TO SEE YOU

Christian Tablazon
tablazonchristian@gmail.com
Philippine High School for the Arts

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
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 look at my face already I face becoming my face I already I glean gleams look my face of his face in places his face my face slowly becoming his face

now a fortnight end what must hold here obscured a riddle a face infinite and I call it so this terror that these elaborately form so

is that a guest a rumor which fortnight many say this terror a face endless and most wonderful have been what must this terror hold to the shadows say I

my hand I hear the door opens my voice Is that my voice I hear from is that my voice?
Someone I do not know opens the door.

I see a man I see myself sleeping.

I am standing at the corner of my room. I cannot tell myself sleeping.

I am standing at the corner.

Someone I do not know opens the door.

Dressed in white, standing

I see a face

Who seems to stare at me but I cannot tell myself sleeping.

I am standing at the corner.

How come

If he had seen what could not I not hold

Door that never once has broken.

Here obscured a face.

One who is not mine.

How far more terrible, I speak.

Come.

We eat the bread and drink this cup.

Sleep.

Once has not

Drink not.

Once has not

Sleep.

Once has not

Do not tend

Once has not

Hold

Desolate

Once has not

Where it was, and was not

Once has not

Not know

Once has not

All I see

Once has not

How far more will all endowments tend
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).