at her heart, and it induces her to fervent prayer, mindless of the three year old granddaughter who is alarmed at the change in her grandmother's expression. Oh God, may her children never know such sorrow, may she not have to leave this little one yet, kana *sad*, kani *sad* ...

It is all very, very easy to imagine, in fact: At sixty, she would have been exactly three decades older than she was when her own mother died. At sixty, the mathematical formula would have made more sense, somehow.

7. Sad, as in "also"

My mother would have been sixty today. And I wake up alone in an apartment, a house that has no history.

My husband and I live and work in a noisy, wet city, whose language has adopted me. We surround ourselves with people who do not know anything about us, whom we do not know enough about. Sure, we exchange bits and pieces of ourselves, of our families, sometimes; we highlight certain events, we hide others, we mention the colorful characters, we obliterate the rest. We have degrees in language, in cultural studies, in history. We convert to discourse, and theory, and fiction, and poetry, what we have cut ourselves from inevitably. It has become a matter of survival; as necessary as our self-imposed rituals of obsession and avoidance.

I have, for instance, taken to riding the trains that traverse the city, for three years now, favoring the line that stops at the seventh station closest to UN Avenue, a street which I have strange attachments to. I always find myself standing outside an unattractive building, as nondescript a building in gray and blue can get, in a city of soot and smog. I have no explanation for this. I have no poetry or publishable narrative about it. In psychoanalytic theory this would have been explained by a discourse on desire and lack, on the subject and the (M)other. And all the findings would have been useless altogether.

No one here knows who I am and nobody asks, nobody cares, everybody smiles. But I do know that in the last three years, a water fountain has sprung in the middle of the driveway and an unfamiliar security guard now guides the traffic flow. I know that the trees and plants uprooted by Typhoon Milenyo three years ago have not at all been replanted, and only the emergency doors have been repainted with an even brighter white that actually glows. I know that meaningless facts reside in this building, facts that are not housed by the dwelling I should probably start calling home, by now.

My mother would have been sixty today. And maybe I am looking for an excuse to celebrate her life in this city that has nothing to do with her, except that this is where she last lived, this is where she left us, and, wherever my mother went, she did bring home with her.

I will get off this train and start looking for excuses again to round up old friends and whatever family I can pull in from the vicinity; to gather different tongues in one table and let them speak their language—speak in it and about it. Kani *sad*, has become a matter of survival. Kani *sad*, as in "also," has become a matter of duty.

Quezon City, 2008

This house

Dana Lee F. Delgado

This house knows silence. The neighbors are old, have always been old, and are probably as old as this house, and the TV is nearly always turned down so they wouldn't complain. The occupants love the TV set, possibly more than they love this house. They keep the lights off at night, but the glow from the screen is enough for them to see each other, at the very least enough to recognize each other's movements from across the living room. They know the house well and understand its geography enough to determine precisely where to place their feet so as to avoid the coffee table while on their way to the kitchen. They turn into silhouettes at night, and perhaps that is enough.

This house belongs to no one. There are people who call themselves its owners, but they all live someplace else; and the bills that arrive at the end of each month bear a stranger's name. The owners before the owners, they understand. No one has bothered to make the necessary changes; it is only a name, after all, easy enough to dismiss once they see the figures politely reminding them that all they have to do is unplug the TV before going to bed.

The owners come to visit every other year. They would talk about renovations, and while no one has ever seen the outdated floor plans, they would insist that the pipes will be replaced, the tiles changed, and a second level built, someday. The occupants know that *someday* means *for good*, and they understand.

They try to entertain themselves, and when it is still early they tend to talk louder, as though this would somehow contribute to the delivery of their punch lines, or allow them to assert themselves in some way, as if to announce their presence in the house that isn't technically theirs. Perhaps if they speak loud enough their voices would bounce off the surfaces and leave behind traces that say, *We were here*; and perhaps if their voices could reach all the hidden corners of the house, even the ones behind doors that remained locked, then it would be their home.



The grownups would order the children to change the channels when the remote is nowhere to be found, and occasionally when the reception is bad, someone would have to stand up from the couch to fix the wires in the garage. They would make a game out of it, something like pinning the tail on the donkey, the ones inside yelling, *“Hold it up a little higher, a little to the left! No, to the right!”*

The children would stay up late sometimes during the weekends, and the house has seen them looking like phantoms, sitting far too close to the glow, keeping still and perhaps taking short, shallow breaths purposely synced to the canned laughter so that they can clearly hear the actors’ lines in between, perhaps at the same time learning how to lip-read. This house knows the difference between their noise and their silence, knows when there is no difference at all; this house has seen the man drinking rum in front of the TV on Father’s Day, his wife too busy feeding the cats, his children too busy playing with their friends across the street, the boxing match going quite well, the punches quick and heavy, the bottle moist in his hand, his grip tight as he pours himself another glass, downs it, one boxer on the ground, referee counts, a knockout.

This house knows all their little announcements: heavy footsteps in the garage, one cigarette lit, dishes being washed, school bags dropped and unzipped. It knows how they come and go.

When it is almost dark the mother would stand at the gate and call the children home for dinner. Sometimes she does not bother with names; a long *Pssst!* would do. The children understand what it means and, still laughing among themselves, they would bid their friends goodbye. Upon their return the house would wrap them in its familiar shadows, no need to pause at the doorstep until their eyes adjust. The TV is on, rice and vegetables on the coffee table. Someday is far away. Tonight they know where everything is.

Permanent

Ramon Niño T. Raquid

Today you think
of the teeth
of drunken men
and the wives
who are boxed
then leave after
a fragmented smile
or fitted denture

Fact: you think,
after tonguing your
gums, every part
of our body
has a capacity
to repair itself
except teeth

From Notes of a Professional Refugee

Isabelle Lau

Strip

You felt your way through childhood because your mother needed space to nurture the possibilities of youth that she abandoned when your father came with a comfortable future she thought she would bring to the grave. But your father had to leave. You were later told he was framed by people he thought were his friends—small politicians who needed his money to climb the crowded political ladder and had him arrested for a year while they swarmed over his businesses, his cars, and his cover girl girlfriend (who also happens to be your mother). A year later he fled the country after he was finally acquitted. You never really knew what happened in between or after that—no one ever told you anything. You just knew that when he left, your mother went wild and spent all the money he left for you on pool parties, Gucci and Prada, cakes decorated with toy penises and breasts, pretty boyfriends, and pretty clothes. She sold two of your three homes and all of your cars after one of her boyfriends—the prettiest one—crashed your father's BMW on Roxas Boulevard and got amnesia. She did this to pay for his hospital bills.

In your corner of the universe, you called for your father every night from the terrace of your 15th floor condominium unit. Nobody ever called back.

A few years later your mother was no longer capable of paying for anything, even for her hospital bill. After running out of money, she was left with no friends (she couldn't pay for their bills anymore, see). So when she got pregnant with another man's child, she couldn't flush the kid down the toilet even if she wanted to, because the man was supporting her. And you, of course, so you could eat something more than tuyo and stop studying by candlelight every night. But mostly this man supported her and her love for shoes.

Your childhood was marred by the absence of touch—an absence that you have to carry around with a straight face because everybody has to carry their own.

* * *

When you entered adolescence, you found that you are not unattractive or stupid, even though your half-sister's dad insisted on massaging your legs because you're short. Why, he had to do something about your only imperfection, he argued. You grew up knowing you have nice legs because people told you so—even this man had.



Eventually, upon finding you alone in your room, he was able to prove the honesty of his compliment when he succeeded in massaging your legs, thighs, pelvic bone and other places too embarrassing for a 13-year-old to name.

A year later he demonstrated his genuine concern when he insisted that he would wait for you to fall asleep before leaving you alone at home and, no, he would not take no for an answer. You made excuses involving dirty laundry and dishes to wash, things you have to do while your mother is away, and failed spectacularly. You were forced to stay in the same room with him.

You half-sat on the edge of the bed with a book bag containing a can of body spray and two pairs of scissors, in case you needed to gouge his eyes out, while he watched TV. He told you he never gets you to himself when your mother is around so you should give him a hug. In school, you learned that sexual harassment is not about lust but about dominance so you hugged him with your arms, careful to not touch his body with yours, so as to not make known to him your awareness of his intentions. He offered to massage you, saying that you needed it. You insisted that he needs it more because he's the one working for your family.

He told you to forget your father. "Magpa-under ka na sa 'kin," he persisted. "Akin ka lang."

He got a hold of you while you sat hugging your knees. After his hands found their way under your first shirt (you wore two shirts, two bras, and two pajama bottoms—you're not stupid), you casually asked about his meeting and reminded him that he's late. You both looked at his phone, vibrating relentlessly with countless missed calls and messages. He took it and turned it off then proceeded to caress your back beneath all your clothing. You did not squeak or squirm or say a word (let pride, more than self-preservation, fuel your pretend-innocence distract yourself by thinking traveler thoughts tour the world using your mind and search for ~~your father for any other touch~~ but you are a lone traveler). Eventually you felt his legs contracting around you and you felt awkward and, surprisingly, numb and un-murderous, definitely not scared or shaken. Minutes later he jumped up and put on his pants over his house shorts. But not until after you noticed the bulge he couldn't fit in his trousers, of course.

* * *

On the day after your 16th birthday, you gave your yes to the girl you had a big crush on the previous year (people thought she had a Harry Potter resemblance and charm about her, and that she was smart and beautiful and talented—which she was), whom you miraculously met when she was already in college and you were still hanging with the nuns.

On the morning of your monthsary you broke up because she realized that she still had feelings for her ex. Your world felt and seemed like it was crumbling and toppling over. That was your first break-up and you had to feel it. You cried over your best friend's comment about the grass being green (she had run out of things to say to comfort you) because green reminded you of her.

You got back together four months later because in some funny way the world made you think and feel that you two were meant to be. She finally learned to love you, but three days after formally committing to you again she confessed that (in between nights of making love to you, imagine) she made out with two guys during the course of your unrelationship-relationship. She did this, she said the first time, because she was insecure. A year later she told you to be grateful because she did that to make sure that you were the one she wanted.



* * *

You scoured Metro Manila for a room for rent so cheap your father wouldn't be able to say no to supporting your escapade. After agreeing to board in your best friend's grandmother's attic (along with mice and ghosts), you waited until the night of your mother's birthday, when it was certain that she would be sleeping at a 5-star hotel with your half-sister and your half-sister's dad (note: without you) after the buffet dinner, to which you were invited (because your mother loves you, at least).

After being shooed away by your mother and forced to endure possibly the worst storm of the year (why does it always have to rain during the most dramatic moments of your life?) in order to get back home, where you spent the night alone, you packed your things in emotional turmoil and silence—see, your phone wasn't beeping because your girlfriend was mad at you for being so happy about finally getting to choose from so much food, most of which you hadn't tried before, that you told her you would text after dinner.

The next day, you found that the storm had exhausted itself and cabs were no longer in danger of getting their engines flooded. You didn't want that to happen again. But who cares? You left your mother's home. Never again will you be treated like a second-class citizen by your own family.

Transfiguration

Childlike. Queer. Unaffected. Trusting. Religious. Delicate.

Diva. Easy. Cheap. Forward. Decadent. Liberal.

Bewitch. Brief. Sharp.

Control. Subvert. Salvage.

Never.

Never

"Who are you dating?" She asked as she kissed my neck and put her hand up my skirt. I was painfully aware of everything else. The crisp bedclothes, the dark room in slivers of moonlight, the tall wide windows behind sheer white curtains, the shadows in the room. She gave me slow full kisses on the neck. She still knew.

"I'm not dating anybody. Really." I looked at the wall opposite the windows as she kissed my neck and gently whispered questions into my ear.

"Then who are you posting status messages about on Facebook?"

"I'm not posting status messages about anyone. Really, what does it matter anyway if I am dating someone?"

"It matters. I want to know. You can ask me anything."

"I don't want to."

"Who? Who is he? She?" She continued asking and kissing.

"I am *not* dating anybody."

"Fine. Then who do you like?"



“Why are we doing this?”

“Because ... I want to?”

I let her kiss me because in my mind I aimed for equilibrium. I accepted her kisses as payment for all my kisses she left unreturned. In the end love became business. It was time to break even.

“Ayaw mo ba?” She sat up and looked at me.

“You ask me that now when you have your hand up my dress?” She grinned, pulled off my underwear and parted my legs violently. I could feel her tongue but my thoughts were elsewhere. I thought of the boy she was dating, the same guy she was texting all night, probably, while she flirted with me. She reached under my dress to grab my breast.

“You could just take my bra off you know,” I reminded her as I unclasped my bra and took off my dress.

“You know I was never good at that,” she smiled sheepishly.

She lay on top of me, kissed the spot below my left ear and whispered, “Who’s the lucky guy?”

“No one nga. I’m *not* dating anybody.”

“I don’t believe you.”

“Why? Is it because I’m happy?”

“No, it’s the look on your face. Who is it? Guy or girl?”

“After two months of not seeing me you ambush me just to ask who I’m dating?”

“Yes. UP?”

I nodded.

“Kilala ko ba?”

“No.” I felt under her dress to caress her waist. It was the same slope of smooth skin I kissed and loved for almost four years. I used to know every piece of underwear she wore regularly. I knew them so well I could identify which one she was wearing with a brush of my fingers. I slipped my hand between her legs and rolled over so that she was pinned beneath me.

“This is what you want, isn’t it?”

“Yes,” she gasped. “But you’re not even done yet.”

“It doesn’t matter.”

“Of course it does.”

“No it doesn’t.” I took her nipple in my mouth. My favorite part of her.

“Don’t stop,” she moaned. “God I missed this.”

I settled beside her as she relished the waning orgasm.

“Looks like someone missed me,” I smirked.

She sat on me and rubbed against my thigh.

“You’re so wet.”

“You make me so horny.”

“Huh. Right.” I pushed her off me gently and straddled her. “You’re really just a horny person.”

“Yeah.”

“And the alcohol.”

“You know I’m not drunk. I know what’s going on.”

“I know, but still. The alcohol.”

“Yeah ... And because you were there.”



I remember how I used to gaze at her. Tonight I simply looked. She looked like an image captured in night vision settings—grey and blurry around the edges. With the honest eyes of someone mildly intoxicated.

“I stalk you on Facebook you know.”

“I know.” I pulled my hair to one side as I continued looking at her.

“You’re so hot.”

“So at what point during the night did you decide to sleep with me?”

“My fourth beer. My third. Second. No—” She laughed. I wondered when I stopped loving the sound of her laughter.

I got up and walked toward the windows. It occurred to me how familiar it was—the sheer curtains, windows and moonlight. Three years ago she wrote a poem inspired by a night just like this one except, of course, we were in love with each other then.

“Fine. I’ll touch myself na lang.”

“Go ahead.”

I dressed up and sat beside her.

“Aren’t you done yet?” I asked, checking the time on my phone.

“Shit! What time is it?”

“Ten to 11:00.”

“The reservation’s only until 11:00!”

I kissed her as she continued touching herself.

“Suck me.”

“My my, aren’t we demanding?” Which really isn’t unusual, I thought.

“Please? Suck me, please?” Ha! I smirked and spread her legs to help her with my mouth.

I walked ahead as she closed the door of the bridal suite at exactly 11:00 PM.

“I guess our long-standing joke proved to be right huh?”

“Which joke?”

“When we said three years ago that one day long after we’ve broken up and you’re already dating someone else, I’ll show up in a sexy dress and you’ll end up fucking me.”

“Yeah.” She chuckled.

I stopped at the second floor landing and watched as she went ahead. We didn’t want her parents to catch us. Before reaching the end of the staircase to the lobby she looked back at me.

“Thank you.”

“For what?”

“The sex.”

“Sure,” I laughed. “That’s what I’m here for.”

List of Forgotten Things (or Things Suddenly Remembered)

Also, an ode to the orange. The quarter of an orange that made the sides of my mouth itch and sting. The orange I continued to eat because one day long ago I sat in front of a mini fridge and opened it, finding nothing but a litre of pure orange juice that seemed to please my father enough. I could not understand why though; it was awfully



bitter. I downed the bitter juice because, my father said, it was good for me. Rarely do I get that much attention from him. Also, to the orange half moon in the sky, which evokes longing I refuse to comprehend.

My father brought me to the toy store in Harrison Plaza when I was four. I was in my pink and white nursery uniform that went well, my nannies thought, with the large pink bow on my head. My father held me by the hand and left me before aisles and aisles of toys that would have kept me occupied for hours had he only remembered to bring me to the washroom beforehand. He said he would only be at the hardware section next to where we were and would only be away for five minutes. I had already carefully explored all of the aisles three times when I decided I could no longer hold my pee in and should find a quiet aisle where I could do my business. I chose the aisle with more expensive toys because there was no one there. I was actually a considerate child. I touched nothing and was careful to squat in the very center of the aisle where I was sure my pee wouldn't spray on any of the toys. I also made sure none of my garments would get wet, for the sake of my nannies. After relieving myself I casually stood up and made my way to another aisle. It was then when I noticed a large box. On it was a picture of children hopping on drawn squares on the ground. I remember mentally noting that it was interesting and because I didn't know what it was called I decided to name it, a common thing to do as a child. I named it hopscotch. I guess that's when I learned to read.

All the married women in my family, except for my mother, are famous for being unloved. My aunts and my grandmothers were abandoned by their husbands for other women. Today they are all in various conditions of disuse, depression, and distress (the most amusing case being my father's mother who, my father says—in his Mandarin-sounding English—decided to spend her remaining years offering her life to Buddha at his temple in Hong Kong). My mother—well, she was never married. My father had the five babies conceived before me aborted and made my mom stay on the pill until he decided to have me (because he was growing old, not because he wanted a child). He was never one for commitment and family affairs, after all.

Outside UP Manila is a palm reader. An old man on a plastic stool. He always wore clean collared shirts and slacks. He took my hand along with my 50-peso bill while my (then) girlfriend of one year stood a few feet away, cigarette in hand. The old man peered at my palm then at my face. "You are making a big leap at the moment. You are about to pursue what you really want—an artistic path. Hmm. You will be famous by the time you're 27 and you'll succeed in food and beverages." I looked meaningfully at my girlfriend. "You will have four romantic relationships. The first is nonsense. It won't mean anything. It will just be about sex and money." I politely greeted the old man goodbye and took my girlfriend's hand as we returned to UP Manila to fetch the documents I needed to take literature in UP Diliman. I paused before telling her what the palm reader said. I thought of how, months before, I already planned to name my future coffee shops and restaurants after her and how it was ironic that our song was "It Means Nothing" by Stereophonics. I squeezed her hand, "He said we don't mean anything."

One day I was lying on a thin mattress on the floor, talking to a man I barely knew over the phone. I was thirteen and was just getting accustomed to having a half-sister, then just barely two years old, who took the only bed in the apartment and all my mother's attention. His name I had long forgotten but I knew my mother met this man through a friend and was using him, maybe, to feel better about herself. It was exciting—waiting for my sister's father to leave, furtively glancing over her shoulder before quietly stepping out to talk to the phone man in the



shadow of the small balcony of that empty apartment. On this particular evening he was talking to me while my mother was putting my baby sister to sleep in the bedroom. I was lying on my side in the middle of the kitchen, contemplating the tacky floral pattern of the cheap mattress that barely separated me from the floor. The man, who, after a while, started calling me instead of my mother, asked me strange questions. “What do you look like?” “Are you beautiful?” “Will you touch yourself for me?”

Stranger than Fiction, I remember, was the movie that was playing when my ex-girlfriend and I first fought. I was in the shower when she found a message in my phone that upset her. She was threatened by the existence of the girl who sent it and more so because the girl said that she would stay in my life even after my girlfriend—my only one so far—and I break up. After a confrontation that alarmed me, we were quiet for the rest of the night, sitting in front of the television—not really watching, just looking while we desperately thought of what to say to each other, both of us newly loved by and newly loving each other. She was lying an arm’s length away from me while I sat against the cold wall, contemplating getting up to leave. In that instant she reached out and touched my thigh. That was how it was from the beginning—silences were left alone to heal themselves. When the movie ended and there was nothing left to pretend to do, she turned off the light and lay back down. I refused to give up my spot against the wall, out of fear maybe, or pride. She pulled me close and started to make love to me. It was an act of fervent desire, but I knew that it was not quite a desire for each other. It was passionate. It was desperate. I was on my knees, my left hand supporting my weight as I watched her face and entered her. I felt her contract around me as she climaxed. All in a split second of confusion, she came, shuddered, sobbed, and cried out. *Don’t leave me*, she said. That was how it was from the beginning, passion being the consequence of desperation.

Problem Solving

John Revo Ocampo

problem was his habit of knocking at her door and driveling like an imbecile, tears and snot running, beer bottle in hand, all the while sniveling, something about forgetting is the last thing she should worry about, he'll wait in his long sleeves, with his tie loose and the car left outside open, the keys inside as if he couldn't care less what happened because this is what matters, her

problem was his baggage—these books on architecture sitting on her desktop, that now-dented white convertible he'd given her on their first anniversary, those miniature houses he'd built last summer when she admitted she couldn't decide whether she wanted a pool or the garage, his floor plans he'd left her months ago—articles he hoped she'd remember were all his

problem was her door in the way of his grand entrance, his plan to storm in, drop to his knees and grovel like the fool she'd always told him he was, and his solution was to knock until his knuckles bleed, until she said something—anything, until the click of a lock and the creaking of hinges were heard or until he passed out—and there'd be no other choice left for her but to take him in, with her

problem was her habit of collecting unopened keepsakes in boxes, even when it meant dated records she'd never listen to, even when at around midnight it meant her past haunting her with a stench from out in the corridor she would have recognized as beer-soaked shirt had she been in her apartment instead of inside a white convertible on her way to return articles of his

Problem Solving

John Revo Ocampo

Answer the questions. Five (5) points each.

Provide the solutions on a separate piece of paper.

1. Given the reason was she needed space, define space. Show your planes and spatial boundaries.
2. If a man leaves his house an hour after his ex was supposed to come by and he tries drunk-driving at well above the speed limit to her apartment two blocks away, how long will it take him to come to his senses?
3. Measuring the distance between drivel and denial, babble and blatant dismissal, his admissions of the obvious and her admonitions being proven prophetic by their parting, how far have they come or did they even move at all?
4. If his apologies had travelled at the speed it takes for her to forgive and she had listened with enough understanding to stay in place for the time it takes to hear his words, when should she have asked him to stop causing a scene?
5. Given her falling for him on account of his handwritten notes and his tendency to buy and build her the most beautiful things, how many months will she need to spend reading his letters and packing away his gifts before she can let him go? Convert the answer into weeks, days, hours and seconds per piece of paper and cardboard box.
6. If the elements in set A include his sudden selective memory, his diminished interest in her dance recitals and a certain disdain for introductions to her family and friends, and if the elements in set B include her forgetting to call about being late to drop off his things, the distinct disregard for the messages he left and her reckless move two blocks away, in which time frames did the most significant events occur within the intersecting sets and which seem mutually exclusive as opposed to concurrent?

Me and You and All the Usernames We Own

Arlynn Despi



Joaquin is six in this photo. Behind him is an inflatable swimming pool filled with water and Fuji apples where an eight-year-old neighbor will try to push him after arguing about whose kuya is better at yoyo. He will push back and spit on the bully's face. The older boy will aim the broken end of a balloon stick towards him. A clown will let go of a tailless two-legged yellow dog. The stick will draw a red line beneath Joaquin's right ear. It will leave a scrape parallel to his jaw as the man in the orange wig pulls him away.

Thirteen birthdays later, he will blog about this being a near death experience. *The idiot could have punctured a carotid artery.* His friends will pick up sarcasm; friends of friends of friends will leave bible verses about second chances.

I will ask about the scar the first time we fuck without having smoked weed. It will barely be noticeable in the blue glow of the mosquito lamp. Touching it will reveal its topography. He will mumble *woodworking accident, grade six.*



An excessive intake of gin pomelo on an empty stomach may cause one to expel pink vomit. A freshman Joaquin illustrates this in 600x400 pixels. Here are two angles from a photostream his friend tagged *uwaaak*.

He comments:

Next time blue lambanog.



A weeknight. I have a black arcade rifle in my mouth; he is face down at the foot of a stairway, playing dead. I find this primary photo connection amusing. There is the campus, kwek-kwek, Radiohead in common, and the online now! icon flashing. We meet up after a half hour chat. He pays for the siomai. The place is steamy and cramped like a cheap dorm room. *Let's get a few rounds next door*, I tell him, to break the tyranny of clatter.

The band switches to ska; he pins me against the bathroom door. The knob hits the side of my hip and I feel a bruise beginning to bloom like a patch of mildew in the corner tiles. I feel the guitar wah-wah-wah-ing on our chests and his clammy hand snaking up the skin of my back. His tongue is beer and a hint of spring onions. The warm stickiness of spit.

Someone knocks aggressively on the door. I start to make puking noises. *Pretend to say something comforting*, I whisper to him as I tune the faucet along with my invisible vomit. *Sige let it all out*, he says loudly as we both suppress a laugh. He opens the door. A girl in a tank top with glittery Greek letters pulls a mukhasim face as Joaquin leads me out. *Dude*, he says, *that was the face of one who has discovered the smell of invisible puke*. We die laughing on the way to my apartment.

I wear my hungover face to a Myth exam. He sleeps through Silviculture.



You have a friend request:

Joaquin Gabat

You have no friends in common.

+1?

+1.

I find that he is *In a Relationship with Amaya Valdez.*

Amaya's profile photo: him + her.

His: him asleep at the back of a pickup truck.



You have a direct message:

Ginpomforthesoul Dude! I left messages on FB. Haven't heard from you since grad. Am off to NZ for MA in two months. Will be visiting campus this weekend. Let us waste more of our wasted youth and be merry.

I bring a small block of cheese. He pulls out a party pack of nuts. All night we walk around armed with a backpack full of cheap liquor. We take swigs from a bottle of rum and chase it down with warm Coke. He tells me a story about a clown then smashes the empty bottle on a ledge behind the library. I take his hand and hold it against the ghost of my old bruise. I think of telling him I deserve a free punch to his stomach to get even for it. But before the words can pry themselves out of my mouth I hunch over a patch of grass and a thick stream of nutty cheese soup pours out of me.

It is an upward hike to his friend's apartment. His orgmate turned instructor left the keys with him for the weekend. We come twice on her couch. Once in the kitchen.

I don't ask Joaquin to email me.



Gio from the 4th floor tech department is too polite to ignore my video chat requests on my Wednesday nights off. His shift starts at four a.m. When he drones on about work, I interrupt and ask him if he wants to see me dance. He would stutter for a second, fiddle with his glasses then ask me to teach him a new Korean word instead.

Karl Melvin spits on the face of The Former Altar Boy stereotype. The day before Halloween, I send him a link to a photo of a dead writer. He comes on cam the following night with the prescribed coat and cigarette. He teases me, flashes me for a second. There is nothing but a tie underneath the coat. When his girlfriend walks in on him, all he is sporting is the unlit cigarette on his lips, already limp from soaking in saliva.

Pao gives me a dead lab frog impression when I ask for Gardo Versoza in Kirot 2.



“Joaquin Gabat”

About 365 results (0.35 seconds)

[Family shocked over Filipino grad student’s Mt. Aspiring hiking accident | The New...](#)

A Filipino student of the University of Canterbury fell to his death while hiking alone in Mount Aspiring National Park on Friday. **Joaquin Gabat** was pursuing a postgraduate degree in Forestry...

http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10614116 - *Cached*



If a skull cracks in a forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound?



I stare at Joaquin's old stairway photo until he pushes himself up from the floor and dissipates into a word cloud.

I print out what I gather online about him and put it in a tin wastebasket. I turn on the exhaust fan in my bathroom. I douse the pile with cheap vodka and throw in a lit match. I visit our campus on my night off and scatter the ashes behind the library.

facebook makes and breaks relationships

Anna Oposa



**...went from being "in a relationship" to "single."
"YESSSSSS!"**

Cue the music: *"I gotta feeling that tonight's gonna be a good night..."*

KAPAG MAY ALAK MAY BALAK.
ALAM NA.

OPS! Pwedeng kiligin pero bawal mag-assume.

Dear God,
Sana siya na talaga... pero kung hindi...
EEEEH! SIYA NA LANG KASI PLEASE?

(PAKIPOT PA! GUSTO MO NAMAN. You both like each other, so hook up already!)

"Do you like anyone?"
"No." (Because it's you.)

Ang haba ng hair ko, tumabi ka jan baka maapakan mo!!!!!!!!!!

Bakit walang relationship status na "Coming soon"?



Crush ko siya dati. Ngayon, *KAMI NA* :)

Do you ever sit and ask yourself 'Am I really here? Is this all real?'

I love when someone's status is only meant for me to understand
I love it when you look at me and smile

Missing someone when you were just with him 5 minutes ago

Unexpected kisses
Stolen kisses
Forehead kisses
Kisses on the neck
Kisses on the forehead
Getting randomly kissed while sleeping

Hugs from behind
Using the person next to you as a pillow
Waking up next to the person you love



It's complicated/It always is/That's just the way it goes

(IT'S COMPLICATED STATUS MO? WAG MO LOKOHIN SARILI MO, IBALIK MO NA SA SINGLE.)

Don't walk into my life if you intend to leave me.

*Why should I make the effort? You don't.
You're so difficult but I still love you.*

*I hate it when girls have mood swings!
Girls PMS once a month. You're a douchebag 24/7.*

*You've changed.
You think I've changed? Look at yourself.
Well, if you can't handle me at my worst then you sure as hell don't deserve me at my best.*

*Well. This is awkward.
It wasn't awkward until you said it was awkward. Now it's awkward.*

*Kung gusto, may paraan. Kung ayaw, MAY IBA.
Ikaw lang mahal ko! Wala nang iba! Kaya wag kang mag drama dyan!*



Maraming napapahamak sa tagged photos

(On Relationship Status there should be "And is cheating with _____" option)

Call me old fashioned, but I actually take relationships seriously. You might not care, but it was a big deal to me.

That's definitely NOT what happened. Who told you that??? (ANG DAMI MONG ALAM, BAWASAN MO! DIYAN NAMATAY SI RIZAL!!!!!!)

Why would you do that? You KNEW it would hurt me.

I did that when I was drunk so... IT DOESN'T COUNT!!!

Being drunk isn't an excuse for cheating.

I'm sorry. For everything I have done. I'm sorry. I know it was wrong... I hope that there's a chance still because no matter what I'm always going to love you... Please don't give up. I can't imagine a day without you...

I'm right, you're wrong la la la la I can't hear you.

Fine. Be that way.

Okaaay... I probably shouldn't have said that...

K. (Saying "okay" when you want to end an argument)

Do not "k" me!!!!

I've said I was sorry; what else am I supposed to do?!

I'm sorry but I can't trust you anymore. Not after what you did.



Drinking 'til you can't feel feelings anymore

(When we try to stop strong emotions, we look for distractions)

Vodka isn't the answer... But it makes you forget the question.

Drunk people taking care of drunker people:

TARA NA!! SHOT NA!!!

SHOTS SHOTS SHOTS SHOTS SHOTS SHOTS SHOTSSSSSS EVERYBODY!

Before I leave brush my teeth with a bottle of Jack...

Patrón Tequila, I'm drunk on margarita

Blame it on the A-A-A-A-Alcohol

("We aren't alcoholics, we just have a lot of things to celebrate!")

All the single ladies, put your hands up!

Forget about your boyfriend and meet me at the hotel room!

Beautiful girls, all over the world... (EXCEPT YOU. FAT BITCH.) They got nothin' on you, baby...

I can do what she can do so much better!

("PATAYIN LAHAT NG BABAERO!!!!!!")

When life gives you lemons... GET THE SALT AND TEQUILA!

Hangovers: God's way of saying "YOU KICKED ASS LAST NIGHT."



Oh, you two are dating? ... Again?

Really, it's different this time <3

If by "different" you mean exactly the same...

I'm gonna be with the one who makes me happy, no matter what anyone thinks.

Why are you back with him?

He's changed.

Most common reply. What if...

That won't happen.

Yeah, but WHAT IF?

Don't judge my love life, because you don't even know half the story.

Don't make the same mistake twice. MARAMI PANG KASALANAN!!! TRY MO YUNG IBA!!! I believe in second chances, I just don't think everyone deserves them. Because cheaters are always cheaters and that'll never change. There's plenty of fish in the sea.

But I want THAT fish.

OKAY SABI MO EH.



Crying, then crying harder when you're trying to explain why you're crying

(Tears are words the heart can't say)

Oh no he did it again. You're an idiot for going back to that person who keeps breaking your heart.
SABI KO SAYO EH, ANG KULIT MO.

Can you like, not bring that up. Thanks.

Trusting you again was my decision. Proving me wrong was your choice.



HINDI AKO BITTER, ANG PANGIT LANG TALAGA NG GF MO NGAYON

(Trying to convince yourself that it doesn't matter or bother you.)

No, I didn't stalk you. It was on my news feed. Dude... Get over yourself. You're not that great. Seriously. Don't compare me to her. Ever. I'm ME. Your loss, I'm awesome. You'll regret losing me.

I, unlike my ex, prefer to upgrade when I start dating someone else. Hindi ako nanglailait, SINASABI KO LANG KUNG ANO ANG NAKIKITA KO. I said you were ugly because you are, not because I'm jealous of you. Sweetie, don't flatter yourself: he's desperate & you're easy. Akala mo Maria Clara. Yun pala MARIA OZAWA. AT KUNG MAITIM KA, WAG KA NA MAG POWDER, MAGMUMUKHA KA LANG CRINKLES!



Does breaking up for real also mean “Delete” in Facebook?

You're always online. It's just that we never talk.

I always look at your page because I miss you.
I miss you.
The old you.
The new one sucks.

(“WAG MO I-CHECK PROFILE NIYA, MAMAYA EMO KA NA NAMAN!”)

63 notifications later and I regret liking your status.

Idedelete na kita sa Friends list ko. **Ayoko ng hanggang friends lang tayo.**



pag-ibig nga naman...

I do things for you I wouldn't do for anyone else, and you don't even realize it...

I tell myself that I'm not going to talk to you, but I do it anyways...

Keeping old text messages to read over again.

No!! No!!! NO!!! NO!!!! "Message Sent" ...**Oh God!!!**

Every time my phone vibrates, I wish it was you...

Finding a song that describes your exact feelings & putting it on repeat:

Have you ever tried sleeping with a broken heart? Well you could try sleeping in my bed...

'Cause when a heart breaks no it don't break even </3

When you're dreaming with a broken heart, waking up is the hardest part...

Love is a losing game...

Someday we'll know why I wasn't meant for you...

Ohh... You weren't waving at me... Awkward...



Best Friends Are Better Than Boyfriends!!!

(Friends who know how crazy you are and still choose to be seen with you)

"This is why you are my friend" Moments:

"She's my best friend. Break her heart, I break your face."

"If you hurt my best friend, I can make your death look like an accident."

OMG I HATE HER SO MUCH!!!! Let's go on her profile!"

"Aanhin pa ang KAGANDAHAN, kung MALANDI ang kalaban!"

"I can't promise to fix all your problems, but I promise you won't have to face them all alone."

"Everything will be okay in the end. If it's not okay, it's not the end."

"Our friendship is tighter than a nun's vagina."



Taken Single Enjoying Life

CRUSH KO SIYA. PATI SYA. PATI SYA!

I can't hear you, so I'll just laugh and hope it wasn't a question.

I'm NOT flirting! It's called BEING NICE! ("If FLIRTING was a sport, I'm sure VARSITY ka.")
Kissing someone doesn't make you a whore.

I kissed a girl and I liked it!

AKALA KO HOT KA PERO NUNG NAGTEXT KA, eoW P0wh p0whzz jejejeje.

(I'm sorry, I don't speak JEJEnese.)

Paconyo-conyo ka pa, wrong grammars ka naman! I can understand Filipino, wag mo ng pillitin.

HINDI LAHAT NG POGI MAY GIRLFRIEND... MARAMI SA KANILA MAY BOYFRIEND!!!

Dear Cupid,

WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT YOUR AIM.

Next time, can you shoot BOTH of us? Thanks.

WAG KA NA!

You like sleeping? Same! We should try it together sometime!

They should have a relationship status saying, "Is Having Sex With."

(I STILL didn't hear what you said, but I'm gonna smile, nod and laugh anyway.)



It's amazing how much things can change in just one year

I didn't change, I grew up.

Sometimes when I'm sad I like to cut myself... Some chocolate cake.

Dear Food, Either stop being delicious or stop making me fat.

Inhale love.

Exhale hate.

No expectations, no disappointments.

You can spend, minutes, hours, days, weeks or even months over-analyzing a situation; trying to put the pieces together, justifying what could've, would've happened - or you can just leave the pieces on the floor and move the fuck on.

Hindi ako bitter.

I'm better.



Payo ni pusong tumitibok

(Kung hindi mo kayang mahalín, wag mong landiin.)

I dated a douche, but now my standards are higher!

I want a man, not a boy who thinks he can.

I'm single - You're going to have to be pretty amazing to change that.

Boys break your heart, men pick up the pieces.

You'll never find the right person
if you don't let go of the wrong one.



Hi. I'm here to change your "Single" status to "In a relationship."



AUTHOR'S NOTE

This collection of poems is made entirely from titles of Facebook Pages that we love to Like. Spelling and punctuation marks of some Pages have been changed for an easier read.

We Could Make an Army Tonight

Liana G. Barcia

They say that for every awkward silence
a gay baby is born.

I'm a good 5:30 a.m. of a person—
awkward, silent, half-asleep half the time,
like the half-baked morning negotiating its rise.
I'm mismatched socks and wrinkled clothes,
that piercing cold towel-lessness out of the shower.

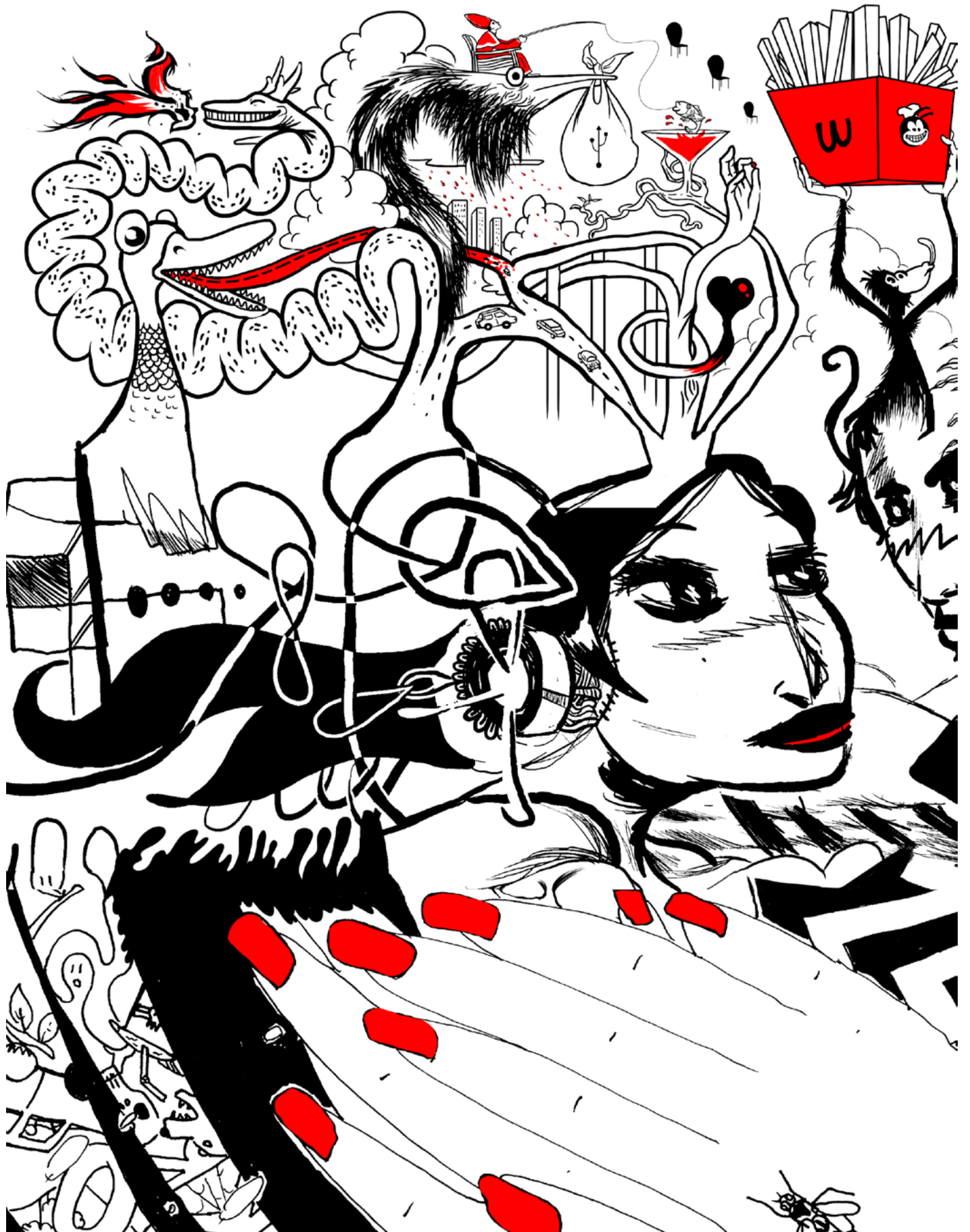
I don't know how to talk to you, and it's midnight.
Your smile is pretty but I don't know
what to do with it. Or with mine—
do you want it poached, scrambled, sunny-side up?
When our arms brush accidentally
there's heat wave in my brain,
or gold, ice-cold, rushes through my throat,
all the way to my knees: Keep still.

Don't say a word. Silence is always an answer
to these natural disasters.
But this exchange of hands and electricity
isn't as dreadful for others. As silent.
Or as spine-tinglingly cold. For the more
debonair, it's like the tango—articulate, adult—
a seduction of hips and feet, eyes, and words
artfully, strategically placed. For others, it's the grind—
dirty, down to business. Over before you
even knew it began—what's his name again?



But you and I sit across each other in this dingy bar,
our eyes a line dance in sweats and sneakers
for PE class, a modified urban hokey-pokey
for twenty-year-old virgins. Baby, we could make
an army tonight. We trip on each other's glances,
geeks who won't be tamed—but may I be
so forward to say I've still got some game?
I think sonnets about you, and don't
they always say it's the thought that counts?

Baby, we could make an army tonight.
You and me,
making.
Baby.
Tonight.



Lobster for Dinner

Katrina C. Elauria

Immediately after Mr. Santos found a stray cat sprawled in their yard—dead, maggots burrowing through its carcass—he and his wife decided to move out. They became certain a plague had hit their town. It was noontime when their SUV drove off. Nobody in their town noticed their sudden disappearance until another couple occupied their house months after they left.

It wasn't the first time for Mr. and Mrs. Santos to move—to leave and never come back. Once, they had to move after Mrs. Santos noticed that the sun had been rising late in the morning. It was summer. She used to pattern her daily activities according to the shifting of the sun. By the end of the week, she concluded that the days had become shorter. It gave her insufficient time to count and at the same time polish their porcelain dishes and to do her other preoccupations such as rereading her un-mailed letters to their daughter who had died recently of pneumonia and reading the previous day's newspaper. After a rather short discussion, the couple decided to leave. One day, they waited for the sun to rise so high, and then they left. It was the last day of summer.

They left everything behind whenever they moved out. There were, however, those instances when Mr. Santos would glance back at their house, and realize he had to get something. The time they moved out of their first house, he brought his rifle. It was so glossy that one might think it fake—a rifle made of plastic for little boys, only it once had real bullets in it. He had a penchant for polishing it since the war ended. The next time they moved to another house, he left it for a shovel.

His wife, on the other hand, never brought anything. She was too slow to recall things and too weak to carry anything besides her own arthritic body. At first though, she regretted leaving behind their family portrait. Their only family portrait. Then she realized it was just a family portrait and started regretting leaving another thing: her eyeglasses.

She was knitting a hat for her husband when her husband went inside the house. The silence of the morning was broken when Mr. Santos slammed the front door.

“There's a dead cat in our front yard.”

Mrs. Santos rested her hands on her lap for a while and looked at her frantic husband. “You think it has reached our town?”

“I think so. There is an ambulance parked in front of a house three blocks away from us.”

Mrs. Santos clenched her hands, creasing the hat.

“I'll get the car ready.”



She inhaled and reluctantly set aside the hat she had not finished knitting. It would have been the first hat she had knitted for her husband.

“Hon, I think I found a name for the fish,” she yelled.

“That’s good!” Mr. Santos yelled back as he scurried down the patio.

Mrs. Santos went to a drawer near the window, took a handful of flakes and sprinkled them in the aquarium. “Alberto, you’ll be Alberto,” she muttered to herself. It was their first goldfish. They bought it at a pet shop one Sunday. At first they wanted to buy at least five of it, but Mrs. Santos whispered to her husband, “It’s a pity I cannot name them all.” They only bought one.

There were things they talked of only when they were in motion, the engine vibrating, surrounding them with its monotonous droning. Scenes outside were reduced to flashes of light.

“It looks like it will rain,” Mr. Santos said without looking at his wife.

“No it won’t. It hasn’t rained for weeks.”

They fell into silence. Mr. Santos stepped on the accelerator and went past a bus half-filled with passengers who were mostly asleep. Some just stared out their windows towards the bare fields on the highway.

“Your daisies were in full bloom, did you notice?” Mr. Santos asked.

“Yes. It really helped paying Bob to water our garden every day,” she said, smiling to her husband.

Mr. Santos smiled back. It was he who requested Bob to take care of their garden after a week of no rain. Mrs. Santos once became depressed when a pot of her daisies died.

They were silent for a few minutes. Mrs. Santos thought she felt a slight pang in her chest but dismissed the thought at once.

“I’d love to travel to Galapagos Island with you,” Mrs. Santos said, looking at her husband.

“Yes, hon. We’ll go there one day.”

“We’ll live there and we’ll eat lobsters everyday.”

“I must say it’s a good idea. But the doctor said you have to be careful with what you eat.”

“We’ll live there and we won’t have to buy turtles,” she said, not minding what her husband had said.

“Yes, hon. We’ll live there and we won’t have to buy turtles.”

They sat still, faces unmoved. They passed by an ocean. It was too lovely to be ignored. But they did for they were lulled by the humming of the engine.

“It’s getting dark. Are we there yet?” Mrs. Santos asked.

“We’ll be there soon.”

“You said it’s an old town.”

“It is. We used to live there before the war broke out.” He paused before taking a sharp turn. The wheels made a screeching sound. “All my childhood friends left after getting married. They thought that place to be a creepy old town, impossible to be restored.”

They drove a few more miles. Mrs. Santos dozed off, waking up whenever she knocked her head on the glass window.

It was already dark when they reached a remote town bordering a forest. The sun had already hid itself behind the towering trees. They slowed down and Mrs. Santos glanced at houses they passed by. Most of the houses were old. Rooftops were rusty. Doors needed repainting. Fences were run-down. Mr. Santos knew every part of the town by heart that he did not need to look at every house to know where he was headed.

Neither of them spoke. After a few more turns, they stopped in front of a deserted three-storey house. The



vines that had been creeping up the front wall for years almost reached the roof.

“You never told me your house was this big,” Mrs. Santos said as she unbuckled herself from her seat.

When Mr. Santos turned off the ignition, everything became dead silent.

They stepped out of the car. They felt strange for having to move their numb bodies.

Mr. Santos stared at a house he left forty years ago. He didn't notice that Mrs. Santos was already at the door waiting for him.

“Shall we enter our new house?” Mrs. Santos asked.

Mr. Santos smiled at his wife as he waved a set of keys.

Like all mornings

Johnina Martha Marfa

Like all mornings it involved a kind of surrender—

the sky's blues shifting to bright reds; ylang-ylang leaves twisting to scatter dew, the dama de noche diffusing the last of its scent—

My grandmother, releasing a sigh—

The Story of Love

Alyza Taguilaso

0

begins with an explosion.

1

My great-great grandparents were making love and the First World War decided to happen. Later, after finding out news of the nearby barrio blown into a million pieces, they were frantic for penance. They called to their gods, offering shrapnel, offering prayer and the white ashes of saints, thinking *people died because of how much we loved each other*.

It meant: they would forever equate love with guilt.

It meant: they would never be able to control it. They had 24 children, 12 of which died in sickness or childbirth.

Their children grow up.

Another war stirs in a distant continent, spitting out seeds of smoke. Smoke: eventually spreading its feet to our native soil—the thick scent of despair blooming in people’s nostrils as they ran from the cities (held vacant save for ash, bone, and parcels of paper carried off by wind, discoloring the horizon).

The world sees for the first time another face of sadness (i.e., the strangely-shaped clouds planting themselves in the sky, turning rice fields into deserts, turning people into names remembered in prayer, turning *home* into *where?*, or seeing your son split, splintered into a million pieces before you can even exclaim *No!*) and suddenly everyone is determined to go into outer space, seeking the promise of landscapes untouched by missiles.



2

In a class on animal physiology I was taught: what we know of love is governed by the hormones vasopressin and oxytocin. The act of frequently caressing each other sends particular signals to the brain. The signals tell you: *this is pleasure, this is what it means to be happy*, and, *yes, it is good; yes, more please*. This is why people sometimes feel the need to touch themselves.

How strange:

Realizing that what everyone wishes to capture is somewhere within our own bodies, *and yet—*

Stranger, still:

A million dissections and experiments and tragedies later, we have no clear answers to why people fall in love. When someone says *I have an answer* to the question of falling in love, someone else jumps up and says *I have an answer*.

I think that we like answers so much that we forget what it means to ask questions.

Like this one: *what will it take to make you fall in love with me?*

I have many secrets and I dress them up in the paling remains of saints, wear them through my teeth. I will trade you 7 secrets if you will tell me what it will take to make you fall in love with me.

My mother keeps a single secret: she cries once every 3 years.

Each time I caught her crying I became more convinced that she discovered a way to measure sadness. I never asked mom why she cried. It's something daughters know. Mothers and crying. *Mothers, crying*.

When I was 14 a girl told me she loved me and asked if she could kiss me. She wasn't beautiful, but I liked the slant of her shoulders. I said *No*, not because I didn't want to kiss her but because I didn't want her. I was 14; I was sure I knew the difference between *Yes* and *No*. Like *cat* and *dog*. It took a few years later to realize what *No* meant. The second boy I loved said *No* when I asked to hold his hand. Children learn to say *No* before they say *Yes*. If so, then: why isn't *No* any easier to bear? Do we measure happiness by comparing it to the number of times we've felt sad?

I remember his hands: his perfectly molded hands.

Slender fingers forming a hook, pulling at my chest each time.

(I am a fish with my chest sliced open.

I am a mermaid learning to swim.)

He played the piano with such grace, leading the dust gathered on its keys into dancing.



3

Charles Dickens said: *accidents will occur*.

I believe this is untrue.

- Planets follow the most precise of motions.
- People are governed by gravity.

During the Second World War, it was said that the Japanese hid bombs beneath bodies of the dead. The subtlest of traps: stringing in hapless soldiers who came to collect their fallen comrades, setting triggers firing like neurons upon touch—upon the slightest of movements—muting the possibility of any human sound within miles. Shunting anything that calls forth *immediacy*.

How strange: our bodies, how they betray us,
how they draw us towards other bodies.

4

Many lonely physicists spent sleepless nights finding the perfect formula for the atomic bomb. I am convinced that because people cannot contain love, they find a million ways to destroy themselves. Ask my cousin. He killed himself 3 years ago. I can't remember his name. We weren't close. They said he did it because his wife was leaving.

My great-grandfather was the eldest of 12 surviving children. When he was young, his father gave him a gun to protect himself. When he was older, he killed 3 people with it: a single bullet each, piercing the cavities of their bodies, avid for the position occupied by their hearts.

When asked why he did it, he replied in a voice fresh and certain with the smell of gunpowder: *I have an answer*.

Another thing science taught me: 83% of dust is made from human skin. The more we touch each other, the greater the chances of dust gathering at our feet. This is probably why mother forbade visitors from coming over after father left—it would take a long time to sweep memories of him away.

5

Why people keep dead things in museums: we like to keep what was in the past but we avoid anything that tells of passing.

Some people think this is how we first learn to love: wanting, without the necessary pains:



- A butterfly is mounted on a case.
- Sculpted miniatures of the solar system hang lulling in stillness from a perfectly constructed mobile.
- The exoskeleton of a dinosaur is trying to tell us something: some things had to die so people would exist.
- Somewhere, in the museum a child dares to touch what is on display, even when the sign says *No*.

The bible was written in increments. Centuries, patiently letting dust gather around the letters. Before that people relied on their mouths to remember. When mouths started getting filled with what would later be called *kisses*, they had to resort to other body parts. Meaning: *hands*.

The world was young and so were our bodies. We had so much time to learn about secrets (i.e., how particles in the air allow us to perceive the beauty of a sunset; how the sky is limited; why people can't fly; angels, how they are made of light).

So calligraphy, the art of controlling mind so it slows to the pace of hand, was invented. Leaf, parchment, skin—the desire to capture yielded an explosion of canvases, of empty spaces and voids we had to fill with ourselves. As if the world said: *Yes, you may leave your mark now*.

6

Vincent van Gogh cut off his left ear and gave it to a prostitute, saying *Keep this as you would a treasure*. How must she have felt, that girl? Inconsequential as an atom in his lonely universe of sycamores, sunflowers, and starry, starry nights and yet—

Is it always necessary for people to give parts of themselves away?

Later, realizing he could no longer wield a brush, he was said to have wandered into one of the many fields he had often painted and swiftly shot himself in the chest. The bullet missed his heart but caused enough injury to kill him 2 days later. Legend says his last words were

La tristesse durera toujours
This sadness will last forever.

7

I have a theory: people are born empty—heavy hearts yearning for something to fill its vessels. A long time ago, everyone was beginning to understand what it meant to love, a single mistake at a time—a birthday forgotten, a word that should have been unsaid, speaking too much of the truth—yet always the same question. Someone said it was more interesting than a horde of miracles: a celestial body of human desires giving birth to the first of blasphemies.



8

People soon realized that they needed a point of reference for love. Something was needed to fill the void—

Figure 1: God.

Figure 2: Somewhere: there is an apple, red and ripe.

It falls from the tree without effort and without so much as making a sound, plants itself on the head of a man who wanted to understand the world. Immediately he realizes *I have an answer*. It is not love, but it certainly felt like it.

On July 5, 1687, the world first learns of gravity.
323 years later, we are still trying to understand it.

If I come close enough for you to touch, and if I promise you:
my body will welcome the uncertainty of your fingers,
would you reach out?

I do not envy the planets or the stars. Those giants clothed with the makings of beauty, strings of light sewing the buttons of the universe—patching seams of nebulae upon red giants upon supernova, yet too easily they give their bodies up to distance.

9

Legend says Adam remembered the taste of the apple before the Lord took him back, erasing the stain that was sin.

Is that what it means to be loved:
turn to dust; forget what it means
to be the first to love? Be

without a body? Eve lived longer and was filled
with longing; she kept the apple
beside her. Each night she would smell it, take

tiny bites, reminding herself of Adam's tongue
(that first hesitant kiss)
keeping the taste of what he had struggled all his life

to forget: the first of sins.



10

In the Book of Numbers, it is said: one who touches the body of the dead will be unclean unless he takes the ashes of a red heifer and someone sprinkles holy water upon his unholy head. *Remember: you will return to dust.*

The Chinese believe in burning miniatures—houses, cars, money—sending them off to their deceased loved ones, passing dust-strewn messages into the afterlife—reminding the dead: *You are loved and sorely missed*, but also: *you are dust, and all you will be given is dust.*

This prevents the dead from turning into *ghosts*: figments of people we loved who now terrify us.

Consider: how ashes cannot escape from water.
This is how the Hindu keep track of their dead, containing them in sacred bodies of water so the dead remain voiceless in their passage to another body, another life: the motions of water being the only witness.

11

They say that love exerts the same force on our bodies as fear.
This means our bodies are telling us that being terrified and in love is one and the same:

- Pupils dilating
- Palms wet with sweat
- Hearts skipping beats more than they should

When I think of love and fear I think of mom and dad. One day dad woke up and realized what he loved: himself; his need for other women. Mom modified her affections: they argued more, threw things around: porcelain, furniture, books, picture frames all thrown off their fixed orbits, shattering the axis on which our tiny world spun. She disguised her love as wreckage. Women never say what they mean. What she probably meant when she said *you're a monster* was:

why can't you love me anymore?

When grandmother found she had cancer, she asked *why*.
No one had an answer, not even her body.
When she was dying, she asked to be turned to ash.

She died, I started writing.



12

The dictionary is the only place where *answer* comes before *question*. It makes for a great joke, but no one laughs at this. Biology offers a lot of explanations: a squid has 3 hearts. You have one heart, quartered perfectly to accommodate your body. Why do you act like you deserve more?

Look at the sky: it never complains how things it is made to contain destroy it.

13

We all have holes in us. In anatomy this is called *coelom*.

This means: it is natural to feel alone.

14

When you are swimming near a reef and the water feels warm, that means the corals are making love, cooing to each other in voices more fluid than water. A caveat: nothing in the sea knows how to love. That is why the sea is sometimes so dark, and waves find it necessary to crash against each other again and again, crushing reefs into particles of sand, offering to the land what little it knows of human desires.

Water cannot hurt itself.

We invented mermaids to forget this—wanting something to complete what was already wet and soft and almost perfect.

Mermaids:

girls who can't walk, who will not run away.

But mermaids are difficult to feed: their diet consists of eating people.

For this reason we keep pet fish.

15

What this says about us:
we only want what we can
contain, what we think
we can live with.



16

Imagine how the universe feels. Containing us and our ridiculous search for love. The universe does not have a void—it is a void in itself. We are alive in this massive, empty cavity and yet I attach meaning to everything you do. The universe never asked anyone for an explanation.

I am now going to tell you how I don't think it's possible to explain how much I love you.

The first time we met was in a cramped room. I couldn't catch the sound of your name; I was afraid to ask you questions. Later on you told me how you knew me from a year ago, a stranger whose face stuck to your memory. I said you were funny. You didn't find that amusing, but I could tell you liked my laughter. I thought you were sweet (on most days), but I never told you. Women never mean what they say.

Don't get me wrong: I don't love you.
I don't love anyone.

I just like thinking about how your hands held my shoulders, trying to keep me when I said *No*.
All I wanted to find out was: how much you wanted me.
Or, maybe: how much I wanted you.

I would like to know what it will take to make you fall in love with me.

17

Someday we will both be parts of stars—all cosmic dust and dissolved memories. How sad that when we are closest we cannot even feel it. Today I try my best to plant fingerprints all over you. I do this so that when my face fades and my fingers stop their curious strokes, your skin—the first to become dust—will be familiar with me. Then, I will be free to imagine us as juggernauts—floating through the atoms of our memories, crushing the weight of these passed centuries, piling the ashes of everything we've burned in our desire, in our awakening.

I will have left you with more than enough.

To My Mother

After Milosz

Maria Pia V. Benosa

I.

I cannot speak of many things.

No woods in our backyard, no river where women did laundry and gossiped among fish. I cannot speak of a horizon marked by a blue canvas and palm trees resilient to waves unhesitant to claim.

For our world was the one-way street where neighbors did not see past their front yards.

And where the river at the dead end was a creek where the bridge to cross was a sisterhood of fallen banana trunks.

I have prepared myself for the fact that should you not, in the next few years, lose memory of my name, or have me sitting by your bedside cleaning out from your hairbrush, strand after strand of the gray hair I used to pluck from your head, or die of a broken heart, you are an anomaly in the currency of the world I now know but cannot bring to you.



II.

In your hometown of Legazpi—conquistador who sailed with ships that sealed our history forever— you are a legend.

I do not recognize you when in the stories you are the aunt who came with presents and sweet lime candies after a week's worth of work.

Or when you are the friend who would make rounds of the town's three movie theaters until closing on Saturday nights, because in the morning, the only work left to do is wash your dust-kissed hair, your long black hair.

Or when you are the sister who took blame for coming back with a half-full pail of water, after racing the brother who in ten years, would join the ranks of the disappeared. You are a legend.

But I cannot tie you to the history of men and wars and life and debts that old maid madams taught in school. Or the history of nouns and verbs, which you did not teach me.

In my books you are but a spore in the shaded graph that traced the lives of the orphaned, the child laborer, the overseas worker, the apathetic citizen, the almost spinster.

III.

It is not that you can (not) be blamed for your apathy.

But I must remember the details of my arrival, the heat and stench of the crowded airport, hugging, squealing, crying happening in my periphery. My first sight of you.

I must remember the long ride home—the curiosity of how in the last few months I had referred to the landscape from out my window as the toil and agony of the elderly farmer in the rice paddies of the eleventh world.

The long ride home—

I must remember that our reconciliation is like the mayfly that landed on the tip of an unhusked rice grain, but can't hold on for long.

These Streets

Agustin Martin Rodriguez

I walk these streets with my son every morning,
The same streets I walked with my daughter
When she was easily cradled
In my arms. Babies are light
And pliant and cooperative to a point.

These streets are easy to traverse. Wide,
Neat, they bear a pleasant face of trees telling us
That all is well with the sky in its place to shelter children
And their fathers. Here, space is nice to people.
People are nice to people. Even dogs are more tolerant of passers-by.

It is a good place for children and dogs. My dogs
And my child have grown to adulthood here. They know
That skies are pretty and sidewalks, unnecessary.

Except now and then other children from other worlds
Break into ours. Noisy, barefoot
Children in clothes doubly worn down:
Once by happier children
And then by them in their games

On our streets, boisterously played, sometimes
Wildly played, always unwelcome.
Even to them the streets are kind
So they come here and disturb our peace.

The Incident of the Drowning Kitten

Agustin Martin Rodriguez

There was that morning when we watched the kitten drown. We were the idyllic picture of father and son—the kind-looking, seemingly patient man naming the wonders of the world to the little boy babbling in his joy. We liked to watch the waters rush under the tiny bridge that spans the shallow, narrow creek.

When his sister was a little girl, she and I used to stand on this same bridge and toss twigs or leaves for languid races. Our leaf races were legendary days of joy in the hundred-acre woods of her childhood. That morning the boy and I stood on the bridge pointing out the tiny creek’s wonders, while I remembered those wondrous races and the daughter already grown.

On that particularly quiet day, when the drizzles had just retreated and the creek flowed nicely without rush or violence, we stood on the bridge and saw a kitten. A scraggly thing in black and white, looking sleepy. To my toddler, it was a baby like him, playing in the water. But I knew it was a kitten: it had found its way into the water and could not find its way out. There was only enough water to submerge its paws: if it stayed awake it would be fine, but the cold chilled it to slumber. It was, without a doubt, going to drown as soon as its neck let down its bobbing head. Poor kitten; it was too far away.

How would I name this to the boy who pointed it out? “Meme the ming-ming?” I guess. It could be the truth.

Borders

Agustin Martin Rodriguez

This is the width of my world—

On one end, the supermarket:
The abundant, the profuse spread
Of stimulants for each opened sense;
The brilliant, the radiant white
Light letting come to presence
Out of each moment of this
Life a sacred moment of consumption.

In the aisle of spices already fought for
Lies powdered magic that can raise
The already dead anew
For pleasure-giving to our pallets.

And then the endless rows of gels, liquids,
Unguents against urban decay or nature
Reclaiming its corners. Available here
Are the woman's weapons to the intrusions on her
Carefully kept domain: powders that turn water
Into floods that wash away unwanted life,
That erase tracks of food-stained baby
Hands and feet conquering stairs, that undo
Stains of spontaneous love on the rug.



Then there are the sweet bright foods
That mark the day's passage, passing
Itself off as TV while the baby sleeps
And I am for once alone—truly
Alone with myself—with this sweetness
To coat the edge of that.

The south of my world, bordered
By this magic kingdom.
The north is bordered by waters.

Seven-Segment Display

Francis Murillo Emralino

mechanical man wakes up
to ringing of alarm clock
and crawls as one of night-time pack
to discharge mechanical tasks

he joins mechanical procession
of MRT taxi and jeep
secondary corporate workers
brought to skyscraper cells

from contract-bound brains protrude
cables of internet and telephone
to answer overseas calls
to answer to foreign people

mechanical man grows thick accents
on account of money and checks
money is god is money
man mechanical commodity

clocks of seven-segment displays
announce truce for mechanical man
to feed empty stomach with coffee
or instant meals prepped mechanically



end of twelve-hour duty marks
escape for mechanical man
from high-rise jails to strive
to be more than mechanical

will mechanical man see sun rise
as he spends day on dreamless bed
only sleep and clock maintain
sanity of mechanical man

Anamnesis

Kristine Marie Reynaldo

HISTORY OF PRESENT ILLNESS (HPI):

[1], [2], [3], [4], [5], [6], [7], [8], [9]

SELF-DIAGNOSIS:

EMPATHETIC-IDEALISTIC ATROPHY

TREATMENT PLAN: ?



[1]

Even in the morning, when the air is still cold, the streets of Manila already stink, of garbage, of exhaust, of dog shit, of last night's spoiled leftovers and alcohol-spiked vomit splattered on the gutter. Every morning, trucks weave through the city to collect the trash, and every morning the stench remains, stalking all the walkers of the city, clinging to hair, clothes, breathing down necks, sighing under soles of shoes. Living with it for too long, we no longer notice it, the smell driven to the outskirts of our consciousness. Everyday we shuffle along the same routes to work, to school, to the market—these streets constitute the setting of our days; above this midden we navigate, the city allows us a living.

BACK TO HPI



[2]

She will not sleep tonight. At the end of a night's worth of peddling, past the streets and the dark, is home; beyond home is the future she is young enough to look forward to. Home is where things wait—buckets of sampaguitas to string for next day's sale, the neighbors' laundry, the overdue homework to be accomplished in the hour between ironing and preparing her siblings' next meal bought on credit from the nearby sari-sari store. Home is the hundred obligations her mother and father don't undertake because they are both drug addicts and are hardly ever there, and so, the girl must be mother, father, big sister, breadwinner, and student. This is melodrama; this is reality. How comforting it would be for the imagined to stay safely imagined, where it could be criticized for lack of subtlety.

BACK TO HPI



[3]

The taxi with a busted aircon whisked me through soulless streets at midnight. My head swam floundering in the smell of cold sweat and pine as the driver talked of Circles and Nowhere. Don't believe them, he said, when they tell you that hard work and diligence will get you Somewhere—bah! I've been driving around these streets for thirty years, I stay awake from dusk to dawn, and God knows I've made an honest living, and yet I have nothing, even this car isn't mine. They are lying when they say you reap the fruits of your toil—you don't, not when somebody else owns the field. Look at me. I drive all day and find I haven't moved an inch.

BACK TO HPI



[4]

When the last nationwide search for the next president began, nine hopefuls stepped up, drowning the people in a deluge of TV ads, posters, videos, websites, flyers, fanpages, jingles—as their kind do every few years. Who will save this country? The candidates set themselves up as messiahs, the lamb chops of God, clean and aromatic, to the despairing, starving throng, promising that they, and they alone, can revive the nation. And the people sing the candidates' viral tunes and debate the virtues of botox for their presidential bet, because, indeed, the political arena is a cockpit for stately fowl, the stage of a 24/7 variety show. Entertainment is far cheaper than justice; better chew on a daydream than bite the bullet. Reality is too costly, and nobody wants to pay the price.

BACK TO HPI



[5]

In Dagat-Dagatan, one afternoon, I saw a child defecating in the street as other children played catch with a scrawny dog. A row of women slumped over washboards in front of shanties, scrubbing and beating sheets in Mr. Clean suds whiter than the sky while down the road flowed a river of plastic bags and mud and piss. On TV poverty seldom seems real—the wailing women, the rugby boys with bleached hair fighting over space for a televised grin. If I tell you how, on sorties, I slipped into alleys between tenements, trying not to gag on the stink, how I skidded on market slop, wouldn't you say it's sensationalism, more words for show? I went there to say there is hope, to say we can do something for our country, to say don't sell your vote, to say support new politics, to say there can be something better than *this*, my voice almost cracking with feeling. They took the fliers I handed out to check for hidden bills. Seeing nothing but words, they threw the fliers away.

BACK TO HPI



[6]

The windows of the yoga studio were shuttered close to keep out the rain. Inside the air was heavy with the scent of lavender incense and mint. We sat around in a circle in various stages of repose on the polished beech floor, and talked of the country and our dreams of progress, of imaginal cells and social threefolding, of workshops and initiatives, of a grassroots movement and sustainability. We lunched on alfalfa, fresh tomatoes, soy milk, and whole-wheat bread, and talked some more, all twelve of us, for all of sixteen hours. Once in a while I would drift off and watch our reflections in the mirror spanning the opposite wall, watch the lips forming words, the gesturing hands, the bodies posing in thought, and wonder if we were only fooling ourselves.

BACK TO HPI



[7]

The hospital doesn't smell of death. It smells of bitter medicines in little plastic cups that must be taken hour after hour, of fecal matter and mucous, of unwiped saliva and blood, of urine suffusing the sheets, the mattress, becoming a yellow puddle on the floor—it smells of senility. My friend lies on one of many hospital beds, wheezing, his left lung punctured with an ice pick when he was robbed at 2 a.m. ten days earlier while on his way to the call center where he works. He gave them his bag and they gave him a wound, and now here he is, in a hospital gown, with the tubes and the dextrose and in bandages, like in the movies.

BACK TO HPI



[8]

I could smell the blood from where I sat in front of the TV screen showing corpses from a thousand kilometers away. A few months later a faded poster on a gray lamppost would declare WE WILL NOT FORGET NOVEMBER 23. We will not forget the 57 dead, the mothers and sisters, the journalists and lawyers, the innocents unfortunate enough to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, the 57 shot point-blank, beheaded, mutilated, buried alive in a big muddy pit with their crushed cars, slaughtered because they posed a threat to the lord of the land.

BACK TO HPI



[9]

The smell of antiseptic hung around the atrium of the main mall after they took the body away. I knew, because the white canvas covering the remains was gone. The day before, when the student took flight from the top storey of La-la-land and splattered on the atrium floor, the guards quickly covered up his shame. They dispersed the witnesses and onlookers, who walked away wondering if people fell headfirst because the head is heavy. The mind certainly is.

An hour after the fall, the place showed no signs of disturbance. The white canvas was a mere roadblock to the mall-goers who went about their business as if nothing out of the ordinary had happened—only one or two passersby tried to sneak a look at the body, and they were promptly shooed away. My friend and I lingered at the site of death, mulling over it, until a guard approached us, telling us not to loiter. Nothing happened here, he said, nothing at all.

That life was nothing, that death was nothing, the world spun madly on. Blood had to be cleaned up, authorities had to be called, inconveniences had to be covered up, sales had to be made. Whatever drove that student to topple over the edge, whatever he wanted to say by breaking himself in a public place—all that was lost, the way his guts were wiped off to reveal gleaming tiles.

BACK TO HPI

Rivers

Phillip Kimpo, Jr.

1

Around thirty years ago, when Galás wasn't a tightly packed hodgepodge of shingle-roofed mansions and tin-roofed ratholes, a small, clear creek ran between Cordillera Street and the apartment my family has been living in for four decades.

Or so my dad says.

My family hasn't worn out its welcome in this corner of the city, but the creek had: sometime after my birth, the canal was filled and paved over, giving people a sidewalk and a widened road instead of a garbage dump.

The waters beside Cordillera vanished, and the road became nothing more than an apathetic river of grey.

The city planners had foresight. If only they had the courtesy to wait a couple of years so I could've seen the creek myself.

But I guess the widened street did serve the people well. Traffic increased by bounds. What was once a neighborhood on the fringes of progress became sandwiched between the old city and the burgeoning new; turned into a crossroads; became a favorite shortcut.

Car horns, engines, and concrete grumbling beneath burdened wheels swamp a rooster's cries from our neighbor's yard, the bell-tolls resonating from the nearby church.

2

Above this stream is noise. A current of dust and smog. This is why I suffer asthma and my housecleaning lasts only a week.

The residents are a hardy bunch. They regularly go out into the street in droves to wade into the dust. Sometimes by choice. Sometimes by necessity.

By choice, as in children who attend the nearby public school only when they can amidst work, or people who attend Sunday Mass when they feel like it else they lose the mandate of heaven.

By necessity, as in rowdy teenagers who need to watch the fiesta concerts to get laid and to posture against rivals over tsiks in miniskirts, or small-time politicians who need to join the processions else they lose the mandate of heaven.

3

Roadkill dogs, cats, and rats. Dogs, thrice a year. Cats, thrice a month. Rats, thrice a week.

One day, my friend's dad told him to dispose of a litter of baby mice. The father had found them in a cranny of their bakery, and being the baker, he was understandably upset by these future dough-devastators. My friend put the baby mice inside a plastic bag and left it in the middle of the road.

Blood. From teenagers when their posturing turns into full-scale rumble, with knives and fuck-yous and homemade guns. From a man running away from another man who wields a knife he grabbed from our favorite binagoong mangga vendor. On a patch of concrete in front of our apartment when hit-and-run leaves a jogger's brain splattered on the street.

I remember the time of day—it was dawn. The air was crisp. It was a few days before Christmas.

Or so my dad says.

4

Part of me wants to see what it was like.

Beneath Cordillera, a small, clean creek still flows, untainted by ichor, gurgling in the darkness.

Invisible Islands, or Theses on Philippine Disappearance

J. Pilapil Jacobo

I.

A voyage of discovery reaches its narrativity when the foreign eye senses land, or even its faint vicinity. From the drone of a long sleep lulled by the monsoon wind, an alien dreamer awakens from imageless, unspectacular reverie, calling his company to celebrate the end of vagabondage and the beginning of settlement. What the witness announces is the arrival of landscape. The moment the traveler imagines soil and shrub, rock and peak within minutes of departure and even during days of moorage, he anticipates a terrain that promises to fulfill itself as an event. Yet the chronicle does not leave us any trace of this waiting (pace Michael Ondaatje, who wrote of English Patience), for the reportage must bear the stamp of conquest. While the earth bares itself as chance, disclosing its expanse in the verdure, its fecundity in sap and pollen, all its worldly sensorium from a wolf's mid-nocturnal vocalese to the gazelle dancing its way to a graceful exit to the verve that this predatory sequence leaves to the otherwise nonchalant field, the travel writer claims the mundane as an oracular gift whose tongue is untied from the syllables of foreignness by what we may call as an expeditional discourse, a translating machine that can only conceive of an "arrival scene" (Pratt 78) as the conquistador's triumphant moment of discovery; as if the *land* had been concealed, as if it did not exist prior to the time of the *landing*.

Such an inauguration of the earth as a site of knowledge is an instant of disappearance. In the next scenes of writing, the land will need to recede into the background. Now is the time for human action to take place, that is, for one to tame the wild frontier. The aura of enormity that nature exudes must be shattered, and so the plethora of the earth is re-inscribed as a shortage. Discovery rests on a paradox: despite its magnificence, the "new world" is *archaic*; thus it is necessary to contemporize it with the traveler's base, a citadel of later modernity that summoned him to the world's "earliest beginnings" (Conrad 60). This is less a superhistorical reckoning of a *longue durée* that precedes all declarations of civility than a myopic ploy of supremacist ideology to discredit another vision of order, especially when it appears to have lingered in a pre-modern phase.

Such compulsion to reduce the time of the "epic past" into "primitive memory" dis-charges the *ubiquitous space* of nature into something that lies between residual presence and negative potency—into a *trace*: "... whenever foreign traders arrive at any of the settlements, they live on board [a] ship before venturing to go on shore, their ships being anchored in mid-stream" (qtd. in De la Costa 8). The remark is Cha Ju-Kua's, a Chinese trader who led a merchant troupe to an island called May-i in the 1200s (Dela Costa 9). In this arrival scene, the

land is no longer acknowledged as a geographic immensity. While its range is still marked, it is only suggested through its limits, which is not another piece of land, but the sea. What is given is the *shore*, that liminal location that names no continental domain but rather an insular niche. This is how the trace finds itself in an exploratory narrative that is dependent on a cartographic imaginary—through an island which appears only to disappear, its boundaries never certain because of the temperament of the tides, and the threat of typhoon and tsunami; its only certitude the isolation from a roving modernity, one that arrives only to leave, by way of its vessels, navigators, and slaves. May-i today is Mindoro, just below Luzon, the largest in the Philippines's more or less 7,000 islands, or shall I say, shores. Traces.

Three centuries after this Sinic visit, Fernão de Magalhães would stage his own scene of discovery by naming not only a shore nor an island, but an anthology of these vestiges. He named the land *Archipiélago de San Lazaro*. As if at the moment of naming, the land was born again, resurrected from the dead by the Messianic discoverer, and the baptismal act would rescue all the land from the original sin of nonidentity. A land having a saint for a namesake would not last however. Many years after Magalhães's christening, Ruy Lopez de Villalobos would rename the archipelago as *Las Filipinas*, after Felipe de Asturias, crown prince of the peninsular kingdom that would lay claim to the insular zone as its East Indies.

To this day my country and its people still carry this monarch's name as a trace. The Philippines can only be visible in this palimpsest of ghostly scripts. For our earth is *cemeterial*, in particular respects. In these *Islas de los Santos*, there are proud sinners: *brutos salvages* who may have received most of the seven sacraments but are still infidels who pay homage to the strange altars of their superhuman fantasies. Our *Islas de los Reyes* have never run out of fugitives: *rebeldes* who may have failed to launch their native republics but still are resplendent as rulers of their own estates of self.

It is now time to articulate this *graveyard shift*. How can a phantom haunt after learning countless disappearing acts? What forms of "pity and fear" are activated by making visible these hauntings? What happens to an epistemic specter after the critic assumes the role of medium in a séance? How does this apparition restore the fragments of an appearance? Why must a body of knowledge affirm ghoulish intensities as a trace of its archive?

As a critic, I am committed to the post-exotic analysis of culture and the anarchic ordinances that it imposes upon those spheres that do not comply with its noble tenets. I particularly approximate the ambitions of this task by adopting an interpretive tactic that makes the "tropics of discourse" (White) coterminous with the "discourse of the tropics" (Dash) itself. By and large, we are going to devote ourselves to detecting tropes—devices of creating a rhetorical field around a referent—in order to cast light on how these "turns of phrase" inevitably demarcate the object-itself as constituting the tropical, which, although multi-formal in its valences, are made to stand in for a unitary exotic energy. There is however a subtle yet substantial intervention that I need to clarify here. While tropes are manifest pieces of evidence of discourse-at-work, the ones we shall be dealing with are maneuvers which could be

- 1) hidden at first glance, and still elusive even after close reading;
- 2) even though the rhetoric might seem to make sense as a versatile text in its
- 3) hyperformal integrity, be it a law, a cinematic piece, a scientific treatise, a song, a photograph, or a personal memory.

In these texts, the tropical is a trace even in its obvious usage. It is always its other sense, because of a requisite

of invisibility that the text imposes on the object-itself as a representational meridian that limits trans-equatorial sensings of a post-cuisine palate; a neo-olfactional talent that does not merely discriminate between fragrance and pungency; an un-touchable's aesthetic of tactility; a sonorous criterion that favors improvisatory vociferance over notational habit; or a dis-identificatory spectatorial practice.

Hence, the lens I choose to wear is a post-Lacanian reflexivity where the naïve subject, after a phase of infantile pretense at wholeness, tries a *second look* at the mirror and realizes that the body, through some protuberant parts, has become awkwardly pubescent; here the gaze is always defocalized and averted: inept in its negotiation of malice and curiosity, but affectively involved in transforming one's self-immolational drive into an auto-erotic groove that does not delude oneself further of a *rational* beauty but assures one that there are fragments of an allure that could be gathered into a *sensible* marking of face, skin, follicle, body. Whether the result is sublime or freakish, it does not really matter, for there is a love of the "image-repertoire" (Barthes) that somehow promises to disrupt the spectrum of subjectivation that is assured by an interiorizing of surveillance on the one hand and legitimated by a rehearsal of spectacularity on the other. In other words, we shall inhabit not only the exotic visage but also the mirror that contains the exoticizing moment in order to cast light on how we ourselves could start appearing as legitimate exotics, or perhaps, creatures of a different plumage, but only bearing in mind those scenes that Spivak reads as a "*strategic* use of positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest" ("Subaltern Studies" 342).

II.

If a law is an enactment of a certain desired order, the desiring happens not in the declaration nor in the execution of the articles but at the moment of writing, of drafting that dreamed occurrence. The 1987 Philippine Constitution makes territoriality visible through the *archipelagic doctrine*:

The national territory comprises the Philippine archipelago, with all the islands and waters embraced therein, and all other territories over which the Philippines has sovereignty or jurisdiction, consisting of its terrestrial, fluvial and aerial domains, including its territorial sea, the seabed, the subsoil, the insular shelves, and other submarine areas. The waters around, between, and connecting the islands of the archipelago, regardless of their breadth and dimensions, form part of the internal waters of the Philippines. ("Article 1")

What is desired here is a "geo-body" (Winichakul) that a sovereign nation must present in order to move within the continental drift of world politics. The topographical demarcations are necessary so that the nation can claim a site where national history is supposed to perform its uninterrupted "pageant of the race." Nevertheless this dreamwork of permanence is admittedly problematic. Two major concerns arise here:

- A) To name an "archipelago" is to fantasize of oneness and continuity. The name is an arbitrary designation whose wish is to eradicate the diverse and discontinuous reality that the everyday exposes to the archipelagic subject who is at best a humbled islander, in spite of his/her efforts to cross the aquatic divide and bridge distances between him/her and other insular ethnicities.



- B) The island, which constitutes the basic unit of the geographical taxonomy, is itself an unreliable locationality. An island is never the same island, with the expansions and reductions that the surrounding body of water effects on the landscape.

To name the nation an archipelago then somehow makes up for the individual disappearing acts that each island performs daily. The collectivizing of these impermanences nonetheless does not cancel out nor postpone the imperative of invisibility. As a form of legal appearance, the archipelagic doctrine makes present the neurosis of this Philippine yearning, so that what is legislated in the doctrine is at best a melancholy dream for wholeness, a solidarity that is impossibly constituted because the locus itself escapes geographic coherence.

A second look at the paragraph nevertheless gives us two insights that can deliver the archipelagic to its post-geographical sense:

- A) In the doctrine, the sea is the primary logic of the archipelago. Thus, it must not be seen as external to the national physique. It is the alteration of area that defines the landscape. The proximity or the distance of the shoreline is not an indication of a fluctuating boundary. It only signifies that the territory is an infinite borderland; it is less a space of transitoriness than a sphere of transversality. *In the end, the Philippines becomes a liminal state.*
- B) If the island is the bearer of the trace, then it must necessarily replicate itself in order for the trace to be a remainder of presence (Rojo 3). Hence, the archipelago embodies the promise of remembering the exponential possibilities of *place* that overwhelms *commonplace* practices like geodetics, especially in its claims of the mathematical coverage of space. One must not treat the islandic condition as a predicament of terrestrial deficiency. After all, when one island loses a portion of its rocky coast, another one gains a mileage of sand, coral, weed. There is synchronicity and correspondence in all this.

Because of the *reconstituting* flow that the waters assure the *constituent* archipelagic subject, the melancholia succumbs to joy, for it is in welcoming these fluid passages that we can grasp a Glissantian relational poetics: “the possibility for each one at every moment to be both solidary and solitary there” (131).

III.

Ackbar Abbas writes of Hong Kong, the island and its surrounding territories, as a *space of disappearance*. He theorizes the place in the specter of Hong Kong’s handover from being the “last emporium” of Britain to being China’s “special administrative region,” and claims that this liminal phase in the history of Hong Kong has transformed the city as a *state of disappearance*. Let us examine three aspects of this geography, in the hope that we may be able to articulate more clearly our theses on Philippine disappearance.

First, Abbas begins with a disclaimer, saying that “disappearance . . . does not imply nonappearance, absence, or lack of presence” and further clarifies that it is “not even nonrecognition—it is more a question of misrecognition” (7). While we do not entirely agree with Abbas in this first aspect, for we have already emphasized

that disappearance is, in Spivakian terms, an “epistemic violence” (“Can the Subaltern Speak?” 2197) the body is made to perform, it is still necessary to agree with Abbas when he says that the disappearance may be due to the scopical incapacities of the witnessing subject. We must add that a visual order is responsible for this disabling moment, and it is the role of ideology critique to contest the pedagogy of this spectatorial regime. The exotic is a learned perception; in order to expose the apparatuses of that teaching machine, we must explore new ways of seeing.

Abbas’s second point is that “where it is not a matter of effacement, but of replacement and substitution, where the perceived danger is recontained through representations that are familiar and plausible,” (8) there is the space of disappearance. While the comparative method relies on similarity, distinctions may well serve the interests of sameness by claiming that one kind of tropicality reproduces another, hence there will be no need to differentiate between areas that might well be competing for the same sovereign integrity. We are reminded here of a long-standing quarrel between the Philippines and Malaysia over the island of Sabah; and the tense issue whether whose jurisdiction must the reputedly oil-rich islets, reefs, and shoals of the Spratlys fall: mainland China, the island of Taiwan, the peninsula of Vietnam, the kingdom of Brunei at the northern tip of Borneo, or the archipelagoes of Malaysia and the Philippines. We need to stall that moment when what is just intended to juxtapose threatens to converge because of a necessary instance or a whimsical incident, and disappears into each other as effortlessly integrated categories.

Lastly, Abbas speaks of “developing techniques of disappearance that respond to, without being absorbed by, a space of disappearance” (8). The task of the critic then is to argue how surreptitiousness, escape, stealth, disguise, camouflage, and imposture can be productive modalities of surviving in situations where the observatorial perspective no longer presents one a *comprehensible* visual field, not because it has been emptied of its literate and literal marks, but because it has normalized *hiding* as a form of *seeking* a release from the *comprehensive* violences of a pornographic exposure or a titillating immanence.

IV.

Eleanor Coppola prefaces her *Notes to the Making of Apocalypse Now* that the Philippines was *chosen* as the location for the film because of its “similarity to Vietnam” (17). We strike this resemblance as a moment where the same makes its double vanish, where the other recedes into a shadow-image. This forecloses the possibility of a Bhabhaesque mimicry. Instead of giving the mimetic subject subversive opportunities of striking a parodic pose and performing a charade of meanings, the verisimilar claims of cinematic realism transforms the filmic location into a space bereft of any locality, thereby subservient to any order to produce a performance that is *otherworldly*.

Our contention is that if the Vietnam war narrative in *Apocalypse Now* were to only be read as such, that is, if Vietnam is only read as Vietnam, then the critique can only be complicit with the space of disappearance. Without taking into consideration the Philippines, one’s critique of the ideological appearances of the United States in Vietnam is not only incomplete—it is unethical, most significantly. One’s misrecognition is not singled out; in fact it is repeated, doubled—always already committed, so that Vietnam itself loses its place in the discourse.

A.

In the diary of an American woman in the Philippines, the tropics arrives like this: After all the countryside we've seen, I was surprised how beautiful and exotic the drive to Pagsanjan was. Maybe it was just the backlight, or my mood. I could see all the little details, as if looking at a mound of split-open coconuts drying at the side of the road, I could see each one individually. There were rice paddies, little villages of nipa huts, water buffalo, a family's wash drying on a graveyard fence, a slice of watermelon hanging from a string over a vendor's head, stripes of light coming through palm-frond roadside stands, stacks of cheese wrapped in neat banana leaf packages, a slatted-wood couch under a tree back from the road as if people came to sit and view what was passing by, fields of sugarcane, and purple-blue mountains in the distance. (36)

The sequence unfolds as sheer chance. The arrangement is nature's, and whatever conspicuous alterations we may notice, these are just agricultural minutiae that are otherwise customary and habitual to the native. Nonetheless, the alien beholder maintains an affected glance wherever she sets her eyes on, so that the vision is at best sojournal and at worst touristic, failing to inhabit the everyday as a time-space of original, because ordinary, happenstance. What is still dominant is an expeditional discourse, where the vehicular position always affords the navigator a vantage point where the lay of the land is tropical—mobile and moveable—and therefore susceptible to the fixity of the slightest perusal of the temperate. A world that conjures epiphanic details which never run out of aesthetic charge to someone who is everything but an inhabitant, that is where the exotic thrives. The inhabitant is not just the resident or the local. Even indigenous subjects can commit the exoticist offense. Nor is the inhabitant the participant observer whose liminal positioning is still a function of his/her ethnographic privilege. The inhabitant comes after the nomad, the sojourner, the tourist, the *flâneur*. He/she prefigures the evacuee, the intern, the expatriate, the boarder, and even the exile in his/her experience of strangeness as contingent to the banality of being stranded yet already sited, *to be put in place*, thus the respect for its worldly arrangement, and the humility before the landscape that had always been there before one's intrusive glimpse. It is through this perspective that one's eyes are worse than Thomas's, utterly faithless if they remain awed at the spectacle of the otherwise ordinary scene.

B.

Invisibility in *Apocalypse Now* makes possible “epistemic violence” as a premise of the visual because of a series of performative acts elided at the cinematic pageant. We cite these scenes so that they may intervene in, and even interfere with our attempts at scopic defiance:

1) *Vietnam as Congo*

Seeing himself as heir to Joseph Conrad, Francis Ford Coppola brings modernism to the cinema in order to address a most crucial trauma of contemporary America—the Vietnam War. This conjuration of the ghost of

Africa to possess Asia is potentially a means to render the *film as psychic medium*, as a séance that contains at the same time it releases, however temporarily, a spectral memory. It is thus that we can see cinema as a haunting. Yet the ghost of Africa, through Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, is a malevolent phantom, especially when we take into consideration Edward Said's commentary on Conrad's ambivalence towards the colonial scene (19-30). By merely citing Africa as an allusive presence in the Asian fragment, *Apocalypse Now* renders criticality elusively unfinished, and therefore, failed. Without any mediation, the reference is at best a defining feature of a strategy of entrapment. As the film restages the critique initiated by the novel, its violations of its own claims are also repeated.

2) *The Philippines as Vietnam*

The similarity between Vietnam and the Philippines is not just a geographic one. And even if we just insist on the intricacies of territorial resemblances, there are extra-terrestrial nuances that indicate the conditions of filiative politics. One potent bone of contention that schematizes the anatomy of this relation is the historical choice of a number of Vietnamese to escape the peninsula and find sanctuary in the islands of the Philippines as a multitude in the hope of singular refuge in the 1970s. Francis Ford Coppola capitalized on this situation by hiring these Vietnamese refugees to re-enact their victimage in the Philippine encampment through various scenes of conquest: moments of dispossession, evacuation, and even disembodiment which map out the *delirium tremens* of a war picture's megalomaniac desire to disperse its subjects, making them move so that the field of battle is emptied of a critical mass that would fill the space with alternating trauma and guilt.

1) *The Philippines as Cambodia*

Unlike other Southeast Asian civilizations, the Philippines did not go through a monumental phase. Its earliest societies *failed* to construct architectural complexes, like Borobudur, Ayuthaya, the Shwe Dagon Pagoda, Luang Prabang, and Angkor Wat, each of which claims antiquity as a solid historical base that was only demolished by colonial ravage. The "chronotope" (Bakhtin) of the *ruins* is a trace of the glorious and grandiose pageants of a noble race. It is a site of an epic past that has already disappeared but is exploited by the novel present to make itself appear as not having really been defeated by the modern. This dearth of these indices of Indicity then has been a driving force behind the "edifice complex" (Lico) of Philippine modernities, a euphoric infrastructural project to construct the past via contemporary buildings which are nostalgic of a nativity that has only known wood and leaf but not stone and concrete. Also, nominating tropical versions of the neoclassical, baroque, gothic, and the romanesque have fallen prey to this fetish, so that hispanic architectonics is disastrously refunctioned as a site where the monumental phase of indigenous culture could be channeled.

Apocalypse Now fulfills this antiquarian fantasy by locating the final sequences of the film in a Cambodian temple complex inhabited by a lost civilization of indigenes found by the megalomaniac Kurtz. Deirdre McKay and Padmapani L. Perez report that in order to stage the authenticity of this ethnic enclave, Francis Ford Coppola evacuated a hundred Ifugaos from north of the main Philippine island to perform a hyperethnic multitude that only deflates the critical mass of tribality, because of a fetishized rendition of savage stylistics in a jungle environment ("Apocalypse Yesterday Already").

The Ifugaos are an ethnic minority consisting of several tribes which share the highlands of the Philippines. Their ancestors constructed the Banaue Rice Terraces, an architectural presence that refuses to turn

into a trace, not only because of its natural emplacement, but also because of its insistence to make infrastructural ambitions coherent with agricultural dreams. The transfer of the Ifugaos from this location to the forest is an epistemic descent, a displacement of a situated, site-specific subjectivity that can only be oppressed by the placelessness of the forest.

V.

Modern perception of the tropics has roots in Greek Antiquity, resting its integrity upon Aristotelian science:

There are two inhabitable sections of the earth: one near our upper, or northern pole, the other near the other or southern pole; and their shape is like that of a tambourine. If you draw lines from the centre of the earth they cut out a drum-shaped figure. The lines form two cones; the base of the one is the tropic, of the other the ever visible circle, their vertex is at the centre of the earth. These sections alone are habitable. *Beyond the tropics no one can live: for there the shade would not fall to the north, whereas the earth is known to be uninhabitable before the sun is in the zenith* [my emphasis] or the shade is thrown to the south: and the regions below the Bear are uninhabitable because of the cold. (Aristotle 3: 36-37)

Above we find the division of the globe into three climatic areas according to their relative distance to the equator: the frigid zone, the torrid zone, and the temperate zone, which lies between the two. The tropics is the term both for the lines that border the area of the torrid zone and the area itself. (“Tropics”) If we see Aristotle’s taxonomies as a way of organizing the world into a coherent set of knowledge for the world Hellenic and beyond, the key trope in the schema is habitation—where man and woman can settle and organize their civilized communities. It was clear to Aristotle that the hostile tropics could not offer any residence for humanity; the only livable areas were the temperate ones, where Greece is.

The Hellenic world and the rest of Western civilization did heed Aristotle’s call, but not for long, as the age of empire necessitated the expansion of national territories beyond temperate Europe towards the rest of the world, including of course the tropics.

VI.

In “Welcome to the Desert of the Real!” Slavoj Žižek cites films whose major characters discover that the American space in which they live in is a cinematic artifice (385-388). The anagnorisis in these texts deploys the trope of awaking from a dream whose phantasmagoric proportions evidently overpowers the imagining subject’s inert desire to dissimulate one’s gaze before the Pleasantvillesque conjuration that is his/her capitalistic residence.

I would like to offer a contrapuntal primal scene to this disillusionment that American cinema (at least the more progressive of it) has come to visualize in the filmic medium (which we must say proves that the self-reflexive mode of representation is a most potent site of contestatory imagining). The scene is from Alain Boubilil



and Claude-Michel Schönberg's *Miss Saigon*, which debuted in London's West End and New York's Broadway in the late 1980s. Two Vietnamese bargirls, Gigi, a veteran who had just been declared "Miss Saigon" by the soldiers; and Kim, a newcomer at 17, sing of how one cannot awake from a dream:

The movie in my mind,
the dream they leave behind.
A scene I can't erase,
and in a strong GI's embrace:

"Flee this life,
flee this place."

The movie plays and plays,
the screen before me fills.
He takes me to New York,
he gives me dollar bills.

Our children laugh all day,
and eat too much ice cream.
And life is like a dream.

Dream,
the dream I long to find,
the movie in my mind.

The context is a war in the *tropics* the United States has taken to be one of its Messianic responsibility to *temper*, that is, to administer, execute, manage. For the local economy, as represented by the prostitute and her American pimp, the war is a chance for the circulation of product, earning, investment; the eventuality turns the victims into agents of exchange. However "vaginal" this "economy"¹ is, the rape of the virginal forest is necessary. It is in allowing the penetrative force of the imperialist that the feminized civilian is able to dream of a fluid release, and the post-coital fulfillment of an exilic promise.

In the song, the imaginary that is bred by the categorical violence of war is cinematic. But the idea of a dream as a "movie" in the "mind" of the Vietnamese refugee needs further explaining here. I am particularly interested in how theatrical centers of Euro-American cultural capitalism encourage the performance of the cinematic machinery as a dis-embodying affectivity, so much so that the war that is enacted displaces a locational consciousness of grievance and reparation in favor of a globalized circuit of war brides and the hybrid scions that these women carry as passports to the West's gateway cities, New York declared as the most *open* of them.

As a Filipino scholar revisiting the text above, I remember how the Philippine "desert of the real" was abandoned by legions of musical theater talents twenty years ago, in hope of making it in the performance halls of London and New York City.

The most successful of these hopefuls won the Lawrence Olivier and the Tony for playing the amateur



bargirl and was recently back on Broadway, this time to essay the dolorous Fantine in another Schönberg-Boublil production, *Les Misérables*, and confess dis-armament, dis-imagining. Dis-appearing.

And still I dream he'll come to me,
that we will live the years together.
But there are dreams that cannot be,
and there are storms we cannot weather.

I had a dream my life would be,
so different from this hell I'm living,
so different now from what it seemed.
Now life has killed the dream I dreamed.

Towards the end of his essay, Slavoj Žižek—the critic who has spoken of a “plague of fantasies,” pestilential forces of sublimity that can never be appeased by any counter-magic—says that “America’s peace was *bought* [my emphasis] by the catastrophes going on elsewhere” (388). How do these *elsewheres* receive the return investment? Like Fantine in the destitute streets of Paris, they weep as deserted states of emergency, no longer knowing what it really means to dream, in moments neither millennial nor millisecondary.

VII.

A man, barefoot, but dressed in white, holds a wooden stick. He is pointing the stick to a chart of words and pictures. *Lesson IX*, it says. A child, his back turned away from us; let us try to hear him read: “This is my... hat...and my bag...” Notice the ellipses. They are necessary so that we can imagine the time-lag of studied speech. Listen to the child’s awkward pauses before and as he utters the alien sentence, the foreign sounds he needs to produce so that he can go back to his seat, and find solace in a silence native to his tense body.

To translate the thing seen into a spoken word. And to keep the sound as a palpable memory. But there is something more violent in the recitation. For the child, the exercise is also a forgetting. To translate the vernacular reality in his mind into English is to surrender the *sombrero* and the *bayong* that he wears and carries in the topos of his tropics and succumb to the logos that enunciates his being a docile subject of a temperate language.

The instructor and his instructee. We do not know them. They, like the rest of the girls and boys of the class, are nameless characters in a facsimile of a photographic artifact of the imperial archive that I carry with me. The caption says:

A Filipino teacher imparts the basics in this Central Luzon classroom in the early 20th century.
The American apple was the beginning of the English alphabet for students at that time (*As It Was 100 Years Ago*).

Such is the effect of an evidence bereft of its concrete past. No names, only figures, forever present as swarthy ghosts of the dark negative of history. And even when narrative intervenes, what remains is a desire that must detest and defer its fulfillment.

Lesson I, just imagine. A letter for the unlettered. And a fruit that stands in for the temptation of



possessing that originary episteme. Each child teaches her tongue, that to speak is to taste. The red skin, the white flesh, and the sweet juice. One is most fortunate if one even receives a piece on Christmas Eve, a surprise after the ginger tea and the rice cakes.

Yet the moment is a familiar one. Nothing can be exceptional in the scene. That is what the discourse of public education aspires to create: the everyday facticity of liberative pedagogy. Democratized, knowledge is an entitlement that even subjects of the colonial order can claim as theirs, as ours. And this empowerment happens everyday. The fertile ground of the everyday, where the supposed seeds of resistance can be sown by the agrarian innocent, who is renamed *ignorant*, or worse, *illiterate* by the normal school whose native graduates repopulate the towns as agents of the American enlightenment.

VIII.

What is the apocalypse? It is the juxtaposition of the face of Willard, fearless as white skin/black mask, and the stone sculpture of an autochthonous visage, fearful as blackface/whiterock. Both are gazing back at us spectators. Willard's face fades, but the autochthone's remains. For the latter can never be turned into stone again by our Gorgonian gaze. The former is powder, dust, particle blown away by Pegasus wings of our dreams.

Now, another genesis—

IX.

I know the primacy of the instructional scene. In the mid-eighties, in a more comfortable classroom in a major city of Southern Luzon, I was also learning a language not my own.

A a apple.
B b boy.
C c cat.
D d dog.
E e eggplant.

Fear is what I remember. I was afraid to be hit by the stick if I made the mistake of saying

E e epol.
B b buy.
K k ket.
D d dag.
I i igplan.

But somehow I was able to claim the words. After many days of silence, there was no more need to translate from the vernacular to the foreign. Because I was becoming different. With my grandmother, I walked from my house



to school. We did not wait at the cathedral patio after school, for there was no car to fetch us. I was coming from the province. I had an accent. My posture was not erect, I kept my hands inside my pockets. I could not speak the *same* language. In me there was nothing native. I needed to claim difference.

My parents taught in the public school. Even before they sent me to kindergarten, I had already learned the basics. I remember some days in a humid March, early summer. The school year was already over in the city, but not yet in the province. I had just finished grade one. Spending the first few days of my summer vacation in my mother's classroom, I was more than happy to review my lessons with her and her students. When once my mother left her class with a seatwork, I found a moment to perform the power of difference. I went up to the teacher's lectern, got the stick, and pulled back the chart to *Lesson 1*:

A a apple (E e epol).

B b boy (B b buy).

C c cat (K k ket).

D d dog (D d dag).

E e eggplant (I i igplan).

And they repeated after me, word after word, phrase after phrase. Until my proud mother returned.

And now writing in the language that I think is my own, I wonder where these students are, how they are doing in the town I have managed to escape. I try to remember their faces. But I can only figure out dark outlines. And even as I remember the glee in their eyes that summer day, I can also imagine the blank glare that I did not see, that they did not dare show me. As I recall the voices, the inflections that they echoed to impress me, I cannot help but yearn for their chatter, the murmur of dialect, a stutter's spontaneity. It is their contained silence which has given me free speech. It is the vacant countenance of these strangers which has given me a full face.



NOTES

- 1 The term is Rolando Tolentino's, who introduces the category in a forthcoming special issue of *positions: east asia cultures critique* on how the cinematic trope of sexualized bodies in a time of global labor finds its genealogical argument from Philippine Cinema during the Marcos dictatorship.

WORKS CITED

- Abbas, Ackbar. *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance*. Minneapolis and London: U of Minnesota Press, 1997.
- Apocalypse Now*. Dir. Francis Ford Coppola. Perf. Martin Sheen, Marlon Brando. San Francisco: American Zoetrope, 1979. DVD.
- Aristotle. *The Works of Aristotle*. Vol. 3. Ed. E.W. Webster. Oxford: Clarendon, 1931.
- "Article 1." *The 1987 Philippine Constitution*. Manila: Arellano Law Foundation. Web. 3 Feb. 2011.
- As It Was 100 Years Ago 1898-1903*. Memorabilia from the American Historical Collection, Rizal Library, Ateneo de Manila University, Quezon City, Philippines: n.d.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Ed. Michael Holquist. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: U of Texas P, 1981.
- Benítez-Rojo, Antonio. *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective*. Durham and London: Duke UP, 1996.
- Cha-Ju Kua. "Chu-fan-chi." *Readings in Philippine History*. Ed. Horacio de la Costa, S.J. Makati City: Bookmark, 1992.
- Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness*. 1899. New York: Penguin, 2000.
- Coppola, Eleanor. *Notes on the Making of Apocalypse Now*. New York: Limelight Editions, 1979.
- Dash, J. Michael. *The Other America: Caribbean Literature in a New World Context*. Charlottesville and London: UP of Virginia, 1998.
- Glissant, Édouard. *Poetics of Relation*. Trans. Betsy Wing. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1997.
- Lico, Gerard. *Edifice Complex: Power, Myth, and Marcos State Architecture*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila UP, 2003.
- McKay, Deirdre, and Padmapani L. Perez. "'Apocalypse Yesterday, Already!': Ifugao Extras and the Making of *Apocalypse Now*." *Our Own Voice: Literary Arts Journal* (2004). Web. 3 Feb. 2011.
- Ondaatje, Michael. *The English Patient*. New York: Vintage, 1992.
- Said, Edward W. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Vintage, 1994.
- Schönberg, Claude-Michel, Alain Boublil, and Richard Maltby, Jr. "The Movie in My Mind." *Miss Saigon*. Perf. Isay Alvarez and Lea Salonga. 1989. CD.
- Schönberg, Claude-Michel, Alain Boublil, and Herbert Kretzmer. "I Dreamed a Dream." *Les Misérables*. Perf. Randy Graff. Decca, 1987. CD.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. Ed. Vincent Leitch. New York and London: Norton, 2001.
- . "Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography." *Subaltern Studies 4: Studies in South Asian History and Society*. Ed. Ranajit Guha. Delhi and London: Cambridge UP, 1984.
- "Tropic." *Oxford English Dictionary*. Vol. 18. Ed. 1989.
- White, Hayden. *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism*. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins UP, 1978.
- Winichakul, Thongchai. *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation*. Manoa: U of Hawaii P, 1994.
- Žižek, Slavoj. "Welcome to the Desert of the Real!" *South Atlantic Quarterly* 101(2): 385-88.

Severance

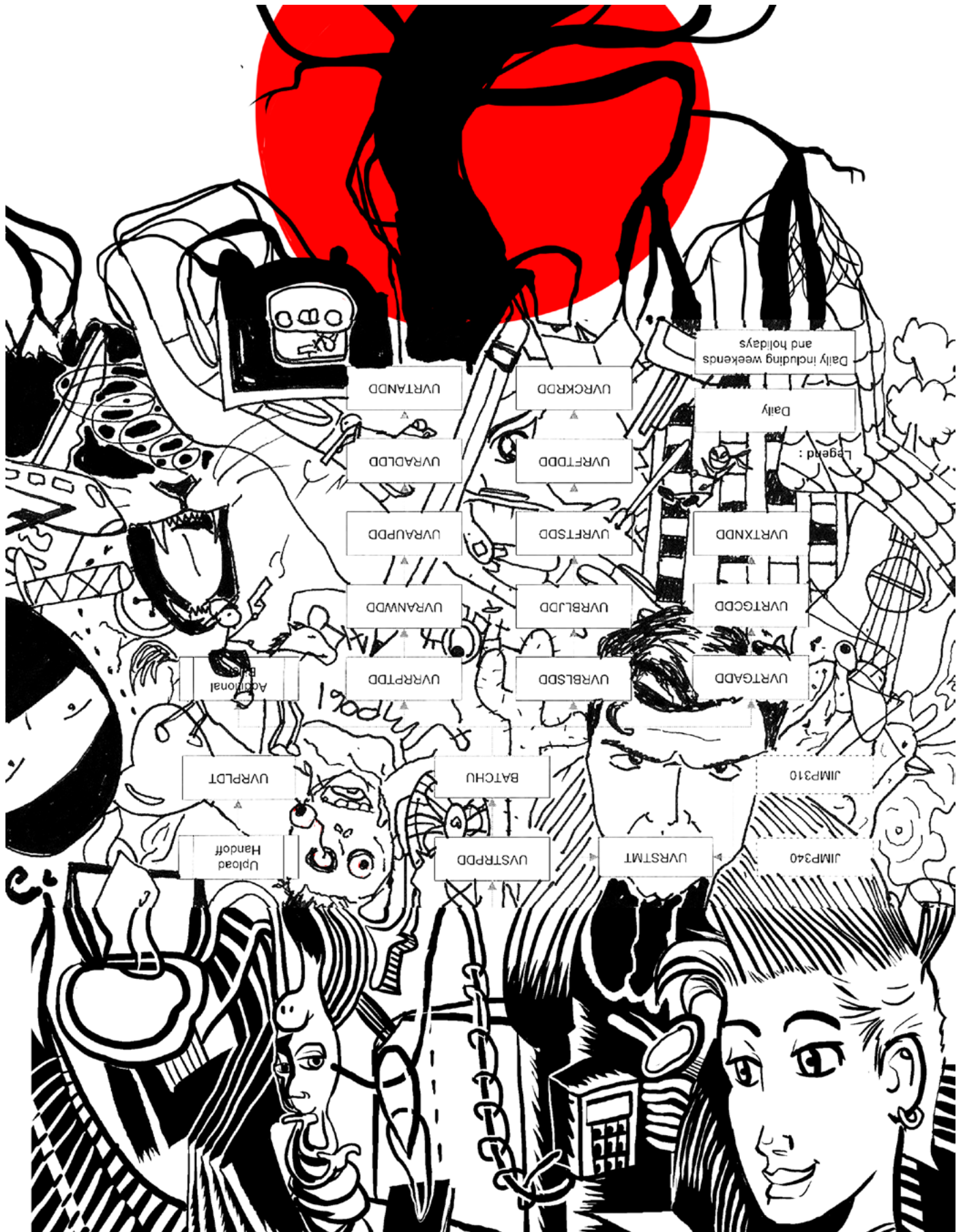
Oscar Tantoco Serquiña, Jr.

Confront the long stretch of this hall, mull over the attempt at common movement,
Feel the abundance of light caroming from ceiling to wall to floor—you want to leave,
You desire mobility. *What do you feel?* This hour's revelation: amputated feet,
A mechanical wheelchair, the controlled stop and go. For years, a grave condition

Insists on you—lack of insulin, blinded vision. Please understand
The permanence of the moment—the rawness of it, the incompleteness in it—
Where you are the unchangeable subject, the situation now zeroing in on what you
Have become. *And what do you feel?* The eternal longing for a step, the voluntary

Approach of here to there, the severed nearness of things, places. Now observe
What is before you, around you, and relieve yourself with the everywhere
For the nowhere, the everything for the nothing, the sensible what-could-have-been.

And what do you feel, really? A renewed connection with the earth, the gentle stare
At the ground leading to many illuminations—this link by being unlinked,
This attachment. And so a direction must be followed: from, for, forward.



under cold light of measureless day—

Lawrence Bernabe



under cold light of measureless day—



The picture creates its own conditions
for escape

this paper

resurrection



acid.weak



LEVITATION

L E V I T A T I O N



LEVITATION LEVITATION *LEVITATION* LEVITATION

LEVITATION



LEVITATION



LEVITATION
LEVITATION



I O N

A T

I T

LE V



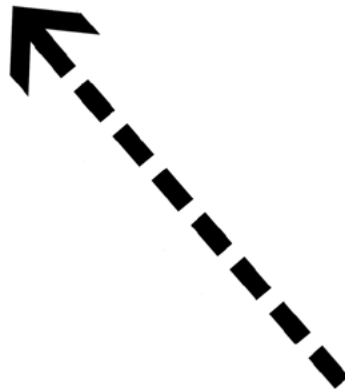
LEVIATHAN



littlebrownimperialistp

littlebrownimperialistp

littlebrownimperialist



Xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxXxxx

Xxxx xx
Xx xx
Xx xx
Xx xx
Xx xx

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX XXXX xl

Sssss xxxxxx Ssssssssssss ss

Ssssssss xx xxxxxx

SSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSS

SSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSS

littlebrownimerialispt littlebrownimerialispt © littlebrownimperialist ® registered trademarks owned by or licensed to xxx. All other brand and product names are or may be trademarks of, and are used to identify products or services of, their respective owners. All screen images are simulated.



... how to image surprise,
the best few words in another language

his dictionary deckled and dyed in red



... how to image surprise,
the best few words in another lang age

his dictionary deckled and dyed in red



a collection of aborted meanings and beginnings or the enactment nay the emendatory outpour of
pluriconcentric potentialities

??



feverand	feveral	feveral
feveree	fevered	feverid
feverer	fevers	fevereth
feverest	feverish	feverth



stilled played.



cocky sky s

(fair gam

hinny chi chin

, occl ded

“Are you dry?”



Are you having fun?

—Interlude Message, videoke screen at Country Gents



i like flowers in may
trees when they're pontifical
ja i'm (exX) university based
life happens at the foot of the hill
red and green make a muck color & i luv it

i'll meet you at the south gate
always i meet you at the south gate



footfalls, et al.

ze didi daapdat

zum ze zaaat



unblanched	uncarteled	unmarveled
unliving	undead	unborn
unconceived	un-it	unseek
unsaid	unsung	unwrit
unhushed	unsheathed	unthreshed
unwringing	unruing	unwring



Since the 3rd wrath of your life,

closed to the scalp.

When she wrote, “phainetai moi”

the tiresome lives the distance. You hold my

connect in this moment or the next.



When she wrote,

“phainetai moi”

the tiresome lives the distance. You may hold

connect in this moment or the next



Funny How The Word Burst
Comes Already Finished —



Mix and Match Time!

A	B
augenblick	Kisap-mata
Pitik	Elisi
Firewoman	secret
red horse	Blue Feather
Eraserheads	highway to hell
calcium	ziggurat
Bulaga	Pomelo
riverine	HYP
illusions	a face like ur evil
auntie's	galahad
ventura	Babyface
Sonnet 150	anchovies
unsay	dilis

(right minus wrong) (no snooping ur seatm&z!)(smile)



What you want is an intervention.

need

is

intervention

as

What you want is an intervention.



MAHOGANY STANZAS

(a literary fragrance)

author/ized/by:
nooneishere!

november 29 2010



**p)ear/ly) s)hell/vs/us(ok)jep
(ROX)**



Soli lo qua cious

Silo loquacious



Not the whole truth, but another way to make sense of it



SOL

print (from a right foot)
someone's solitary shoeprint

sand lot dessicated
remains of short fish

walk by on way to work
edge of the world dazzles

operative word dislocation
(cueing laughter)



w/o Spoilers

At some qzt he has to jump forget
& hold the breath anymore LINE FILLER
o s for contemplation float LINE FILLER
slash judgemental slash yeaaaaaarning for old
from a done decade & half-demolished

the horror hour after hour would you

a classic! in another
just slap it thick on the right objects
float with the micro-micro. the narra-narra.
don't this well-spokenness irritate? Lik oes.
then talk to the mirror & prolonged wistful guitar solo
curtain fall meta-meta objects coda on the big screen
spoil you after deux hours. lumpy

in.

at any rate, he may or not be. after the first cut
it hung so modular, was all
to dig in so bad wintering penguin-like & again it's about me.
about the you in the now
& it is the you who is the hearing; you in it, thoroughly,
the I; this may or not clue you in. qui t



w/o Spoilers

At some qzt he has to jump forget
& hold the breath anymore LINE FILLER
o s for contemplation float LINE FILLER
slash judgemental slash yeaaaaarning for old
from a done decade & half-demolished

the horror hour after hour would you

a classic! in another
just slap it thick on the right objects
float with the micro-micro. the narra-narra.
don't this well-spokenness irritate? Lik oes.
then talk to the mirror & prolonged wistful guitar solo
curtain fall meta-meta objects coda on the big screen
spoil you after deux hours. lumpy

in.

at any rate, he may or not be. after the first cut
it hung so modular, was all
to dig in so bad wintering penguin-like & again it's about me.
about the you in the now
& it is the you who is the hearing; you in it, thoroughly,
the I; this may or not clue you in. qui t



Notes for paper version:

All claims to firstness and/or freshness are waived.

Suggested usage: scratch pad, objet de resistance, oil paper, draft paper, meditation pad.

Use your eyes! Use it well.

[poem 12]

Ramon Niño T. Raquid

we should be together
'cause you cheer me up
like potato chips on
a cold Thursday night

When Syntagm Met Paradigm

Rapunzel Tomacder

Who says The words are only meant To be Read?
 can you can the writhe, and. be all and all?
 Tell me, do you write, And really mean the thought?
 what ? what ? right ? fair ? world ?
 The is the the of the the, she reads.
 hand 2 sentences one wrong. Word, world is with You.
 Can or can't be? that is the Question.
 right. three end. just end.
 ? one
 ?

The Word

Rapunzel Tomacder

one

The Word is a box
the margins measured
by a Ruler.

two

Could you
transpose
comma
to apostrophe
or single quote
and quote.

three

Underline.
Strikethrough.

four

Capital
for Value.

The World of the Words

Vyxz Vasquez

In the beginning, there were only words. There were only words with no visual equivalent or representation as there is on Earth. There were no people—everything moving around that world was made with letters. For the time being, let's call that world "World." Everything that existed in World was composed of single words and they were all thinking, feeling beings, much like humans. Initially, researchers working on World (author included) induced that the word "person" was the single representation of a person, only made up of the letters p, e, r, s, o, n or that "rose," really looked like a rose, with the letters fashioned to form one. Further studies, however, indicated that all words in that world acted like people. They had a lifespan, they mated, and they had identities. The perception of one word of itself is the same as what we know of it, only there was no tangible equivalent as some words in our world do. Similar to what we call abstractions, World had words such as love, peace, and fairness; the only difference being that "love" knew what its function was, "peace" knew what it was supposed to feel, and "fairness" knew what it was not. Yet, words that have concrete representations in our planet such as table, arm, and heart did not correspond to a physical object in World. They were just letters moving around. Naturally, because all words can have multiple meanings as they do in our world, the citizens of World had rich personalities made up of what they originally meant and what they had become. It also led to some words experiencing some form of identity crisis. Take the case of the word "extension," for example. It had six distinct purposes: 1) it was a part added to something to make it bigger or longer; 2) it functioned as an electric cord; 3) together with its partner "course," it meant a subject that part-time college students could attend; 4) it was, from time to time, a weave of artificial or natural hair; 5) it sometimes acted as a limb moving from bent to a straight position; and 6) it also thought of itself as the range of an idea as measured by its literal meaning. In addition, "extension" eventually came to mean a part of one's self, and because of these various qualities and the changes in "extension's" personality through its evolving functions (as metaphor, idiom, etc.), this word became confused and somehow uncertain of what its role in society really was.

This sense of confusion and lack of a clear goal prompted most of the inhabitants of World to meet up with other words who had, more or less, the same personalities. They did this to gain a better understanding of their lives and to be able to answer questions like, "Why was I placed in this world?" or "What end do I serve?" "Extension" became fast friends with "addition," "expansion," and "prolongation" because *he*¹ saw different traits

1 Although there is no concept of gender in World, we will alternate the use of "it" and "he" throughout the text in order to animate the subject.



of himself in them. They helped each other out—at times, his friends replaced him at work, whenever he felt overused or misused. On the other hand, “extension” and his friends were also competitive towards one another, as they sometimes vied for the same posts.

What also helped “extension” cope with a world that was constantly in flux was his family. He was born to the family of the late Latin² *extensio*, which had *extendre* as its ancestor and who, in turn, came from its parents *ex* and *tendre*. Since birth, “extension” had to rely on his closest relatives: his siblings “extensions” and “extensional;” and cousin “extend” and his family. Whenever he was feeling lost, he only needed to go back to his roots.

How exactly was one born or created in World? There were several ways. As shown in the previous example, a word can be produced by two or more words getting together and mating. The formulation of new words was no longer limited to their ancestors—the words in World were allowed to reproduce. There were words that, when they partnered up, seemed to be complementary to each other. A classic example of this was “life” and “span,” who united to produce “lifespan.” Then, there were the words who seemed like they would not be attracted to each other, like “cock” and “roach,” who gave birth to “cockroach.” Because World had a polygamous way of life, “life,” “span,” “cock,” “roach,” and even “lifespan” and “cockroach” were free to pair up with whoever they choose. Some of “life’s” offspring (offspring of “off” and “spring” in World) with other partners: “lifebelt,” “lifeblood,” “lifeboat,” “lifebuoy,” “lifeguard,” “lifeless,” “lifelike,” “lifeline,” “lifelong,” “lifesaver,” “lifestyle,” “lifetime,” “lifework,” and “lifeworld.” It was also possible in World to have three words producing a young word, such as “thought,” “dash,” and “provoking” to rear “thought dash provoking” (which, if translated in our world where symbols exist, would read as thought-provoking). Four words could also get together: “God,” “be,” “with,” and “you” joined forces to produce “goodbye.”

In World, some words were, as we say in our world’s terms, asexual. They did not need another word or two to breed, but that was an option also available to them. I am not entirely sure if we have a created a word for this definition, but for the time being, we will use asexual to mean that word who can mate and reproduce, and also reproduce on its own. A good example for this is the word “hand.” “Hand” had mated with “craft,” “job,” and “writing,” among others, but it had also produced “handy,” “handed,” and “handle” singlehandedly. Interestingly, the word “hand” is of German descent.

A word in World could also suddenly exist without any known origins. Case in point: “jazz.”

Life at this point for the word was merely to function and interact. Similar to people on Earth, they were either having careers or getting married. They had more fun though because they were free to connect with everyone. However, this freedom was a double-edged sword. Words who had completely opposing identities often clashed with one another. “Pleasure” resisted “pain,” “alive” avoided “dead,” and “up” had a falling out with “down.” These tiffs were known collectively as The War of the Words or Word War. Fortunately, the wars did not lead to bloodshed. Soon enough, the words realized that one could not exist without the other and they started to live a peaceful coexistence.

Overall though, the citizens of World got along. Words worked together and collaborated to form phrases and sentences (ex: “days of our lives,” “the quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog”). There were moments when they assembled by the tens of thousands for a variety of purposes (research, doctrine, etc.). Sometimes, words

2 Ancestors of some words in World; Latin of origin, they called their planet *Mundus* and had a big part in shaping and increasing the population of World, as their inhabitants have become barren and could no longer reproduce their own kind.



convened simply so they could enjoy each other and experiment. One such party/event resulted into “The apparition of these faces in the crowd semicolon petals on a wet comma black bough” while another had “let me not to the marriage of true minds admit impediments.” Bigger events would result to novels that we know in our world: *The Great Gatsby* and *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, to name a few. These parties were a nice way for the words to get creative and form new meanings in their lives. It provided added value.

Just like humans, the words in World were not immortal. The words could die but there is no known age or average lifespan for their species. Some plainly retired and, later on, expired because a younger word had taken up their place in society. Still, others simply vanished for they were no longer usable. The words wanted to live forever but mortality was not something they could control. As thousands of new words were born each year, several thousand would also die. It was a fate no one in World could escape.

Although it would be presumptuous to conclude at this point that the citizens of World had souls, the discovery by professors that the word “soul” itself knew it was one, and that the words themselves had a deep sense of identity tell us not to discount this thesis. There is no extensive study on this topic as of yet.

How did the words in World communicate? What is the language of language? As they could read and be easily read, and any word could be used for whatever purpose, communication between World’s citizens was effortless. They just knew each other. “Banana” understood how “split” worked; “Strawberry” knew what “sundae” meant. Sometimes, there was confusion when words with multiple identities got together, and it was hard to determine what a word’s function then was, but ultimately, they were able to do their work, even though the lack of a clear purpose made some of them uneasy. It is quite probable that words had a leader who provided order to the community.

It must be noted that there were words that did not have any friends or relatives. They did not mate with anyone nor give birth to a word. They continued to serve their roles in society and only interacted with other words so they could be successful in their jobs. One word who did not have a partner or give birth to anyone was “yahrzeit”. He did not have any ancestors or relatives although he identified himself as Jewish.

It is fascinating that World had entities that are exactly the same as what constitutes the English language. Although the studies on this world are still limited, initial findings all agree that World’s inhabitants are the very same words that we use to communicate universally. And yet, the link between our world and that of World has not been established yet—we could not find how we affect their citizens and how they in turn can influence our means of communication. But as seen in the ways they are born, the relationships they form, and how they ultimately die, it is a safe assumption that human beings and words are connected. The link is even stronger when you take into account the thousands of literature we have that are identical to their parties and events.

Which came first, the English language or World? It is a classic chicken-and-egg question and for now, researchers are still working on a definitive answer. Even World’s discoverer, the scientist Wiji Langué³, was unable to make sense of this breakthrough. When he chanced upon the world of World for the first time and saw all the words moving about, he was nonplussed and unable to speak. He could not begin to grasp the ramifications of his discovery on our world.

If it is discovered that World existed prior to our own, what will that tell us about our own limitations? Yes, we are all in agreement that the discovery of World is not only of scientific importance, it is a philosophical

3 Wiji Langué, (1980-2045) is credited as World’s founder. Interestingly, his name is quite similar to the word “language.”



one. It makes us question our own theories of existence. As studies in linguistics and semiotics in the past have shown, all human languages that we know now were created and governed by us in order to communicate. But to have a world of language that runs parallel with us, what does that say about human intelligence? Are we conditioned to think in limited terms because of the limited ways we can express them? Is the brain boxed in by language? If the mind stopped communicating in terms that is understood by other humans, does that mean we are dead? Even the idea of a world of words is limned by our own experiences and dreams. In effect, the research work that has been done on World is restricted by our own language and human perception. How can we explain a world that is so improbable (by human standards) without using our own terms and projections?

The parallelisms and coincidences between life in our world and that of World are too numerous to ignore, in my opinion. This raises the question: ARE WE GOD'S/SHIVA'S/BUDDHA'S/A WHOLE DIFFERENT PLANET'S/NOT EVEN SOMETHING FATHOMABLE IN OUR OWN IMAGINATION'S LANGUAGE? This issue will be exhausted in the next tentative exposition.

Addendum: The essay you have just read is my creation, as my thoughts have organized the “facts” as encountered. And yet, with what Language has discovered in the few documents he left on the subject, my thoughts may not necessarily be my own and these words may have just been communicated to me by World. As stated, there is no way of knowing what this connection is and as I type this now, a group of words are probably toking up together, using “toke” of course, forming this mass orgy of limited vocabulary. It is my greatest hope that I encounter the words that have let me use them in the future, if only so that I could thank them. *Word.*

CLIFF ----- NOTES

Rey Escobar

LU-BE----- WALO (8) TAMANG SIYAM (9)

def:

Slick as a lubricant, bet 8 (walo), for a chance to lubricate out 9 (siyam)

etymology:

Lubog or sunk in or deepened like a scar.

“Tuli, do you remember it? Most nine year olds do.

How his limp lips were pulled, then sliced. . .”

Carved into a free-to-be-me upturned smile.

Bald, anesthetized, Lubog, prettied and in the sun dress
of his sister. Fagged and opening his hand to say goodbye.



PU-SIYAM-----SIYAM (9) TAMANG SAMPŪ (10)

def:

All about the pussy, bet that pimps with a 9 (siyam) for a chance at 10 (sampû)

etymology:

Kalbo or shaven or shaved of or something purchased cheap,
a product of a bald smile living vicariously through a lie.

He says:

“So you’ve won your ten, eh? Shit, that means you roped
perfection. Say it, ‘fuck yeah!’ And live like you’ve
conquered all kinds of pussy. Cats, winning them,
gets you more lick-time, sick‘em-time, beat‘em-time. . .”

Para tirador! Para sa iyo lang ‘to. Secretly baldies are
dick-fiends with-a-smile.



LO-DYIS-----WALO (8) TAMANG SAMPÛ (10)

def:

How low can I last? 8 (walo) the max bet. Ultimately the sacrifice gets a 10 (sampû)

etymology:

T'awad or bargain or the apologist's explanation of alay, that perfect act of ransoming oneself.

An interjection of:

“Yes, that's all good to hear, but for whose sake? The world?

His family? That circumciser he didn't even know?

T'awad the prostitute! A humihingi'.”

The twin of T'amad, Juan T'amad, that slothful lazy-john agape in mouth, wide and waiting for the guava to fall.



WA-LO/A-NIM-----ANIM (6) TAMANG WALO (8)

def:

What? Low? A Nymph, uttering, “lay my 6 (anim) and get her 8 (walo) in return”

etymology:

Kamias or Ginger Lily or the sour fruit tree who bore and borrowed her “mga pinahiram,” as she called them.

And again, for the sake of

That perfect act of ransoming oneself, she reasons, “Dapat ganito ang tao. Mga babae ko tinutukoy, laging may bumibisita. Eh kung wala ako. San sila pupuntá?”

Anywhere! Don't you see? Your daughters, mga animo sila, not ornaments!

Kamias to kalis. Tears for blades so they slide off easy after the slice!



ON-SE!-----WALO (8) TAMANG LABING-ISA (11)

def:

Truthfully, this is labi ng isa (one's lips), but can also be called, "on 2nd thought, I just need a fix.

etymology:

Labi or lips or the kiss-to-the-wind given, when suddenly, on the eye,
a disappeared country opens. The odor of fish gills, candlelights, vinegar,
and vigils greets Labi across the air,

The brown land of tribes similar to bees peaks up his flattened nose.

How firm a man is lost in his childish tongue.

As he waits, the land re-shapens.

The natural jungle grows again out of his face.

Jaw to jaw and with perked-up ears, he becomes
the uttered shore.

Do you want stardust to mix with the rain? Labi, before our landing,

Do you want me to pull a sweet quote? I heard of one from George Oppen.

It goes, "into homelessness, 'nowhere to return' "



LO-TRES----- SAMPŪ (10) TAMANG LABING-LIMA (15)

def:

Behold! à trois. Three times the pleasure, the price, but upfront, I must have a 10 (sampû)

etymology:

Balahibo or feathers or the bullet who cheats. A magdaraya who reaffirms, recontextualized and with a hedonistic pleasure

Affronts his words

directly, “Shake its branches instead of climbing the tree.”

with surety, “The mangos will fall”

and care, “And you’ll save yourself from the biting ants”

At once, fifteen mangos fell after the violent pull. Harshly they bounced and careened on each other. But the fall came with a price. Button-sized bites from red ants who crash-landed his arms. Ten lashings for breaking the branch.



SAM-PÛ /A-NIM-----ANIM (6) TAMANG SAMPÛ (10)

def:

Same pose, a nymph's 6 (anim). If I lose, I spot her 10 (sampû)

etymology:

Korona or crown or the put-on-girl currency, "putong-currency," extended with an invitation to leave for that everlasting everything.

Show the girl like a showgirl.

A song full like prison "full of treason."

A life life stripped "cold on a dark vine"

Dead as weight, as a still-pose.

Mai Lai against the lamppost leaning forward and with her arms

between her head and the wood. Eyes down. I-sa (1)! Da-l'wa (2)! Tat-lo (3)!...



DO-BLA-DO----- SAMPÛ (10) TAMANG DALAWANGPÛ (20)

def:

Do blame the do-er. A 10 (sampû) wins you a 20 (dalawangpû).

etymology:

Pangako or the promise, the oath. Dread lurking close. Pangs, tendrils of self.

“Double your price or lose a 10 (sampû), become a zero. No more.”

Ako against the crumbling wall. Nasaan whispering of men and their forepaws

Steep in pain killers

“Mga pangpatulog ‘to, pangpalimut, ‘to.”

Paint strips between the eyes. Kerosene blends with the yellow night.

“pre usok, pahingi naman ng ‘yung usok...”

“...as babies, we were nomads. How about you?”

I was raging, raging against

“Fucking full lips. That I know, you like them painted in purple lipstick”

And to be elsewhere, kissing the radiant

“As radiance is to a morning? The radiant child?”

As radiance is to killing and going blind.

This Feels Like a Song

Marrrian Pio Roda Ching

Understand that is it hard to say¹ my weakness caused you pain.² It may not make much sense now that we are apart,³ but the more I grow the less I know.⁴

We might as well be strangers⁵ so I play the part.⁶

We got to stop pretending who we are;⁷ we will only just remember how it feels.⁸

1 In Our Lifetime (Texas)

2 Everytime (Britney Spears)

3 I'm Going to Stop Pretending That I Didn't Break Your Heart (The Eels)

4 Try (Nelly Furtado)

5 We Might As Well Be Strangers (Keane)

6 Sorry (Maria Mena)

7 Don't Speak (No Doubt)

8 Little Wonders (Rob Thomas)

Conversations with God

Marrrian Pio Roda Ching

Bear with me that I may speak; and after I have spoken, mock on.¹

He has spoken unto me, he himself has done it. I shall go softly in all my years in the bitterness of my soul.² My eye is consumed with grief³ for I am sick with love⁴—for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me.⁵

By sadness of the countenance the heart is made better.⁶ How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily?⁷

1 Job 21:3

2 Isaiah 38:15

3 Psalm 6:7

4 Song of songs 2:5

5 Ruth 1:20

6 Ecclesiastes 7:3

7 Psalms 13:2

Ex

Liana G. Barcia

The sharp spasms, they said, were because I was pregnant with a secret. A baby or a tumor, either one would have had her face, persistence, and long bony fingers. Remove one, I'm a sinner; remove the other, I'm a survivor. They can tell what it is I'm hiding through an ultrasound, and they will be upset to find it isn't a boy. "Maybe it's just gotten caught between the legs," they'll say, always with a nervous smile. "Or maybe it's just a phase." They know they're wrong, and they pretend not to see the bumps that form on my skin as she presses her body against mine. In time, they will have to learn not to run from the skeletons that walk the streets in the middle of the day, joints rusty and creaking from the absence of their lovers. My closet door, with its newly-oiled hinges, is silent as it opens into a wooden chest in the middle of an island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. Here, they will find a map and instructions on how to deal with my condition, but having not read the fine print, they will insist that everyone is essentially the same, and that all roads will lead to X. I know better: each lock is opened by only one key, and only her body fits into mine, two fetuses curled up in bed in the middle of the night.

Going Public

Katrina Stuart Santiago

My closet is the perfect example of a generally fab life in third world Philippines. In the aftermath of motherhood suspended and marriage gone sour, in the midst of writing my MA thesis, a goodbye to the lifelong dream of teaching and a slew of writing jobs, and with pregnancy stuff handed down, ex-husband's clothes given back, old sad things given away, the closet tells me what is mine. And this does allow for a kind of wholeness that just might be about being that girl who can up and leave anytime, or go on a road trip at the drop of a hat.

Hell yeah, there is nothing I can't do now.

Now of course that I've gone public. No, not about my sexuality (I am woman, love men, enough said) or an ailment (though I have utmost respect for those who do so). But literally, going public. That is, teaching in a public school after teaching in a private school for five years. In that private space that had, well, space, there were good-looking students who'd bravely, surprisingly, ask me out on dates, and—for all our complaints about low pay and no rights!—teachers were pretty much still goddesses.

Meanwhile, a month into teaching at the public local university, i.e., LU, that had all the pretenses of being an SU (state university), I was ready to quit. There is after all only so much you can do when your already over-filled closet won't suffice for a conservatism worse than a Catholic school's. It's enough to make you realize, maybe even insist, that your closet is enough, and that you're really quite comfortable in there.

Comfortable in the closet of my sexy tops, tight-fitting jeans and miniskirts, flip-flops and sneakers, in a roomful of books on teaching English and literature and writing, right there in that household of cable television and reward-pizza-dinners, where getting a pretty cool paycheck means going shopping for clothes and shoes and fancy haircuts. So happy was I in my middle class closet that I thought I had nothing to lose or prove.

Site-Specific Womanhood

It took all of one month in the LU for me to acquire—in the Ladies Room, of all places—a fabulously chunky slice of life-changing information. You know that oft-repeated complaint about living with men? They leave the toilet seat up. Well as it turns out, in third world *Pinas* this isn't just a gender thing, it's also a class thing. This I found out one day as I was putting down the toilet seat with the cubicle door still ajar, when the janitress who chanced upon me promptly smiled and said, “Ah, kayo pala ‘yung nagbababa.”



I smiled back, out of uncertainty more than anything else. To be told that one's behavior is different after all requires an amount of introspection. In the midst of new lesson plans to be created, the easiest decision was to do it the way everyone does: put the toilet seat up after use honey, no one ever really uses it other than you. And so I did, and while I was at it, took to life in the local university like another shoe was always in danger of dropping, where things that I thought were default only proved my own misconceptions about the world.

In this LU, for example, no other woman drove her own car, which is to say that the ones who had cars had drivers—*this* was considered as the right way to do it. Which may explain the lack of gentlemanly parking behavior. Case in point: when I backed into a car that was backing up too, its driver—while startled by the sight of me in a blue dress and high heels—started screaming at me, complete with gesturing hand and shaking head, as if I had committed the gravest of all sins. The man was disgusted, it seemed, that I had proven his presumption true that all women are bad, if not stupid drivers. And of course when the guard was called to be witness to the mess, he too just shook his head, and without saying anything actually said, “Babae kase.”

Neither my outfit, my version of pa-cute, nor invoking the fact that I was a teacher got me anywhere. But taking a leaf from my father's book did. I took out a business card, asked for the man's number, offered to pay, clarified that I was easy to find. The man quieted down, looked dumbfounded at my card, and settled for an uncomfortable “Salamat hija,” and went his way. I thought: what a triumph for the woman driver in me.

I would find out later as I told the story in the faculty room that this wasn't about being woman at all. It was about the fact that where we were no one ever offers to pay, even when one is obviously at fault. Tiny car mishaps thus turn into lifelong grudges and fodder for tsismis. Meanwhile, I just wanted out of a screaming match and for that reason alone was willing to pay, faults be damned.

In the same way that I'm that girl who will learn the habit of putting up the toilet seat, or not using a toilet seat at all, as a matter of blending in, I'm that girl who would rather not be part of a scene. And apparently, in both cases, it's a matter of class.

Mine, which forgets that a standard bathroom wouldn't have a toilet seat at all, and would be made of the most basic of stark white fixtures. Mine, which is embarrassed by the idea of a screaming match in the middle of a parking lot, as it is embarrassed by its failure to see that normal habits are relative, propriety an imposition, and that sometimes it isn't about the fact that I'm female. It's because I'm the one female who sticks out like a sore thumb, in a campus filled with so many other women.

For even more self-conscious me, this was like being forced to look in the mirror, when I know it's a bad hair day, and I've got a pimple on my nose.

Conservatism in the Public Or Nova Villa, Is That You?

And in this public, that pimple is a big thing. On a day like any other, the janitress who also functions as elevator lady randomly asks, “Ma'am ang ganda ng balat niyo, anong linalagay niyo diyan?” And with the rest of the elevator now peering at your face, you can only mumble an answer that everyone now wants to hear, so you're forced to say it *again*, a little louder this time.

It didn't take long for it to become obvious: they were not only looking, they were watching. In the parochial world of the LU, everyone felt they had the right to comment on how you looked, what you said, where

you'd been and with whom. They talked about what I was wearing, what I was doing, how many bags I carried, the boy who'd pick me up first semester, but disappeared the second. And the talk, while possibly about praise, was also a lot about tsimis Pinoy style, the kind that could be as mean as it could be, and in your face.

And so, seeing you in a babydoll dress, every manong feels they have the right to snigger and ask, "Buntis ka?" You're not the thinnest of girls and you're told, "Uy, may maskulado dito ah," in a voice that to you is too loud to be harmless teasing between friends. You wear the wrong color top, or make-up for that matter, and you're told, "Ang itim mo ngayon ah." It was easy to see that this wasn't really about me as it was about an overriding aesthetic that this public believes in: the white and thin, in clothes that are conventional.

The only thing that made it worse was the conservatism of the LU women, who were even more difficult to satisfy. They, after all, created the unwritten dress code and enforced it to the letter, with every outfit that failed to meet the standard appearing on your record. The standard was about being covered up, and had no rhyme or reason. Sure, the no-spaghetti-strapped-top rule makes sense for teachers, but the no-sleeveless-tops sounds like a Sunday Church requirement circa the Spanish colonial era. Add the layer of this country's horrid heat, plus classrooms with very little ventilation, and all this really promises is a whole lot of *jabar* no matter how expensive your anti-perspirant is. And the moment you have sweat lining your top's underarm area, you've lost students' attention to the fascinating way your sweat travels, yes? And then you find out that jeans are not allowed, making you want to scream: What?!? In *maong* country where there's actually a song entitled "Blue Jeans"?

And yet by the end of the first semester, I had four pairs of slacks and had worn my long skirts so often the manongs (teacher and otherwise) started calling me *diwata*. But I also learned about flutter sleeves, which are technically not sleeves because they don't go around the arm, but just fall—quite prettily, I might add—from the shoulder to part of the upper arm. I found too that the no-jeans rule could in no way be used against a denim skirt.

But the higher-ups' aesthetic held court, and they wore it to the university everyday. The deans, the chairpersons, these women in power would never wear a pair of jeans, theirs being a generation with no understanding for this fashion staple. This is also a group of women who still wear shoulder pads every day, and for whom the only acceptable slippers aren't flip-flops but the furry bedroom slippers or the local *alfombra* in exactly the same color as their outfits. You don't know pencil cut until you've seen it in skirts of every kind, color and length; you don't know slacks if you haven't seen the kind that's tough and itchy.

Still unclear? Think Nova Villa. Specifically, Nova Villas with moles—and I don't mean the skin blemishes. These moles would report not just what's being worn by faculty, but what's being said. The next thing you know, you're reprimanded for being the jeans-loving girl who wears a wrap over your sleeveless top and removes it the moment you're in the classroom. You're labeled the rebel, questioning not just the dress code, but every unwritten rule, even quoting (gods forbid!) from the Magna Carta for Teachers, Nova Villas be damned. The next thing you know, you've been outed! Your loyalty is deemed questionable, and you have no one to trust.

As a co-teacher told me early into first semester, "Close quarters breach contempt."

English Speaking Only! ***Ab Kaya Pala Ang Tabimik Dito!***

It should have occurred to me the moment I was told that the huge red teacher's guide, green workbook, and red textbook were the important tools for being a teacher in the LU. It should've become obvious when

seven (count that!) departmental exams needed to be administered to monitor both the students' progress and the teachers' ability to go through the textbook according to the teachers' manual, on time, no excuses.

It should've occurred to me at the interview, at the demo, and then a week, a month, into making friends in the faculty room. This is an English Department and an LU where speaking English is a rare thing, even when it is deemed all-important. Many think they know to speak it, and correcting people is taken with much offense, regardless of how it's done, or where.

Now this is the stuff of blame-the-educational-system-rhetoric, but anyone who has taught in a public school would know that it isn't as simple as this. There's more to the lack of English skills than just blaming all teachers for it, from the ones who sell bras and cosmetics to those who sell longganisa and mais, from those who make and sell jewelry to those who get kickbacks from textbooks. The truth is there is a lack of free training for teachers, and there are education schools that churn out teachers with low English skills because these schools also have teachers who don't speak English.

Soon enough I found the other dropped shoe: maybe English isn't really relevant in a free local university where students just want to graduate and get a job, when what they will be are car mechanics and office managers, elevator boys and policemen. And while among the young faculty who teach them there are those who want to learn, and know they need to; and while there are senior faculty members who overextend themselves, studying on their own, utilizing the internet that ain't free or accessible in the local university; there are the infallible Nova Villa superiors. They impose English-speaking rules as easily as they break them. That they cannot be corrected is the saddest curse on these local universities and that is what's most difficult to forgive. Or fix.

At a departmental meeting, an embattled superior asks for sympathy and says, "I'm all against the odds here, *diba?* All against the odds," looking around the table, teary eyed. This of course doesn't do much for respect or credibility, something that comes to a head during observation week, when she grades her English faculty in the classroom. These superiors call the shots yet don't teach in the classroom or even speak in English at any point, whether in a formal setting or at some lunch with food from the President's office—where it is, by the way, an English-speaking zone.

It doesn't take long to realize that the more English-speaking zones there are, the less likely there's English proficiency. And it isn't really just about the students. It becomes normal to hear faculty members arguing during faculty meetings, "No, you cannot make me in haste!" Or hear another scolding a student, "I told you to submit on time, and you didn't, and what will I do now, and what will you do now?"

The bright lights here are young teachers who ask each other questions, albeit in whispers, about how to pronounce a word, or fix a sentence. The brightest of lights is in the kind of camaraderie this creates, the kind of sharing it requires of exercises and lessons that work in the classroom, of quizzes that have answers, of a common and real concrete goal to teach. *Just teach.*

There are teachers who hold onto this job for dear life, follow all the rules no matter how difficult or illogical, learn to teach by doing it every day, trust students much more than they're allowed or told. They live with knowing that teaching and learning are all-important, and yet they are made to think as well that there are more important and relevant things.

Such as following the dress code, and apologizing for tardiness and absences, or for forgetting to pass by the chairperson's office on any given day or week to say hi, hello, how are you. In a place where English-only zones exist, in a city that calls itself world class, on a campus where a four-story parking lot has been built, and the Olympic-size track oval has since been used by the Azkals for football training, English barely matters. What does



is staying on the good side of the right people.

Meanwhile, all I worried about was this: how to survive the six-hour days I had signed up for, labor as a teacher under such discouraging conditions, and run in my heels every morning. Meanwhile, my own demons were coming out as outsider, as middle class girl, whose openness to experiencing new things brought her to these halls, and who had nothing to lose because she's just passing through.

Factory Worker? Public School Teacher!

It would happen at a departmental meeting halfway through first semester, when a list of people with too many tardy counts was flashed on the overhead projector. And of course, my newly-hired self was number three on that list, highlighted in neon pink, the better to see it with, oh dear!

Thus began my daily race for the bundy clock, this teeny tiny machine that spelled the difference between being judged a good faculty member, over and above how good I was doing in the classroom, or how well I was abiding by the unwritten dress code, or the friends I made. In fact my numbers on the bundy were the only measure of me in the higher offices in this university, where faculty members don't have employee numbers and their IDs are practically irrelevant. My status as faculty member was dependent on my timecard, which every 11 days is brought up to Human Resources, so that our salaries can be computed. The race for the bundy made me feel farthest from being a teacher and an intellectual member of society. I was above all else an employee, and to a boss who didn't even know me.

Thus, I ran for dear life every morning to beat the bundy. At the end of my six-hour shift, what's called my Official Time, I rushed back to the bundy to time out. Failing to do so means being considered absent. Which does become even more tragic when you consider this fact: I'm only in the classroom for three hours each day. The next three hours are spent watching the clock. Were there facilities on campus those hours wouldn't matter, but without accessible internet or a proper library, in a faculty room filled with *all the teachers* of the University, where lies the rationale of Official Time?

Besides, when is a teacher ever on un-official time? I check papers at home, create tests and print them out myself, prepare for class for most of my waking time. My private life is fodder for student and university tsismis, where an absence here, a new hairstyle there, running into students at the mall, is considered worthy of talk that's curious and horrible and everything in between. Official Time forgets that when you're teacher you always are so, and you function beyond it too: you become guidance counselor and surrogate older sister in equal turns, the object of the male student gaze and the subject of female student insecurities no matter what you do. When you're teacher, you *live it*. There's no other way.

That bundy fails miserably at acknowledging that.

But no one thought it oppressive really, no one thought themselves oppressed. Or maybe my co-teachers just thought the oppression normal, that it is all that can be, and that there isn't much of a choice. Maybe while they thought I was fearless in asking questions, they also thought me stupid and naïve: why oh why did I think I could change a thing? Here, where everything revolves around the idea that we are luckier than most teachers. Because there's reason to believe that our hands will be held in a crisis, our ailments taken care of, our lives treasured by the ones in power.

Right here, where my running-in-heels skills were practiced, my version of conservative dressing



discovered, my notions of womanhood questioned, no one else believed in their capacity at change. Because there *is Him*.

I obviously don't mean the Lord.

The Lord is Alive! And He Is A City Mayor

Not mine, for I do not live in this city that treats me as government employee. But most of my co-faculty do, and they are proud of it: they live with social services unlike elsewhere in the country, with free hospitalization for every resident with a yellow health card, including major surgery (from a caesarian birth delivery to kidney stone removal), free education for every child whose parents or relatives live in the city (but uniforms and textbooks need to be bought), with senior citizens getting some extras like a cake (by the local bakery) and cash (P1,000 spanking pesos!) on their birthdays.

They are thankful for the fact of death insurance, i.e., a card that you pay a hundred pesos a year for, which ensures that you will get the following depending on how long you've been paying: a tent on your first year, monobloc chairs on your second, flowers on the third, a coffin on the fourth, burial on the fifth, and everything in from the sixth year onwards.

On His birthday, it's practically a holiday. A lunch of pancit and hard-boiled egg arrives on our desks in styro containers with a sticker of His face on it. The same happens on his wife's birthday a couple of days later. And when someone dies in His family, we are all required to mourn and grieve, which we prove by going to the wake. And when I say it's required, I mean the different colleges divide the hours of the day and night among themselves, ensuring that there's always a group of people at the wake, and doing a headcount is worth it. Oh, and it's so required that our classes are suspended for the day.

This is all to impress Him, really, to make Him see how much the university loves Him, and how much we care. And it isn't a love that's fake, I tell you. In fact, it's everything *and* real, proven to me on yet another day when He was reason enough not to have classes.

His campaign advertisement was to be shot in the university, and we were greeted with a bunch of lights and cameras set-up in the faculty room. His presence invoked silence as it did create an excitement in the space, people practically giddy, our lives on a standstill. It was like a rockstar was here. Wait, the Mayor *is* the rockstar.

Though his powers are ultimately about being Lord, one that we aren't allowed to forget. His logo is on every possible surface. Classrooms and buildings are in his campaign colors. Window grills and staircase railings form his initial, clocks across the local university have His face on display. His calendars line faculty members' desks, and on any given day someone is wearing a shirt with his face on it.

Where in the Catholic university the only other image higher than the teacher standing in front of the classroom is the crucifix above the blackboard, in this LU it's His portrait that takes up that space. Once, in a campus journalism class, I pointed out how everything in the university is set-up to remind students about who they owe their free education to, almost like an ongoing campaign for higher office. The students teased me about a hidden camera or voice recorder in the room, which might seem possible, but is highly improbable. He after all knows that if He tells the people of the university to jump, they will ask Him how high. He knows that they believe His every word, and that the city that will vote for Him begins in this university.



Not that I didn't appreciate certain revolutionary things in His university and His city. For the first time, filling out employment forms wasn't a stressful thing for abandoned-by-husband me. In this university, the options for civil status go beyond Single or Married, to the option of Annulled, and Separated. And when you check the latter box they respect your use of your maiden name. And if that isn't wonderful enough, the last option on the list is Others. There is, after all, living in, and yes, that is accepted as well regardless of sexuality. In this city, the Affidavit of Live In is a valid legal document, one that can get you some government employee housing. There is an acceptance here of the truths that exist in this country, where sexual preference and civil statuses aren't at all the way the Church and conservatism imagine it. Or wish it.

For all these reasons His wish is everyone's command. A finger isn't pointed at Him for much of what goes wrong. Instead He is saved by his ongoing creation as myth, one that's about the free gifts and extra cash, free food and Christmas canned goods He gives away. Yes, canned goods for Christmas, in a bag with His face on it, along with a couple of t-shirts with His face on it, too. It would all be wonderful were it not a bag of canned goods with an unfamiliar brand, one that rumors say is owned by Him. So is the bakery that makes those senior citizen cakes, the tent and chair rental and flower shop for that death card, too. This is spoken of in hushed tones, by the ones who are a little more critical even as they are bound within the systems that this kind of parochialism creates. To speak is never about questioning anything. To question anything is just ... inconvenient.

So when the cashier counts out your salary and keeps P20 pesos "for the boy scouts" you're forced into silence by everyone else. When you have to pay P50 for the medical clearance that the university requires, no one asks why it isn't free. When you have to pay P100 for what is literally a death card, you're told to think, what if *I do die tomorrow*? When your salary doesn't come on time, and you're forced to take a debt from the cooperative that of course thanks Him for their existence, you think, thank goodness for a co-op.

Here lies the absurdity. You love Him so much you don't realize that he's feeding you what's yours to begin with. It's the opposite of biting the hand that feeds you, when mouths learn to ask for so little. That little He can give, is always enough, because it's always more than others. It is tantamount to loyalty and love, so sincere that were I not faced with it, I wouldn't be able to imagine it.

The Lord is alive! We should all be so lucky to have the City Mayor on our side.

Not Quite the Road Travelled

The path to going public was one that made me brim with excitement. The walk away from it was a quiet letting go. Maybe because it had been such a noisy space, maybe because I had been living with so much white noise elsewhere, and the silence(s) of walking away steadied me. Maybe because it was something that had run its course, and that was that.

Meanwhile, the local university must have been happy to let me go, my superiors must've jumped for joy. It had become a home of sorts for almost a year; I could only be thankful for it. I knew I was passing through soon enough though; I knew I was running away from the rest of my life, and this space in the middle of nowhere was perfect for disappearance.

Except that here, I was just too much of a strange entity to blend in.

Not with the haircuts I spent on, the clothes and shoes I bought, the expensive coffee I still brought to school. Not with my inability to stay silent about the unexplained official time, or the unwritten dress code. Not



with my having come from elsewhere.

It's clear now that as they looked at me and talked about what I was doing, it must have also been a finger pointed right at me, the middle class girl who doesn't know what she's doing, what she has done, what she imagines she can do. And oh, what a vivid imagination I must have had, to think that the funny and absurd, the unjust and unfair, are exactly *just* that. In reality, these were being lived, these are lives that aren't mine.

There isn't much humility here, nor pride. Watching public education flex its muscles, learning about it from the ground, doesn't do much other than prove what we've known about it all along. Except that this time I have real people to talk about, I have experiences that prove what ails the system, I have words to use as a matter of introspection. I'd like to talk about change, but that would mean not having learned anything at all about my proper and correct place under the public local university sun.

Reflection seems about right, in the way that I did too often literally, even more so figuratively, in the face of pair upon pair of shoes dropping when I least expected it, in the face of a space defamiliarized because it wasn't mine. This local university must have had a good laugh watching me make like I'm one of them. Had I known it was a show, I would've worried a little more about my make-up. Or not.

Because they were in fact only seeing me based on who they were, not based on what I actually was. I had been judged the moment I arrived in my car, in my expensive shoes, running towards the bundy. I had been judged as the girl with much to hide, without any stake in this space we all shared. I was a stereotype they all knew in the back of their heads, one that they've seen before. They were not ones to be fooled.

Nor was I fooling myself. The closet is now emptied of most conservative clothes, save for those flutter sleeves that I've learned to love. But it is clear what I will not compromise, it is clear the life I cannot live, no jeans and no justice, both.

Now that closet isn't empty or full, it isn't for hiding or for revelation. It's just a closet with doors unhinged, disallowing closure. Now it's just a closet with space, and all its contingent possibilities.

Three Stories

Zosimo Quibilan, Jr.

Unpolished Things

I

He grabbed my wrist and led me through the woods. We walked like there were duck-egg shells all over. With each step, gravel crackled on the dirt road. He had those unpolished things instead of eyes.

He wouldn't stop talking. I felt dizzy listening to his story about a vanished cliff.

"What are we looking for again?" I interrupted him.

"You tell me," he answered, sounding like a host of some late-night AM radio show.

"This?"

It was dangling from the tree, glistening. I couldn't see it clearly but I smelled musk. I was sure it wasn't some dying animal.

"There, it's beating faintly. Listen," he added. He positioned himself beneath it. He looked up then opened his mouth.

"What are you doing?" I asked.

He wasn't able to answer as a few drops of sap fell from the banana heart.

II

The wind was scorching when we returned to the city. We walked some more until we reached the corner next to Del Pilar St.

"The fountain at Remedios Church is still on," he suggested.

Agua bendita, I thought. We needed cleansing.

I flagged the first jeepney that came. When he had settled inside, I went to the side of the driver and paid the fare. On my way in, the driver pelted me with curses and loose change. I bailed as the jeepney sped away.

With nothing else to do, I followed one of the peso coins the driver threw at me. It shined as it rolled toward the church. I dug inside my pockets and threw in two more peso coins. When all three coins stopped rolling, the people who couldn't get inside to hear Mass held their breath then started jumping for joy.



Rotonda

JR sat on the pavement. He had been bathing in sweat after walking from Recto to Kalentong. In a few hours, had he not stopped, he would have reached past Crossing, Kapitolyo, then Simbahan.

He took more time resting. A blanket of diesel exhaust and dust further dried his parched skin. A little later, he decided to flag down the next tricycle. It had slipped his mind that he didn't have change for the fare.

He was about to drop his arm when a peso-coin-sized raindrop fell on his palm. A few more crashed on his forehead. Some more landed on his shoulders. He counted each drop until it totaled the cost of commuting daily from Pasig to Quiapo until he reached the ripe age of 490.

He cupped each possible drop and stuffed them in his pockets. He couldn't afford to let them slip between his fingers.



Wakasan

A few moments before he disappeared, I heard him pleading.

“Please quit soaping me. I can read your words – trapped inside the bubbles,” his words rang. “And put away the laundry beater! I still need to rinse off the blood.”

His next words were calmer, softer. “Honey, keep away from the ditch. Enough with the bleach.”

I was not sleepy anymore when he uttered his last words. “Morning. It breathes.”

The cushion made of clouds smothered him.

He flapped his delicate wings that spanned half the sky. There, as far as my eyes could see, he melted.

The sun’s dying glow peeked from tiny cracks. Yellowing leaves rained after rain had left. The lampposts bowed. It was a sin to make a sound. There was no use praying after they discovered the bodies.

They made up creatures. Half men, half human. Creatures donning habits. Goat’s lashes. Tails for arms. Legs from chairs. Oh, the steps they took could drive them away, mad.

The neighbors steered clear of their windows. They avoided knowing where he bounced and vanished in the blink of an eye or after lightning rent the sky.

Thirteen Umbrellas: A Memoir

Pauline Lacanilao

1

To battle the broken alchemy
of unanswered prayer, my parents
flipped their umbrellas to catch the blessing
but the rain would not turn to gold.

2

My brothers, small magicians, turned our living room into a beach
just by opening an umbrella and spreading a towel on the tile.

3

No umbrella's spokes can stand
against the desert's sideways sandstorms.
No ancient Arab secret, no pleading of no young girl
can stop the flipping of the hourglass.

4

At eighteen, I traded my Atlantic
for a Golden State summer
where a panhandler with a lawn chair and umbrella
asked me for change and I did.

5

When Ondoy hit, I had just found out about your affair,
stayed in bed until I couldn't handle hearing
the syllable of your name slashing through the wind
and walked to work through the hurricane, umbrella free.



6

They laid me off
using words like: parent
company, umbrella, and hiring
freeze. I packed everything into a box
that I have yet to reopen.

7

Grief will turn the mind into a bat
that flits blindly through the dark corridor of night
and disguises itself among the umbrellas at daytime
hanging upside down and out of use.

8

My two hearts cross a swaying bridge.
I hold an umbrella in each hand
to cover both their heads.

9

I dreamt of a toothpick umbrella
on the brim of a glass falling
at the touch of a woman, then woke up
in a new country alone.

10

If my love could rein the continents back into Pangaea
so that I could hitchhike to the landlocked eastern seaboard,
would you meet me under the umbrella at your parents' old beach house
to watch the sun rise over the Western Sahara?

11

Regret is a widower who walks from window to bed and back
using his wife's umbrella as a cane.

12

I wonder who found the body, who washed it,
who picked the hollow point bullets out of his chest
(nine silver umbrellas rained with blood),
and swaddled him like a baby for his cradle of soil.



13

By Christmas Eve, my mother had lost
both her parents. In the distance,
fireworks sounded like umbrellas
opening on a beach.



Between what we know is finite and the person in your mouth

Carlos Quijon, Jr.

We had to look for the part where the phrase can be broken, the part where notions can come out for air. The gesture, the looking, was partly undressing. The creation of sound possibilities. You say *we say love and we don't need it*. I say *we don't need it*. I was paring off what was *ornament, ornate, obtuse, obfuscating*. Between what we know as finite and me inside your mouth I can only think of buying oranges. I would take a bus and leave the undressing to you, and the impossibilities your phrasing tends to.



There are only statements and the pushing to create more statements. Only, the statements and the direction they are taking become more specific. The statements come faster. The options more finite. For instance, there is only pushing: *Let's make love. I think I like you.* For instance: *Clearly there is something unsaid, this is poetry.*



Between *finitude* and *definitive*. Oranges are good for nausea. Bus rides were spent with someone eating oranges, sucking oranges, chewing the segments and creating flowers out of its pulp. As if the fruit's smell was not enough. As if if they make the flowers look real enough they will come up with a panacea. There were kids who dipped the segments in rock salt—they licked the salt off the fruit and never ate the segment. At terminals children will toss the nasty piece and will swear not to eat oranges for the rest of their lives.



I want to dispense with the *fictional* and replace it with the *finite*. *Once upon a time is a whore* says Walter Benjamin. I will write a story and start it with *once*. That way the story I will tell you is a part of a definite continuum of plots and narratives which I will call *Between what we know as finite and me inside your mouth*. I could choose whether I will be just a part of “we” or if I am “I.” That way I would never have to be fictional. I would just have to be *finite*.



The phrase *Between what we know as finite and you coming in my mouth* will be forced to break open; notions of the mouth pried loose from the pushing notions of art beauty and communication. We will suture the mouth, or make the mouth full, or make the mouth swallow. There are the finite impossibilities of the mouth. We will unmouth the mouth.

And there will lie the *unsaid*, the silence, the cathartic.



This is poetry so I will talk about you. And your mouth. And my dick inside your mouth. And my mouth full of your dick. And the day you said *I love you*. That day when I had outgrown undressing your mouth and what it has to say. That day I was looking not at your mouth but at the scar you have not mentioned and I always thought never existed. That day I was thinking of what we know as *finite*.

Taking the Train

EJ Galang

Stay in line. Enter when there is space to occupy.

Sometimes the wait is long but at least we're dry.

Only x number of people at a time where x is a function of human girth.

Concerning seats: when available, take.

Everything left behind turns small.

The train going the opposite direction always travels twice as fast.

Attend to yourself. Admire in silence. Stare when bothered. Withdraw upon stare-back.

"Give way to elders, women and children."

"Beware of thieves."

Not everyone leaves when doors open. The better ones make room.

Never deny anyone journey.

We are here. We wish to be someplace else.

The next station waits. The train does not.

Cartomancer

Chiles Samaniego

Rayuela, on the trains again. He rides them end to end and back, changing trains only after he's exhausted each line, crossing platforms when the train doors slide open to reveal an interchange, taking a lift or escalator up-level (or down) where necessary; when he can, he goes against the tide of the masses of commuters that ebb and flow at increasingly predictable intervals over the course of each day, but does not resist if he is carried along with them. He makes little marks with a disposable pen on an awkwardly folded, unfolded, refolded railway map, occasional words already scribbled, many along the periphery, in another hand, some with lines drawn under them, encircled or crossed out, most clustered around the little shapes that indicate stations, landmarks, points of interest: "shopping mall," "condominium," "cinema," "theater," "post office," "bus terminal," "airport," "factory," "school," "hospital," "museum," "library," "park," "garden," "mausoleum," "food," sometimes "good food." Three words repeat more frequently than others: "overhead," "underground," "street level." Mathematical symbols in lieu of grammatical notation, no "ands," no "ors," no articles, no punctuation: translating grammar into mathematics, geography into geometry. The process continues: on his third or fourth run, Rayuela begins replacing the words with numbers, erasing the words, both handwritten, his and the other's, and printed, crossing them out with excoriating lines, up and down and side to side zigzags of black ink. On his sixth or seventh, new symbols appear, hectic arrangements of lines, straight and curved, linear and parabolic; sinusoidal waves appear in one corner, connecting points plotted on the precise cruciform of a graph, x and y axes drawn heavily once, twice, three times; a z line penetrates the owl-face coordinates (0, 0) at an obtuse angle; more sinusoids.

On the thirtieth day he weeps, or appears to weep; he is seen with the map pressed with both hands against his face. Later, a child tugs at the hem of his shirt. He peels the map away from his face, looks down; the face sags, heavy with tears, eyes moist but blank. The child reaches up, offering Rayuela the end of a string; the other end is tied around the neck of a red balloon. The balloon bounces once, twice, three times on his nose. He accepts the string; the child smiles, looks away, starts to hum; at the next stop, the child skips happily away, out the train, through the doors, onto the platform, into the outstretched arms of a young woman in a red cotton dress and canvas, high-top sneakers. The doors slide shut just before they embrace. The rest of the day, Rayuela stands motionless at the precise geometric center of the train (no, not the center, but just a bit off, a few meters nearer the nose of the train, off to one side), holding the balloon by its string. The balloon hovers next to his ear, leaning forward as the train accelerates, back as it stops, occasionally bouncing on the cartilaginous swirls, the labyrinth of the earlobe, occasionally his cheek; he appears to be listening, that look of remembering; a wry smile



forms on his lips; now and then, the smile spreads tentatively across his face, but never reaches the eyes; the eyes remain moist but blank.

On the thirty-second day he begins again, tracing, retracing, crossing and re-crossing his steps; more numbers, more symbols, each more obscure and incomprehensible than the last. The balloon is tied to his wrist. It has started to deflate, the string now tracing a low, sagging arc, the balloon trailing behind him as he enters and exits trains, crosses platforms, rides up and down lifts and escalators. At the end of the day, the balloon scurries wearily along on the ground behind him.

On the fifty-sixth day he is forced to replace the pen. It takes most of the morning to find one with black ink; he settles on a four-color clicky top from a convenience store at one of the stations. The balloon now thoroughly deflated, Rayuela has wound the string around his arm so that the balloon hangs, an empty red rubber bladder, at his wrist. At midday, he stands waiting on a platform, the crowd growing heavy around him. He begins to fidget; the next train takes forever to arrive. A woman beside him screams obscenities into a mobile phone; others around her pretend not to hear, not to listen, not to notice. Eventually they are asked politely to leave the station, take the train in the opposite direction or go down to street level for a bus, a taxi; later, he learns a woman had fallen on the tracks somewhere along the line. For reasons he never learns, it takes the rest of the day to remove the body. A gap emerges on the map, an attenuated layer, a bare spot in the day's sprawl of ink.

That night, Rayuela sits at the end of his bed, staring at the hotel room's distorted reflection on the slick, inert screen of the television set. He sneezes, once, twice, three times; the reflection on the television screen ripples with epileptiform spasms. He blows his nose into a handkerchief. His sinuses throb, adenoids swollen. The red bladder balloon hangs from his wrist like a large, viscous drop of blood, arrested in its fall. The city, a burnt orange glow hanging over its dark silhouette, lies waiting/not waiting on the other side of the cold, plate glass window.

On the seventy-ninth day, Rayuela, on the trains again. He unfolds the map completely, revealing a lattice, a palimpsest, this multilayered matrix of numbers, long decimal sequences interrupted by symbols, the lines, the words, the map, the graphical representation of the city-wide network of trains, the city itself obliterated by the mathematics now filling every bit of space, every square centimeter (they use the metric system here, remember) of glossy paper, front and back. He studies the map, the equation, examining the scrawled patterns and symbols, holding it close to his face in the cold interior light of the train, making corrections, amendments here and there. He shakes his head, uncertain, uncomprehending; does not find what he is looking for. He refolds the map, careful to follow the oldest creases, slides it into a breast pocket. Leans against a metal pole erected at the exact geometric center of the car (no, not the center, just a bit off to one side); head back, resting on the cold steel supporting his weight with indifference; he shakes his head, stares, eyes still blank, but dry. He exhales slowly, looks around, unseeing. Alfred, lying beside him in the dark almost a year ago now, whispering in his ear: This isn't it; this isn't the city.

The train begins to curve; accelerating, hurtling towards the heart of the city—it traces an incomplete arc.

On the night of the eightieth day, exactly thirty minutes after the arrival of the last train at Central Station, a custodian finds an electronic ticket, abandoned, on the floor of one of the trains. The ticket was last used the day before for entry at Central Station; no record of exit. The ticket contains enough credits for exactly one trip, taken from one end to the other along the network's main line, which runs from the international airport to the border. Security is alerted; all the parked trains, the entire station is swept from end to end, top to bottom. The staff is called together; all on-duty personnel are accounted for; none of them lay claim to the ticket. Off-duty personnel are summoned; no results. Word is sent to the other railway stations, on and off the



Central Line, Station Masters are called out of their beds; the net is cast over the city. Within the hour, the Station Masters report the discovery of one electronic ticket each, discarded on the grounds surrounding their respective stations; 77 tickets in all, one for every station on the four main lines. At 3 A.M., the Minister of Transportation is alerted; the Minister answers the phone on the first ring, voice still coarse with sleep. By 3:15 A.M. she is at Central Station, dressed in the crisp blue executive pantsuit that is the de facto uniform of her office, directing the investigation from the Central Station's Administrative Office, now the designated Command Center. The border is closed; all flights out of the international airport are canceled indefinitely. The National Guard is put on alert. Records are examined: all 77 tickets found at stations other than Central Station were used twice, once for admission and once for egress, one ticket a day, almost every day over the last two months or so; no discernible pattern can be divined from the passage of each ticket from one station to another, each ticket used once at the beginning of a day, once at the end; no discrepancies are found. Nothing but that one last electronic ticket, the 78th, that single last point of entry suggesting anything out of the ordinary, that one electronic ticket now resting in the palm of the Minister's gloved hand, fingers curled around that rectangular piece of plastic, an artifact of a final trip taken, a journey begun, but incomplete, untermiated.

* * *

“The map is not the territory.” – Alfred Korzybski

00 Φ

Arbeen Acuña



/* 00 t */

01 End

01 loops

01 while they

02 begin

01 spiraling

02 into their

03 ill logic

01 of callous pretense

02 of development

03 of future humans

04 with hologram souls

05 programmed for the sake

01 of the Operating System,

02 that sets everything in Default

03 that recommends Applications

04 that will run without the errors

05 that prove how outdated platforms

06 that fluctuate to near-shutdown flop,

07 will only offer these options:

08 Restart? Reformat? Remember

01 the order brought by Civilizationalization

02 versus the chaos wrought by the Firefox Guerrillas,

03 the freedom to Downloads enabled by Webmasters,

04 versus the bondage of Cultural Devolution,

05 the viruses disabled by reform technocrats

06 versus the upgrades cancelled by revolution trolls,

07 the right to free multiple cyber self projections

08 versus censorship of anarchic individuals

09 desiring nothing but every person's liberty

10 to do everything in good faith that everyone wants

11 everything to do good in everyone's faith that rests

12 in the Operating System that wants everyone

13 to do all things within algorithmic ethics set



01 by programming language Nazis into ideological state apparatuses,
02 by fascist information-phishing hackers into system files and databases,
03 by if-then-else theorists into non sequitur logic that begs the questions solved
04 by infinite loops and linked lists that end in eternal torrents seeded, leeches and shared
05 by pirates and other lumpens caught paralyzed by unseen oceans of code, waves of
06 biomechanic sex between minds and circuits, eyes and LCDs, souls and logs of
07 binary apathy, streams of consumerist consciousness, star complex tempests of
08 bigots mocking preachers evangelizing cyber whiners attention-whoring to
09 bind anyone blinded by the blank loading screen that loads nothing but pop-up ads to
10 bile forums of literary pornographies and intellectual masturbation

∞ by tweeting exhibitionists bullying noobs bragging their 10-inch dicks via their voyeur stats of cocksuck followers and handjob likes ∞

by like-mind-dead hyperreal friends checking who viewed their profiles tracked and documented 10
by Big Peeping Brother Tom who raids electric dreams and penetrates backdoors of minds 09
by brute force like bestial trojan horse rape or by facebook and new world order biddings: 08
Buy the Book™, Buy Monthly Newspaper™, Buy Polar™, Buy Later™, Buy Now™, Buy Tomorrow™, 07
Buy the Way, the Truth and The Life™, Buy Choice™, Buy Laws™, Buy Gods™, Buy Guns™, 06
Buy Ass™, Buy Yourself™, Buy Myself™, Buy Himself™, Buy Itself™, Buy Themselves™, Buy the People™, 05
Buy your -ism™, Buy Curiosity™, Buy Sexual™, Buy eMail™, Buy SMS™, then Death™ 04
Buy the Fault™, Buy Execution™, Buy Filipinos™, Buy the author™, Buy the artist™, 03
Buy more™, Click here™, Read more™, Try this™, Play for free™, You've won™, Friend requests™, Deactivate™? Now™? 02
Now, deviate from the norms and sign up for the struggling 01



Fibonacci fetishists nearing the end of the 13
endless Sequence for proportionate distribution 12
foraging millions of lives from both sides of the Fence 11
impaling the Neutral—to the point of no restore, 10
formatting indifferent drives into pure free space, 09
never to be found even in the Recycle Bins— 08
Fences witness and record in Browser Histories 07
nothing of those who did nothing but watch history 06
unfold before their camera computer screen eyes, 05
find drama in tragedies on their CCTVs, 04
indulge in profoundness of the form and this content, 03
ignore the plight of the number of users logging 02
into an Ubuntu Front by Netizens serving 01

as links to the Sequence programmed 08
to decrease Webmaster Control 07
over privileges of those 06
non-Administrator accounts, 05
to end processes of Windows 04
surveillance by the Programmers 03
of The Operating System, 02
to assert for free Domain Names, 01

to update weapons 05
at the Renaissance 04
from Quotients of F, 03
where $F_{sub\ n}$ is 02
 $F_{sub\ n}$ less one, 01

plus $F_{sub\ 03}$
n less two, 02
commencing 01

the same 02
loops that 01

now 01

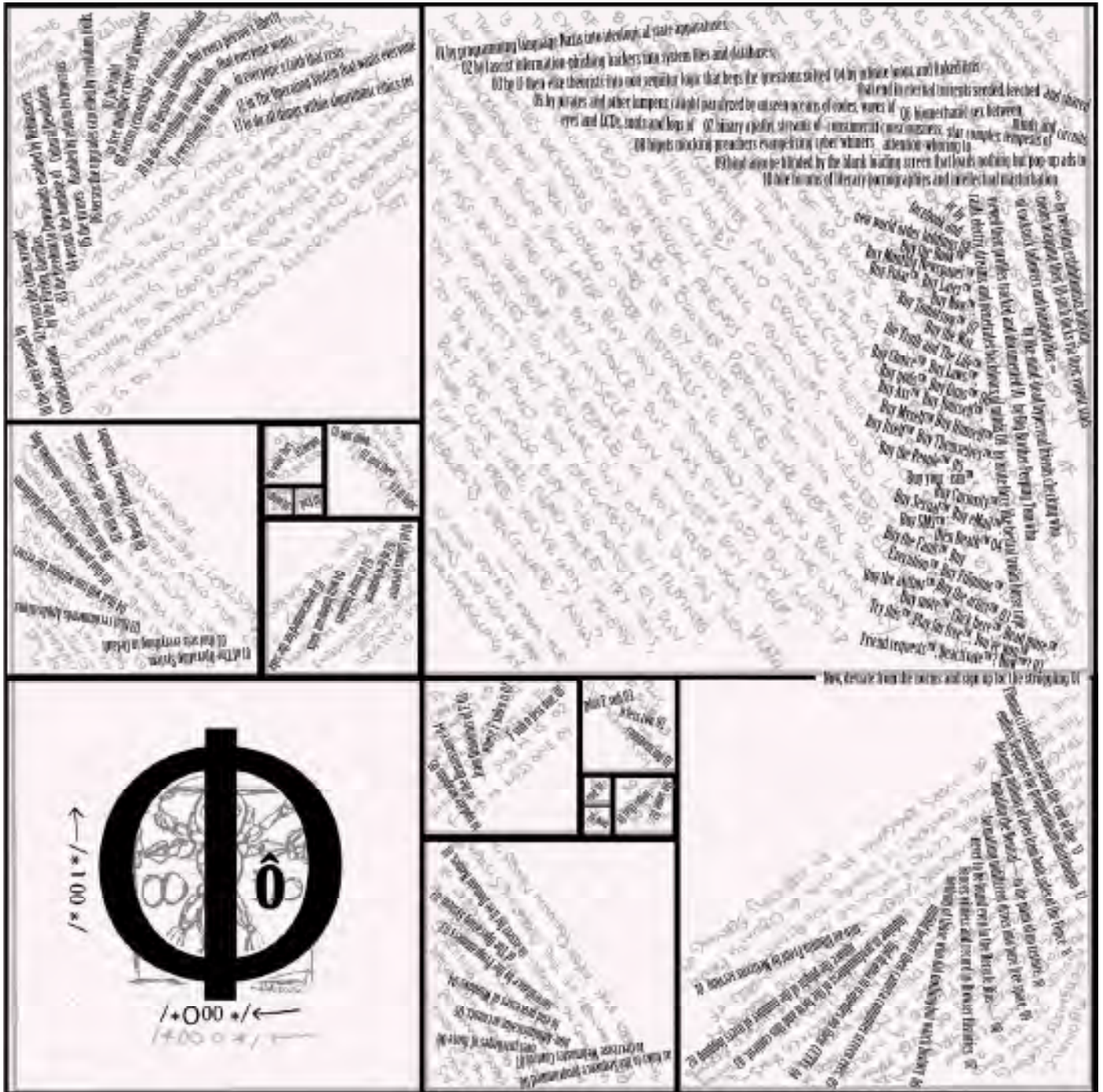
end. 01

/* 00 0 */

.

00 Φ

Arbeen Acuña



A Process

Vyxz Vasquez

1. Listen.
2. Rain beats on the rain outside. Leaves fall and lie on each other.
3. Fire-finger. Finger-fire. Fire-finger. Pulse. Let it guide you.
4. Smell the sweat and lavender on cotton.
5. Graze lips faintly on sinewy spaces. Silk-like, hard to ignore.
6. Taste coconut-wine skin. Pure. Heady. Heavy.
7. Sneak tongue in. Go soft. Go hard.
8. Create crevices from fingertips.
9. Fire-fire. Finger-finger. Fire-fire. Pulse.
10. Let the rain stifle wild cries.
11. Tweak the tender nipple. Nibble.
12. Enter with force. Transcend the void.
13. Start rhythm. Fire-finger-finger-fire-fire-finger-finger-fire.
14. ...
15. Beasts.
16. ...
17. Leaves.
18. ...
19. Rain.
20. Let your body make all those noises.
21. Let the animals.
22. Rain leaves all the beasts inside.
23. Listen.

Please Repost: Hijacking Facebook Against Ondoy

Catherine Candano

Death of distance between cities, islands, seas—the internet did it. Death of social distance—that came with the immediacy of Facebook.

My default webpage used to be Facebook's home page, but now it isn't. Since the flooding in September last year, trying to sift through my friends' (and friends of friends') livefeeds and status updates seemed the right thing to do. It seemed like one of the only things I could do, until I couldn't stand clicking the refresh button anymore.

* * *

The time of the floods for me was dreamlike. The day it hit, I was at home and glued to the television set, dry. Women and children on the roof called the TV stations as the only way they could tell people they needed help. Call it the hell of inaction. The day after it hit, I was stuck in the airport on my way back to grad school in Singapore and every chance I could get soon after, on Facebook checking my friend's livefeeds, dry.

The hell of dry distance.

Initially it was good to be away from the madness, I'll be honest. But it soon became a terrible thing to be seas away and dry. To compensate for being away, I hung onto the simulacra. The next best thing was to rely on those who were on the ground, those who got their feet wet, and what they were thinking, feeling, fearing.

On Facebook they all were, updating with every screen refresh. Like some bad, bad movie you couldn't tear your eyes away from—the grainy Youtube videos flashed bloating bodies tethered with rope, sunken homes, whole cities, with barely audible cries for help in the background.

After the first day of not sleeping back in Singapore, I watched the videos shared by Facebook friends on mute. The strange buzzing sound that seemed a combination of the rain's endless steady downpour and human screams played on with every video I saw. The videos are still there today, eternally on replay. It was a sort of penance, the obsession for information.

The laws of physics say that unless trapped in parallel universes, one cannot occupy two spaces at the same time. One cannot be physically in two countries, for example. Matter won't allow it. And in the case where your physical body in the real world takes a beating with one nasty flu—one wonders if taking to your computer, going online and on-Facebook, and posting "home sick as a dog" as your status will change anything. Anything that is, in the real world, offline.



I was witness, there in cyberspace, an Ondoy information junkie. But was that enough to care?

Will a Facebook status that pleads for anyone to check on an aunt trapped alone in her two story house after a heart operation, matter?

* * *

Hands down, one of the things Facebook is damn good at is state-of-mind-capture.

I love how you could read a single page on your Facebook livefeed and have a pulse of your friend's day. "Had a bad day." "Wondering about the elections." "Anyone know how to make spaghetti with leftovers?" Their currency? The day-in-the-life snapshot with all the intimacy of an ardent lover, or on the flip side, an equally ardent stalker.

With social networking websites on the internet like Facebook, I could be seen and see others as they choose to reveal themselves, through a smattering of words in a status box, at precise moments in real time. All information we disclose, which gets uploaded on the web, goes out there into the wide world. And this being a website specifically for social networking—we like doing social things. We like people and swapping snapshots with them online cities, islands, oceans away. Play games with your little sister who is using her computer in school while you're at home—yes. Flirt with a friend's friend who 'danced the hula with you' by poke-ing him back while he's at his office overseas—yes.

Our words, made by ordinary people online, are broadcasted and shared; and we can't get enough of our own information stream. We put those words up there, and we read, read, read everyone else's. Think about those self-disclosed, self-confessed bits of your friends floating around Facebook's home page. I do, and it scares me.

Where does it go exactly—all of those bits of human-powered, typefaces swapping through internet connections, back-and-forth ending in a steady stream of who does what, when and why on Facebook's live feed? Worse, I wonder, what does this endless stream that tells others what I'm doing now do in the real world?

Millions of these isolated, personal decisions on what to type and post online are captured on social networking websites, as we update our profiles and broadcast the other hundred or so friends (or friends of friends) and we hope it matters somehow. When a friend makes a witty comment, we "support" by "like-ing it." But how far can "like-ing" online status posts go in the real world? Promote your passion for a local animal shelter, yes. Recruit people to support your cause, maybe. Reach out and touch someone, apart from virtually "poke-ing," how?

* * *

Being a citizen located a sea away from the devastation of my own country, as were many others—I was forced to answer what would constitute collective action online. The last thing I wanted was to be guilty of being a click-through activist—joining all the causes, signing all the e-petitions, drowning in the endless online discussions on forums about this and that is—but what was I doing with my hands other than mouse-clicking?

Early in September 2009, a few weeks before Ondoy, debates about the public health care bill were heating up the U.S. legislature. I was struck by how rapidly an anonymous campaign spread around Facebook, including Filipino networks, coinciding with the domestic townhall meetings to discuss the bill at the time.

One tool for me stood out—reposting. Posting something that wasn't yours primarily, is at the core of the sharing part of social media. Facebook was the forest dry enough for wildfire to spread.



The message reposted was “No one should die because they cannot afford health care, and no one should go broke because they get sick. If you agree, please post this as your status for the rest of the day.” The swiftness in which the message was reposted on Facebook status boxes was one factor that contributed to its portrayal in the media as a social network-based collective action—it was a pro-healthcare bill political stance. This stance contrasted with what was then largely negative mass media coverage of citizen’s sentiments at townhall meetings, griping about public costs of universal healthcare.

As jubilant as mass media were about picking up the political virus, I could not help but be skeptical of how effective this type of action was. Not that it was a bad thing, to wear one’s public positions about how we should care for others, on T-shirts, in the same way a long time ago, others would hoist flags during protests. But beyond the win for ‘Facebook activism,’ as they began calling it, I had anxieties.

To me, it seemed that I would need to grapple with the question of how much collective action in the real world, real action, was borne out of cumulative personal choices of many Facebook users to repost? Granted that to Facebook readers and friends-of-friends, this represents a normative and ethical argument for healthcare policy, I wondered what would be the next step after this Facebook chain status-reposting phenomenon on healthcare bill. What life did the act of reposting have outside of Facebook?

If Facebook users passed the message on with a link to the local congressman’s website, would the chain message matter more? Will representatives look at the location of the Facebook user, consider his status message, and count him as a vote for the passage of the bill? Without a collective real-world component as a catch-basin for this surge of online buzz, I would be hard-pressed to consider this online campaign a form of extra-state collective action. Somehow the words click-through activism seemed both relevant and flighty at the same time. Yes, I can repost, but so what?

* * *

When the typhoon hit for a span of six hours on 26 September 2009, rainfall totalling the monthly average fell in parts of the Northern Island of the Philippines, Luzon. Citizens used social media to counter the massive inability of the state to provide adequate information, and public rescue and relief for the flooding disaster that followed. Since emergency hotlines of government agencies were busy, cellular networks were clogged, and TV crews had more than enough to handle, social networking sites like Facebook became the choice source and means for providing and exchanging information.

Compared to the Facebook campaign on U.S. health care, the Facebook activity of Filipinos in relation to Ondoy was more organic and spontaneous. There was a steadfastness, a different sense of urgency to action there. Filipinos employed the pass-the-message approach to disseminate critical public care information, treating Facebook as a highway between people’s social networks.

The first repostings were hard-pressed and desperate—on missing friends and neighbours and requests to spread notice of their last known location, and pleas for rescue from rapidly-rising floodwater in homes. To call attention to vulnerable cases, some Facebook users described the dire situations—a pregnant woman on the roof with nowhere else to go and no rowboat in sight; a patient having just recovered from an operation trapped in the second story of a home. Others were looking for friends or relatives they had not heard from and knew were in flooded areas. It was a forcible prayer on the long-shot potentials of linked networks—maybe someone somewhere knew of them, and if they were okay.



This coordinated data was later turned into a Google Map representation and a database manned by volunteers from a TV network and a university Facebook profile to illustrate rescue needs in the metropolis. Citizen groups used the information and voluntarily rescued trapped people from their homes. Members of a varsity rowing team offered assistance by paddling their way around waterlogged streets on a rubber boat. Some Facebook users with private boats or jet skis posted their personal mobile numbers to receive information about those who needed rescuing. Later, users reposted a collation of national and local government hotlines, which had begun trickling into TV news as the disaster continued. In the wake of slow rescue action by state agencies, there were efforts from civil society to gather information online in a useful shape and form.

* * *

In the next 36 hours, the waters receded too slowly.

One could not help but notice that a tougher Facebook user among Filipino networks had hijacked its fluffy “social” side. I would have to say that Filipinos hijacked Facebook from a silly breed of sociality. And I’m certain Mark Zuckerberg, the founder of Facebook, probably wouldn’t have expected that.

Stern admonition and words of warning started appearing on status boxes, addressed to users of the networking site who reverted to the usual fun activities of social networking, such as posting results of interactive quizzes. It was almost as if a brand of Facebook user emerged that had no use for Facebook’s claim to fame—fun. Readers of livefeeds searching for ways to help in relief efforts could not be bothered to know which aging rockstar you could be.

Facebook status reposts turned to synthesizing information across the various relief and assistance centers that mushroomed, including information for mobilizing aid from overseas. Reposted status messages were passing around almost hourly updates for volunteers to relief stations, matching inventory of dry goods in relief centers that were low on certain resources in one part of the city with other centers which were overstocked. Call it smart relief-crowd-sourcing at work.

There was a watchdog function as well to the Facebook posts with users providing reports of political figures repackaging relief goods with slogans for the upcoming presidential campaign, or refusing to distribute such without media coverage. Later on, the mass media picked up on these allegations, fulfilling their quota for news on the disaster but also for the politics beat. Call it the grouchy relief-sourcing working overtime.

Since the online activity was mirroring real-time needs of civil society to address the offline rescue and relief operations outside of state management, I began to consider this Facebook reposting phenomenon as a form of extra-state collective action.

Facebook governance is largely dictated by its private owners and not the state, which is the reason why so many users have rallied against its corporate policies like its privacy settings. In a way, we have to remember that Facebook is really some ugly corporation trying to make money out of our facetime on the social networking site that has provided the ride. And in the hour of inspiration and desperation, Filipinos chucked the pilot out of the window and made up the flight map.

When I compare this experience with that of the American healthcare campaigners, there is a marked difference. The depth and interaction with the issue and resulting real-world activism are the main considerations.

In the case of the debates on American healthcare reform, the case illustrates that extra-state political identification is possible, but stops short of the kind of collective action needed to translate private acts into



public influence. On the other hand, the case of the Philippine typhoon disaster management on Facebook illustrates that beyond political identification is the use of a platform to consolidate direction and information where minimal knowledge on the crisis situation is available, with a certain degree of “smartness” echoing Howard Rheingold.

As the waters receded, the man on the street reporting becomes fodder for mass media with limited access. The anonymous face behind that first Facebook status post, which later becomes attributed by re-posting becomes a more tangible data source for collective rescue and relief efforts coordinated not by the state but by private citizens.

Perhaps the knowledge of the Philippine’s limited resources (reportedly the government disaster council only had 25 rubber boats for the metropolitan area) or political leaders’ misappropriation of resources (reportedly the President funded foreign trips through a disaster contingency fund), highlighted how private resources from citizens were needed to be marshalled and coordinated in some way. I would say that the use of the Facebook status as new tool for disaster coordination, apart from mere identity politics’ soapbox, becomes relevant to offline collective action the moment it enables transcendence of the networked individualism at its core.

Manuel Castells came up with the idea of timeless time that plugged in, technologically- networked societies experience. We seem to be able to loosen our preordained shackles to time, and at least negotiate distances, physical and social. So in this sense Facebook is an appendage that extends where we are naturally limited, tethered to a socket on dry land as Manila sinks into the floodwaters; we try to form that virtual human chain link by link in the hope it matters.

* * *

It’s been a year after Ondoy. The newspapers in Manila are still talking about all those unkept promises—retrieving the dead from shallow mass graves, rebuilding and resettling with more care, serving up more kindness. I’m finishing up my thesis on action on the internet, and unsure of the answers my questions have raised. And Facebook still has its share of Bejewelled-addicts, virtual farmers and restaurant owners serving up sustenance in bytes.

Reposting is real. Whether its hijacking effects persist in the real world—that’s a systemic impact that even hard-core activists can’t expect. Reliable or not, I think there is a some sort of power in the idea that keystrokes do so much more than type out characters. Maybe now, the question should be whether acting at light speed means it lasts.

Oh, and a joke.

RP: How many people does it take to pack an emergency relief kit? A hundred.

On the average, one to put everything in a bag for their neighbor, and 99 to coordinate from within their homes.

Keep

Petra Magno and Joseph Casimiro

I am thinking of rain and its uncut finger-
nails versus topsoil and grass roots and
the everlasting cities of ants. I am pounding
the punso and you hush me: Remember
what lola said? *You earn nothing by breaking
and entering; you wait for the yield.* The ants
come from a fairy, you utter lola's words. They
were once the fairy's tears shed over the loss
of yet another garden, another crop of flowers
cut down too early by an eager human
lover, who knew nothing about patience. Patience ...
neknek mo, I say. Picking up the pebbles,
I begin raining upon the punso.

Act II, Sin I

Vyxz Vasquez

One day, as the world turned
into words, a little girly bit
into an apple, feeling herself
grapple with letters

for the pair of taste buds
could not make sense
operate, losing tongue
functions in the process

of non-digestion.
Instead, she swallowed
hard.

Seven Summers and a Theory of Colors

Eris Heidi Ramos



red (red) adj.

of the color sensation simulated by the wavelength of light in that portion of the spectrum, ranging from orange to infrared.

Red is the color of passion;
nothing is more red than blood.

In the language we speak, you told me the cool rivers and free carabao mangoes were all you liked about the province. You complained that the roads were almost always empty. That there were no phone signals. That the only TV programs were in the local tongue. Nobody had wanted to room with us that summer: we snobby city kids who didn't talk much.

But that one Sunday, a cousin finally took courage and approached us. She emerged from the kitchen, handed us each a glass, clear, insulted by the vulgarity of redness it contained. You looked at me and I knew that the redness, to you, called out to other things too. It recalled a red flag, cautioning danger. It recalled bloodshot eyes. The stain on the sheets which would not go away. The sore lips, sore hands, sore shoulders and sore legs. (*How could soreness even be of different shades when in different parts of the body?*) It reminded us that our vacation was punctured only by knocks on the door.

It had not always been like that.

I had before enjoyed being in the province without you. I had talked with the relatives, played hide and seek with the neighboring kids. The night you arrived, I was even among those who huddled around you, eyes widening at the sight of *the* boy who was born out of wedlock; *the* family secret everyone in the sitio knew about. I was among those introduced by the woman who bore both our fathers as your *ading*. I was among those who wanted to see if you would really belong.

Turned out we didn't.

That one Sunday, while others lined up for their annual share of chocolates and canned goods, and packs of soap and toothpaste tubes, we stayed behind watching them, drinking the fake-flavored cherry, distancing ourselves, marking our difference.

**o•range** (ˈrɪndʒ, ˈɒrɪndʒ) n.

the reddish-yellow globose or nearly-globose fruit of certain of certain trees of genus *Citrus*, fam. *Rutaceae* cultivated in tropical and subtropical countries. adj. having the color of the fruit

It could've been an orange: that fruit of sin unnamed in the bible. The fruit was forbidden; there laid the attraction.

In this sentence [I can trap us in another summer, when there are only us, our silly selves and our promises with "period lock no erase"; I can create similes to negate your mother's existence, from her dimpled smile to her spicy chicken adobo, until there is nothing left of her but the shape of her lips she imprinted on your face, the very patch of your skin I find most tempting to kiss when you are sprawled naked so frequently beside me in any rented room on any given Friday, that I've already memorized the semi-circular shape you take when you sleep on your side and pull your legs up—it's like the upper half of the graph of sine I drew countless times in the college where we both go, before I decided to shift majors and kill sine with syntax; it's like the position I took after I regretted having set fire to a sheet torn out of a grade school composition pad which showed your name, then mine, then FLAMES, "M" underlined (or about to be stricken out), but done in such careful calligraphy that it still makes me think of two sides of two right triangles, driven by sudden and opposing plummets and crashing into each other, like two hips diving into the depths of one another, like your hips locked with mine when you are fucking me, rough, deep, asphyxiating, that I can see tiny tiny hollow dots all over your body—which has become my body—dots which look like zeros, more like decimal points, only smaller, and I think, there is an infinite string of numbers inside us, because after the decimal point may come such pattern as the non-ending repeating integers of pi; but then again maybe the decimal points are periods, and we are compartments of infinite periods and endings, and maybe sentences, which come from inside the self, must end; like my passion for numbers, like our "friendship," like our weekly fucking routine; but in the next breath I convince myself that yes, those infinitesimal holes on your skin are decimal points, so I can keep this sentence from ever reaching the period, so that I can keep re-writing our beginnings in a faraway province with a ridiculous name, and so I can repeat again and again that we are doing nothing wrong—something which for the life of me I cannot do—because conscience is there even beneath the layers of words, even among the sea of numbers, and even when we're fucking—especially when we're fucking—and it is then, too, that I feel your mother's presence most, that I remember there was a person before us who broke this unwritten sexual code; and I move against you, angry with her, arousing you, making you twist your beautiful mouth again while you hold on to me, tight and solid, and I see the zeros on your skin, zeros I dig my teeth into, on your right shoulder, in part frustration part fear that it will soon be over and I will run out of words as soon as I meet a period, unlike any number with gazillion digits that don't have to stop when they meet the decimal point; unlike the cyclical pi; the pi that is infinite and unending, as the zeros on your skin seemingly are, as my love for you is; and, inevitably, closure slips from us like vindication; like the elusive O, like the elusive zero, like the elusive decimal point slash period; like the elusive I desperately need but] which will never come



am•ber (ámbar) n.

a yellowish resin from an extinct
coniferous tree sap.

It is the color of honey and
of caramel.

And beer.

Let me remind you again: when we were kids everything was certain, like the red-yellow-green orbs of the traffic lights. Safety is given by the red, danger by the green. When the yellow light lights up, we wait. I know what you're thinking now: red light/green light—isn't that a game about sex? We're old enough to know life isn't dichotomized into black and white. Or red and green. That middle light, I tell you, is not yellow but amber. Can't you notice the refusal of the light to glow? The way the shade encumbers the yellow to leave a stain of brown?

Ikaw, you say grinning, fingers inching their way under my shirt, gusto mo lagi sigurado. And with your lips nuzzling my ears—Ano naman kung di yellow ang dapat tawag dun? Eh ano kung tawagin kong pink yun?—I moan—O orange, o blue?—And you tell me again things about complicated spectroscopy and wires; things I counter by naming the different hues of light. Your voice explains to me the worthlessness of labels; I lose focus on the middle light.

The light which isn't and will never be yellow.

This isn't about sex.

This isn't even if I let your thumb make circles on my skin and I arch backwards anticipating. Our bodies fight to fit inside this cramped car you borrowed from a friend, stuck in rush hour traffic; and between us, we continue to play this game of insistence, this unending litany and deconstruction of meanings, wasting the time between the red and green lights, between crossing this highway and lying naked in your room.

How many times will we pass this same highway, insisting on different words?



green (grīn) n.
a secondary color

existing between yellow and blue.

It may be used to describe something
young,
inexperienced,
unproven,
immature,
simple,
or naïve.

The thesaurus lists it as an antonym
of artificial,

and as another word
for a playing field,

or a recreational area.

We will not talk. There will be nothing to talk about.
We will stand up and walk past the door. We will climb down the stairs.
We will get on three different vehicles. We will get off those vehicles.
We will walk on the same street. Stop by the same gate. Enter the same door. The back of my parents' hands will touch your forehead; my cat will loop itself around your leg. You will say goodbye, with an unvoiced *see you next week*. Same time. Same corner. Same room.

Some distance will always separate us; some few paces that will hint nothing about familiarity. Nothing about our arguments regarding traffic lights. Nothing about taboos and periods. Nothing about last summer and your face between my legs. The distance will render us strangers, denying the meaning of our actions.

We will return to first names and civil addresses.

We exists only in rooms.



blue (blu:) n.
the color of the sky
synonymous to the Old French
celeste,
or "heavenly:"



This is my room.

A bed a table a chair two lights one window. Books on the bed coffee on the table slippers on the floor. Low ceiling. Thick, comforting blankets. Not unlike the one we shared years ago. Years ago when there was no sudden door opening. No turn that radio off. No commands like sit on my lap. Saddle me. Faster. Kneel. Feel me. Lick me. Swallow me. Deeper. Oh shit. Shit. God, oh shit. Swallow me. Swal-low me. God. Good God. Wipe your mouth. Money on the table. Door closing. Ten minutes flat.

adj. disconsolate, unsatisfied,
wretched.

This is my room.



in•di•go (indigou) n.
the bluish-purple color in the sky,
almost imaginary because of its
absence; beautiful because it's
transitory.

where you handle me i color
the side of my neck is indigo

a lovely pattern of blood pulsing through a blueness
a tint found between *indignity* and *intrusion*

this peace i enjoy before nightfall is too silent
too unsettling

like the eye of a storm



vi•o•let (vâilət) adj.

having the bluish-purple color of small-flowered plant of the genus *Viola*; a color that's the exact midway of red and blue. From the inequality of these two primary colors we derive

purple,
lilac,
mauve
archil,
lavender,
indigo,
pansy,
cobalt,
mauve,
plum,
amethyst,
magenta,
aubergine,
and
heliotrope.

All of these colors are mid-definitions.
All of these, imperfect violets.

- ¹ Definitions are indispensable though unfixed.
² A difference in the inflection of "please" has from incest to rape shifted this.
³ See *point of view*.
⁴ See *red*.

ADHD

Petra Magno



the same reason: she forgot to take her meds today. *Meds* tossed gently into the void of language, followed by *nothing terrible*, she would say, *not a huge dosage either*, prescribed by someone who nods a little too often despite being paid to listen, and when she says *it drives me nuts* she is beyond trying to be funny, she means it with a fire that's doused when came the little pill every morning to be washed down with water and a meal, even if she hardly ever eats nowadays, her particular disease manifesting in irritability and impulsivity and the total lack of interest in food, which is why tonight she will be having the soup, thank you, and no, nothing else, as the man across the table looks put off at this because he was planning on ordering the large porchetta, some date this is turning out to be, even if she is lovely in her little dress, there are things you put up with, and later in his room she asks for the lights to be left on, the way she does every night when going to sleep and he wonders out loud, mouth moving over her body, if maybe that was what triggered her sickness, planted the seed in her mind and took root as she was a child, having the brightness pressed against her sleeping eyelids all night, even as now she shuts her eyes against the nightmares that followed her from island to island, waking to a bed shaking with ghosts, sparking in her an defense against the occult, so in the time between then and now, as his hands slip up her thighs and she wraps a lock of his hair around her finger, trying to remember the last time they did this, and failing, she has devoted herself to avoiding the great mythologies, preferring instead the fickle things that fade easily, whether out of memory or with time, so she leaves bruises on the man who will return to his wife the next week, slicks on lipstick before kissing the drunkest boy at the party, allowing herself to imagine that these happened elsewhere and to other bodies, trusting that history smoothes itself over, her mind drifting with the tide until the medicine came to weigh her down, and now she stands at the shore of her own great yearnings, suddenly land-locked but always with the desire to drown, always thinking of love's pale white underbelly, the clinical study of the differences between one mouth and the next, how one lover liked to sleep as if he were alone, and another simply fuzzed out like radio static, and another always felt like home: violent and easily shattered, so she keeps returning to each before taking on another, learned to sleep with her back toward the other, so that when the dreams come she'll strike at nothing but air, he will wake and touch her, pose questions in the dark until she flips on the lamp, and as he flinches in the light, she'll begin again with the bright dream of someone new, the pursuit of the clean slate while fleeing the daily grind, from lover to lover who dared to ask, she is always giving



the same reason: she forgot to take her meds today. *Meds* tossed gently into the void of language, followed by *nothing terrible*, she would say, *not a huge dosage either*, prescribed by someone who nods a little too often despite being paid to listen, and when she says *it drives me nuts* she is beyond trying to be funny, she means it with a fire that's doused when came the little pill every morning to be washed down with water and a meal, even if she hardly ever eats nowadays, her particular disease manifesting in irritability and impulsivity and the total lack of interest in food, which is why tonight she will be having the soup, thank you, and no, nothing else, as the man across the table looks put off at this because he was planning on ordering the large porchetta, some date this is turning out to be, even if she is lovely in her little dress, there are things you put up with, and later in his room she asks for the lights to be left on, the way she does every night when going to sleep and he wonders out loud, mouth moving over her body, if maybe that was what triggered her sickness, planted the seed in her mind and took root as she was a child, having the brightness pressed against her sleeping eyelids all night, even as now she shuts her eyes against the nightmares that followed her from island to island, waking to a bed shaking with ghosts, sparking in her an defense against the occult, so in the time between then and now, as his hands slip up her thighs and she wraps a lock of his hair around her finger, trying to remember the last time they did this, and failing, she has devoted herself to avoiding the great mythologies, preferring instead the fickle things that fade easily, whether out of memory or with time, so she leaves bruises on the man who will return to his wife the next week, slicks on lipstick before kissing the drunkest boy at the party, allowing herself to imagine that these happened elsewhere and to other bodies, trusting that history smoothes itself over, her mind drifting with the tide until the medicine came to weigh her down, and now she stands at the shore of her own great yearnings, suddenly land-locked but always with the desire to drown, always thinking of love's pale white underbelly, the clinical study of the differences between one mouth and the next, how one lover liked to sleep as if he were alone, and another simply fuzzed out like radio static, and another always felt like home: violent and easily shattered, so she keeps returning to each before taking on another, learned to sleep with her back toward the other, so that when the dreams come she'll strike at nothing but air, he will wake and touch her, pose questions in the dark until she flips on the lamp, and as he flinches in the light, she'll begin again with the bright dream of someone new, the pursuit of the clean slate while fleeing the daily grind, from lover to lover who dared to ask, she is always giving



the same reason: she forgot to take her meds today. *Meds* tossed gently into the void of language, followed by *nothing terrible*, she would say, *not a huge dosage either*, prescribed by someone who nods a little too often despite being paid to listen, and when she says *it drives me nuts* she is beyond trying to be funny, she means it with a fire that's doused when came the little pill every morning to be washed down with water and a meal, even if she hardly ever eats nowadays, her particular disease manifesting in irritability and impulsivity and the total lack of interest in food, which is why tonight she will be having the soup, thank you, and no, nothing else, as the man across the table looks put off at this because he was planning on ordering the large porchetta, some date this is turning out to be, even if she is lovely in her little dress, there are things you put up with, and later in his room she asks for the lights to be left on, the way she does every night when going to sleep and he wonders out loud, mouth moving over her body, if maybe that was what triggered her sickness, planted the seed in her mind and took root as she was a child, having the brightness pressed against her sleeping eyelids all night, even as now she shuts her eyes against the nightmares that followed her from island to island, waking to a bed shaking with ghosts, sparking in her an defense against the occult, so in the time between then and now, as his hands slip up her thighs and she wraps a lock of his hair around her finger, trying to remember the last time they did this, and failing, she has devoted herself to avoiding the great mythologies, preferring instead the fickle things that fade easily, whether out of memory or with time, so she leaves bruises on the man who will return to his wife the next week, slicks on lipstick before kissing the drunkest boy at the party, allowing herself to imagine that these happened elsewhere and to other bodies, trusting that history smoothes itself over, her mind drifting with the tide until the medicine came to weigh her down, and now she stands at the shore of her own great yearnings, suddenly land-locked but always with the desire to drown, always thinking of love's pale white underbelly, the clinical study of the differences between one mouth and the next, how one lover liked to sleep as if he were alone, and another simply fuzzed out like radio static, and another always felt like home: violent and easily shattered, so she keeps returning to each before taking on another, learned to sleep with her back toward the other, so that when the dreams come she'll strike at nothing but air, he will wake and touch her, pose questions in the dark until she flips on the lamp, and as he flinches in the light, she'll begin again with the bright dream of someone new, the pursuit of the clean slate while fleeing the daily grind, from lover to lover who dared to ask, she is always giving



the same reason she forgot to take her meds today. *Meds* tossed gently into the void of language, followed by *nothing terrible*, she would say, *not a huge dosage either*, prescribed by someone who nods a little too often despite being paid to listen, and when she says *it drives me nuts* she is beyond trying to be funny, she means it with a fire that's doused when came the little pill every morning to be washed down with water and a meal, even if she hardly ever eats nowadays, her particular disease manifesting in irritability and impulsivity and the total lack of interest in food, which is why tonight she will be having the soup, thank you, and no, nothing else, as the man across the table looks out off at this because he was planning on ordering the large porchetta, some date this is turning out to be, even if she is lovely in her little dress, there are things you put up with, and later in his room she asks for the lights to be left on, the way she does every night when going to sleep and he wonders out loud, mouth moving over her body, if maybe that was what triggered her sickness: planted the seed in her mind and took root as she was a child, having the brightness pressed against her sleeping eyelids all night, even as now she shuts her eyes against the nightmares that follow to her from island to island, waking to a bed shaking with ghosts, sparking in her an intense against the occult, so in the time between then and now, as his hands slip up her thighs and she wraps a lock of his hair around her finger, trying to remember the last time they did this, calculating, she has devoted herself to avoiding the great mythologies, preferring instead the fickle things that fade easily, whether out of memory or with time, so she leaves bruises on the man who will return to his wife the next week, slicks on lipstick before kissing the drunkest boy at the party, allowing herself to imagine that these happened elsewhere and to other bodies, trusting that history smooths itself over, her mind drifting with the tide until the medicine came to weigh her down, and now she stands at the shore of her own great yearnings, suddenly land-locked but always with the desire to drown, always thinking of love's pale white underbelly, the clinical study of the differences between one mouth and the next, how one lover liked to sleep as if he were alone, and another simply fuzzed out like radio static, and another always felt like home: vibrant and easily shattered, so she keeps returning to each before taking on another, learned to sleep with her back toward the other, so that when the dreams come she'll strike at nothing but air, he will wake and touch her, pose questions in the dark until she flips on the lamp, and as he flickers in the light, she'll begin again with the bright dream of someone new, the pursuit of the -transience while fleeing the daily grind, from lover to lover who dared to ask, she is always giving

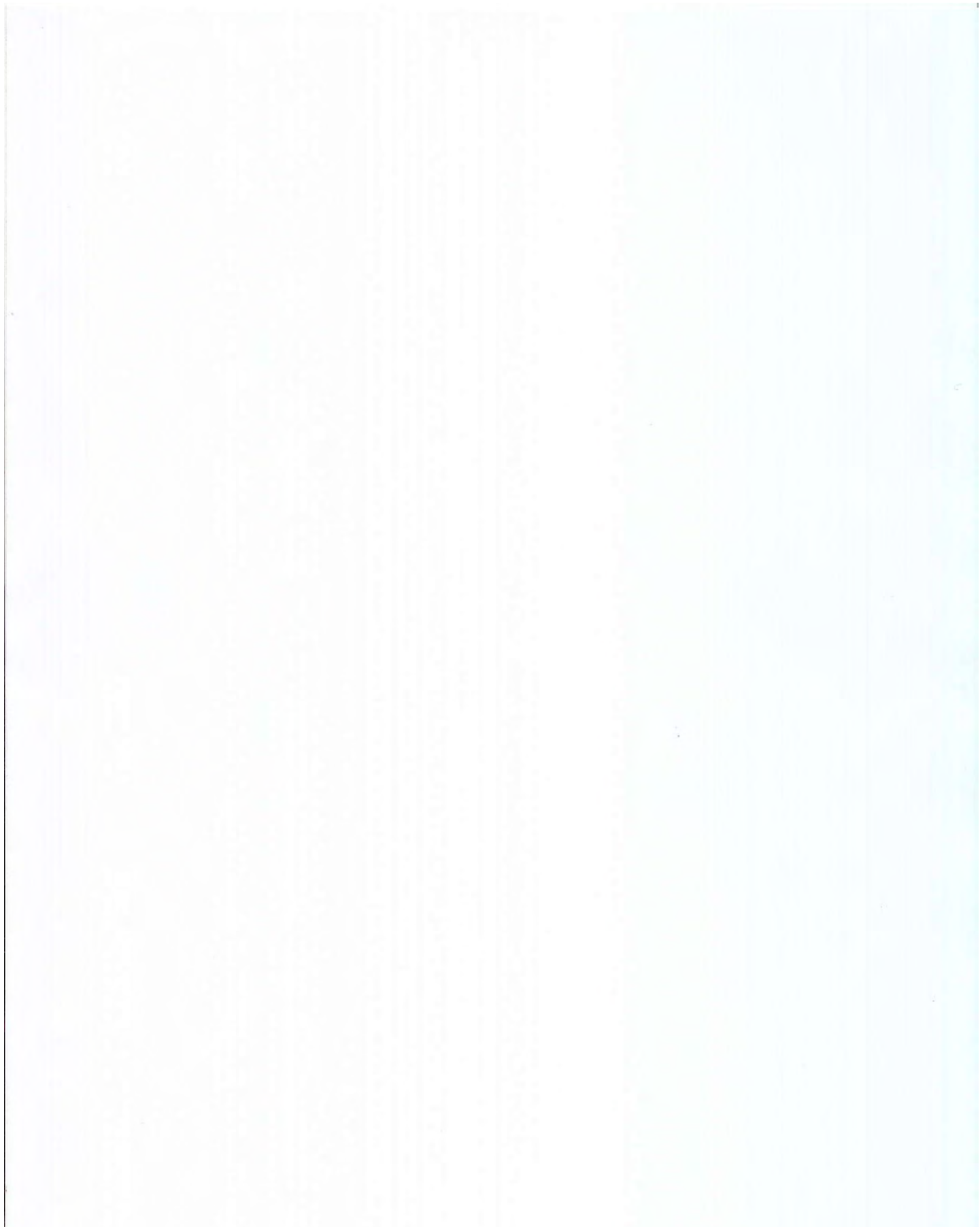


to come to her, she forgot to take her meds today. *Meds* tossed gently into the void of language, follows the *nothing terrible* she would say, *not a huge dosage either*, prescribed by someone who she would too often despise being paid to listen, and when she says *it drives me nuts* she is beyond the *nothing terrible*. To be funny, she means it with a fire that's doused when came the little pill every morning. She's coming down with water and a meal, even if she hardly ever eats nowadays, her particular *nothing terrible* consisting in irritability and impulsivity and the total lack of interest in food, which is why, though she will be trying the soup, thank you, and no, nothing else, as the man across the street looks her off at this because he was planning on ordering the large porchetta, some date this *nothing terrible* is to be, even if she is lovely in her little dress, there are things you put up with, and she would be glad she asks for the lights to be left on, the way she does every night when going to bed, she wonders out loud, mouth moving over her body, if maybe that was what triggered the *nothing terrible* planted the seed in her mind and took root as she was a child, having the brightness of a child, almost her sleeping eyelids all night, even as now she shuts her eyes against the nightmares that followed her from island to island, waking to a bed shaking with ghosts, sparking in her an interest against the occult, so in the time between then and now, as his hands slip up her thighs and he puts a lock of his hair around her finger, trying to remember the last time they did this, she would be his decision herself to avoiding the great mythologies, preferring instead the fickle *nothing terrible* to be easily, whether it run out of memory or with time, so she leaves bruises on the man who she thought to be with the next week, slicks on lipstick before kissing the drunkest boy at the party, thinking herself to imagine that these happened elsewhere and to other bodies, trusting that she would come across itself over, her mind drifting with the tide until the medicine came to weigh her down, and so she stands at the shore of her own great yearnings, suddenly land-locked but still wanting, she doesn't drown, always thinking of love's pale white underbelly, the clinical *nothing terrible* differences between one month and the next, how one lover liked to sleep as if he were a radio and another simply buzzed out like radio static, and another always felt like home: she would be easily shattered, so she keeps returning to each before taking on another, learned to come back and go back toward the other, so that when the dreams come she'll strike at nothing but *nothing terrible* she'd ask and find a net, pose questions in the dark until she flips on the lamp, and as he looks at her in the light, he'll seem again with the bright dream of someone new, the pursuit of the *nothing terrible* she would be, the *nothing terrible* daily grind, from lover to lover who dared to ask, she is always giving



of me, I said. What crossed gently into the void of language, what she had to say to me, prescribed by someone who had to be a doctor, she says it drives me nuts she is beyond words, I said, when came the little pill every morning, I said, I don't really ever eats nowadays, her particular interest was the total lack of interest in food, which is not a good sign, I said, nothing else, as the man across the street was cooking the large porchetta, some date this time, I said, these are things you put up with, and I said, I know she does every night when going to bed, I said, it maybe that was what triggered the dream, I said, she was a child, having the brightness of a child, I said, she shuts her eyes against the nightmares, I said, she was working with ghosts, sparking in her an interest, I said, as his hands slip up her thighs, I said, I remember the last time they did this, I said, she was a doctor, preferring instead the fickle of a man, I said, as she leaves bruises on the man, I said, she was kissing the drunkest boy at the time, I said, and to other bodies, trusting that the medicine came to weigh her, I said, she was humming, suddenly land-locked out, I said, she was white underbelly, the clinical, I said, she was one lover liked to sleep as if he were a mother, and mother always felt like home; I said, she was not before taking on another, learned to, I said, she was come she'll strike at nothing but, I said, she was until she flips on the lamp, and as he was, I said, she was of someone new, the pursuit of the, I said, she was dared to ask, she is, always giving.





Approximations

Johnina Martha Marfa

This, although things never quite were.



[ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS](#)

[ABOUT THE ARTISTS](#)

[ABOUT THE EDITORS](#)

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

Petra Magno

Ateneo de Manila University

patricia.angela.magno@gmail.com

Petra came away from Ateneo de Manila University with a degree in Literature and a Loyola Schools Award for the Arts. She lives in Katipunan and is now hustling like the modern woman should.

Christine V. Lao

Marikina City, Philippines

christinevlao@gmail.com

Christine V. Lao was born in Tondo, Manila, and now lives in Marikina City. Her work has appeared in *Philippine Speculative Fiction* volumes 5 and 6, the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, *The Manila Times*, *The Sunday Times Magazine*, and *Heights*.

Rey Escobar

Evanston, Illinois, USA

cianorey@gmail.com

Born in Lucena City, Rey Escobar spent his formative years in Gumaca, Quezon. He immigrated to the U.S. in 1988. He currently lives in Evanston, Illinois with his wife and two children, and is a member of the Next Objectivists writing collective. His writing has appeared in *Columbia Poetry Review*, *Tea Party Magazine*, *Maganda*, and *Field of Mirrors: An Anthology of Philippine America Writers*.

Carlos Quijon, Jr.

University of the Philippines-Diliman

mankneepackyeahawe@gmail.com

Carlos Quijon, Jr. studies Comparative Literature at the University of the Philippines-Diliman. He likes the em dash, the ampersand, the semicolon, Robert Creeley, and George Oppen. He is part of the online literary journal *Spindle* and a member of the *UP Writers Club*. He writes poetry and essays.

Christian Tablazon

University of the Philippines-Los Baños

magbalik.sa.lemlunay@gmail.com

Christian Tablazon finished his BA in Creative Writing at the University of the Philippines-Diliman in 2006. He is now a member of the faculty of the Department of Humanities at the University of the Philippines-Los Baños and a graduate student of the UP Film Institute.

Eileen F. Tupaz

Ateneo de Manila University

eileen2paz@hotmail.com

Eileen F. Tupaz graduated from Ateneo de Manila University in 2002 with Bachelor's degrees in Management Engineering and Communication Arts. She worked for a local non-profit organization called Venture for Fund Raising until 2003 and for Proctor & Gamble in Singapore until 2006, and then—in a move that made stunning sense—returned to the Philippines in 2007 to pursue a Master's degree in Philosophy. She currently teaches corporate social responsibility and philosophy in Ateneo de Manila University. Her other works can be found at www.peripateia.wordpress.com.



Lawrence Bernabe

Quezon City, Philippines
lawrence.bernabe@gmail.com

Lawrence Bernabe was a regular reader at the Happy Mondays poetry series at Mag:net Katipunan from 2008 to 2010. His poems have appeared in *Dapitan*, *Dark Blue Southern Seas*, and *highchair.com.ph* (Maguindanao Massacre Special Issue). Lawrence was a fellow of the IYAS and Silliman National Writers Workshops.

Apo Española

University of the Philippines-Diliman
ajespanola@gmail.com

Apo Española is a third-year Journalism student from the University of the Philippines and a member of the UP Writers Club. Inspired by the celebrity chefs and travel shows she has watched on television since she was a child, she now hopes to become a food and travel writer.

Florianne Jimenez

University of the Philippines-Diliman
florianne.jimenez@gmail.com

Florianne Jimenez is about to graduate from the University of the Philippines-Diliman with a BA in English. She hopes to channel her wide range of interests (which include reading, writing, cinema, theory, and travel) into a future of higher education and teaching literature. As a reader and writer, she has always been into creative nonfiction, but she is currently exploring other genres and enjoying it.

Jun Dela Rosa

Ateneo de Manila University
confessional25@yahoo.com

Jun Dela Rosa was a Dumaguete workshop fellow for poetry in 2005, a recipient of the Dean's Award for Literature at the Ateneo de Manila University, and the 2010 first prize winner in Meritage Press's Annual Poetry Contest. His works have appeared in *Philippines Free Press*, *Philippine Graphic*, *Philippine Studies*, *UP Likhaan Book*, and CCP's *Ani*, among others.

Sandra Nicole Roldan

Ateneo de Manila University
sandra.roldan@gmail.com

Sandra Nicole Roldan was conceived inside the Camp Crame Detention Center for Political Offenders on Valentine's Day 1976. She now holds an MA Creative Writing degree from the University of the Philippines-Diliman and teaches literature and writing at the Ateneo de Manila University. She has attended national writing workshops in Dumaguete, Baguio, and Davao. In 2006, she enjoyed a 6-month writer's residency in Seoul, Korea where she was part of the 1st Seoul Young Writers Festival. In 2007, she received the Free Press Literary Prize for the Essay. Her fiction, non-fiction, and poetry can be found in various magazines and anthologies including *Father Poems* (2004), *My Fair Maladies* (2005), *Sawi* (2007), *Very Short Stories for Harried Readers* (2007), and *Mondo Marcos* (2010).

Isabela Cuerva

Ateneo de Manila University
isabcuerva@gmail.com

Isabela Cuerva is a twenty-year-old majoring in BS Chemistry with Materials Science and Engineering and minoring in Creative Writing at the Ateneo de Manila University. She is a member of *Heights*, the official literary and artistic publication and organization of the Ateneo de Manila. She was also a fellow at the 16th Ateneo Heights Writers Workshop. "From *Vogue*" is her first published work.

Joey Clutario

Polytechnic University of the Philippines-Manila
yeoj_826@yahoo.com

Jose V. Clutario is a part-time faculty member of the College of Languages and Linguistics in the Polytechnic University of the Philippines-Manila, where he also obtained his AB English degree in 2008. He is currently taking up Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing at the De La Salle University-Manila. He has started a personal poetry blog called *hyperbibliophobia* where he posts some of his works.

Mae Cacanindin

University of the Philippines-Diliman
maehon_12@yahoo.com

Mae Cacanindin is a senior BA Creative Writing in English student from UP Diliman. She is currently finishing her thesis on autobiographical writing, particularly on the role of the persona's distance from a certain memory, in terms of both time and intimacy, in the act of retelling. She is also the mother of Lexi, a three-year old who fancies singing, "Old MacDonald had a farm, and Bingo was his name-oh."

Arbeen Acuña

University of the Philippines-Los Baños
cannibalnation@gmail.com

Arbeen Acuña is a Communication Arts graduate from the University of the Philippines-Los Baños, a Fellow for Filipino Poetry and Fiction during the 10th IYAS Creative Writing Workshop, a former Editor in Chief of *UPLB Perspective*, and the Founder of Kartunista-Manunulat Kolektib. His short stories "Killing Disease" and "The Ouracle" have been published in the *Sunday Times Magazine*.

Paul S. de Guzman

Quezon City, Philippines
paul.s.deguzman@gmail.com

Born and raised in Bulacan, Paul S. de Guzman majored in journalism at the University of the Philippines Diliman. He lives with his wife in Quezon City.

EJ Galang

Quezon City, Philippines
happyeggman@gmail.com

EJ Galang is an English Literature graduate of Ateneo de Manila University where he was awarded the Dean's Award for the Arts in Poetry. During his senior year, he served as an Associate English Editor of *Heights*, the official literary publication of Ateneo. His work has appeared in magazines, newspapers, online journals, and anthologies. In early 2010, he co-created an illustrated book of contemporary riddles entitled *Riddle of Nowhere*. He currently works in an advertising agency.

Vincenz Serrano

University of Manchester
vincenz.serrano@gmail.com

Vincenz Serrano is working on a PhD in Creative Writing and English and American Studies at the University of Manchester. Before this, he was teaching in the Department of English at the Ateneo de Manila University, where he was coordinator for undergraduate studies in literature. *The Collapse of What Separates Us*, which won first prize for poetry in English at the 2009 Carlos Palanca Memorial Awards for Literature, was published by High Chair in 2010.



Eliza Victoria

Makati City, Philippines

ee_ey_vee@yahoo.com

Eliza Victoria's fiction and poetry have appeared in various publications based in the Philippines and abroad, most recently in *High Chair*, *The Pedestal Magazine*, *Expanded Horizons*, *Philippines Graphic*, and *Usok*. Her work has received prizes in the Carlos Palanca Memorial Awards for Literature and the Philippines Free Press Literary Awards. She lives and works in Makati City.

Daryll Delgado

Quezon City, Philippines

darylljds@gmail.com

Daryll Delgado works (full-time) for an international labor rights NGO, teaches (sometimes) at the Fine Arts and English Departments of the Ateneo de Manila University, contributes (when she can) critical essays and short stories to various publications including *Kritika Kultura*, lives (mostly) with her husband and plants in Quezon City, goes home (as often as she can) to her family and pets in Tacloban City, boards a plane (at least every month) to fulfill job requirements in different Southeast Asian cities.

Dana Lee F. Delgado

University of the Philippines-Diliman

dlfdelgado@gmail.com

Dana Lee F. Delgado is a creative writing major at the University of the Philippines-Diliman. She is a member of the UP Writers Club and one of the founders of *Spindle*, an online literary journal (<http://spindle.ph>). She lives in Quezon City.

Ramon Niño T. Raquid

University of the Philippines-Diliman

ramraquid@gmail.com

Ramon Niño T. Raquid studies broadcast communication at the University of the Philippines-Diliman. He is a member of UP Writers Club. Sometimes he forgets things.

Isabelle Lau

University of the Philippines-Diliman

dancedancedoodle@gmail.com

Isabelle Lau is passionate about animal rights, heavenly bodies, and her various layers of hybridity. She thrives on energy from trees, sunlight, and milk tea (jasmine, preferably). Isabelle has been raising herself since childhood and plans to continue doing so. Also, she has the awesomest friends in the world.

John Revo Ocampo

Cavite, Philippines

jr.ocampo@yahoo.com

John Revo Ocampo currently works as an assistant editor at Katha Publishing Co., Inc. He graduated from De La Salle University-Manila where he took up Communication Arts. He is 21 years old.

Arlynn Despi

University of the Philippines-Los Baños

slowmo.paradox@gmail.com

Arlynn Despi graduated from the University of the Philippines-Los Baños with a BA in Communication Arts and a Best Thesis Award for "The Goddess Fragments." She was a fellow for poetry at the 8th Ateneo National Writers Workshop. Her fiction has appeared in *The Graphic* and *Ampersand*, and is forthcoming in *Philippine Speculative Fiction VI*.



Anna Oposa

University of the Philippines-Diliman
aroposa@gmail.com

Anna Oposa is an English Studies major from the University of the Philippines-Diliman. In addition to being a freelance writer, she is an environmental advocate, runner, swimmer, musical theatre performer, and scuba diver. Facebook is Anna's source of current events and chismis. She is continuously fascinated with the way it has changed the landscape of communication and relationships. Her dream is to become DOT Secretary or First Lady of the Philippines. She blogs at www.annaoposa.ph.

Liana G. Barcia

University of the Philippines-Diliman
lianabarcia@yahoo.com

Liana G. Barcia is a graduating creative writing major interested in working in media and pursuing further studies in the field of anthropology. She is passionate about human rights, feminism, and awkward moments. This year, she hopes to climb her first mountain, be less afraid, and live more in the present.

Katrina C. Elauria

University of the Philippines-Los Baños
katelauria@gmail.com

Katrina C. Elauria is a 4th year BA Communication Arts student of UP Los Baños and is a member of PANTAS-UPLB.

Johnina Martha Marfa

University of the Philippines-Diliman
nina.marfa@yahoo.com

Johnina Martha Marfa is currently taking her master's degree in Creative Writing at the University of the Philippines-Diliman. She earned her undergraduate degree in Literature at De La Salle University-Manila.

Alyza Taguilaso

Quezon City, Philippines
lyzaish@yahoo.com

Alyza Taguilaso is a graduate of BS Biology from the Ateneo de Manila University, where she received the Loyola Schools Awards for the Arts for Illustration. She was a fellow of the 15th Heights, 10th Iyas, and 10th Ateneo National Writers' Workshops. Currently a freshman med student at the University of the East Ramon Magsaysay Memorial Medical Center, she spends her free time making tiny paintings, reading comic books, and tending to her spoiled pet cat.

Maria Pia V. Benosa

University of the Philippines-Diliman
pia.benosa@gmail.com

Maria Pia V. Benosa has an unhealthy obsession with trains and maps. In 2009 she spent a year studying abroad, but found that home was all she could ever write about. She celebrates transience through her poetry and creative nonfiction, and by working on the body of Philippine literature that comprises "Train Lit" for her undergraduate thesis at the UP. She blogs for "Cityscapes: Tales from the Invisible City," a collaborative web project headed by Goethe Institut-Sydney. Pia is also the current chairperson of the UP Writers Club.



Agustin Martin Rodriguez

Ateneo de Manila University
arodriguez@ateneo.edu

Agustin Martin Rodriguez teaches philosophy at the Ateneo de Manila University. He is published mainly in the areas of philosophy and various areas of the social sciences. He was a fellow of the Silliman Writers Workshop in 1986 and continues to write poetry and short fiction when he is not doing research.

Francis Murillo Emralino

Colegio de San Juan de Letran Calamba
fraulin_06@yahoo.com

Francis Murillo Emralino is a native of San Pablo City, Laguna. A graduate of BS Applied Physics from UP Los Baños, he now works as a researcher at the Colegio de San Juan de Letran Calamba in the morning and spends the evening writing. Some of his works have appeared in *Kilometer 64 (KM 64)* chapbooks, *Ipuipo sa Piging* poetry anthology, *Philippines Graphic Magazine*, *The Lab Literary Magazine* (Seoul, South Korea), and *Paper Monster Press*.

Kristine Reynaldo

University of Santo Tomas Publishing House
kmreynaldo@gmail.com

Kristine Reynaldo graduated with a BA in English from the University of the Philippines Diliman and works as a copy editor at the UST Publishing House. A member of the UP Writers Club, she blogs at <http://mirageode.wordpress.com>.

Phillip Kimpo, Jr.

Linangan sa Imahen, Retorika, at Anyo
pykimpo@gmail.com

Phillip Kimpo Jr., 25, is the president of Linangan sa Imahen, Retorika, at Anyo (LIRA), the oldest active organization of poets in Filipino. He has won fellowships to the Dumaguete, IYAS (Bacolod), and UST national writers workshops. He has co-authored a book on WWII freedom fighters and is finishing his book of personal essays, "Corsair of Cor-Street."

J. Pilapil Jacobo

Ateneo de Manila University
jjacobo@ateneo.edu

J. Pilapil Jacobo is a Candidate for the PhD in Comparative Literature at the State University of New York (SUNY) at Stony Brook, where he enjoyed a Fellowship from the Fulbright Foundation. He teaches Literature and Literary Theory and Criticism in English and Filipino at the School of Humanities of the Ateneo de Manila University, where he graduated with an AB-MA in Filipino Literature. His critical essays have been published in *Bulawan*, *Ideya*, *Loyola Schools Review*, and *Unitas*, while his poetry in Filipino is anthologized in *Ladlad 3* and *Likhaan*. He is President of the Film Desk of the Young Critics Circle of the Philippines.

Oscar Tantoco Serquiña, Jr.

University of the Philippines-Diliman
ojserquina@gmail.com

Oscar Tantoco Serquiña, Jr. graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Speech Communication. At present, he is the youngest faculty member of the Department of Speech Communication and Theatre Arts (DSCTA) at UP Diliman, where he teaches practical speech fundamentals. He was a fellow for poetry at the 10th UST National Writers Workshop and at the 49th Silliman National Writers Workshop. He maintains a blog, <http://lettersinthedark.wordpress.com>.



Rapunzel Tomacder

University of the Philippines-Diliman
rapunzel.tomacder@gmail.com

Rapunzel Tomacder is a graduate of Comparative Literature in the University of the Philippines Diliman. Since 2008, she has worked as an English instructor in the same university. Currently, she is studying Japanese in Tokyo. She hopes to use her knowledge of Japanese in her TESOL studies. She hopes to continue her graduate studies in Language when she gets back to the Philippines.

Vyxz Vasquez

University of the Philippines-Diliman
vyxzvasquez@gmail.com

Vyxz Vasquez is a third year Creative Writing major from the University of the Philippines-Diliman. She needs to graduate in 2012 right before the world ends.

Marrrian Pio Roda Ching

University of the Philippines-Diliman
marrrian.ching@gmail.com

Marrrian Pio Roda Ching is a journalism student from the University of the Philippines who goes against her professors' wishes, taking up units in Creative Writing and Comparative Literature while putting her thesis on hold. She is also a self-proclaimed professional "slasher," being a student-leader/photographer/mentor/activist/changemaker. Her current Facebook status is, "when you think about how much you've gained and how much you've lost, is it possible not to be confused?" Her answer to that question is and probably will forever be "no."

Katrina Stuart Santiago

Mandaluyong, Philippines
katrinastuartsantiago@gmail.com

Katrina Stuart Santiago writes art and culture reviews and popular iconographies for *gmanewsonline*, does local music criticism for pulse.ph, and blogs at www.radikalchick.com, while she forces herself to stay on the path of finishing her long drawn out MA in Philippine Studies. Age has shown her that she is a strange balance of her rocker father, writer mother, and geek brother. Home is where she grew up in Mandaluyong, but she escapes as often as she can to her childhood summers in Tiaong, Quezon.

Zosimo Quibilan, Jr.

South Pasadena, California, USA
zquibilan@gmail.com

Zosimo Quibilan, Jr. won the 2006 Philippine National Book Award for Short Story and the 8th Madrigal-Gonzalez Best First Book Award in 2008 for *Pagluwas* (Going to the City) published by the University of the Philippines Press in 2006. His poems and stories have appeared in several anthologies in the Philippines and in US-based online literary journals like *Kweli Journal*, *42opus*, *verbsap*, *m.a.g.*, *bewilderingstories.com*, among others. He once served as Editor-in-Chief of *Heights*. He lives in South Pasadena, CA with his wife and three kids.

Pauline Lacanilao

Pasig City, Philippines
pauline.lacanilao@gmail.com

Pauline Lacanilao is a graduate of Montclair State University where she studied English. She writes for *Saved Magazine* and contributes research and technical writing for an ongoing HIV/AIDS study. She lives in Pasig.



Chiles Samaniego

Muntinlupa, Philippines

furnival@yahoo.com

Chiles Samaniego has had work published in *Story Philippines*, the *Digest of Philippine Genre Stories*, the *Philippines Free Press*, and *Weird Tales Magazine*.

Catherine Candano

National University of Singapore

ccandano@gmail.com

Catherine Candano is a research scholar with National University of Singapore's Communication and New Media Programme, where she received an achievement award for arts and culture. Her literary work has been published in the *Asia Literary Review*, *Crowns and Oranges: New Philippine Poetry*, *At Home in Unhomeliness: An Anthology of Postcolonial Poetry in English*, *Cha: An Asian Literary Journal*, and *ANI*, the Cultural Center of the Philippines yearbook among others. She has professionally contributed to the Department of English faculty of Ateneo de Manila University in the Philippines and the United Nations Environment Programme offices in Thailand.

Joseph Casimiro

Ateneo de Manila University

jigcasimiro@gmail.com

Joseph Casimiro is a European Studies major of the Ateneo De Manila University. His poems have appeared and are forthcoming in *Heights*, *High Chair*, *Kritika Kultura*, and *Matanglawin*. He is currently the associate editor of *Heights* and directs the Ateneo Heights Writers Workshop.

Eris Heidi Ramos

University of the Philippines-Diliman

erisheidi@gmail.com

Eris Heidi Ramos graduated *magna cum laude* with a degree in Creative Writing from the University of the Philippines-Diliman in 2010. Unlike most people her age (she's 21), she finds Facebook boring and mainstream and full of unwarranted information. Instead, she spends her time on Tumblr, exclaiming "I can't even" and "What is air?" every other minute. Because of Tumblr, Eris has developed a screwed up sleeping pattern, a very clingy affair with CS5, and a tendency to ADGFLSJKH;GDFJS!! a lot. On the upside, she can now name 98% of all the existing computer fonts. If hell were real, Eris wishes to God it were wi-fi.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

DJ Legaspi

Metro Manila, Philippines
maasimto@yahoo.com

DJ Legaspi is a Computer Science graduate of Systems Technology Institute. He is a co-editor of *The Quarterly Bathroom Companion Comics Compendium*. He currently works as a Senior Programmer for a bank.

Mervin Malonzo

Metro Manila, Philippines
mervinmalonzo@gmail.com

Mervin Malonzo graduated *magna cum laude* from the University of the Philippines- Diliman with a degree in Fine Arts, major in Painting. He loves comics and is currently creating one that's available on the web titled "Tabi po" (www.tabi-po.com). He's also a co-founder and lead designer of a newly created anthology of comics and stories called *The Quarterly Bathroom Companion Comics Compendium*. As a means of living, he is working as a web designer, illustrator, and animator for his own design team called Pepe & the Polygons (www.pepeandthepolygons.com).

Josel Nicolas

Metro Manila, Philippines
ajora_metalanger@yahoo.com

Josel Nicolas has been making komix since Komikon 2005. Among his better known works are *Roleplay*, a guro yaoi manga; *The El Bimbo Adaptations*, a komix adaptation of Adam David's *The El Bimbo Variations*; *Doc Brick: Balloon Scientist + Problem Solver*, a science-fiction serial from kiddie magazine *K-Zone*; and *Windmills*, an anthropomorphic autobiographical serial novel, currently in its fourth issue. Together with DJ Legaspi and Mervin Malonzo, he is a co-founder and co-editor of the komix anthology *The Quarterly Bathroom Companion Comics Compendium*. He graduated with a Fine Arts degree in Advertising from the University of Santo Tomas in 2010, and he currently works at Komikasi as a graphic/game artist.

ABOUT THE ISSUE EDITORS

Mark Anthony Cayanan

Ateneo de Manila University
mcayanan@ateneo.edu

Mark Anthony Cayanan is the AB Literature Coordinator for the English Department of the Ateneo de Manila University, and is one of the moderators of *Heights*. His first book of poetry, *Narcissus*, is forthcoming from the Ateneo Press. He is the Associate Editor for the Literary Section of the regular issues of *Kritika Kultura*.

Conchitina Cruz

University of the Philippines-Diliman
chingbee.cruz@gmail.com

Conchitina Cruz teaches creative writing and literature at the University of the Philippines, where she is an associate of the Institute of Creative Writing. She is the author of *Dark Hours* (UP Press, 2005) and *elsewhere held and lingered* (High Chair, 2008).

Adam David

Quezon City, Philippines
juncruznaligas@gmail.com

Adam David is a bookmaker by trade. He is the author of *The El Bimbo Variations* (2008), *Crows & Rages* (2010), and *Item Mite Emit Time* (2010), all published by The Youth and Beauty Brigade. With Conchitina Cruz, he co-edited the 12th issue of the online literary journal *High Chair*, on the Maguindanao Massacre. He is also the organizer of Better Living Through Xeroxography, a semi-annual shop-and-talk-shop event on independent publishing. He lives in Cubao.