

philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University • Loyola Heights, Quezon City • 1108 Philippines

Harana / Serenade

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Philippine Studies vol. 33, no. 3 (1985) 388–391

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Fri June 27 13:30:20 2008

ROMULO A. SANDOVAL

Harana

1

Sangsang na kulob ng itim na papawirin,
ang Kagitingan
ay byoletang umiigtad sa dilim.
Huwag kang iingit,
mga mata ng Kuya mo'y nagbabala.
Granateng talulot, masilakbong kumakawag,
ang bawat bubong na dinuduhapang ng putik.
Namumutla ang mga kaldero.
Bunton ng antak,
tiim-bagang ang bawat basahan.

Huwag kang iingit.

2

Sagpang ng alapaap ang buwan.
Sa bungad ng isang tulay, pagdunghap mo sa estero
ay may naaninag kang mga langkay ng waterlili,
kayakap ang mga layak,
bilibid ng langis:
sisinghapsinghap sa itim na tubig.
Animo'y nais umungol,
tigagal ang nag-iisang punungkahoy.
At pagkaraa'y nangatal.

Isang paslit, nilalangaw na sugat
na wari'y ayaw magbahaw,
ang may kung anong dinudukwang, sinasagip sa imburnal.

Sunudsunod, nahuhulog ang mga nguynogoy,
nahuhulog sa burak.

May babaing nakapanunghal sa bintana,
hinukot ng sunong na ubaning tagsalat,
aanas-anas habang ang daan ay tinatanaw.

Inaawitan ng mga pulutong ng yayat na damo
ang tumitigok na mga bituin.

3

Bawat hakbang ay hikbing sukat makalugso
sa andamyong binabagtas.

Kasunod ng kapatid,
nilambungan ka ng apat na anino, mapupusyaw.
Sa sinapupunan ng kanyang kabiyak,
may dagdag na hiningang pumupusag,
handang ipaghele ng alingasaw at silim.

At sinakmal ka ng mistulang lungga.
Ang liwanag ng bombilya
ay di makaukab sa maninipis na dinding.

Salimbay ng tatlong supling
ng mga nangangapos na hininga:
mga kimpal ng galis,
kumikiskis sa tisikong haligi;
mga iskinita ng bulate,
walang-lubay na pinaglulubak ng guton;
mga abuhing tangkay ng dugo,
inihahapay ng itim na hangin.

Ay, nais mong sa kanila ay humingi ng tawad,
ngunit ang tanging nausal
ay muli't muli kang babalik:
pulang ibon na may punyal sa tuka.
Hangga't ang iyong utak ay gusgusing kalyehon,
hangga't ang iyong puso'y pusikit na barungbarong.

Serenade

1

Foul smell trapped by black sky,
Kagitingan
is a violet dodging blows in the dark.
Don't whimper,
warn your elder brother's eyes.
Each roof reached over by mud
is a garnet petal violently twitching.
The pots are pale.
Heap of pain,
each rag tightly presses its jaws.

Do not whimper.

2

A mass of clouds has seized the moon in its teeth.
At the foot of a bridge, looking down at a creek
you make out clusters of waterlilies
hugging rubbish,
entwined by grease:
gasping for air in the black water.
As if it wanted to moan,
a lone tree stands stunned.
And then trembles.

A child, fly-covered wound
that seemingly wouldn't heal,
reaches out retrieving some thing from a sewer.

One by one sobs fall,
fall into the mire.

An old woman looks out from a window,
hunched by hoary poverty she carries on her head,
mumbling as she gazes afar down the road.

The clusters of sickly weeds sing
to the dying stars.

3

Each step is a lament that could collapse
the planks on which you walk.

Trailing your brother,
you are enshrouded by four faint shadows.
In the womb of his wife
throbs another life,
waiting to be lulled by foul smell and the dark.

And you are swallowed by a burrow.
The bulb's light
could not bite into the thin walls.

Swirl of three offsprings
of short breaths:
lumps of scabies,
rubbing against a tubercular post;
alleys of worms,
endlessly eaten away by hunger;
ashen stems of blood,
bent by black wind.

O, you want to beg their forgiveness,
but can only mutter
that you'll come back again and again:
red bird bearing a dagger in its beak.
As long as your mind is a ragged street,
as long as your heart is a darkened shanty.

ERIC GAMALINDA

Death Comes to Diana

It was long past summer
when Cristina spilled out
of mother's guts to die.
Do you remember?
We stood on the sofa
to peer at her black mouth,
and she smelled of cotton
and fresh paint,
a day-old cherub
stuffed in a box,
and since then death
had always seemed to us
scrubbed and antiseptic,
cloaked in laboratory gowns
and tight rubber gloves.
You would meet it one day,
though, in that halfway-house
of your sleep, and it would
surprise you not with radiance
but with worn and tattered
shoes, an old wastrel
hungry for affection,
grappling with you for that space
above the China Sea:
and now it fattens,
nourished by your absence,
revelling in places
that once were yours.