Speculations of the Soul: Shades of the Catholic Imagination in Carlomar A. Daoana's *Clairvoyance*

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Poetry and the Quest for the Divine

One analysis of *The Hobbit* by J.R.R. Tolkien, whose blatant Catholicism is less known among lovers of his fantastic worlds and creatures, is focused on the author's use of runes as symbols in his story (and later, in his own developed, fictitious language). Runes—tiny fragments of bone or stone that have traditionally had some divinatory purpose—have been used in both pagan and Christian cultures. In the Middle Ages, this system of writing was thought to possess supernatural powers because "all language was thought to be magical" (The Tolkien Society, n.d.); however, in the Christian context, this is to indicate that language has a Divine origin, having descended from Above. This is nothing if not an excellent defense of literature that seeks to embody the belief that all language is an access to a realm beyond this earth, a conduit to approaching the Infinite, the Abstract, the Intangible.

Poetry, then, becomes spiritual—in the impulse of writing and an approximation of the lyricism of the spirit, and in the very movement of the lines, the enjambments, into verses, there is the intimate connection between language, artistry, and the divine. In Catholic literature how these two are seamlessly interlaced is explained by Ron Hansen (2004) in his essay "Writing as a Sacrament" —"Good writing can be a religious act, [...] insofar as it provides the graced occasions of encounter between humanity and God." As the writer shares in the work of creation through his work, his output becomes proof that literature, the very art of language, can be

endowed with a sacred dimension. Thus, writing is not only sanctified, but also considered a covenant.

In light of these ideas, this paper will attempt to study Carlomar Daoana's third poetry collection *Clairvoyance* (UST Publishing House, 2011) by teasing out the Catholic strands of thought embedded in the verses—concealed, perhaps even unintentionally, but nonetheless present. This analysis will utilize a confluence of various readings that define the Catholic imagination, culled from the writings of various literary and cultural scholars who are avowedly Catholic: Andrew Greeley, Carlos Aureus, Michael J. Himes, Ron Hansen, Joseph Pearce, Mary Reichardt, and Angela Alaimo O'Donnell. In doing so, it is hoped that it can contribute to the oft-overlooked research on Philippine Catholic poetry in English.

The Collection

In an interview with online magazine *Designed by Words,* Daoana clearly wanted *Clairvoyance* to be more spiritual than his earlier two collections:

> More than its metaphysical and occult implications (although they count too, being rich in conceptual associations), the word 'clairvoyance' attracted me for the way it sounds, its polysyllabic beauty. Its etymological French meaning (*clair*=clear; *voyance*=vision, seeing) seems to me the oblique pursuit of every poem, a transparent thing where the mysterious, the spiritual if you may, could shine through (2011).

The collection embodies the 1:1 correspondence between poetry and spirituality, as the poet demonstrates the meditative quality of language.

The collection thus lends itself quite readily to a Catholic reading, as its impetus (without subjecting this analysis to a strictly biographical criticism) is geared towards the realm that both recognizes and transcends the realities of this world. Close to twenty (20) of the forty poems in the collection are touched on in this paper, selected on the basis of their relevance to the chosen analytical framework.

An Invocation

The entire collection resounds of a prayerful, meditative tone, contacting the mystical in language that is tangible. Thus the first poem, "The Spirit," aptly sounds and functions like an invocation, and it is fitting that the collection opens with this piece—readers can only surmise whether its placement was inadvertent or not.

The Spirit

By the grove
I waited for the spirit
To come.

The spirit came,
Plunging
With a cloud of bees.

This is the versification of the quiet sensibility of a time yet to arrive, being accessed in the language of "now." There is a serene contemplation on the Intangible, a kind of patience that is reached only with zen-like clarity. Only with opening oneself up to the stirrings of the spirit in quiet meditation can one be confronted with an assault of some form of enlightenment, achieved only as one opens himself to the expression of Grace (defined by Himes as "the outpouring of the love of the Trinity"). The attempt to personalize the active metaphor—"plunging with a cloud of bees" instead of descending with tongues of fire (cf. Acts 2:3), (as when The Holy Spirit comes down upon the apostles succeeding Jesus' ascension), yet recalling the same painful sensation of being awakened and transported (if not "charged," to borrow Gerard Manley Hopkins' famous descriptive of the world being fired up by the "grandeur of God") into another state, only this time, it stings rather than burns—at first seeks to distance the association of the said invocation to the Third Person of the Holy Trinity (as the "s" in "spirit" is not capitalized). However, it can also conversely suggest a conversation of the soul with the Infinite, an awakening to the dialogue of Truth as it funnels Itself into a mortal receptacle. The descent of the spirit may be understood as a descent *into* the spirit—the metaphysical merging with the physical, dialoguing in dualities of form and formlessness.

The poem is then followed by two full blank pages. More than acting as a preparatory gap, enticing the reader to plunge (just as readily, but cautiously) into the rest of the collection, this decisive, paginated pause works to invite the reader to savor the immensity of the unsaid, to meditate on this textual silence—implying that the most profound of truths cannot be approximated in words. This whitespace, these breaks in the lines, the margins surrounding words, attest to the poet's craftsmanship. His restraint, his economy of words, capture not only his subtle, refined personality that extend themselves into his poetry, but also the intended effect of intertextuality. They leave the reader to converse with the text and to fashion his own meaningful insight from it.

Imag(in)ing God: Incarnational and Sacramental Principles At Work in the Verses

These two principles are basically what constitute a distinctly Catholic Imagination (cf. Reichardt, 2003; Greeley, 2000; Aureus, 2000): The incarnational principle is God becoming like us, or one of us, suffering like us and for us—a teaching that not all Christian sects accept, but that Catholics do so, readily. This emphasizes Greeley's notion of the Catholic imagination, which is the Immanence (God-with-us), not Transcendence (God-beyond-this-world), of God (the latter characterizing the Protestant imagination). Similarly, Reichardt extends the incarnational principle to mean that we should not shy away from suffering, nor should we deny the negative things in the world—the Catholic imagination celebrates what is good as Godly, but is not confined to it; it acknowledges the evil in this world, too, and turns it around—uses it as means of sanctification.

In this context, it is related to sacramentality, which is described as "point[ing] to the visible becoming invisible, the abstract becoming concrete, the Mystery becoming knowable through mediated realities" (cf. Greeley, 2000; Aureus, 2000; Himes, 2005; Reichardt, 2003). In a way, it is a search for the path to sanctity in the workings and windings of the world. Similarly, Himes (2001) declares it to be the manifestations of God's presence in the world; and O'Donnell (2012) further clarifies it as abstracting God's infinity through his finite creations, in order to access and marvel at His greatness. If one's worldview is sacramental, then one believes that everything in the world is "engraced"—everything, even sin, potentially

leads all back to God (Himes, 2001). Moreover, this demonstrates that the paradox of the Catholic imagination is in its polarization between the "sacred and the secular" (O'Donnell, 2012).

Daoana's Catholic imagination could not have been emphasized better than in "He Who Comes to the World Bearing a Cross." The title alone embodies the incarnational principle: in the language of the Angelus, this most definitely refers to the Word becoming flesh, and dwelling among us. The Christology pushed forward by Daoana is not necessarily original—it is one of a misunderstood figure of salvation, a falsely-accused or misrepresented Figure through which we attain our redemption. This denial of the Truth, a refusal to see the Savior for Who He is, translates itself into cruelty, and becomes a form of suffering. Yet the poem focuses more on the perceptions of the people external to Him. Using the first person, the speaker both observes and identifies with their lack of faith and unwillingness to believe, their hypocrisy, their imposed expectations and unreasonable judgments:

He Who Comes to the World Bearing a Cross

The man happens
Enters the picture
He has good intentions
Intention meaning the categorization of desire as an agent of goodness in the world
But intentions are not enough
We need proof
We need the water to be transformed into wine
We need him to walk on water
He does all of them
Obligingly
We clap our hands and turn on the TV
We say, you're such a magician, visit us again some time
And when we are no longer charmed by his tricks
We need him to suffer
We need to see him walk for miles bearing wood that makes his muscles shake violently

We need to see him humiliated
We question the motive of goodness
We are certain he's keeping explosives in the trunk of his car
He wants to rape our children
He wants to profit from our weakness
But he emerges, comes to us with his bright wounds
He touches us
We fall on our knees trembling

The merit of the poem is in its successful updating of an otherwise archaic, period-specific event (Jesus Christ on Earth, 2000 years ago). Through the use of jarring juxtaposition of images of postmodernity ("TV," "explosives," "profit"), the poem situates problems in the contemporary, making them more current, more relatable—primed for contemplation into the perils of this world, including war on/and terrorism, crimes against children, and the evils of capitalism. Here it becomes clear that this is a God who chose to be one like us, one who elected to embrace the suffering of the world, in hopes of "touching" us and moving us to our core, "our knees trembling." Thus, the poem is also a prime illustration of the principle of sacramentality: God-with-us, suffering for us "not so we do not have to, but to show us *how* to." At the same time, the poem ends on a note that is didactic but not preachy: only if we allow ourselves to be touched by God can we realize that our being cannot suffice to encompass the infinity of His greatness, and only by opening ourselves up to His grace can we be overwhelmed by His presence, so much so that we come face to face with the Truth.

Clearly related to the Incarnational principle is the belief in the Transubstantiation, that the Bread and Wine become the actual Body and Blood of Christ during Mass. The path to belief through this teaching is most easily seen in "Dream Sequence: Church." At first read—from which some sense of surrealism must be expected, based on the title alone—the poem sounds like the persona is struggling with faith and belief, and a disillusionment with the agent/institution of dogma (the Catholic Church) as well as with the edifice that functions as a house of prayer (church)—precious images ("ivory statues") of saints are stolen, the church is "silent" and "contemptuous," reducing the persona to a "small" and "commonplace" figure:

Dream Sequence

I. Church
in the dream a day is three centuries
so the church is there solely to be there
the cracks in the fresco exist
right from the beginning
the ivory saint has been stolen
from day one
the corridor that leads to the rooms
of priests
sways with a rocking motion
because no one is permitted
because the sea is the only thing
to aspire for
and this church regards me
contemptuously
as I bang the tongue of bell
and stagger through the arched door
the walls respirate with the heat
in my mind the sea is solid
with statues
so many of them not wanting
to be brought in this smoky blue light
the church remains a point of view
it will not say anything
but remains the hand that twists
the globe of this dream and shakes it
so I can remain small, commonplace
with no right to reach the exposed heart
of Christ
that now starts despite the helix of barbed wire to palpitate

Despite earlier misgivings, the poem ends with a hint of faith, at the point when the metaphorical becomes literal ("the exposed heart / of Christ"), which can only refer to the Blessed Sacrament. To the nonbeliev-

er, this detail remains beautiful poetic imagery, metaphorical at best. But to the believer, this is the point of intersection between the literal and the figurative: the metaphor *is* truth, and at this moment, a piece of reality in the midst of surrealism is introduced. Thus, the bread (the Sacred Host) is acknowledged as heart of Christ struggling to beat, for him (the speaker), perhaps for the Church. The movement ("palpitating") is a rapid, irregular beat, one that occurs because of stressors to the heart as an organ. In this image the speaker seems to personify Jesus as a God in pain for what the teachings of the Church have done to him, hurting the few faithful who want to believe but find it difficult to. Yet it is also in this palpitating heart that the speaker finds consolation and life; that in the journey of questions, he still finds his way back to a God who would give up His flesh and expose it in painful strife ("despite the helix of barbed wire"), though in the form of the Sacred Host. It is also in this moment when the speaker realizes his unworthiness, that his earlier-perceived smallness no longer feels like a negative thing, but a declaration of fact: in the Presence of the Divine, coming into contact with the physicality of His immense love, any creature can be humbled into inadequacy.

The other poems that embody the Incarnational and Sacramental principles include "Dream Sequence: Snow," where the lines "I in rapt attention of ruin / in the hush room watch the commotion / shiver into consciousness / become itself an entity" allude to the Ideal coming into Being, of Idea becoming Real(ity); and "Father and Son," "Motherhood," and "Marriage," all of which acknowledge the bitter realities of domestic life. The first about a strained paternal dynamic; the second, about the uncertainty of daily life, a reluctance to transition, which is likened to pregnancy—the anticipation of giving birth to new form and stage in life; and the third, about divorce, separation, and a bitter end to a relationship, leading one to reconstruct the truth and oneself. All three do not shy away from suffering: these are not denied, but these are not celebrated either. The poems echo the most intuitive pains of human relationships, but are not averse to them; despite the mournful or grave tone adopted by the speakers—the three poems illustrate the acceptance that life is not perfect—the acknowledgment of such pains serve to reinforce the notion that suffering cannot be avoided, but that the only solution is to seek something higher, for the redemptive purpose of such turns in people's lives.

Some poems in the collection contain social critique, an attempt at uniting art with social consciousness—in effect, becoming the kind of poetry that "bears witness to suffering" (O'Donnell, 2012), therefore grounding faith and sacramentality in the world, into something more concrete, into life as lived. In the incarnational principle both Divine and Human Natures intertwine seamlessly in the person of Jesus Christ, believing in God's love and being in the service of others, as seen in the Catholic narrative, is not dissociated from reality; there should be no distinction. "Dream Sequence: Intramuros" is one such example. An unabashed social critique, it seems to condemn the deliberate distancing of people who have no historical memory ("we are not good historians"), presenting a city that needs to seclude itself desperately behind stone walls—no small thanks to the corruption in the country's prime political institutions ("religion and government fornicate in one gilded bed"). The apathy is depicted in sinister tones: "during the afternoon's long, slim light / shadows snake on the pavement / people with footsteps stream past the iron gates."

Similarly, in "News," a poem that renders in verse the complexities of headlines in all their unsavory details: "worsening weather still / sweeping / its heavy robes, smothering / people / in its wake, dirty monsoon / in their eyes" and "wars keep happening / like fire-/ cracker explosions on the map / that bullets still locate the softest skull / of a child." The deliberate enjambment of words renders the rhythm of the lines almost telegrammatic, staccato in delivery—and the jarring sound replicates the speed at which such news is conveyed, both in manner, as in the news anchor's speech pattern, and in dissemination, as in the speed at which the news spreads.

At the same time, there is a seeming condemnation of the distancing of a life lived in art but devoid of social awareness:

> [...] nothing about your
> indignation
> is useful so you live the only life
> you know
> you will make love with your
> husband

tonight you will write your
small poems
you will consume almost
nothing
because of that you deserve
some kind
of reward your hands are clean
you're spared
from committing murder in this
lifetime

Both poems clearly illustrate that the tragedies are sacramental, in that they remind readers to be constantly in touch with reality, at the same time emphasizing the interconnectedness of realities, regardless of one's situation and location.

Aureus (2000) says that there is a necessity now, with all the negative forces in the world and the seeming lack of hope or knowledge on how to deal with them, to "ensoul" society with the Catholic imagination. "Alexandria," a poem that echoes the lavishness of Alexander the Great's glorious city in the age of antiquity, bespeaks of the death of human connection in the modern city, as it is the one thing that is sacrificed for the sheen of glamor and the immediacy of gratification:

Alexandria

Is the cityscape the final arbiter
To the doom long held
Between the eyes of pharaohs?

Isn't it such an achievement—
Our stark assembly of stars
Held in long columns of glass.

Who wants to locate a soul
On the forty-fourth floor?
Down below is a convenience store.

I look up and the buildings stagger.
We know you are small, ha ha ha,
They say, and the concrete shimmers.

Alexandria, bring me back
To the flick of sand that roars
Before a slanting pile of bricks.

They fashion heaven here.
The seraphs finesse their ties
Into Windsor knots.

I need to be treated like copper.
I can't stand the elevators
Singing like coffins.

Blast open the enclosed spaces
With the army adrift
In your winds.

Heal the sewers.
Allow blossoming.
Let the black fruit fall.

The last stanza implies that some form of healing is necessary ("Heal the sewers. / Allow blossoming") in order to restore the beauty of the vivacity of life—a romantic yearning for the one point in the historical past that the speaker desires. Only with that kind of spiritual charge can the true glory of society be restored.

But it is in "Architectina" that one sees an illustration of how even (post)modern society clamors for order. It is not accidental that the title is a play of words on architecture, the "art of crafting space" (Gilbert, 2003) more than a glorification of buildings erected for their functional and aesthetic purposes. The first four stanzas seemingly glorify the "stripping down" of modernist architecture and everything associated with it: wooden surfaces, complex patterns (reminiscent of the Art Deco move-

ment), the ornamental design. Modernism as a movement in art is a break away from classical design, but it also visually celebrates order: clean lines, exactness of measure, patterns of repeated shapes—"culture dictat[ing] our sense of the beautiful," which can only be found in symmetry and order. The persona questions whether "it is in the straight line that we can find the beautiful," and concludes that "This severity seems the downfall of modernism."

The next two stanzas contain the suggestion that perhaps it is postmodernism—the fragmentation, the amalgamation that reveals a lack of any unifying force, the beauty of surfaces—that truly celebrates freedom found in "independen[ce] from chthonic nature." Even sex is elevated as, in the words of F. Sionil Jose (1989), "the only honest thing in this world:" "The culmination into an orgasm is the beautiful. / Anonymous sex […] / Greatly affirms the truth about human nature."

And yet a turn in the poem emerges in the next stanza:

> Devotion, however, is innate to our flawed nature
> And people come together not solely for sex
> And in spite of the imposition of modernism
> We still crave for order, repetitions, patterns
> Even in our architecture, environment. Beautiful
> If we can imbue our world a sense of ornament.

There is the sense that this stems from an abrupt recognition of an innate compulsion that naturally flows into things: Everything must restore itself to order, for chaos, simply, cannot last. This resounds of a craving for coherence; that it is natural, built-in, embedded in human nature. And what is this if not proof that man proceeds from God, who is Order Himself—all things He created are by His intelligent design?

On a related note, Aureus says that the Catholic imagination is necessarily baroque (2000). The fact that the word "ornament" is used repetitively throughout the poem, placed strategically in lines that, indeed, render its position ornamental, if not self-referential: the term looking for and into itself. This seems to suggest the paradox that the excesses are necessary to remind us of the desire for simplicity. God is the source of everything ornate, but He is also the language of simplicity, of generality, so that He can "draw all things unto Himself."

In these poems, it can easily be seen that the only way to imag(in)e God is through His constant reaching out and willing interaction with His people, and to know Him through the world is to succumb to faith and belief that He dwells within us, and suffers for us. God can be seen and known, the poems seem to assert, through the struggles in faith of those who want to believe. This is summed up succinctly by Mary Reichardt (2003):

> Fully comprehending a Catholic view of incarnationalism and sacramentality means that one can embrace without reservation any work of art that represents life truthfully—its goodness, beautify, and joy along with its evil, sin, and misery.

Concretized (In)Finitude: God as the Ultimate Mystery

The way to represent God in literature is to think of Him as the Ultimate Unknowable, Whom no words in any language can contain nor define. Himes (2001) puts it best:

> If it cannot be said, be silent. If you do not know how something can be said correctly, do not say it. But [T. S.] Eliot wisely knows that there are some things that are so important you dare not keep silent. You know that you cannot say 'I love you' in any way that is adequate, but you also know that you cannot simply be silent, that you have to try to say something, however badly. There are those so important that one simply cannot be silent about them. This is preeminently true when we speak of God.

In Daoana's poems, one gets a sense of the restraint, delicate-ness, simplicity and minimalism of the zen-like brush stroke on the cover—all indicate an innate, intuitive grasping, a yearning for what cannot be fully knowable in this life.

"Voyage Out" fittingly illustrates the terms to approach the Infinite, precisely by going back in abstraction to consider the origins of Creation, as if to journey through the past (history) and into space (science) as if to determine one's purpose on earth. The poem adequately suggests the marriage of science, the physics of things, and the philosophical means of

arriving at a spiritual enlightenment; at the end of it, we will come face to face with the energies of the cosmos, which are vibrations of the Universe humming to the tune played by the Creator—for what is it but the manifestation of the Infinite Greatness of The Author of Life? "[A]nd where the parameters can't anymore be breached, / energies sizzle, darkness collapses before the slit, / the great parenthesis" When Time is wound back far enough, the poem says, the people to whom the speaker alludes can only come face to face with God, "parenthetical" in our inability to utter His greatness; He becomes the Ultimate Unsaid, for language cannot contain him—the Most Precise Implication, intuitively revealed in Creation.

Similarly, in "Counsel," the specificities of life magnified into something greater; connected to the pulse/throb of the mysteries of the Universe:

> Truth is, we can not make each other significant.
> We have banged our lives together once and nothing out of it.
> We stare into an empty space until it punctures into stars.
> The universe's larger indignities are beyond us.

In "Water Wheel," the poet declares, "The concept of a dam is similar / To the concept of God," after saying that "The water, as you know, cannot be / Immobilized." More than a symbol of cleansing, of baptism, of the ebb and flow of life, the constant turning of how the world works, the water confined in the dam is used here as an image of liquid that allows itself to be contained, though its shape cannot be predetermined. It is the Source of Life, from where "Animals, at the onset of unmediated dawn / will drink," and where a "miracle" is performed, when "the nearby village makes use / of something that is there already: […] the river / which is now ululating in a field of stones." The poem seems to say that though the water provides for everything needed in this life, the way the world drinks from it is utilitarian at best. Yet the speaker asks, "Should we / Fasten our beliefs in such small things?"

"Parcels of Time: Unknowable Future" seems to provide the answer, as the poem shoots for a time in the uncertain order of chronology when the elusive mystery can be unlocked:

Emerging from light-years of sleep,
Our freedom will be absolute,
We shall be harmless and armed
With keys to many doors whose use
We no longer care to know.

What is the Ultimate Mystery? It is as Dante illustrated in his *Divine Comedy:*

> He says that he was dazzled by a light that initially blinded him. But as the intense light burned his eyes, it healed them so that he began to discern that the light was actually the interaction of three concentric globes of three colors, [Dante's] image for the Trinity. As his eyes were simultaneously seared and strengthened, he could look into the very depth of the light, and there he saw one exactly like himself. In one of the greatest statements of the Catholic humanist tradition, Dante saw that, as a result of the Incarnation, at the heart of God is one like him and you and me (Himes, 2001).

Some poems, however, do not always approach God in such mystical metaphors, but rather through another path. Some of them sound accusatory, portraying God as indifferent ("the god to be faulted / looking blameless" in "Afterlife" and a "collector of ransom[s]" in "Unknowable Future", and other unflattering portrayals. In a similar vein are "Skepticism," "Parcels of Time: The Past," and "Parcels of Time: Unknowable Future.").

However, in light of a Catholic reading, these "accusations" against God can only be connected with the notion of *via negativa,* which is "a way of describing something by saying what it is not, esp. denying that any finite concept of attribute can be identified with or used of God or ultimate reality" (Oxford Dictionary). Joseph Pearce also speaks of a "dark path to Christianity" (Pearce, 2006), exemplified in such literature as the short stories of Flannery O'Connor, "Silence" by Shusaku Endo, and "The Power and the Glory" by Graham Greene (Reichardt, 2003), where darkness only leads to light, or, that the light can only be attained by enduring a path of darkness. But these dark notions are not to be taken at face

value; rather, they seek to challenge prevailing notions of belief and direct the path of the reader-believer into profound reconsideration of truths he takes for granted.

In "If God Were," for instance, the speaker contemplates the patterns of Creation, trying to discern the "manic hand" that made them, but hears a version of "deranged music / That which we perceive as order."

> Who wants to live in the negative, aware
> Of these swarms of tendencies arranging them-
> Selves into bits and pieces we recognize—
> Fruitfly, fly, fruit—and the flame in them
> Is possibly whim, but premeditated, fashioned
> From the remnants of what stars there were
> By this manic hand that can't quite wrap around
> A clock or itself—a bud, a potential of its own—
> Only—following its own deranged music
> That which we perceive as order—the proof—

This is not to be taken as fact; this is merely the impression of the speaker, questioning what he perceives is the Truth, of the Being of God. The seeming accusation stems from an apparent frustration to know, to define, the Ultimate Mystery—but it simply, cannot be known. Moreover, the entire poem is elliptical; the lines end when they should not; nothing is ever really finished, as if to linguistically render the point that these Truths are truly beyond human understanding; approaching the unknown and unsayable—that no one but the Creator of the Universe can put a definitive stop to such speculations.

Thus, in the spirit of reading the poems *via negativa*, it is only when such notions are challenged that one's convictions can be tested, and hopefully, firmly reified.

In Tongues of Fire: Interjections of Religious Language

It is noticeable throughout the collection, even in the most religion-neutral of poems, that Daoana's poems cannot escape from the "cameo appearances," to use a film reference, of terms that contain a clearly religious allusion. While not strictly only in the realm of Catholic language,

the terms used may be readily associated with Biblical connotations, or at least carry some spiritual dimension.

"Rothko's Pink," for example—a poem clearly inspired by the expressionist painter's series of abstract works featuring squares of pink that supposedly convey an exact emotion (this he calls color field painting)—makes use of the words "heresies," "silence," "angel," and "light" to articulate the meditative prompting of the visual art:

> the field of color vibrates
> upon which the charge surges sweeps the bright
> pink square arena to squanders and heresies
> silence blooms against glass
> the tongue of an angel under
> a microscope or that brief arc
> by which salmon captures light […]

"Flotation Device," which lyrically narrates the escape of a murderer and his victim being found abandoned in the most undignified of ways, makes use of the words "ascension" and suspension as corollary ideas, as if to suggest the victim's transcendence of death:

> It is the take-off and then the freeze
>
> The body is suspended
>
> In liquid, clearer than air and more volatile […]
>
> Where else in her body will you stick your hopes with pins?
>
> After this ascension—incomplete and alas, forever—
>
> She is clarified, she is triumphant, she is immobilized

"Alternate Reality," which in part is about desire and sexual release, and a relationship gone wrong, pinpoints the addressee's belief in the "holiness of documents" at the end of the poem—perhaps, alluding to the sac-

rament of marriage, if not an elevation of the belief in something legal and binding to define their togetherness:

> And you, noteworthy with
> a birthmark
> On your left flank, accomplish
> the task
> At hand as you—who believe in
> the holiness
> Of documents, the folly of
> erasures—
> Bank on the side of the real.

Lastly, in "Two Figures," which may be literally about figures as in a sculptural piece, contain some powerful lines about being in "the womb of the afterlife" and being "afflicted with something more than hope:"

> Both of them crawl from their chairs which sink their wood into the soft earth
>
> They seek the light of each other which is the eye they left in the womb of the afterlife
>
> The eye blinks the blur of what is considered as the eternal, identifying element
>
> But how about them, the two on their knees, searching for a hard notion of glass
>
> Aren't they eternal and identifiable too? Look how they poke the clay with their fingers
>
> They know what they are doing, they are afflicted with something more than hope

The use of religious allusions seems to endow each of these poems with an authoritative reverence for what the idea signified; it is almost as if the mere use of the term gives an added layer of significance to what was originally meant—one that is undoubtedly more meaningful, as it shows concern for something beyond the concerns of this world. On the other hand, they can also be seen to endow the otherwise secular poems with a consciousness that may be taken to resound with the language of a Catholic imagination. This also demonstrates a key fact: while the interpreta-

tion of the text must be held separate from the writer's intentions, this is a clear illustration that the poet is certainly not free from the influence of his Catholic sensibilities; this reality is lived in breathed, and thus inevitably—perhaps deliberately, perhaps subconsciously—make their way into poetry.

Conclusion

Clairvoyance, without question, is a testament to the author's craftsmanship: The trademark Daoana style of careful restraint, extolling beauty in simplicity; maximization of whitespace to articulate necessary silences in reading the poems; the attentiveness in selecting words, choosing them on the basis of sound and rhythm—these all attest to the poet-as-artist's elevated role as co-creator: He whose tool is language, who appraises creation in rhythmic cadences that sing love into being (to paraphrase Himes and St. Thomas Aquinas), who wields words as weapons and holds the power to enchant and uplift. Every language is indeed inherently powerful, divine, and poetry, like all writing, can be a covenant. Instead of progressing in linear fashion, the poems gyrate, a symmetrical move to the direction of the brush stroke the cover artist's hand sweeps the canvas with: the circular clarity, of Eternity, that only a spiritual understanding can circumscribe, where, in the title of Flannery O'Connor's best known short story, "everything that rises must converge" (O'Connor, in Reichardt, 2003). The poet's language, therefore, reveals the works' tendency to aspire for something more—and in light of a Catholic reading where the principles of incarnation and sacramentality are unearthed, imag(in)ings of God discovered, and interjections of religious language pinpointed, this is indeed possible.

Sometimes the language can be faulted for being too "airy" and abstract—it can suffer from a lack of the "relatability" of images used (as in "Unknowable future," which feature "seagulls" and "meteorites"), or hampered by the weakness of rhyme (as in "Parcels of Time: Tomorrow"). However, in the poems that do attempt to concretize the approximations of the abstract, it should seek to draw the readers to an epiphany, of sorts—the immanence of God, His presence in everything around us, so that everywhere else is a manifestation of His Grace—the Ultimate Mystery made knowable through the tangibility we are only able to perceive—the sacramentality of it all. V

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