

philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University · Loyola Heights, Quezon City · 1108 Philippines

Death Comes to Diana

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Philippine Studies vol. 33, no. 3(1985) 391–392

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Fri June 27 13:30:20 2008

O, you want to beg their forgiveness,
but can only mutter
that you'll come back again and again:
red bird bearing a dagger in its beak.
As long as your mind is a ragged street,
as long as your heart is a darkened shanty.

ERIC GAMALINDA

Death Comes to Diana

It was long past summer
when Cristina spilled out
of mother's guts to die.
Do you remember?
We stood on the sofa
to peer at her black mouth,
and she smelled of cotton
and fresh paint,
a day-old cherub
stuffed in a box,
and since then death
had always seemed to us
scrubbed and antiseptic,
cloaked in laboratory gowns
and tight rubber gloves.
You would meet it one day,
though, in that halfway-house
of your sleep, and it would
surprise you not with radiance
but with worn and tattered
shoes, an old wastrel
hungry for affection,
grappling with you for that space
above the China Sea:
and now it fattens,
nourished by your absence,
revelling in places
that once were yours.

The truth is that death must strive
to wrench our places from us
because as long as we are here
it fails to exist.
We always arrive
at these elementary observations
a little too late.

MANNY PAMBID

Ang Hibik ng Birhen sa Groto

Sa *soccer field* kasingtaas na ng talahib
ang damong nagbabantay sa groto, nag-iinat
sa lamig ng gabi, nakatingala sa langit
na walang bituin at pinaglalakbayan ng buwang
inaantok, na paminsan-minsa'y inuubo sa usok
na ibinubuga ng kalawanging pugon sa bubong

At sa pampang ng ilog Pasig ako'y tumangis
sa gabing nakakuwintas ng ilaw dagitab
itim na buhok ko'y sumabit sa puno ng ratiles
kuwerdas na nagpakawala ng isang paos na awit

At aking pinaliguan ang paa ng putik
hinugasan ang kamay ng langis at usok
kinumutan ang hapong katawan ng lumot
kinoronahan ng *water lily* ang buhok

At ako'y naupo sa bubong ng kapilya
(sa tabi ng krus na walang tanglaw)
hinintay ang muling pag-awit ng soccer field
sa muling pagtapak ng paa at pagpadyak ng spikes
sa muling pagtalbog-paggulong ng bolang hinahabol

Subalit ang mga manlalaro'y saan na nagpunta
nakatagpo na yata ng ibang pagkaabala.

At sa lamig ng gabi, nag-iinat
ang damo sa soccer field
wari'y mga sibat na ibig tumudla
sa naglaho nang mga bituin.