

philippine studies

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

Daus Church
Flower
Reason

Victor Peñaranda

Philippine Studies vol. 53, no.2&3 (2005): 419–422

Copyright © Ateneo de Manila University

Philippine Studies 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. However, unless prior permission has been obtained, you may not download an entire issue of a journal, or download multiple copies of articles.

Please contact the publisher for any further use of this work at philstudies@admu.edu.ph.

<http://www.philippinestudies.net>
Fri June 30 13:30:20 2008

R. TORRES PANDAN

Falling Star

Sometimes, looking up just
 In time to catch a falling star,
 I'd worry that it is some planet,
 One with friendly gases,
 One with people in it, with houses
 And nice furniture, small children
 And their pets, hurtling toward
 Its fiery doom. And while this planet
 Slipped out of control
 In the empty sky, I'd wonder
 How soon we might share its fate,
 With its late skills in French
 Or basketball or with its vain loves
 Or losses. But yet, this plagues me
 Most of all: would anyone even
 Bother to catch our own brief apparition
 Of dust, forgotten—soon gone—
 And falling across no one else's sky?

VICTOR PEÑARANDA

Dauis Church

I strolled to Panglao Island one morning years ago,
 When lanterns of fishers still shone far out at sea,
 And ended up lost in thought near old Dauis Church
 Wondering if it was wise to enter without favor,
 To worship its cumulus ceiling of illuminated tales.

I recalled swallows gliding through its open doorways
 Threading eye of my heart with mystifying secrets:

The trapdoor, the hidden well in front of the towering altar.
 There beneath the floor an ancient source of fresh water,
 The sweetest in the whole island, had been sighing for ages
 Waiting for someone to genuflect on that very spot,
 Peak of dry spell, to slake thirst without yielding to baptism.

Among scattered ruins beside limestone shore I lingered
 Heard the wholeness of prayer flowing from the cavernous church:
 They were chanting, luring the dawn with rhythms only heard
 When forests reclaim abandoned fortresses with feral splendor.
 I turned pagan round the radiance of the communion chalice.

(1998)

Flower

The wind falls behind as our boat touches
 The mouth of a great river known for carving,
 Haunting seascapes after the rainforests died.
 The open sea hesitates then swallow-tails
 Into a maze of mud flats and waterways,
 This delta of boundless wetlands ungoverned
 By outriggers or flocks of migratory birds.
 Each island, exposed by receding tide,
 Offers a riddle for children with bare feet.
 The nipa fronds seem consumed in mystery,
 Wilderness relaxed in my lungs.
 This territory I once called home has lost
 Track of places where desires touch lightning,
 Ghosts haunt the roots of mangroves.
 Names have become elusive as silver eels.

I return bruised with love to reclaim
 Tales locked within the gaze of kingfishers.
 My travels introduced me to new worlds,
 Allowed me to explore the nature
 Of labyrinths where words and objects stray
 Then lose the power of their meanings.

Sorcerers took me into their company.
 In a city made infamous by traffic gridlock
 I recovered secrets from ancestral belly,
 While drivers committed acts of homicide.
 “Burak,” I whispered at busy junction,
 And the image of a heron, white as cotton,
 In a field of black silt, on a lake of blue sky,
 Sprang to life inside a bus crowded with people
 Committed to drown in forgetfulness.

As our boat negotiates with the dusk
 I whisper “burak” to salt-laden breeze.
 It means “flower,” the name of my coastal village
 Where ilang-ilang trees once bloomed in cascades,
 Seducing the righteous to commit infidelities.
 Childhood caught us gleaning one morning
 When horses stormed out of a military camp,
 Racing without riders, wild to the scent of insurgents,
 Gunfire recoiling in perfumed air.
 Marooned in a meadow of turtle grasses, my body
 Became a shore of legends, freight of blue sky,
 White heron dreaming in burnt-out garbage dump.
 I whisper the word again and feel a slender moon;
 Quietly the landscape begins to possess us,
 Flowering like sea anemones in the speed of light.

(Samar)

Reasons

I step out of the house,
 Still warm from breath of cooking,
 To converse with the breeze . . .
 Darkness and dewdrops lace
 The hills of Kalamalamahan.
 Fireflies reason in pulses.
 Friends are feasting
 On fish and rice in the kitchen.

Someone breaks into brittle laughter.
 When I look up the sky
 Stars graze my forehead;
 Entire constellations seem
 Concerned with our modest affairs,
 Exploring reasons
 To keep expanding the universe.
 I hear my name called—
 My turn to wash the dishes.

(Rogongon, Iligan
 2000)

ALLAN POPA

Dapithapon

Mula sa pahinang binabasa
 Tumingala ako at pinagmasdan ang daloy
 Ng mga paniki mula sa yungib.

Kasunod nilang umahon
 Ang mga minerong nakayuko sa paglakad
 Na waring kay bigat ng gumagabay na liwanag.

Nang balikan ko ang tula sa aking kandungan,
 Mariing kumapit sa papel ang mga titik
 Na nanganganib mahulog sa bitak
 Sa gitna ng aklat.

Sinalat ko ang isang munting salita
 Upang tumatag pansamantala sa pagkalula.
 Sa sandaling iyon, waring maikukuyom ko sa palad
 Ang lahat ng naghihintay na maunawaan.