

LITERARY SECTION

THREE POEMS: BORDER CROSSING, DAWN (FOR R.) & DESTINATION (FOR E.)

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About the Author

Danton Remoto is Associate Professor at the Department of English, Ateneo de Manila University. He has published two books of poems in English and Filipino—Skin Voices Faces and Black Silk Pajamas. His forthcoming books are Runes of Memory: New and Selected Poems in English and Kuwaderno: Mga Bago at Piling Tula.

BORDER CROSSING

On their faces that betray
no emotion

you can read the unspoken
questions:

Are you really
a Filipino?

Why is your skin
not the colour of the padi?

Your eyes,
why are they slanted

like the eyes of the ones
who eat babi?

Your hands,
why do they not have

calluses
layered like our roofs?

Does your sister dance
the dance that is haram?

Or does she clean
other people's latrines

and wear a red mini-skirt
every Sunday

while lassoing a dark husband
in Kotaraya —

a bird bright of feather
amongst the chattering classes?

And why are you tall,
almost six feet

and so erect,
wearing well-cut

clothes in subtle blue,
no dogchain gold jewellery

around your neck,
speaking to us

in beautiful English
whose accent

we cannot place?

Padi—paddy or rice field

Babi—pig

Haram—forbidden

DAWN (FOR R.)

While the crickets
sing
a one-note harmony,

we sit in your car
in the small hours
of the morning.

We talk
about the rollercoaster
of our lives

rising and dipping
before us,
the present

like a highway
stretching
into infinity.

And then you reach
for me in the half-dark,
your big, strong hand

soft and warm
around my hand,
your lips brushing

like a butterfly's wing
against my lips.
But when you look

deeply
into my eyes
and caress my hair

with a touch
lighter than a feather,
I could not bear it—

this gesture of now
and forever—
that I brought your face

down
and let your tongue
graze / my nipple.

DESTINATION (FOR E.)

I went to all the places
of your body.

My fingers brushing against
the ferns in the mountain
of your hair.

My lips kissing
the half-moons
of your eyelids.

My finger tracing a river
down the curve
of your chest.

My tongue losing itself
in the valley
of your navel,

in the silk
of your inner thighs,
the red eye

in the sky burning
with a thousand
suns.