

RIZAL WALKS ALONG THE FOXGLOVES

Eugene Gloria

Rizal Walks Along The Foxgloves

I looked at the foxgloves
and told myself what I needed.
Walk with me I say

to the foxgloves
and let my lonely leak through my pores
like sweat from my brow.

O bruised sky, O anvil waves—
The waves hammering in the distance
are composing their own melody. A doe
stares me down as if I'd grown wings.

Angel I nothing am, blooming beside
the spiraea bush. Poets?
My poets, I confess to my graceful interrogator,
measure their breaths and caesuras with the bend

and pulse of their hands. // I follow
the foxgloves toward the beach. A mother,
I keep my careful watch of them—her boy
pretending to be a plank of pine on the water.

Her daughter beside her building a tall
sand castle until a wave comes and claims it all back.
She wanted to swear, but I don't think she knew how.

How old were you when you first learned how to swear?
Did you learn how to curse from your mother?
If not from your mother, then who else can you trust?

Exit Interview With A Once And Future Ghost [Part 1]

What was the first word you remember?

Egalitarian

What was your favorite gift?

Two black stones that reached far

Where are you?

Here with you in Fort Santiago

State your full name for the record?

José Protasio Rizal Mercado y Alonso Realonda

Whom do you see in the mirror?

My one bad self aboard a train

What is your favorite flavor?

Bitter

Really?

Did you expect me to say “sweet”

What is your go-to karaoke song?

[no response]

How did your travels shape your perception?

In signs and symbols, but mostly in colors I mistook
for silences, silences that turned to humming

Which earth-friendly practice matters to you most?

Being minimal and using only high performance
beauty products

What were you doing when the twin towers fell?

[no response]

Who was the president when you were born?

Ulugh Beg

He was a genius, so he couldn't have been a president.

Why don't you ask me another question

At what age did you start developing your messiah complex?

[no response]

How is silence a fond farewell?

[no response]

What is your favorite memory?

When You said to Mary Magdalene *Noli me tangere*

What is your name?

Nobody

Why did you write "The Devil is God in Exile"?

That was the painter Manuel Ocampo. It was a title of his painting hanging in Carré Sainte-Anne

The Outskirts

[A Micro Essay On Time]

The outskirts are disguised as death and death is time disguised as an asterisk. Robert Penn Warren said that Time is the subject of every story. "Tell me a story...a story of great distance and starlight." Time is a thing we invented to give our stories a beginning, middle, and refrain. José Rizal's journey departs and arrives like an asterisk sailing across a vast ocean of time. Time beating loudly inside his frock coat until time leaps into an unruly little empire where a man enters a room unsure of his footing. His story is a series of overlapping transparencies. It starts with him negotiating a world of mutations and transformations tempered with tolerance, irresolution, and patience. A world yet to be discovered, a world in constant search of a hiding place from time. Rizal meanders, failing at moving in a straight line. A man in a frock coat and bowler hat revising his story boards a ship and sails across the water. "Time makes beautiful everything life distorts." Robert Penn Warren, I'm almost certain, did not say that. Art cannot be hurried, just as a man making art cannot be slowed down even at the threat of a bullet aimed at his heart.