

LITERARY SECTION

FIVE POEMS

Michael M. Coroza
Department of Filipino
Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines
mcoroza@ateneo.edu

About the author

Michael M. Coroza is currently an Assistant Professor at the Department of Filipino, School of Humanities, Ateneo de Manila University. He has received numerous national and international awards for his poetry, essays, and short stories for children. In 2007 he received from the Royal Family of Thailand the prestigious SEAWRITE or Southeast Asia Writers Award. He holds a PhD in Filipino from the University of the Philippines and is constantly engaged in language, literary, and cultural studies aside from creative writing and performing the kundiman and other vintage Filipino songs. He is the newly elected Secretary General of the Unyon ng mga Manunulat sa Pilipinas (Writers Union of the Philippines).

1)

Dalitiwan

Lagaslas mo ay eternal
Na pagkabasag ng kristal;
Banyaga kong talampakan
Ay naakit, nasugatan.

Sa daloy mo ay lumahok
Ang tumagas kong himutok;
Sa pampang nang makaabot,
Ang dibdib ko'y nagkalumot.

Dalitiwan¹

Your rustling: the eternal
Breaking of crystal;
My alien feet
Are seduced, bruised.

Into your stream
Spill my resentment;
As I reach your bank,
My heart gathers moss.

Translation by Marne L. Kilates

¹A place name in the town of Majayjay in the province of Laguna, actually a river, which combines, felicitously, the words dalit (a Tagalog poetic form of lament) and iwan (which means to leave or abandon).

2)

Palaging May Ulan

Palaging may ulan ang pamamaalam
Kaya binabaha ng lungkot ang lungsod
Ng panandaliang pagsasama't lugod.

Huwag kang lilingon at baka malusaw
Na asin ang mithing pagbabagong-loob.
Palaging may ulan ang pamamaalam
Kaya binabaha ng lungkot ang lungsod.

Bangkay na lulutang ang panghihinayang
Ngayong nalunod na ang lahat ng pusok
At kuyom sa dibdib ang basang alabok.
Palaging may ulan ang pamamaalam
Kaya binabaha ng lungkot ang lungsod
Ng panandaliang pagsasama't lugod.

It Rains Always

It rains always as farewells are bid
and so sadness floods this city
of fleeting unions and delight.

Do not look back for it may dissolve
like salt, this yearned for change-of-heart.
It rains always as farewells are bid
and so sadness floods this city.

Regret will float like a carcass
now that all passion has been drowned,
and a wet fistful of ash is clenched in the chest.
It rains always as farewells are bid
and so sadness floods this city
of fleeting unions and delight.

Translation by Mikael de Lara Co

3)

Paslit

May paslit na pinapaslang natin
Sa isip, nilulula sa mga panaginip,
Tinatatagtag sa mga pagsisikap. Mula

Sa tore ng pananagumpay, inihuhulog
Natin siya sa limot, ngunit hindi
Namamatay. Lingid sa atin ang kaniyang

Pamamahay sa kamalig ng malay, bumabalangkas
Ng mabibisang hakbang sa pagsalakay upang
Mabawi ang kaniyang teritoryo na mula

Nang ating sakupin ay nawasak ang pagiging
Payak at panatag. Sa sandaling naglilibang
At nahihibang tayo, darating siyang

Isang dambuhala. Walang kamuwangan
Sa lupit at sákit, ibubuwal niya ang lahat
Ng ating itinindig. Mapapabungisngis,

Aakalain niyang ang lahat ng nangyari
Ay laro, samantalang tayo ay walang
Katinag-tinag at nakatitig sa malayo.

Child

There is a child that we slay
In our minds, make dizzy with dreams,
Jerk with our labors. From

The towers of our victories, we drop
Him into oblivion, yet
He does not die. We know not of his

Nostalgia for the storehouse of thought; he outlines
Effective schemes of attack to
Wrest his territory which since

We conquered was stripped of
Simplicity and calm. In the moments we amuse
Or drive ourselves to insanity, he arrives

A leviathan. Knowing nothing
Of cruelty and suffering, he topples all
That we have built. Snickering,

He thinks everything
A game, while motionless we are left
To stare at the distance.

Translation by Mikael de Lara Co

4)

Magnanakaw

Tulad ng nasusulat, dumarating
siyang ni walang pasabi
kung kailan sinlalim ng gabi
ang ating kawalan
ng pag-intindi.

Dilim siyang nakapaglalogos
sa lahat ng ating pasadyang
pag-iingat, nakapaghahalongkat
sa bawat lingid na silid o sulok
ng ating mga lugod at pag-iimbot.

Ginigising tayo ng alinsangang
dulot ng kaniyang pangahas
na hininga ngunit dagling
naglalaho siya sa pagmulat
ng ating pangamba.

Napapabalikwas ang ating
takot, at kahit bantulot,
hinahagilap natin ang ikinubling
tapang, iniuumang saanman
may hinalang kumaluskos.

Ngunit tulad ng dapat
asahan, tanging tagumpay niya
ang ating nasusumpungan
sa pinto o bintanang
kaniyang dinestrungka.

Malaking puwang sa ating
loob ang iniwang bakas
ng kaniyang pagdalaw sapagkat
tinatangay niya pati ang liwanag
sa palad nating binutas ng bagabag.

Thief

Like what's written, he comes
without warning
when, deep as the night,
we simply lose
our guard.

He is the darkness
barging, no matter how
cautious we are,
shuffling through
every secret nook and shelter
of our joys and loathing.

We're startled where his warm
breath dares,
but quickly he darts
off even as our trembling
stirs, its eyes wide open.

Our terror comes
alive and quite fickle,
we fumble for the secret courage,
pointing it at every place
where conspiring noises stir.

But expect it,
to meet his victory, at last,
on the door or window
through which he has broken.

A gaping void he
leaves within
when he comes visiting,
taking even the torch
that slips off our palm,
all shot through with fear.

Translation by D. M. Reyes

5)

Matanda sa Bintana

Mahusay sa kulay ang kamay
na nagkuwadro sa iyo, abuhing
anino na parang sinadyang
iadorno, lapat na lapat, sa pagitan
ng mga kapis na panarang babahagyang
binuksan. Agaw-buhay ang araw
sa iyong mga mata, lusaw na ang ingay
at gulo sa kalsada. Sayang at hindi ko
marinig ang ritmo na iyong tinitipa
sa pasamano: marahill pananabik sa isang
pagbabalik o pagkainip sa katuparan
ng malaon nang panaginip.

Sadyang mahusay ang kamay
na nagkuwadro sa iyo, napatigil
ako at nagawang mapaglimi sa kabila
ng aking pagmamadali. Kumakaway
ang lumbay ng iyong mga kulay,
yumayakap sa malay nang napakahigpit:
gumuguhit ng alinlangan sa aking noo,
nagtatatak ng takot sa aking anino.

Dalubhasa ang kamay na nagkuwadro
sa iyo: nagbubukas ng bintana
ng kaluluwa, nakapagpapadungaw
ng pag-alaala. Nilulusaw ng pusyaw
ang aking kasibulan na ngayon
ay nakakuwadrong iyong pinagmamasdan.

5)

Old Man at the Window

The hand that framed you
knew color—a grayish
shadow consecrated at will,
placed well between
the nacre shutters, now parted
a little. In your eyes, the sun
is fading while, down the street,
the rush and din have slipped away. Too bad,
on the ledge your fingers tap
a rhythm I can't hear: perhaps a longing for some
return or your sweet impatience, while
waiting for an old dream
to happen.

Fine hands framed you;
despite my rush, I
stopped and begun musing.
Your pensive colors
Wave, clinging to my mind,
Etching doubts on my forehead,
and against my own shadow,
impressing fear.

Masterful hands framed you,
parting open the soul's
shutters, asking me to look out
and to strain. As you gaze on,
your fading colors shame
my youth, which stands
framed, as well.

Translation by D. M. Reyes