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## **We are Protected from so Much Pain Jesus Visits a Tatoo Shop**

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I am father  
of my past, its progeny  
of grief.

### **Bayang Palengke**

Bangkay ng bayan  
itong palengkeng nakahilatay  
sa gilid ng uka-  
ukang aspalto.

Binabangaw ng dyip  
ang tagilirang nagdurugo.

Inuuod ng tao  
ang singit at tadyang.

Lumalapot sa katanghalian  
ang lansa ng hiwa-hiwang balat.

Kinalawang na talukap  
sunog na mata  
labing tuklap.

Tinitimbang ang bigat  
ng kalansing at itak.

### **ARKAYE KIERULF**

### **We are Protected from so Much Pain**

For example: graves.  
The earth's roots and brown-black blood are busy  
covering the soft, violated bodies of our loves.  
Death is a secret, and the rain with its many hands

washes off the streets to the gutters death's thick surprise.  
The automatic shutter of the eye never fails,

the courtesies of the tongue. What goes on in the rooms of houses  
is guarded from us by the hardwood doors,

the carefully closed windows. Whatever was said or done,  
night will come, eagerly, to clean up.

And death will shield us, in time,  
from the sun's megalithic promise:

Tomorrow, the same day.  
Tomorrow, the same day.

For example: A flower  
is the most beautiful lie.

### **Jesus Visits a Tattoo Shop**

After that terrible ordeal  
At the cross, surely  
A little masochistic fun  
Would not hurt  
Before formally starting the mission.

The ones who heard about it  
Rushed to the shop to kiss His feet.  
"Our messiah!" they shouted.  
"You have come again!  
We are saved!"

Outside, a growing crowd  
Looks in with side-cupped hands  
Through the glass window.  
A boy runs out to the streets  
Shouting the news.

As for the tattoo  
It is slowly taking the shape  
Of two hearts on the butt of Jesus,  
One per rosy cheek,  
Which delights the crowd.

## JOHN LABELLA

### **Black Psalm\***

#### 1.

Mother of brute grace,  
in rags of wind and rain,  
make aim of my doubt.  
Remind me of the end.  
O strike and spare me.  
Mother of lightning.

#### 2.

Glory be to fire.  
Glory be to the flames at my feet,  
the serpents of heat  
that lick the dark hissing  
and coil to stun.

Dusk, dawn,  
from pyre to pyre,  
I sing and I thirst.  
I dance and I hunger.  
I leap and falling clatter.  
Desire unto death  
after death, I desire.

Glory be to fire.  
Glory be to the singeing  
grief and the crackling silent.  
I consent, fire: unmake me.  
Burn my horizon.