

LAWDENMARC DECAMORA 29

RODINA-MAT, MARCH 2022

Towering Mother of Air – summer is so far away!

You stand proud with a raised sword cutting air raid sirens into ribbons of sighs, who shield their innocence from the nonchalance of smoke as that of life's arithmetic.

You look towards Dnieper and see more homes guarded by drones. Names of newborns whispered among tall firs and burning shrines, empty strollers parading in Lviv streets. You think that a madman's theatre has its curtain once again pulled down. Embassies of rage, schools of bombs, museums of dead letters, of war pageantry!

And you live a poetic life, so poetic as that of AnnaLynne McCord's message to Putin. "If I was your mother, you would have been so loved."

This carnival of sound you've neutralized, state borders unvacated by memory.
They think what you do each day is to embroider peace from the world's soviet fears, ancient dreams.

Because summer is so far away. The night hears the distant throb of fate. The Black Sea murmurs as it mothers your history, your sky-throat warrior flame.

Inside its vastness, out of time they sleep and somehow they are FREE.

Summer is so far away, dear deathless Mother of Air!

How do they savor the night I smell the pariah's scent Walang gera. There's no war. Look at me. I follow tanks, Where are the clocks that tell them Gifting me with hope is this The moment they picture are like butterflies my lips against a stoical mirage; my war machine, my ars poetica. Now they are amazed by my peace squarely in the quiet air.

in its humid cloak of stars?

and I am freezing

May gera! Oh there's a war!
javelins, nukes with my eyes.
they'll never be stateless?
inner kaleidoscope kapayapaan.
in their minds that ammos
because I never close my eyes,
I am my own rebulto—

To be a rebulto is to be Ako.
 and sleep and my breathing
 be a rebulto is to be the spectacle.

LAWDENMARC DECAMORA 31

TUNNEL #4 (CLARK FREEPORT AMNESIA)

Good morning, Spine. Out there stilt houses look serious and fine, here we live on echoes simply spelling the past. I've been told by your sister that your Dad's growing old in Kampong Kleang. The sting of war, now stacks of misery. His farewell letter on the drawer,

just sleeping soundly. Cars driven to drive ego away and further into a port of somewhere. Dead batteries tested, windshield washed clean, ready to shelter no rain, even the 17th fly coming to feel your spine, your shoulder blades the twin tunnels the rising Phteah Keung I'm a mess I need to go somewhere else.

The roads, oh they're paved for your courage, road signs newly painted though they're sick to death of neon. Spine, I wake up early to catch not the sun but the careful subtext of your hips telling me that there's not a day brighter than your special scrambled eggs.

We seek explanations, we carry flags. Please remember to feed the cat as ordinary conversations may sink if your head's going from point to point, tropical to jazz. Please remember your name's Spine and your Dad's gonna call you his baby and return to change this place into a forest of Khmer flowers. But you say you're not Spine and wasn't born so yesterday.

Tell you what: your real name's Soul and you continue to move places, ports and bases, Los Angeles Nowhere, Clark Freeport Somewhere. Poetry and airplanes on our roofs! And you were born in 1987, in the late 60s, at the end of the century, in a time of lit hysteria of the mind. And I was born right next to you.

Lawdenmarc Decamora 33

ODE TO PACKAGE ARRIVING

It is not about the terrible Taliban takeover, the assassin air that moans with the birds as Kabul's wrapped in today's sentiments of newsprint. Nor is it the cheese melting on a fry pan, its cream a thick status quo.

It is the delivery box arriving today.

I acknowledge my patience like how you acknowledge yours. And slowly, I am going to close my eyes. Toy zebras, of course! Astrolabes and mandalas, why not? Or maybe a cute gift box offering a cosmic-size publication contract.

Huh?!

Grains of summer occupy so much space in my mind! You keep guessing about the contents of the package, don't you?

I only want three things.

One is an endless friendship with common things, lyrical as songs about fingernails. Two is to receive the package while my hands are still two happy hands. My third and final wish, your book. I cannot survive without sniffing its garden-fresh air.

SOMETIMES / MINSAN

new life (when you notice the colors) like rain in the arms of the night

sweet & light tonight

ecopoetics in sight sometimes i question things no not to please

the wind in your hair the autobiographical animal

annotated here & there i just want irony to swim in the skin of human existence & i'm the first to admit

& i'm the first to admit i believe in people like you

believing in people like me in the June air of two

so ecstatic as gold shiny eyes gyrating w/ things though it's only goodnight

it means something

a question of time || (minsan) a question of pride || (minsan) i just want to see you || (minsan) cellophane bees meander

through fields of lollipops

as tall grass as power

of remote concerns

but in this show i'm not complaining

your pleasure's my sugar boat

& my dwelling only sometimes

reminds me of begonia skies

of one times two the dirt in your son's fries

caring is true...

though it's only goodnight

it means something

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POETICS

Conceived as two of the startling pieces in *Line Affairs*, the author's new and unpublished poetry collection, "Rodina-Mat, March 2022" and "Tunnel #4 (Clark Freeport Amnesia)" examine the psychosocial foundation of language, memory, as well as the politics of migration. The memory of war is a kind of cultural phantom which purports to permeate the consciousness of people—say, the Filipino family or community—hankering for the presence of the beloved, at least in the traditional aspect of remembering the dead. Likewise, mobility in the poem encourages the mental mapping of some familiar signs, albeit refracted and rhizomic, as can be gleaned from "the wind in your hair / the autobiographical animal / annotated here & there" (sometimes / *minsan*).

Anglophonophilia channels the music

This is however the reality the poem speculates, that is spectatorial more than spectacular: the recklessness of the poetic line. Moreover, the theme of migration based on the conditions of colonial influence and employment opportunities, as it were, may signify a performance of dissociated sensory images. Hence, the colorful voicing of diaspora amplified in the poetic lines, not to mention the desire to experiment with sound which can be a bit gossipy or hypnotic at some point. Take for instance this line from "Tunnel #4": We seek explanations, / we carry flags. / Please remember to feed the cat as ordinary / conversations may sink if your head's going / from point to point, tropical to jazz. //"

of literary tyrannosaurs.

Apparently, the short collection selected by *Entrada* embodies the lyrical finesse, structural fragmentations, as well as the metaphors and unpredictable associations of Paul Celan. *Threadsuns, Poppy and Memory,* and *Glottal Stop: 101 Poems* are my favorite collections of his. My personal pick is "Death of Fugue" which is a poem that exhibits dexterity and disguise. I love how these two elements engage themselves in a play, in a war of words and ideas. This is how my poetry works, and this is how I fell in love with Celan's poetry. Such lines as "Black milk of daybreak we drink it at nightfall" and "Your hands full of hours" are immortal. I also think that Michael Hamburger did an impeccable job in translating Celan's poetic text from the original Romanian. And that's Paul Celan: he certainly has a spot in my Mt. Rushmore of World Surrealist Poets.

Deeper, deeper there's a sound.

As regards the linguistic approach emanating from my body of work, I certainly write my poems in English, but the conscious play of 'code-switching' can be an effective poetic device. This is how exophonic poets articulate their own form of rhetorical protest. As a Filipino poet writing in English, the art of poetic code-switching allows me to play with language and embrace the Asian American identity in my writing. My inspiration for this kind of poetic practice, therefore, was the Korean American poet, Cathy Park Hong. Her "All the Aphrodisiacs", for example, retains the cultural intimacy within the Asian American cultural community.

A familiar sound.