

philippine studies

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

We are Protected from so Much Pain Jesus Visits a Tatoo Shop

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Philippine Studies vol. 53, no. 2&3 (2005): 395–396

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Fri Jun 27 13:30:20 2008

I am father
of my past, its progeny
of grief.

Bayang Palengke

Bangkay ng bayan
itong palengkeng nakahilatay
sa gilid ng uka-
ukang aspalto.

Binabangaw ng dyip
ang tagilirang nagdurugo.

Inuuod ng tao
ang singit at tadyang.

Lumalapot sa katanghalian
ang lansa ng hiwa-hiwang balat.

Kinalawang na talukap
sunog na mata
labing tuklap.

Tinitimbang ang bigat
ng kalansing at itak.

ARKAYE KIERULF

We are Protected from so Much Pain

For example: graves.

The earth's roots and brown-black blood are busy
covering the soft, violated bodies of our loves.
Death is a secret, and the rain with its many hands

washes off the streets to the gutters death's thick surprise.
The automatic shutter of the eye never fails,

the courtesies of the tongue. What goes on in the rooms of houses
is guarded from us by the hardwood doors,

the carefully closed windows. Whatever was said or done,
night will come, eagerly, to clean up.

And death will shield us, in time,
from the sun's megalithic promise:

Tomorrow, the same day.
Tomorrow, the same day.

For example: A flower
is the most beautiful lie.

Jesus Visits a Tattoo Shop

After that terrible ordeal
At the cross, surely
A little masochistic fun
Would not hurt
Before formally starting the mission.

The ones who heard about it
Rushed to the shop to kiss His feet.
"Our messiah!" they shouted.
"You have come again!
We are saved!"

Outside, a growing crowd
Looks in with side-cupped hands
Through the glass window.
A boy runs out to the streets
Shouting the news.

As for the tattoo
 It is slowly taking the shape
 Of two hearts on the butt of Jesus,
 One per rosy cheek,
 Which delights the crowd.

JOHN LABELLA

Black Psalm*

1.

Mother of brute grace,
 in rags of wind and rain,
 make aim of my doubt.
 Remind me of the end.
 O strike and spare me.
 Mother of lightning.

2.

Glory be to fire.
 Glory be to the flames at my feet,
 the serpents of heat
 that lick the dark hissing
 and coil to stun.

Dusk, dawn,
 from pyre to pyre,
 I sing and I thirst.
 I dance and I hunger.
 I leap and falling clatter.
 Desire unto death
 after death, I desire.

Glory be to fire.
 Glory be to the singeing
 grief and the crackling silent.
 I consent, fire: unmake me.
 Burn my horizon.