

ALEX GREGORIO



## Midas

Hermetically, without glory,  
god carried him  
near the Rocky Pit.

Because he was gold,  
the lord approached him pettily and simply  
like cough.

He watched the world dumbly like chaos.  
The wind,

understanding his shimmers  
peeped behind trees  
and wooed.

Toads and some flies waited.  
And this nature god built  
which understood how even metals are flesh

found its awkward geology  
and hugged it

and kissed him forever on the craggy mouth  
of the Rock.

## In Water

Something enters your brain  
bringing more eddies.

Meanwhile the crab-frightening chance  
distends and flattens  
its irritating ocean.

Birds in various capacities  
understand the depth  
and squawk.

You know some fish are sick  
but they rise, challenging air,  
needing new biologies.

Everywhere on this sea  
the waves move from a dumb shell.

You are the target,  
eye of a shrimp,  
where nothing's allowed to blink.

There is no science to stop  
your endless swimming.

ALLAN POPA



## Mater Dolorosa

On her lap, what remains  
is the part of him that was mortal.  
The gravity she was fated to bear  
from the very beginning.

He was what could be called a site  
of struggle: having been both human  
and a god. Passionate, complete  
with wounds.

What she gave him was form.  
Matter that endured the suffering.

What else can we do but admire  
her bearing in carrying the body  
and all it carries: the sins of the world.  
The buoyant spirit having been  
commended into the hands of the father.

Even a mother conceived without sin,  
whose place is assured in the holy order,  
grieves for the son she has outlived.  
For the time being.

## Lacuna

They found him many years later  
in another town. Suffering they say  
from amnesia. But doesn't memory  
make people suffer?

He sure has recollections.  
Though excluding those who claim  
to have taken him home.

He remembers numbers like days.  
And a few words: *they will come soon*.  
Meaning, he knows where he was.  
All day, he traces figures, connecting  
dots nailed firm on a plane  
of strange mathematics.

So much misunderstanding  
taking form.

When his turn to be recognized came,  
Jesus walked toward the water.  
The way all long journeys come to end  
or begin.

No one asked where he'd been.  
Walking unscathed through the break  
in the narrative.

But what are years to a god?  
They were lost only to the teller.

The man looks up into space, attentive.  
As though enraptured by a presence.

They follow his lead, the way  
religions rise, inevitable as cathedral  
ceilings. As high as the eye can believe.

LAWRENCE YPIL



## And Love Passed Between Them

There was a time when they could not reach the world,  
(Time would not reach the world.)

So they walked the long streets  
in search of what would not pass for time.  
They waited at corners for the late bus rides.  
(The months were filled with slow days.)

They were leaving their lives for the sturdier sides  
of old churches. The quieter sides.  
Sometimes the latch on a bag would give  
and for a moment they had something to say.  
(There was much to give the world if not time.)

So they held hands while they crossed streets  
and they always had somewhere else to go to.  
And there was wind that shook the old roofs  
while the new ones stood still.

And love passed between them  
like a lost rumor that, given years,  
would become history.

There were times when they held  
what could not be theirs like gifts they could give.  
There were times when they reached  
the end of their days happy.

## The Discovery of Landscape

When we saw the city,  
We believed again in time.  
Line of the tall spires and the bend  
Of a bright sky.

We believed again in space.  
Light of the large looms  
and the roof of the wrong eye.

We believed again in perfectibility  
(if not perfection), in the fresh  
(if not the new).

We named it progress. The past  
was not warm, so we named it dead.  
We named everything we could not touch

Passed. (If not pleased.) We believed  
Again in what was large.  
Might of the long road and the wrist

Of the wrong risk.  
(If not the right way)  
When we made the step back—

Look. There. Clear measure  
Of the flock on the far tip,  
Of all the missed trips.  
When we saw the city—

## The Foundering

Watch the blue glass make  
Its long travel down.

David on the Late Night Show  
Asking the world—will it float?  
—while the girl warped in twenty  
hula hoops twines her thin torso  
into the spectacle of what cannot  
almost be done.

The stiff surrender of her arms  
to whatever it is that twists.  
To whatever it is in which consists  
the long embarrassment of the strange.

For her to stop would reassure us  
of her wanting to please us,  
so we want her to go on,  
of her wanting to be like us  
so we want her to continue whipping  
this dizzying cylinder of herself up  
to the high ceiling lights  
into what cannot be seen  
because it is beyond us.

Because it is what lies  
outside of us. The part of her smile  
that passes through the twenty blurs  
of what she loves, into what loves her.

Meanwhile, the small transparency  
Of what was to be tested hesitates  
Before its fate, before the long drawn out

eureka of what can carry its weight.  
And already now, the expected  
crash lies covered and twenty secrets  
hover in the hidden air  
of what's beyond a wager

of assumptions.  
We were stuck on the side  
that sinks. On the part  
of the laughing eye  
that blinks on a momentary joy.



## Visiting Danao

What a bright light the sound makes  
as it weaves through the roads of this house.  
This town. The bound pact of the long  
years before there was anything

to make. To speak. It was a language  
and it was not ours. For the wrong aunts,  
a dumb look. For the no spoons, we quickly  
took the biggest legs of meat to our mouths.

*Oh they're from the city.* It was a hot day  
and what a pity we were at the end  
of the last block with no-channel. The fast  
clock of our heads and there was all the chatter

about us. About what we could do or not do.  
A syrup for an itch and the last ice for an eye  
bitten by a bug on a night out the house.  
*We must be extra careful with them.* Lest

the thin arm of the best child be burned dry  
by the sun. *Buy a liter of coke for the thirsty one*  
*quick.* And a shirt for the sweat of the just  
woken up back of the one in the no aircon

room. What a long night when the dark beads  
of a humid heat seeped into our city shorts.  
At the back of the knee was the space for the breath  
of a word *Taga-diri*. At the back of the head

was a hole at the roof of a lonely, lonely mouth.

## When I think of what could have been

1.

As from a cliff overlooking  
The wide expanse of a now,  
As from the top of trées,  
a glimpse of the passing crowd.

As from memory—  
Forty boys on a trip  
clambering up to squeeze their smiles  
into the limited lens of a camera.

One. *Two*. Elbow-to-elbow,  
the nudge-bump-push  
of the wanting to be .seen.  
Wanting to see—

Mad scramble on tiptoe. On knee.  
Till they were stuck form-fit  
into the view-

Mountain blur. Large field  
Downsized to a line. A sky  
under the limiting light of the world,

They were sweating under the noon  
sun soon clicked late  
for the too long *Smile!*

I was one of them.

2.

Suddenly, the eye is taking a long-shot view of the world

Çezanne, painting from memory,  
In the last decade of his life,  
Arcs a flutter of long diagonals  
Across a sky of large trees.

Foliage from afar,  
a hurried guess. While the near  
held their own smudged roots  
of a hunch.

Landscape had become his enemy.  
Distance was a mark  
to be broken down in hue.

The world was a blur of blue,  
and exasperation plodding  
its own mark down the dark  
road was the surest thing.

Çezanne, at the end of his century,  
Saying this: It starts here.

3.

When Cupid swept Psyche up  
Straight to the mountain top,  
He did not make her see his love.

Every night, blindfolded tight  
by the knot— not wanting  
to make her see— Psyche slept.

Till when the lure of light swept  
Sight over the face of the oil  
Of mischief, and the jealous

Might of her sisters brought plight  
To the still-castled, still-silent  
Heart of the perfect night.

Oh, for the loved-one to waken.  
Loving one, to weaken the bright  
Candle light before flight.

What must needs beauty be broken  
Like this? Like light.  
Oh, long night that ends with a long  
No-loving. No-sight.

4

This is the dance of the right slip,  
the fabulous trips. No such miss  
is a missed mark.

What seemed like a move of the wrist  
was a moving somewhere.

She was pointing her toe to the tip  
of the heavy drapes of the curtain,  
when she fell like love on her knee.

What a gasp cushioned the fall of her  
Ungracious fall. It was a hit.

It became the point. Of the dance,  
there was no end to the perfect applause.

Now, every gesture looks all mistakes  
and the checked dresses. And the flawless  
poise of the ankle makes the bore.

We wanted the rawest scar and the bruise.  
We became proud of our losses.

## Window

So this is the eye of the soul,  
Requirement of room.  
Between walls, the quick sneak  
Into the bleak night.

Peek of the thick-shadowed ivy.  
Form of the far field.  
A sweet recess  
Of the mind from all hooks.

What paintings imitate  
This fresh need for air!  
What short strokes pretend  
This space of false sense!

See all the naughty errors  
Slip through the narrow nips.  
All the joys. Is this not a sweet  
Menace then? Barred and bred steel

For the hurt till the swift flit  
of a stranger strips fast  
the darling drapes of the eye  
for the world to see?

## Garden

When we talked of the world  
We talked about order.  
The odd flowers of the bush  
Flashing the lonely sads of its reds  
Straight into our eyes.  
Trees and the circled branches  
Of their holding. The grass.  
Large, guiltless pose of a lazy,  
Generous with its still.

When we talked of order  
We pretended we had a world  
Of choice. Of a green, easy  
Tending. The orchids tenaciously  
Clinging to their dark barks.  
Tall heavy boughs of a secrecy.

We talked straight into evening.  
Straight into each tangled tendril  
angled against dark, into dark.  
If we could only hold the edgeless  
In place. Night and its reckless weeds  
The light was not ours to give.

## House

A kind of wanting  
it was. A kind of not  
wanting. It was

our favorite  
place. By the screen  
door. Under the eaves

of the old clocks. Beside  
the vases. The mornings.

The wind  
that could enter but  
not leave.

That stayed the long  
days within. The long

keys hidden  
under the dark  
carpet.

Up the old  
trees, under  
the leaves— this strange

way of  
insisting to leave,

a kind of greed,  
rustles.