

TRIGGER WARNING AND OTHER TRANSLATIONS

Ralph Semino Galán translates
four poems by Allan Popa

DESCRIPTION

Love and death—Eros and Thanatos—are two of the most recurring themes in lyric poetry. This is because this intertwined pair of instinctual drives governs human behavior. Primal and foundational, they propel mankind, like twin flames, to the opposing inclinations of creation and destruction, unification and dissolution, attachment and dismemberment. Allan Popa's poetry in Filipino renders this thematic dyad of pleasure and pain with such precision and suppleness of language, which Ralph Semino Galán's translation into English tries to approximate.

TRIGGER WARNING

Sa subasta, nabenta ang baril
na ginamit ni Van Gogh
sa pagpapakamatay
sa halagang 182,700 dolyares.

Baril na kinain na ng kalawang
ngunit ang pinakawalang putok
umaalon pa sa oleo
ng kanyang mga kuwadro.

Mumurahing pistola
kaya't hindi siya agad namatay
matapos iputok sa sariling dibdib.
Nakauwi pa siya
at umabot ng dalawang araw
ang pag-aagaw-buhay.

Pangamba sa pera diumano
ang dahilan, pangamba sa kinabukasan.

Paano ba hinahawakan
ang ganitong baril
ng nananalo sa subasta?
Maingat na maingat marahil,
tila ang hawak niya ay likhang-sining.

TRIGGER WARNING

In an auction, the pistol used
by Van Gogh to kill himself
was sold for the price
of 182,700 dollars.

Pistol eaten away by rust,
but the gunshot it released
still ripples in the oil
of his paintings.

A cheap pistol,
so he did not die instantly
after firing it on his own chest.
He reached home
and his struggle for life
lasted for two days.

Anxiety for money the reason,
anxiety for the future.

How does the winner
in an auction
handle a pistol like this?
Most carefully perhaps,
like he is handling a work of art.

SOLITARYO

Ang umibig na parang walang katapusan
ganoon tayo noon, na parang nasa atin

ang lahat ng panahon upang mangahas,
magpadalos-dalos, magkamali, at mabigo.

Ang lahat ng iyan, waring lumipas na.
Isa-isang nalagas ang mga hawak na baraha.

Balasahin ang hangin sa iyong mga kamay.
Ilatag sa mesa ang mga pinalampas

na pagkakataon. Walang panghihinayang.
Sa tuwing itinataya mo ang buong puso

hindi tumatanda ang puso.

SOLITAIRE

To love as if there was no end
we used to do, as if we had

all the time in the world to dare
helter-skelter, make mistakes, fail.

A thing of the past all that it seems.
One by one the cards fell through.

Shuffle the wind with your hands.
Lay out all the missed chances

on the table. With no regrets.
Each time you wager wholeheartedly

the heart does not grow old.

LAMUKOT

Hindi na ako natatakot
kung nalunok ko man ang buto
ng santol. Hindi na ako
natatakot sa mga panakot.

Ramdam ko sa kailaliman
ng gabi ang pagkapit ng ugat
sa aking tiyan, ang pag-usbong
ng unang mga dahon hanggang
yumabong nang yumabong.
Ramdam ko ang pagsasanga-sanga
ng mga sanga, ang pamumulaklak.
Namimintog na ang mga bunga.

May batang umaakyat
para punuin ang kanyang bulsa
ng mga hinog na santol.
Pipiliin niya ang pinakamabango
para biyakin sa pagitan ng mga palad.
Doon sa pinakamataas
na sanga, nanamnamin ang tamis
at lamukot. Lulunukin ang maliliit
na buto nang walang takot.
Hahayaan niyang tumubo
ang isang hardin sa kanyang loob.

PULP

No longer am I afraid
to swallow the seed
of a cotton fruit. I am
no longer afraid of fear.

I feel in the darkest hour
of night the clinging of root
in my stomach, the growth
of the earliest leaves until
they flutter and flourish.
I feel the branching off
of branches, the blooming.

A child climbs
to fill his pockets
with ripe cotton fruit.
He selects the most redolent
and breaks it between his palms.
There in the uppermost
branch, he savors the sweetness
of the pulp. He swallows
the tiny seeds without fear.
He allows a garden
to blossom inside him.

SA KAMATAYAN NG KAPWA MAKATA

Sa maraming pagkakataon
tula ang nagsalba sa atin.
Na maaari tayong magkasya
kahit sa kakaunti,
sapat na ang iilang salita
at katahimikan.

Diyan tayo mayaman,
sa pakiramdam.
Kung pwede lang sana tayong
magtatag ng lipunang yari sa selan.
Ang ating buntunghininga,
marahang nagpapaalon sa kurtina.

Kakaunti ang hinihingi para mabuhay
pero parang buong mundo na
ang hiniling nating magbago.
Sinlaki ng mundo ang hiniling natin
na hindi maibibigay ng mundo.

Hindi makakaya ng tula
na panatilihin tayong buhay.

ON THE DEATH OF A FELLOW POET

There are many times
that poetry has saved us.
We can survive
on so little,
a few words and silence
suffice.

We are affluent
with feelings.
If we could only establish
a society made of sensitivity.
Our sighs gently
ripple the curtains.

We ask for so little to survive,
but it seems we are requesting
the whole world to change.
As big as the world is our entreaty,
which the world cannot give.

Poetry is unable
to keep us alive.