



To Be An Empire Is To Burn!

Eileen R. Tabios

# **TO BE AN EMPIRE IS TO BURN!**

**Eileen R. Tabios**

locofo chaps

chicago, 2017

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Locofo Chaps is dedicated to publishing politically-oriented poetry.

Chicago, USA, 2017

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## **Ambition and Beauty**

—*Paris, 2016*

When offered Versailles  
I shook my head

He'd never been  
Once was enough for me

No need to gorge  
on foie gras, etcetera  
though many do

I don't feel superior  
bringing crickets to geese  
Crickets also matter

I am still with this man  
who appreciated the result  
of a 27-year-old King  
's aim for immortality

If only ambition could unfold  
and beauty reveal itself  
without collateral damage

The Lord sits with me  
He does not laugh  
though we listen to Mozart

and the sunlit sky is burnished  
by Versailles gold

## Dialogue

Marianne Moore: "I think each time I write that it may be the last time."

Eileen Tabios: "I want to think so, too. But then 2017-2020."

## WHITE TOMBSTONES, GREEN LAWNS

No promises exist  
in combat...

Hot lead muzzle velocity  
= 1,000 feet/second...

Proverbial bad shit?  
Bound to happen...

The rare constant:  
white marble tombstones...

White tombstones blossom  
as ever in Arlington...

From afar, the eye could choose  
to see magnolias against green lawn...

But he salutes in intimate space  
facing the warrior's mother...

He cannot disclose  
why her son's casket is closed...

"I made him promise  
to be careful..."

She sees the medals—  
they fail to console...

"Promises are difficult  
in battle..."

He offers the flag  
folded, not waving...

“You survived to be general.  
Are you a good man?”

He forgets to answer  
“Never as good as the dead...”

He forgets when he catches  
the scent of white blossoms...

As a boy, he frolicked  
in his mother’s garden...

To be a general  
is to be old...

If the old must dream, *the innocence*  
*of perfume offsets inflamed hot lead...*

*As if...*  
“As if...”

He silently pleads with  
the grieving mother...

*Don’t let me explain: flowers*  
*must be crushed for perfume*

(written while reading *Commander In Chief* by Tom Clancy and Mark Greaney,  
G.P. Putnam and Sons, 2015)



## **“What Kind of Poetry Will You Write Now?”**

They belittle the safety pin  
on my bodice, cushioned by a breast

They do not see the sharp(ened) point  
lurking within its shining steel clasp

## **Ferdinand Edralin Marcos**

—*a Rippled Mirror Hay(na)ku*

“Power  
corrupts absolutely”—  
you provided proof.

Your life proved  
“Absolute corruption  
powers.”

## The Dictator's Daughter

You praised Chaucer—you understood  
the significance of the poet (and philosopher  
and astronomer) for legitimizing  
Middle English vernacular at a time  
when French and Latin dominated

Now you're relegated to claiming youth  
as an excuse for not protesting  
your father's abuses. 29 is young?  
No doubt—but only—to a centenarian

Ivanka Trump, meet Imee Marcos—  
a future you do not want to be yours

### Bibliography:

Thomas Fink's Introduction to *THE THORN ROSARY: Selected Prose Poems & New (1998-2010)* by Eileen R. Tabios (Marsh Hawk Press, 2010)

"Dear Imee Marcos, you knew all about the torture and political detainees during your father's dictatorship" by Raissa Robles, *inside Philippine politics & beyond*, Nov. 15, 2016

## #NoDAPL

water fleshes out  
any hollow  
if

water does not  
freeze from  
greed

## **To Be An Empire Is To Burn!**

*—in memory of Dionel Campos, Datu Bello Sinzo and Emerito Samarca*

You slashed  
the teacher's throat.

But he survives  
your ignorance

with what he knows:  
when you push us

deeper into the forest  
higher up the mountains

away from land our ancestors  
did not own but cherished

we will fall  
from ravines as land ends.

But you shall follow us  
down with your lack

of comprehension: our  
survival is your survival.

And the few survivors  
and the many witnesses

from even oceans away  
will pray, sing, dance

make art, write poems  
for us, not you.

They will celebrate our lives  
not yours. They will remember

us, not you who murdered  
to become a footnote in

other people's lives.  
History reveals over and over

despite your ears deafened  
and deadened by greed:

*To be an empire  
is to burn!*

Hear the teacher invading your  
dreams with a throat slashed

but still able to proclaim:  
Mr. Footnote, no one knows

your name. Mr. Footnote,  
when an empire burns

trees split their own wood  
to hiss through the flames:

*No one is spared  
not even he who lit the match.*

## MONICA LEWINSKY

obtained a psychology degree from Lewis & Clark College

received a master's degree in psychology from the London School of Economics

wrote a master's thesis entitled "In Search of the Impartial Juror: An Exploration of the third person effect and pretrial publicity"

designed a line of handbags bearing her name "The Real Monica"

is the daughter of German Jews who escaped Nazi Germany and emigrated to El Salvador and later the United States

worked as a correspondent for British Channel 5, reporting on U.S. culture and trends

hosted a reality television show

enjoys yoga, musical theater, flea markets, museums, facial and color hydrotherapy

was a spokesperson for Jenny Craig's diet program

was sheepish when she forgot to pay her cable TV bill

often offers toothy grins

gets introduced by strangers to their dogs

apologizes

is friends with Alan Cummings

knits

## LISTING

*I saw the Best Poets of my generation*

Best American Poetry  
Best U.S.-American Poetry  
Best Poet With Lariats Poetry  
Best Puppy Poetry  
Best CAT! Poetry  
Best Moon Poetry  
Best Mooned Poetry  
Best Ethnic-American Poetry  
Best Ethnic-American Poetry  
Best Ethnic-American Poetry  
Best Ethnic-American Poetry  
Best Ethnic-American Poetry  
Best Cowboy Poetry  
Best Indian Native American Poetry  
Best Under-Thirty Poetry  
Best Under-Twenty Poetry  
Best Minor Poetry  
Best Over-Fifty Poetry  
Best Eighty-is-the-New-Fifty Poetry  
Best Obscure Ethnic-American Poetry  
Best Bestests Poetry  
Best Beasties Poetry  
Best White Male Poetry  
Best Filipina Poetry  
Best Non-American Poetry  
Best Non-U.S.-American Poetry  
Best Whale Poetry  
Best Political Poetry  
Best Apolitical Poetry  
Best Witness Poetry  
Best Blind Poetry  
Best Conceptual Poetry  
Best Concrete Poetry  
Best Death Poetry  
Best Samurai Death Poetry



Best *Other* Poetry  
Best Other-ed Poetry  
Best Eileen R. Tabios Poetry

*I saw the Best Poets of my generation*

*submit themselves*

*to Best-of Lists*

*and Create New Lists*

*upon zero acceptance*

*by Old Lists.*

Best American Experimental Poetry  
Best U.S.-American Experimental Poetry  
Best Poet With Lariats Experimental Poetry  
Best Puppy Experimental Poetry  
Best CAT! Experimental Poetry  
Best Moon Experimental Poetry  
Best Mooned Experimental Poetry  
Best Ethnic-American Experimental Poetry  
Best Ethnic-American Experimental Poetry  
Best Ethnic-American Experimental Poetry  
Best Ethnic-American Experimental Poetry  
Best Ethnic-American Experimental Poetry  
Best Cowboy Experimental Poetry  
Best ~~Indian~~ Native American Experimental Poetry  
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Best Blind Experimental Poetry  
Best Conceptual Experimental Poetry  
Best Concrete Experimental Poetry  
Best Death Experimental Poetry  
Best Samurai Death Experimental Poetry  
Best *Other* Experimental Poetry  
Best Other-ed Experimental Poetry  
Best Eileen R. Tabios Experimental Poetry

*I saw the Best Poets of my generation*

*submit themselves*

## Letter From Paris to New York

—November 2016

When offered Versailles  
I shook my head

Once was enough for me

No need to gorge  
on foie gras, etcetera  
though many do

I don't feel superior  
bringing crickets to geese  
Crickets also matter

If only ambition could unfold  
and beauty reveal itself  
without collateral damage

The Lord sits with me  
He does not laugh  
though we listen to Mozart

and the sunlit sky is burnished  
by Versailles gold

as if he really was the *King  
of the Sun*—an aspiration  
understood and shared  
by the steak-eater  
with small hands

flinging open the door  
of blood diamonds  
to the same flashing gold  
gilding the chandeliers  
of a Fifth Ave penthouse

in New York City where  
streets are buckling  
before the steps of a toddler  
holding up a sign: IF YOU  
BUILD A WALL, I WILL GROW  
UP AND TEAR IT DOWN!

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“MONICA LEWINSKY” and “LISTING” in *Moss Trill*, editor William Allegrezza

## **ABOUT THE POET**

Eileen R. Tabios has released over 40 collections of poetry, fiction, essays, and experimental biographies from publishers in eight countries and cyberspace. More information is available at <http://eileenrtabios.com>

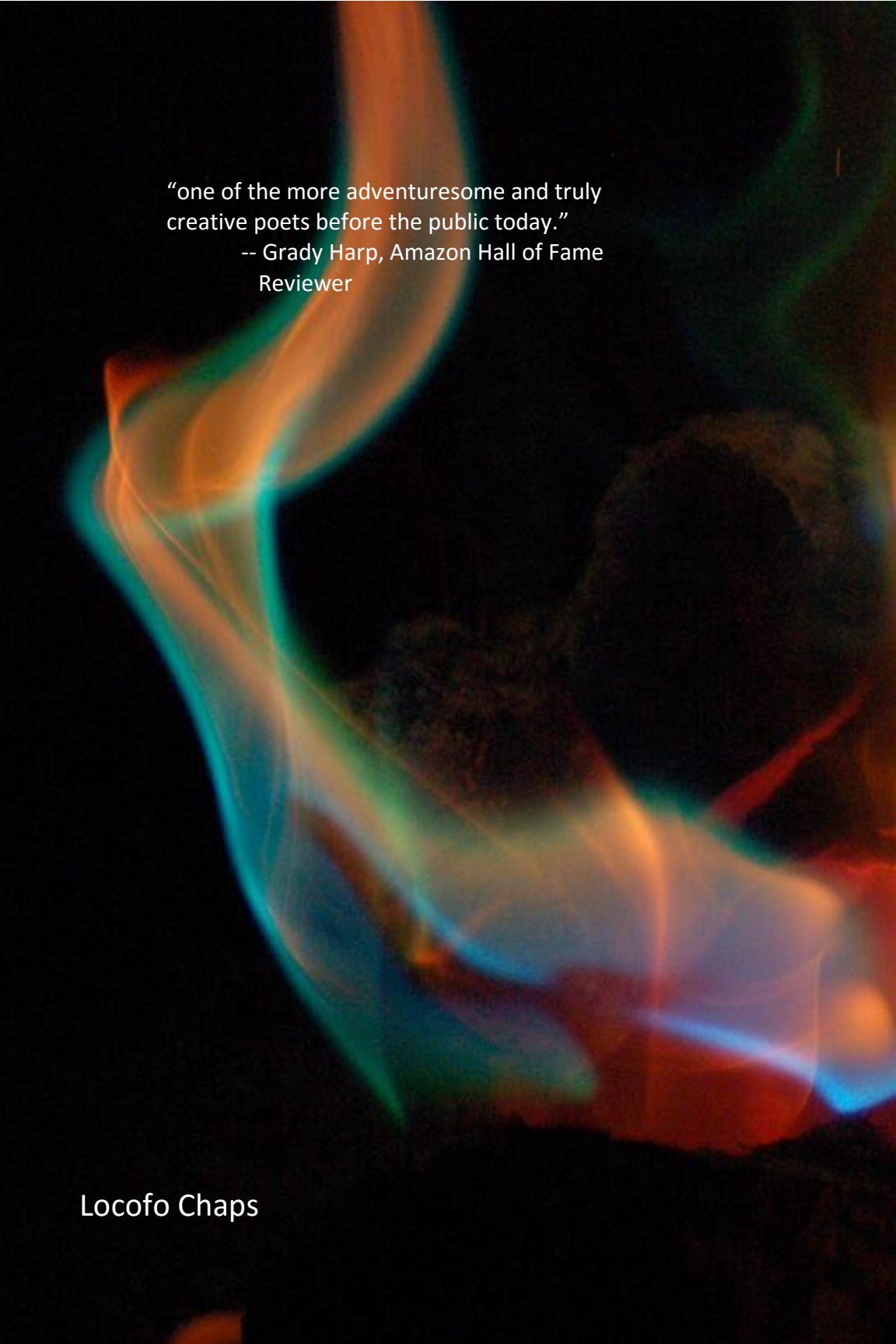
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Charles Perrone's *A CAPacious Act*

Joel Chace's *America's Tin*

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