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Departures
September 12, 2001

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O dalungyan o langka,
 Bungang bangong ninanamnam-namnam sa pag-iisa,
 A, lahat na lagda ng mukhang yaong
 Tila litong ilang-ilang
 Ay bunghalit ng hinagpis,
 Balangkas rin ng namumuong tapang,
 Daliri't bisig na dadampu-dampulay sa likod at leeg
 Sa sandaling liglig ng hangin ang kaluwalhatian
 Ay tutok din sa gatilyo sa paglilok ng bukas,
 Dibdib na iyang umaawit ng ligaya kung ika'y kaniig.
 Himlayan din ng nalugmok,
 Bukal ng di maapulang init ng paglaban.
 Balakang, hita, binti, paa't
 Lahat ng bighaning iyong pang-anyaya
 Sa paglipad sa sintayog ng ulap at papawirin,
 Kung ika'y hahagka'y
 Nakaugat rin sa lupa,
 Saanman ang paghahanap na ito,
 Ang mabuo-magiba, masubsob-matayong moog ng paglabang ito'y
 Humantong,
 Ika'y laging iniisip
 Kaibiga't kaagapay sa paglakad,
 Labis kitang iniibig.

JOSÉ EDMUNDO OCAMPO REYES

Departures

Now the hours of color are coming
to an end; soon only fireflies

and a row of tentative lamps
will illumine the path

to the main road. In the vestibule
of the retreat house, a sign

(SILENCE PLEASE)
painted in fading red.

Eleven sparrows glide across
the darkening sky and leave

a trail of notes for those
fallen behind. Listening

to the song, I do not know
if I am the one who is more faithful

to the sign, or if it is
the flock heading home.

September 12, 2001

In my language, the word for *staple*
is the same as the word for *bullet*,
so I, the emptied
instrument in one hand
and a sheaf of poems in the other,
naturally asked you
for some bullets.

Your hand shuddered
backwards, as if
the thing in my hand
was a black alligator
baring a full set of chiseled teeth.