

I.

"Nine rebels were killed while five were arrested after an intense crossfire and bombing between the troops from the 41st Infantry Batallion and the Joselito Martirez Command in Porac.

One of the rebels arrested is Leandro Basilio, son of Central Luzon rebel-leader Florencio Basilio and grandson of the First Great Civil War martyr General Rene Basilio.

The arrests were made seven days after the newly-installed government declared an all-out war against the longest-running insurgency in Asia led by Maoist revolutionary forces."

an excerpt from the news published by Pampanga Herald, dated September 22, 1986

This is a night of potent portents:

flaccid bodies, fractured bones,
assorted rifles, ammo belts,
shards of shrapnels,
stray bullets, empty shells; enraged
blood splattered across
the broken defense flank
mixed with the unsung reveries
of youthful innocence –
they paint
a foreboding maelstrom
within the belly of a sleeping monster.

Ashes, alas, shall return
to its feudal master
in such swift nocturnal bliss. Carbon,
nitrates, hydrogen, and oxygen will unite
with the phosphoric
givenness
of the earth's bosom.

Such process,

dialectical as it may seem,

is filled with myths.

Suppose

the pulverized meat

fixes itself

in the realm of the unseen. It wafts unconsciously, with the air

in its

particularities

aimlessly loitering

around our breathing caverns.

Afterwards, inhaled or ingested, how does the body react with

the colonial.

almost imperial intrusion of particles.

Does the mind suspend its operation

to judge, afterwards –

silence the foreign?

Or do cells throng,

to forge an army

as they smell the urgency

of revolution

to prevent the looming crisis?

To many,

the answer remains a riddle

too unclear. Derived from the current

scarcity and impoverishment

of awareness.

Only one thing is still certain:

The hallowed hills and mountains,

The torrential rivers,

the solid fortress

shall remain singing

the hymns of freedom

while preparing

for the nascent return of chaos.

II.

"I hold that it is bad as far as we are concerned if a person, a political party, an army or a school is not attacked by the enemy, for in that case it would definitely mean that we have sunk to the level of the enemy. It is good if we are attacked by the enemy, since it proves that we have drawn a clear line of demarcation between the enemy and ourselves. It is still better if the enemy attacks us wildly and paints us as utterly black and without a single virtue; it demonstrates that we have not only drawn a clear line of demarcation between the enemy and ourselves but achieved a great deal in our work."

a quote from Chairman Mao found in the diary of Ka Maita, nom de guerre of Leandro Basilio

Sonorousness holds itself gently, as the mountain stream flows the woes of its current temporarily muted by the vociferous exchange of bullets.

Demarcations have been drawn.

Territories have been marked.

Life hangs itself on the impermanent **balance**

contesting lines; between between contending forces.

> Soon, spaces will be encroached; In the hope that borders will be dissolved.

Nothing is immutable.

Hearken! Behold!

Guns talk forcefully
in a grand manner:
they decry the brutality of words –
Nameless
in any language.

Respect roots itself

in that temerity,

vividly expressed

by the vigorous

and glorious

retaliation of the people.

Valor lies, not

in the absence of

trepidation

that paralyzes the limbs;

of fear,

that makes the heart falter as it leaps

out of its hollow cage;

of terror,

that chills

the spine

down to its core.

True valor lies

in facing the overwhelming

enemy from within;

in defeating the specters

of history

that haunt the nation's soul;

in confronting the universality of contradiction.

It thrives in the recognition that one's heart is beating –

in unison

with the interest of the masses.

III.

"Can we annihilate one's firm rooted love for the oppressed? Can anyone extinguish the fire continuously burning within one's soul endlessly consuming the thoroughness of existence? Why is our selflessness equated with foolishness? It must be because we're the only people capable of loving unconditionally. We immerse ourselves so much with this scientific lunacy to lead people to the triumph of historic truth. The old adage holds true, 'And those who were seen dancing were thought to be insane by those who could not hear the music."

an excerpt from one of Leandro's letter to his schoolmate and childhood friend Ka Mara Taguba, a martyred Red fighter

Has the hour come for me to unmask myself?

To relinquish and reveal the hidden, one must speak of collected sorrow and resistance.

Epic struggles had been waged throughout centuries, with it countless lives have been lost

together with unheard narratives native to our vocation, irreparably vanished from the contesting cacophony.

As I meditate here, behind the mediation of the brash coldness of aligned bars. I retreat to the senile solitude of exhalation.

Inside, this narrow hutch
while the sterile stillness
saturate my veins – I felt

my widowed presence, longing for the return of the irrevocable.

IV.

"... I perused the steep path to the precipice, incurred the scars of contempt, endangered myself to uncertain terrains to seek the refuge of the principled warriors. In the savage wilderness, I exposed my porous being to the permeating presence of the divine."

from Leandro's collection of poems entitled Of Mountains and Echoes

After much palavering we have learned to domesticate our identity in the apparent quietness of the countryside. Far from the debilitating tyranny of capital, we define the demarcation by decimating relations inherent in the existing system.

An act to reclaim our dignity from the paper gods who continue to reign behind the force of terror.

> History will be rewritten, and the masses shall finally inscribe their dictatorship in a manifesto

that will remain unerased,

permanently for it is written with the boiling ink blood of the people's martyrs.

V.

"...no matter how you conceal it in metaphors Leandro, it shows. It just shows. We cannot escape the fact that we're equally vulnerable, ailing, and fragmented individuals. We're all too human after all. That is our grave fault. We are born humans. But it is in itself a gift we must cultivate with revolutionary strength and vitality. Transcending our humanness by becoming more human. This is the gravest fault after all in this age. Loving until we cease to live."

Ka Selya's reply to a letter sent to her by her brother Leandro

How do we undress the flesh of its sordidness?

It's bondage to decadence,

it's servility to oppression.

How do we inter the putrescent remains of serfdom in the womb of a moribund society?

> Do we caress the chains, or do we break free from it

Freedom is abstract in the face of an empty plate. Principles cannot quench feed

thirst nor

those whose stomachs ache for crumbles.

Should we embrace our dungeon and castrate ourselves for dreaming?

Lance Romulus S. Dayrit 23

Defiance is defeat for those who never learned to struggle.

Revolution is not for the weak!

The green grasses shall sprout unannounced as long as the rain pours its grief down

the barren realm: The land shall remain fertile.

The bewitching flowers shall continue to bloom in the face of tormenting heat and ceaseless change of weather.

The heart doubts, certainly it is an unsettled affair.

But when the heart decides resolutely to move forward with the masses, with its army, with the brave daughters and sons of revolution:

Alas, we shall sing, Victory is near!

POETICS

My collection of poems entitled "Warrior Poet: Leandro Basilio, Son of Pampanga" started years ago after I wrote my first collection of poems entitled "The Way of the General". It is an original and experimental sequel to my first collection that won me the title as Poet of the Year in English at the 11th Gawad Digmaang Rosas awards. From my record, I would like to believe that I am a Marxist poet.

In both collections, I tried to insightfully explore the power of historical fiction in poetry. Using historical references that are both concocted by the imagination and authentic in nature, I tried to weave interconnected narratives with my poems. To reflect the nature of historical materialism through the power of verse — to show the ferocity of class struggle as embodied by the ongoing people's revolution through armed struggle. Here, I tried to show how the State has historically used its coercive apparatuses and power to defend the class interest of the bourgeoisie. On the other hand, I have elucidated the valiant struggle of the oppressed and voiceless against the seemingly infallible power of capital and semi-feudalism that is being preserved by the agents of the State.

In my attempt to make a poem tell a story — to apprehend a particular feeling, idea, or event — I am also trying to challenge the limits of what is considered as poetry. I also believe that I have been more daring in terms of form in my current collection of poems. Each poem contains separate epigraphs that provide specific contextualization for the corresponding poems they are attached into. Each of the epigraphs tell a story of its own, but when pieced together with the other epigraphs and poems — it reveals a larger picture. My collection of poems may be read in part or in whole. However, its beauty lies when it is read in its totality. Here, the reader will see the dialectical unity of various parts that may not make sense if read as a singular poem.

In this collection I have also been very particular and careful in crafting the poem's imagery, even though at times the poems read as if they were too direct. However, the primary image that I want to convey is the terrifying perils of warfare along with the extraordinary grit, persistence, and fortitude that revolutionaries exude as particularly exhibited by the remarkable life of a warrior, a people's hero — Leandro Basilio, grandson of a prominent martyr from the first collection, General

Florence Basilio. His life, along with his family members, has been thoroughly devoted to the undying cause of the democratic people's revolution.

The fundamental duty of a poet is to tell the truth through the creative cultivation of language. This collection of poems is a small yet venerable attempt to accord the people's revolution its rightful place in the literary scene. It seeks to give voice to the historical truth that it is trying to communicate with the people. To add, even though this collection is highly political, it is also deeply personal for me at the same time. At this age, where truth is challenged from all corners: postmodernism, misinformation, malinformation, disinformation, etc. I believe that it is absolutely imperative that writers hold steadfast to their political, social, and moral convictions. To sing truth through their pen and keyboard, no matter how seemingly strong the powers that be.