

SUITE OF FIVE POEMS

Danton Remoto

Boracay Sunset

I stand on the sand
Finer than any grain
I have ever seen,

Inhaling the blueness
Of the sea.
At the stroke of six,

The sun begins to tint
The sky
The mountain and the sea:

First with a wash
Of yellow followed—
In seconds that seem like eons—

By a hint of purple
Spreading in the canvas
Of the sky

Like watercolor,
And then a burst
Of red

Brilliant as blood,
Reminding me of wounds
That have seemingly healed.

Boracay Night

I turn away
From the sight
Of green and blue lights
Seemingly carved
Into the thighs
Of coconut trees

To the sound
Of the sea heaving
At night—
The sibilant voices
That rise and fall
With my breathing,

To the sight
Of boats moored
In the dark night—
Pale as ghosts—
Looking at me intently
Like the eyes of lovers
That now open
And now close.

For Grandmother Onda

You plied me with dried fish
And native chocolate steaming
In noisy tin cups
That summer many years ago.
Outside, Mayon Volcano
Was still sleeping beneath
Its soft blanket of clouds.

In the mornings, I now fork
Hotdogs and drink brewed coffee
Slowly, relaxed in my seat,
Preparing for the crawl of traffic,
When they told me you died
Last night. Suddenly, the morning
Leaves no taste in my tongue.

Badjao Graveyard On
Sta. Cruz Island, Zamboanga

(For Annie Feleo and Thelma San Juan)

We lie here
On this island of white sand,
Whiteness mixed with pink coral
Fine as the grains of sugar.

Our sentinels
Are wood carved into the shape
Of people, wood shaped
As billowing sail, as boats.

The blue sky
Is our wide and curving roof.
Blue also is the sea
That is our womb.

In silence we gaze
At the infinite sea—
Giving us fish and sea weed,
Rocking us gently in our journeys—

As the wind freely
Turns into waves around us.
Death is only
One kind of journey.

Firetrees

(For Ada)

Comme la vie est lente
Et comme l'Espérance est violente
(How slow life is,
How violent is hope).
- Apollinaire

Here, in Stirling, the leaves
Are just beginning to spring
From the dead twigs.

The skin of snow
On the loch is slowly
Moulting.

And the wind from Scandinavia
Is only now resting
From her long journey.

But in my far country,
The leaves of the firetrees
Are already tongues of flames:

They're talking about the wilderness of summer,
The hot whirlwinds of April and May.
They're gossiping about the people passing by—

Who themselves gaze amazed at the firetrees—
Like lovers' breath aflame—
And for a moment thought

About the violence of hope.