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Pep Pen de Sarapen
Santo Burro
Thoughts over Lunch at Mango Square

Luis H. Francia

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LUIS H. FRANCIA

Pen Pen de Sarapen*

My pen can be a pen
Or un cuchillo de almacen

It can earn my daily bread
Or my daily pain
Loaves and loaves, or
Crumbs

My pen can be a pane
To open, or close
On what you will never see
Again

Pen can be a gun
Bring grief to some
Or be a wizard's wand
Bestowing light, mystery

My pen can be everything,
Seeding on a sheet
a universe of verse

My pen wounds and heals
Raises me as easily
From death as can
Plunge me into it.

Hail, pen!
Ink god!
Write my life with
Your blood!

* A line that begins a nonsensical child's rhyme.

Santo Burro

Rounding a bend on the country
road I see him, burro beneath a fig tree
regarding my vernal passage.
Everyday I pass him, on
my way to and from el pueblo.
He never moves; I always do.

There he stands rooted, his
tail a splendid metronome which
flies attest to with a lively pas de deux.
Sometimes I think of surprising him
by a different route, climbing the promontory
behind him, to see how in his measured
world this might affect him.
I desist, not because it would upset

his worldview, or alter his wide-eared
innocence but because he would ignore
my deviation, defiance of my fated orbit,
I unfaithful planet and he,
disciple and saint of the daily grind.

(Mojacar, Spain)

Thoughts over Lunch at Mango Square

My stomach growls intermittently as
It misses you, reminding me
That even in this southern Visayan port
You, who are thousands of miles
Away, continue to feed me a much
Better lunch than even oysters, steamed
Sea bass, wood mushrooms can.
How raw fish, horse radish,
Vinegared rice wrapped in *nori*—a fisherman's
Simple meal—can compete lies

In your hands, hands that love me,
 Hands that know my body well,
 O and especially my belly.
 Toothpick in mouth, I remember
 How you would pat it with a smile
 And say, look, you're stretching
 Your T-shirt, and I would reply,
 You'll just have to love me more
 Now that there's more of me to love.

(Cebu City)

JOSE MARIO C. FRANCISCO, S.J.

Kay Richie Fernando

(Heswitang namatay sa Cambodia)

Nanganganib ang Angkor Wat
 ginagapang ng kagubatang pumupulupot
 sa nunong karikitan ng tore-toreng bato
 pinapasok ng sanga-sangang ugat at baging
 ang kaliit-liitang siwang upang kapitan
 hanggang tuluyang maibuwal at kubabawan.

Nanganganib ang Angkor Wat
 pinasusuko ng pakikidigmang hasik
 ay walang kinikilalang bakal at minang plastik
 binubuhay ang mga sundalong nakaukit
 para tabunan ang Buddhang mayro'ng matang pikit
 ng gabundok na bungo't butong wala nang litid.

Nanganganib ang Angkor Wat
 pinagtutigpas-tigpas ng pagkagahaman
 ang piping saksi ng banal na kabihasanan
 ikinakalakal pugot-ang-ulong katawan
 ng diyos, bayani, at maging mitong halimaw
 para iluklok sa altar ng dayong mayaman.