

## LITERARY SECTION

### POEMS

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#### About the Author

Lawrence Ypil teaches poetry and writing at the Ateneo de Manila University. Recently, he won first place in the Carlos Palanca Awards for Literature for his poetry collection *The Highest Hiding-Place*. He spends his time between Manila and Cebu.

#### AT THE PIANO

Wanting to cleave clearly in the mind  
the wooden chopping boards of the house  
into piano keys,  
and the long tables of the dining room  
into some imagined concert: *Do you hear it?*  
*Yes? Do you not since then not realize*  
*this grand scale?*

The poor boy is playing a sonata  
in his head, yes? *Yes. Now.* (Pushed  
into agreement as if pushed by birth  
into an empty room without choice  
and flowers for wallpaper and a mirror  
kept blind dark in a drawer)  
*There was a piano, once, in my head.*  
*And a stage. And the world surprised*  
*by what had been found.* Difficult piece:

the left hand flying over the right  
and the air-pedal stepped through and clean  
to sustain. And all the world standing  
behind kitchen counters and the dinner plates  
waiting for the imagined overture  
to complete its applause:

If only there was no need to explain.  
If only the real thing was as clear  
and as audible as  
*once the beautiful music.*

\*

*Brown beaver in a stream  
and the grass green*

*Small girl on a swing  
and a bird wing*

And because he thinks it's meant to be spring,  
he colors the clear edges of all living  
things in his piano book—

Where the paw touches sharp the blades  
of the green patch and the bare arm  
of the blonde girl arcs her slender  
reach to the sun. And old Brahms who lifts his hand  
in a wave, even if this is meant to be  
a slow waltz he's playing, and a packed  
piano concert hall he's set in where a bright  
blue blazer's not the right suit  
for this true master to wear.

This genuine thing:

*Every day before the sun rose, I dreamt  
the world already in color. Ivy on the old wall  
greener by far than any I had seen  
the lush trees bending some friends  
hiding behind jars, sliding doors  
snuck into the empty cabinets of the garage  
wanting to be found and:  
everyone loved.*

Wanting to tell the truth, to play it.  
Song remembered from somewhere else  
and someone else's mistake:  
the bored boy on the waiting couch  
knows the girl now playing the piano  
has no applause in sight.  
*The day could be awash with light!*

what colors blind him with the waiting  
wrap his hands with a song  
fill his eyes while he's playing  
a fast loud trick of a trill in his head  
in what was said to be "with feeling"

*bird on the wing  
small girl's swing*

*terrible  
terrible thing*

\*

All encompassing terror of the grand design

I wanted the great concertos, the Bach arias.  
I wanted: *Praise be to God  
who fashions with his own hands the universe  
and all of creation out of a deep love  
for everything without choice.*  
Without being dramatic.

I wanted the long pause.  
I wanted the audience stunned  
to tears because: this we have  
not heard before in the streets this  
song this beautifully done. It moves.  
It brings us to the edge of our sight.

*I am not the light.* I was not even part  
of its terms of recovery or perfection.  
Joy without end without just reward.

Who has not, faced with a sin,  
said: I want to be good?  
*For he hears even our thoughts.*

I wanted that silence.  
I wanted the huge applause after the silence.

## PORCH

Because it was what we thought  
was meant by family: Laughter.  
A new house. A party in the garden  
where the tables were filled with young faces.

Who did not want this true  
and tender accomplishment? This just  
reward handed over to the world's honest men,  
its citizens. Every house

rested on its joys. So when one of the guests  
nudged a glass when she was telling a joke  
which fell on the floor and broke,

we laughed. We were accountable  
merely for our own mistakes and  
committed solely. And everything was  
part of the good story, really.

How could we not love what it cost?  
Crack on the marble floor just set,  
dent on a polished  
kitchen door. A small window  
overlooks the children, one nimble,  
one frail, balancing on the far  
edge of the porch.