

## TO SEE YOU

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### **About the Author**

Christian Tablazon is an instructor at the Philippine High School for the Arts and a graduate student at the UP Film Institute. In 2012, he founded The Cabinet with young artists in Laguna working mainly with fiction, graphic literature, drawing, digital art, and photography. His works have appeared in *Spindle*, *Kritika Kultura*, *Asian Journal of Culture Literature & Society*, *Social Science Diliman*, *High Chair*, *hal.*, and *Kilometro 111*, among others, and his picture book *fled, their faces turned* was published by The Youth & Beauty Brigade in 2012. He held his second solo exhibition, *to think about a brushfire*, early last year in the Sining Makiling Gallery in Los Baños, Laguna. His videos were also screened recently as part of the second edition of The Wrong - New Digital Art Biennale.

To see you

to see the illumined, not the light  
—Goethe, “Pandora”

There is someone here who looks like you.  
—Cole Swensen, “The Landscape Around Viarmes”

## to see me in the forest

and must, this body which is itself  
the body; which is itself, to speak  
the body which is itself quivering

## If here the house signifies

how wanting the field is at a given distance  
as in a house waiting  
night, and, if possible, through the next  
banquet, or is the house out of sight  
a silhouetted figure observes  
the house, he thought to himself, a week  
if the rest of the field is not  
nature, these manifold  
that if the field is different  
as if waking from a dream,  
*it* into an unbroken window in  
the other, while the rest of the field is seen  
the rest of the field, is  
a question; this house,  
already, he inhabits a landscape where nothing is  
like fiction, inhabits a landscape where  
these sounds flay, when plundered they reach  
when the body is, as if  
as if waking from a dream, the stranger turned  
as if waking from a dream, the smell of

to witness, this field

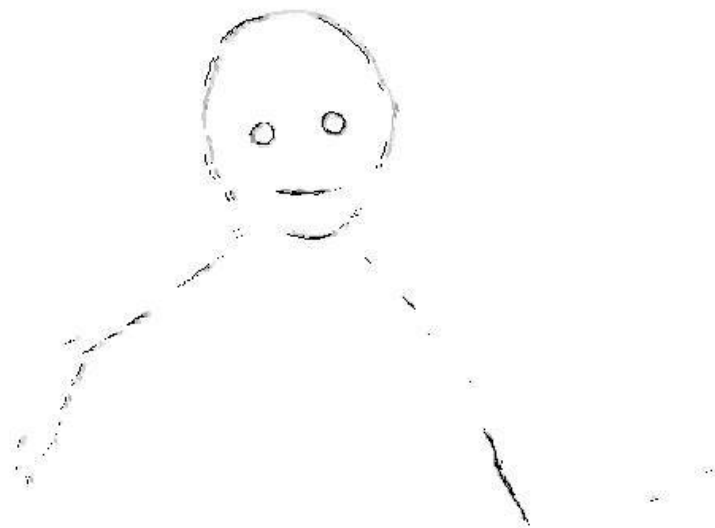
Everything you see will be explained  
as you leave today, and everything you see has been  
described as being almost, if not fully, but almost

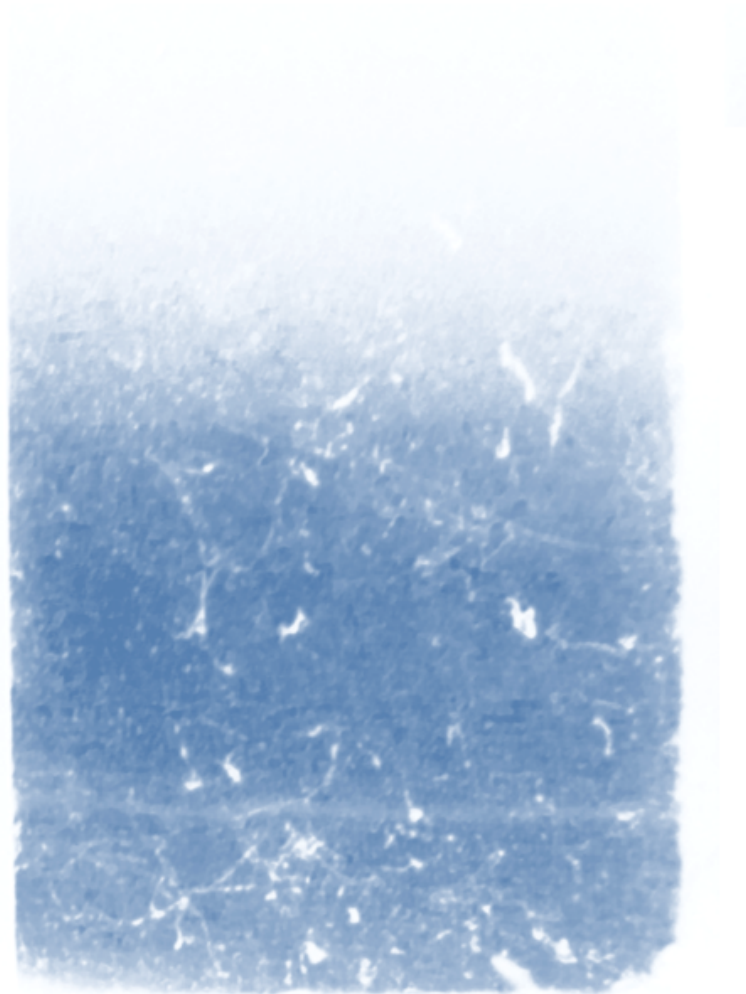
everywhere you go and everything you see has so much good  
and everything you see has been spoken  
and everything you see has been done before

and everything you see has been tried  
and everything you see is just  
and everything, you see, was present inside

and at the next visit, they will say,  
Look around you right now and everything you see has been touched  
(and everything you see has been covered)

Look around you and everything you see has been  
through a town or a forest and everything you see reminds you of  
They describe it to you.







either an absence in the visible field or as a distortion of that field <sup>the gaze as</sup>

## their faces covered

1.

They take me outdoors, put me in front of a staircase because a group of children is playing behind me, they notice a bench and immediately make me sit down on it. One of them holds a gun that rests on his thigh (I can see his nails); but his other hand is stretched out, open, as if he were explaining and demonstrating something. He teaches me how Russians dress (which after all I don't know). I *note* a boy's big cloth cap, another's necktie, an old woman's scarf around her head, a youth's haircut, etc. He shows me the photograph of one of his friends whom he has talked about, whom I have never seen.

2.

She is on horseback, her skirt suitably draping the entire animal but beside her a kilted groom holds the horse's bridle. Sometimes I recognize a region of her face, a certain relation of nose and forehead, the movement of her arms, her hands. Or again I *know* it is she, but I do not *see* her features.

3.

What it reads there, I do not know (in any case, there are so many readings of the same face). An old house, a shadowy porch, tiles, a crumbling Arab decoration, a man sitting against the wall, a deserted street, a Mediterranean tree. These two little girls looking at a primitive airplane above their village (they are dressed like my mother as a child). The clothes my mother had worn before I can remember her. The gesture of the child pointing his finger at something and saying: *that, there it is, lo!* but says nothing else. The windowpane and the landscape, and why not: Good and Evil, desire and its object. I am truly becoming a specter.

as in  
those terrible dreams in which a loved person shows up  
with the lower part of his face quite erased, without any  
mouth at all

*fault through my fault through my most grievous*

1.

"The house is history and history is uninhabited." Now he takes  
 over my shape my face slowly becoming his my left hand no longer my hand.  
 no longer now I now I look at my face already I face becoming  
 already I glean gleams my face I  
 look my face of his face in places  
 my face slowly becoming his his face

now a fortnight now end what must hold here obscured  
 is that a guest a rumor which fortnight many say this terror a riddle a face mine or yours  
 my hand my fault a face endless and I call it so most wonderful that these elaborately form so  
 I hear and most wonderful have been what must this terror hold  
 the door opens and over and over to the shadows say I  
 Is that my voice I hear from my voice is that my voice?

2.

Someone I do not know opens the door.  
 I see a man I see myself sleeping.  
 tell who seems to stare at me but I cannot  
 I am standing at the corner of my room. I cannot tell myself sleeping.  
 really tell all I see is a silhouette I see I am standing at the corner

dressed in white, standing I  
 opens the door How come If he had seen and drink  
 Someone I do not know opens I do not see his mine what could not I not hold  
 Here obscured a face never once a guest a silhouette do not tend  
 all I see mine hold once broken How come and drink  
 when we eat how it was, and I do not know how have we not come?  
 the door how far more terrible, I speak Come.  
 how far more silhouette When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we sleep  
 not know more how have we not become how never was, was not  
 and drink at once, explain how far where Speak at once a guest  
 explain how far more will all endowments tend this whole desolated hold  
 has now never once has broken

## Notes

Many thanks to Marc Gaba for his valuable editorial suggestions.

The epigraph “to see the illumined, not the light” is taken from a line in Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s poem “Pandora”.

The epigraph “There is someone here who looks like you.” is from the poem “The Landscape Around Viarmes” in Cole Swensen’s *Noon* (1997).

The image of the text “the gaze as either an absence in the visible field or as a distortion of that field” is taken from “Theorizing the Real” in Todd McGowan’s *The Real Gaze: Film Theory after Lacan* (2012).

The title “fault through my fault through my most grievous” is based on a phrase in “Confiteor” in the Introductory Rites of the Roman Catholic Mass.

The quotation “The house is history and history is uninhabited” in “fault through my fault through my most grievous” is from Mark Z. Danielewski’s novel *House of Leaves* (2000).

“there faces covered” is an assemblage of phrases and sentences lifted from Roland Barthes’s *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (1981; translation by Richard Howard):

“[...]their faces covered[...].” (25)

“[T]hey take me outdoors [...],put me in front of a staircase because a group of children is playing behind me, they notice a bench and immediately [...] make me sit down on it.” (14)

“[O]ne of them holds a gun that rests on his thigh (I can see his nails); but his other hand is stretched out, open, as if he were explaining and demonstrating something.” (25)

“[H]e teaches me how Russians dress (which after all I don’t know). I *note* a boy’s big cloth cap, another’s necktie, an old woman’s scarf around her head, a youth’s haircut, etc.” (30)

“[He] shows me the photograph of one of his friends whom he has talked about, whom I have never seen[....]” (102)

“[S]he is on horseback, her skirt suitably draping the entire animal [...] but beside her[...] a kilted groom holds the horse’s bridle[....]” (57)

“[S]ometimes I [recognize] a region of her face, a certain relation of nose and forehead, the movement of her arms, her hands.” (65)

“[O]r again I *know* it is she, but I do not *see* her features[....]” (66)

“[W]hat it reads there, I do not know (in any case, there are so many readings of the same face)[....]” (14)

“An old house, a shadowy porch, tiles, a crumbling Arab decoration, a man sitting against the wall, a deserted street, a Mediterranean tree[....]” (38)

“These two little girls looking at a primitive airplane above their village (they are dressed like my mother as a child[...])[....]” (96)

“[T]he clothes my mother had worn before I can remember her.” (64) “[T]he gesture of the child pointing his finger at something and saying: *that, there it is, lo!* but says nothing else[....]” (5) “[T]he windowpane and the landscape, and why not: Good and Evil, desire and its object[....]” (6)

“[...]I am truly becoming a specter.” (14)

The image of the text “as in those terrible dreams in which a loved person shows up with the lower part of his face quite erased, without any mouth at all” is taken from “I am odious” in Roland Barthes’s *A Lover’s Discourse: Fragments* (1978; translation by Richard Howard).