

L I T E R A R Y

PREFACE TO THE LITERARY SECTION

Alfredo Cuenca, Jr.

MJ RAFAL

Ulat sa Tula

Ars Poetica ng Makata sa Karsel ng Sarili

Kung Ita-tag Mo Sila Makikilala Kang Makata at

Sisikat sa Tula

ELAINE LAZARO

Bread and Fish

The Height Of...

Kulam

I Wonder How Real Writers Write

DENNIS ANDREW S. AGUINALDO

Days of Going Nowhere

Foreparents

Portrait, After 31 Years

The Grandfather Lullaby

PREFACE TO THE LITERARY CONTRIBUTIONS

ALFREDO O. CUENCA, JR.

It is interesting to discover that we have in our midst a number of poetic voices to herald the new issue of our academic journal Mabini review. Then, as now, the world over have spearheaded the growth and development of the arts and the humanities, the technological and scientific culture of the age. Nowhere has this been more felt than in the academe, with such venerable reviews as the Sewanee Review; the Harvard advocate (which saw the early works of T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound); Botteghe Oscure; New Mexico Quarterly; Texas Review, which explicated on the works of D.H. Lawrence and the Farleigh Dickenson review of Wisconsin U.S.A. which at one time featured Filipino poets like a certain Alfredo O. Cuenca, Jr.

With this issue of the PUP Mabini Review, we expect to be around for quite a time, with its new poetics exemplified by its three contributors: Elaine Lazaro (very sharp), Dennis Andrew S. Aguinaldo; and the bilingual poet MJ Rafal, who reminds us of the multi-lingual Federico Licsi Espino, Jr., language-wise, of course. We would be immensely pleased to see the emergence of more poets in the PUP campus, and perhaps lay the seeds of greatness as with the Literally Apprentice of the University of the Philippines.

New Poetics

The three new voices featured here typify the search for the new poetics which is also the expression of the modern temper that, on the whole, offers the world with a heightened awareness of the potentialities of language. If the new politics “shattered every accepted standard of verbal behavior” (a line by this author on the works of Alejandrino G. Hufana) the reader must realize that the old

and oft-repeated archaic tools like music, beat, rhythm and meter are also present but better felt, heard and seen in the new poetics, physically and metaphorically. For this reason, the new poetics provide both the discovery and the judgment that make for a new experience, a new etymological comprehension and rejuvenation of words.

Lazaro/Rafal/Aguinaldo

The three poets featured here should be able to write more, and not think of the critics such as T.S. Eliot, who once wrote on the so-called “Three Voices of Poetry,” with the first voice centering on private or personal lyricism, the second voice as something beyond the personal or private, and the third comprising the terms “objective correlative.”

The last stanza in Elaine Lazaro’s “The Height Of ...” says: “but the height of contentment/smiling hands/” reminds me of a line in another poem by Simeon Dumdum, Jr. a Palanca awardee and Silliman University Writers’ Workshop fellow, this wise: “a coffin is not a work of art.” Nice, says Cirilo F. Bautista of the line.

Poet Dennis Andrew S. Aguinaldo is versatile and provides the reader with a heightened appreciation of the potentialities of language.

Poet MJ Rafal also reminds us of the bilingual novelist Vladimir Nabokov (*The Defense, Speak, Memory, Lolita*) who warns us against creative translation from one language to another. He wants a literal translation.

On the other hand, Ezra Pound, in a somewhat akin move, wants a ruthless editing of anyone’s work. It was he who reduced T.S. Eliot’s “the wasteland” to skin and bones.

Take a bow, PUP Mabini Review.

Ulat Sa Tula

MJ Rafal

Irap ng Pari ang asim sa misa.
May tama ng rikit ang tirik na mata.

Lampas ang sampal ng baril noong Abril.
Lugod ang dulog ng mga liblib na bilbil.

Parang bigwas ng bagwis ang lagay ng layag.
Kung ugod na ang dugo wala nang yabag ang bayag.

Kupit lamang ang tipak ng kapit na putik.
Wala nang tikas ang salag kung lagas na ang sakit.

Mugto sa gutom ang tabain na binata.
Bugso sa busog ang alagad ng dalaga.

Tingi sa ngiti kung lima ang mali
Sa tipo na pito na kayliit ng tili.

Sipat at pitas, pisil sabay silip sa pula na lupa.
Ngunit sala pa rin sa lasa ang payapa na papaya.

Ubos sa subo kung lungkot ay tungkol
sa patay na payat na hatol ay tahol.

Hindi ba angat ang tanga kung salat ang talas?
Pangil ang lingap sa sapakat na kapatatas.

Hindi kinaya ng iyakan ang ipis sa sipi.
Usap-pusa ang asal-sala na siping ng pisngi.

Tigil na ang gilit kung ligtas nang saglit.
Sasukal ng luksa pilat ang palit.

Sagip daw sa pigsa ang langis ng lasing.
Dusa daw ang usad kung may sigla ang galis.

Laksa ang sakla sa lamay na walang malay.
May ilap ang pila sa yakap na pakay.

Awatin ang awitan! Pahiram daw ang mahirap
Ng ligtas na saglit sa pakpak ng kapkap.

Wagi ang agiw sa sagwa ng wagas.
Aliw ang ilaw sa salamin na minalas.

Awat-tawa, agaw-gawa! paskil ng piskal.
Labag nga ba ang bagal sa lawak ng kawal?

Tigib ang bigti kung may alat ang tala.
Sulit ang tulis kung tama ang mata.

Kulob at bulok ang kahoy na hayok.
Ang angas ng sanga ay kupkop ng pukpok.

Sandal lamang sa landas kung tagos ang sagot.
Paksa dapat ay sapak kung gusto ng gusot.

Mula habag ang luma nang bahag.
Lapat ang tapal sa pagal na lapag.

Sapat ba ang patas kung may bawas ang sabaw?
Italas ang salita, ang wika ay ikaw.

Mahalan ang halaman, isumpa ang umpisa.
Dilig-tubig sa gilid ay hindi ubra sa bura.

May pahid ng hapdi kung hula ang luha.
Walang sutla ang lutas kung daya ay adya.

Sikat sa tikas ang tuhog at hugot.
Tabig sa bitag, tukod sabay dukot.

Sa kalat ng takal, banat ang banta.
Sobra ang braso kung said na ang isda.

Walang talab sa balat kung bakli ang libak.
Pula ang ulap sa batak na tabak.

Sa kuta ng utak, may bagsik ang bigkas.
Patis sa pista ang pilas nang lipas.

Suntok sa kutson ang patak ng tapak.
May silbi ang bilis sa kati ng itak.

Tangi ang ingat kung kutkot ang tuktok.
Pisi ng isip ay kulog ng gulok.

May asam ang masa. May alab ang bala.
Banal ang laban na ang alay ay laya.

Ars Poetica Ng Makata Sa Karsel Ng Sarili

MJ Rafal

...Parang mga makatang labis na naaaliw sa pagkatula ng kanilang tula at walang pakialam sa damdamin at pag-unawa ng mambabasa.

–Reuel Aguila

(aaminin ko, oo, minsan
oo, minsan, wala akong
pakialam sa damdamin
at u na wang u mu nawa ng mam
ba
ba
sa
bagsak sa pamantayan ko ang kanilang
kakayahan na umintindi, intindihin
ng ,ang
metapora, simile, paradox, irony
prosody: metro ritmo intonasyon
mga pantigan at patnigan
tetrahexaiambicdactyltrocheeanapestspondeepyrrhic
tugmaan ballad villanelle oda soneto
jintishi haiku tanka
ghazal bersolibre
assonance consonance aliterasyon
estropa couplettripletquatrain

hindi nila ito magagagap bakit ko ilalantad sa kanila
 ang aking nalalalahan ni nadarama nakikita ni
 nalalanghap

indibidwal at personal ang lahat lahat
 sa akin

may musa akong pinagsisilbihan

ano pa't naging makata?
 ang tula ko'y tula at tula

lamang

wala akong pakialam. walang makikialam.

...for art's sake!)

Kung Ita-tag Mo Sila, Makikilala Kang Makata At Sisikat Sa Tula

MJ Rafal

siyento-porsyento, garantisado makakukuha ka
ng mga mata at daliri at makaiintindi sa
tula mong tumatalakay sa alienation at sa kailaliman
ng soul at ego at ng angst at metapisikal something
ng malalalim mong tugmaan

proseso: itaya mo muna ang hiya, umangkas
sa balikat ng namamayagpag na makata sa FB
add as friend hintayin mong makilala ka niya then
penetrate his/her world, virtual world tandaan mong tulay
ang kaniyang pangalan kilalanin mo ang kaniyang kaibigan
add them as a friend at matutong mag-tag
tag-tag-tag-tag-tag-tag i-tag
ang tula mong nakangiti
at nagsasayaw sa hangin ng ilusyon at ma hika wait a
minute
like is like a likeable thing
aangat ang ego at ang angst at ang confidence mo
makakainuman mo ang iyong mga iniidolo inside the literary
scene
ng Philippine Pilipinas Pilipino Filipino
malaki ang chance waiting for godot masusungkit mo
ang grandest ever award basta't tandaan alisin mo muna ang
hiya

walang hiya-hiya at delikadesa at kung anu-ano pang dahilan
upang mapigilan kang mamayagpag hello hello hey hi
ang tula ay kahalihalina kung ihahain sa kailaliman ng lupa
at itatabi sa kepler 22b ang tula ay tulay na tuluy-tuloy sa
tuluyang
like like like is like a likeable thing

kung matututo ka lamang mag-tag
babasahin ka di nga comments and suggestions positibo
negatibo kakatamin ka yeso ba o marmol narra pa
lo tsi na

siyento-porsyento, garantisado makakukuha ka
ng mga mata at daliri at makaiintindi sa
tula mong tumatalakay sa alienation at sa kailaliman
ng soul at ego at ng angst at metapisikal something
ng malalalim mong tugmaan

manalig
naghihintay ang

stardom.

Bread and Fish

Elaine Lazaro

I had been trying to explain what philosophy is to you for an hour, but you keep on telling me that it is a loaf of bread. I said it is something that you are not supposed to eat. 'But it should taste something, doesn't it?' You keep on asking me if I have ever, fishing, caught Thales. I told you he is a philosopher, a Milesian; and disappointed, you almost smirked: you had been thinking that he was a fish, this Thales. I whispered: it is a word, philosophy. You frowned, '*Just* a word? *Just* a word?', so you asked me ten more times making sure that it really is not baguette or cinnamon bread. Ten more times I had to confirm that Descartes was not a carp; Heidegger not an oyster and Sartre not your mother's milk fish. Thrice I repeated that my bait never caught any of the golden Milesian fins.

The Height of...

Elaine Lazaro

The height of ignorance:
fingers counting limited
to one, two, three.

The height of poverty:
too poor to pay the ransom
for one's own poem.

The height of loneliness:
the sound of a raindrop falling
on a tin can.

The height of uncertainty:
off to the brink
of indifference.

The height of absolute freedom:
the inanity of existence;
an eagle soaring without a prey in sight.

But the height of contentment:
smiling lips on the deathbed,
with weary eyes closed
and praying hands.

Kulam

Elaine Lazaro

Fifty—they counted it and made sure each of it died. These cockroaches, who are sending them, who? Nita's belly is swollen; her mouth puffy and red. The smell of her breath like a mice dead. Nita, she was an hermana and then twenty—they drowned all of them. Ten more worms are coming out from her ears. Nita was a beauty, crowned—now crowned with a water snake and decorated by the blood dripping from her nostrils. Our mamang called for the mambabarang. She is stubborn, our sister Nita: we have all warned her that the new seamstress is mangkukulam; her daughter is a basketful of envy. She should have just given her the five mangoes and three orchids.

I Wonder How Real Writers Write

Elaine Lazaro

I

I wonder how real writers write. Not that there are counterfeit made of synthetic leather patched. Not too that there is a demarcation line saying: Here you have finally reached the end of the line. For still, are not all acts of writing a reaching for some other end? Or at least some catching? Look! at that boy yonder, he is keenly watching the fandango of the Maya bird. He would lure those wings into a trap he plotted the night before. At the moment, he is feeding her with crumbs from a week-old slice of bread. He stole it from his grandmother's jar of biscuit, by the way.

II

I heard of a girl who listened to how a poem (or something like a poem) would sound. And only until later would she patch and stitch the holes between the terms. I heard of a girl who alters the trail of thought for the sake of rhyme; meaning to say, she would replace the l of luck with the f of fuck if the replacing would sound lighter. I wonder if she was trained to play the cielo as a child, to what songs she listens to, or if her tricks were first heard from the chimes.

III

Yeah, I wonder: How real writers write? Someone named me a poet; I forgot her name. She was said to have gazed at the ceiling all night and day. She was born at the time when men mistook the universe as inside the labyrinth of the brain. She filled tatters of papers with nouns, bouquets of adjectives, and dancing verbs. Surprisingly, despite the life bestowed, the leaves/birds didn't flutter outside her windows.

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Days of Going Nowhere

Dennis Andrew S. Aguinaldo

Dad bought the chair for his father
after Tata's body stopped moving.

We kids took turns adjusting the bar on the pegs
for Tata's back: upright, lean back, prop up,
lay down. We were careful, slow.

Aunts and uncles told us when to raise or lower him,
but Tata himself would not tell us he was comfortable.
No nod or smile at the flexing of our arms.

After Tata died, his children divided his house.

We kids commandeered the chair under their noses.

We played cards or jackstones for the right to ride
the driver's seat, what was Tata's footrest.
Losers rode rear. The body of the great rattan car.

The winner headed to the moon or under the lake.
The rest declared speed by raising, lowering the bar.

Foreparents

Dennis Andrew S. Aguinaldo

Along roads wet with August we drove the kids
to see the grandparents, to compare the width
of wrists, draw around feet, measure, measure up.

At the sight of pencils – blunted, unbroken –
I missed, suddenly, the parents of my parents,
the three I remember, the three,
the two, the one, the none.

On our last night, we drew letters on the backs of the kids,
sang them to dreams, inhaled the sour of their napes.
Mama asked my wife to leave a child behind.

My father made coffee stronger than the dawn,
then helped me load the car under the pour.

We tiptoed on the water: my shoe,
his slipper, my shoe. Together

we let the sky speak its volumes.
Believing our scalps too good for the rain.

Portrait, after 31 years

Dennis Andrew S. Aguinaldo

My father, 66,
asked my daughter, 3,
who she thought was on the picture
hanging over his door.
My daughter said it was me,
would not believe otherwise,
but it was my father
sitting on the stripes of the sofa,
his leg over his knee,
pleats over pleats,
flanked by the plant whose name
he knew, whose water
was his to give.

I would have been the last thing I'd see
in that handsome frame, withdrawn
thin smile, a knot of
tie, that belt incompletely
concealed, and sleeves long enough
for the rolling, for what
labors a city would unfurl.

There had to be shoes
somewhere, off-frame, aglow
with destination, the taking of this
picture a scheduled bother—
we had to be on time
for the place in his mind.

And somewhere else,
clutching his jaw, sitting on his shoulders,
answering the question
unasked for was my daughter:

age of mischief,
tiara of plastic,
her mother's eyes.

The Grandfather Lullaby

Dennis Andrew S. Aguinaldo

These years have held stones so smooth
They should never have tasted breaking
These years have known hearts so pure
Have felt the warmth of a hand
Have come to hold you

*My humming kisses your humming
Throat to toy
A world must close its eyes*

These arms have been burned by veins
By nerves hissing, leading to the goose-skin
The reddening of the face
The spew of water and calamity
A choke of tears and ash, of ash, of salt

*My rattling kisses your rattling
Throat to toy
A world must close its eyes*

Hushed or no, your wisdom shall govern
This long world, that holy mountain
Maybe I shall hear you say “break the bread”
Then shall you lick your lips
Then shall it be broken

My humming kisses your humming
Toy to throat
The moon comes to a close

Let me tiptoe outwards like an echo
Of what I have long ago destroyed
What crying thing you have yet to disfigure
Unclench, my child, let loose the clouds seeking sky
The dreams asking you, tonight, to sleep.

CONTRIBUTORS

Dennis Andrew S. Aguinaldo teaches literature and mythology at the University of the Philippines Los Baños. He has been publishing his creative work online and offline for the purpose of improving his teaching methods. His main drafts are available at tekstongbopis.blogspot.com.

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Elaine M. Lazaro is Writer/Researcher of the Information and Creative Services Division of the Department of Trade and Industry. Her literary works have been published by the *Philippine Free Press*, Anvil Publishing and other independent literary magazines. Ms. Lazaro holds a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy (PUP).

Marciana Agnes G. Ponsaran holds a doctorate degree in Philosophy. She is currently teaching ethics and philosophy of science at the University of Santo Tomas—Department of Social Sciences. Dr. Ponsaran’s research interests cover Aristotelian ethics and nanotechnology.

Mj Rafal. Pangarap niyang maging arkitekto, pero naging guro; gustong maging kwentista pero nahumaling sa tula, si M.J Rafal ay madalas na makikitang naglalakad sa Recto at Quiapo, sa Divisoria at Cubao upang maghanap ng mga kayamanan tulad ng ‘ngiti sa labi ng pulubi’. Nag-ugat at namumugad sa Tundo, dito na siya tinubuan ng pakpak at sungay. Paborito niyang quote ang “Poetry, like bread, is for everyone” ni Roque Dalton.

Virgilio A. Rivas is the Director of the PUP Institute of Cultural Studies and concurrently Chief of the Center of Social History. He is the Secretary of the Philosophical Association of the Philippines, and a lifetime board member of the Philippine Association for the Sociology of Religion. He holds a masters degree in philosophy.