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Reenactment

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Ang gabi ay gubat ng basag na tinig,
 Anino ng luhang namuo ang buwan,
 At may giniginaw na sundang sa bisig.

*Buwang kabilugan, hulugan ng sundang,
 Ako'y may haliging dapat na tagain
 Sa lupang iniwan ng aking magulang.*

GEMINO H. ABAD

Reenactment Of the Event on the 21st of August 1983

An autopsy is always necessary in violent deaths. . . . Then, with that bit of official decorum finished, the body was turned over to the people.

– *Eleven Days of August
 Ninoy / A Tribute*

I

It took place too suddenly
 – so thought our Clown –
 nor time nor place had part;
 it must have been planned.
 With craft more sure-footed,
 or eagle-eyed,
 its strange credibility
 would have shocked us less.

But its reenactment now,
 O, just right; it proved incredible,
 and produced laughter,

Which was just.

Replay, replay,
 and read well that link
 between justice and laughter.

The slaying piece itself
 was nothing unusual -
 certainly not the shooting,
 if trigger-happy;

by any director's script
 is treachery well-defined.
 The bullet's trajectory too
 was redundant travesty;
 two corpses already mocked
 the word in heat
 upon that cheerless track.

But the reenactment now,
 that prior script —
 the dumb Event, already past,
 the possibilities of its speech,
 the void of occurrences
 where tyrants and martyrs breed . . .

There flagrant
 the spectacle apter to catch
 a relevant pang, or spark
 a tyrant's conscience.

So now,
 under the subverted rose,
 what dumb show more
 to dress the gunman in derision,
 or try our detective wit
 toward a minor resolution,
 or touch or teach our soldiery
 a thing or two about tragedy?

If that instant commodity
 in public relation
 did not serve for mass communication,
 the same play has already passed
 bare of text, without sponsor,
 from mind to phantom mind
 as species of bottom humor.

O, the truth's in heat,
 and all our dogs baying.

II

Our interest lies amorous
 with Rumor,
 a covenant with lies,
 brute, executive, beyond pale
 of anyman's writ.
 Or thus our perhaps truth
 plays Clown,
 to no one subservient,

grotesque with desire to speak,
 insatiable
 to unravel the unspeakable.

Clown offers song and geste
 as vaudeville, as make-believe;
 as bullet-proof vest
 against that ownerless doom;

 As windy text
 where a dead man distanced
 from his critics' blasts,
 rests wreathed with the poem's
 earthbound words.

 O for the meat
 of all bruted gross!
 What words more *post mortem*
 do unsay and demean
 our witnesses' and witnesses' lies
 whose eyes were expertly folded
 against their gunfire's noonday
 ire.

The truth is not so simple,
 nor to justice by laws
 conformable,

 If, purely sprung
 without text, it spays
 that balance of power
 called unquestionably a State;
 or if, beyond the optics
 of a designated creed,
 it pricks the very writ
 made us all subject
 to one man's greed.

 The truth damn us,
 or nothing, peaceful nothing,
 if, for the inquisitive mind
 and the whirlwind of its words,
 or the tyrannical
 and the still eye of its script,
 our words drop like confetti
 and cannot compose a single
 text.

 O, the truth's in heat,
 and all our dogs baying.

III

Such events as have voided us
 – liquidation, the ‘water cure’,
 the mortal bath –
 these our founding phenomena,
 ontics of rulers and fools’ Eden,
 ever eluding ideology,
 Reason protests to straighten
 and so finds itself at sea
 with its cargo of madmen!

So Clown irrepressible
 must ask, ‘What killing motive?’
 or wear his cap and bells
 to toll our Angelus at noon.
 Clown will not be denied;
 truth in the entr’acte
 may smile and smile, and divide
 our laughter half and half.

What witnesses more?
 what eyes, what lies?
 These are not mysteries
 except to the unhappy mind.
 Clown without his fee or lie
 detector will move toward laughter,
 but not unkind,
 for we may purely know
 but not tell
 since texts contend to lie.

But more deadly still
 than fiction’s retail to pacify
 is the venom it secretes;
 even Clown must fear
 its brute fermenting.

The Event stands,
 all dumbfounding;
 it has no burial ground.
 Ourselves then as witnesses
 without syllable yet to speak,
 becalmed must sail,
 reenact without script
 the Event that murdered speech;
 replay, replay,

apart from mind's insistent text,
 how, in that original horror,
 the first to fall was the word.

O, the truth's in heat,
 at bay,
 and all our dogs howling.

JOSE F. LACABA

In Memoriam

I

Dumadapa ang talahib
 sa hampas ng hangin at ulan,
 nanginginig ang dahon ng kamyas.
 Masuwerte ako't may bubong sa aking ulunan
 at masasarhan ko ang bintana
 kung ako'y maanggihan.
 Masuwerte, di tulad ng puno ng bayabas
 na susuray-suray, parang babagsak;
 di tulad ng mga hinahaplit ng lamig
 sa bangketa, sa ilalim ng tulay,
 sa loob ng mga dingding na yero't karton,
 o sawali't kugon,
 sa tubuhan at talahiban, sa gubat, bundok at parang.

Masuwerte ako't nararamdaman ko pa ang lamig.
 Marami na ang nilagom ng lamig,
 at ang aking dibdib
 ay parang niyog na pinupukpok ng mapurol na itak
 ngayon, habang ginugunita
 silang wala na sa ating piling:
 Emmanuel, kapatid;
 Leo, bayaw;
 Dodong, inaanak;
 Eugene, Tony, Lorena, Lerry,
 Charlie, Caloy, Henry, Jun,
 pati si Edjop na aking tinuya,
 oo, pati na rin si Ninoy na pinagdamutan ko ng tiwala.