

Puñeta: Political Pilipinx Poetry



Eileen R. Tabios, Editor

Puñeta
Political Pilipinx Poetry

Edited by Eileen R. Tabios

Locofo Chaps
Chicago, 2017

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Locofo Chaps is dedicated to publishing politically-oriented poetry.

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ABOUT THE POETS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Michelle Bautista

FLOW

Hear playful moon in this sacred space. Our afflictions, its laughter of paradise, fire jutting out of a deep pulse. Crafted warriors, sliding, struck upon fire and water, earth and air. Hear guardians in corners split heavy hollow resonance. Touch earth and air. Red bamboo above flows. Hear unimpeded feet remembered. Come open across air. Shadows form spirits in closed eyes, follow wordless offering and smell colors in evening light in circles of firelight and water rhythms. Rattan taps earth's laughter.

Mg Roberts

notes from the gyre,
an excerpt from *Anemal Uter Meck*

this sky inverted in blue, in red, in white nesting
into handcuffs,
into the heavy of a thing now residual, endless.

drawn against continent we are like a sad
imitation of bird noises:

a flock

a population

a country

Kimberly Alidio

I was born for a stricter regime

than this loose place of acoustic guitar mass and
grape juice

trained long before birth to be a soldier of something

a wife of someone's
a link to some underground
a constellation

ready for the call exiled from the cell
embedded missing you
dreaming the word
a passkey magic safe entry

haunting corners scanning my papers for fraud
flushing myself out
terror is the mainstream's peace

I will be truthful I am lost
the mall is starting to make me forget

the prophecy fulfilling itself
a manifesto

in one line indigene in the next struggling
with addiction
in each wife and nun

a hand of unraveled threads a bomb blast awhile
ago

violence in the soft core

paratroopers I am running out of writing
implements

they want to know how I run

Jose Padua

Headhunters

When we were young my family displayed wood
carvings
of headhunters on the end tables in our living
room. The headhunters portrayed in the carvings
were from
somewhere in the north on the island of Luzon in
the Philippines. I was five or six and my favorite
was the tall, stately one with the narrow strip
of multicolored cloth that was wrapped around
his waist

then tucked between his legs to cover his private
parts,
though most of his buttocks were still exposed. I was
slightly embarrassed that we had this carving of a
man
with his ass hanging out on display in our living
room, but what made up for it was his face, long
and tight
lipped, bearing a look of determination, and of course
the head he held in his right hand, just off his hip. He

was what used to be commonly called an Igorot
though the better term was a Bontoc, from the
Mountain
Province, and he carried the head so casually
that it seemed that it was no big deal for him, that
he'd captured many heads before this one, and that
even though the journey ahead was long—and
through blinding,
unbreathable heat—the future was bright with many

more heads to come. I wasn't quite sure what
message
my parents were trying to give visitors or what
mood they were trying to create. I was born in the
States,
and while like other families we had a wooden
bowl full of plastic fruit, we also had paintings
of grass huts on our walls, and a carving of a beast
of burden called a carabao on our coffee table,

all of which to me seemed to say we weren't from
here, we
were from somewhere far away and backwards,
and when I
was young that wasn't where I wanted to be from—
why
couldn't we have been from England like that cute
girl
from the apartment upstairs, or from France like
that woman
my Mom sewed for?—and besides all the other things
in the living room just seemed to lead one's eyes back

to the wooden headhunters that stood guard on
either
side of the plastic-covered sofa. I wondered if
they might be our relatives back in the islands—
cousins
or uncles I'd never met who had somehow missed
their
chance to come to the States. Did they live side by
side
with my Mom and Dad or maybe it was an uptown/
downtown sort of distance, or maybe they were our
neighbors

“out in the country”? Maybe I thought the answer
would

be too scary, maybe I didn't want to know but
I never asked where we stood with them or what we
shared
even though as a child there were so many things I
didn't know about headhunters. So I learned by not
living with them, how they were merciless like the
monsoon
rain, how determination begins in the home

as years gather like rings on trees and jungles grow
dense
in a distance too far for me to sense, but close enough
for me to know. And it turned out some of them *had*
made it to the States and were displayed in a human
zoo
at the St. Louis World's Fair, 1904, for America
to watch and gawk at and maybe this is what
Mom and Dad meant to say, that when you look at us

we're looking at you, we're paying attention to your
moves, your strange, exotic speech and your skin
a color
you can only see in our teeth and our eyes when we
look
at you and smile. We're nice and kind and polite and
we like
to cook and entertain, but cross us and there's no way
for you
to know if it's daytime or nighttime or heaven or hell
and time for us to start collecting heads again.

Kimberly Alidio

I'm sick of white people from Baltimore talking about Baltimore I'm sick of leftists who left Baltimore talking about their comrades in Baltimore I'm sick of people who aren't from Baltimore talking about Baltimore I'm sick of the New York Times mapping the incident and the CVS looting in Baltimore I'm sick of the Washington Post reporting on Baltimore I'm glad for Ta-Nehisi Coates' piece in the Atlantic starting off with his growing up near Mondawmin Mall But I'm sick of people living in Cambridge and San Francisco posting on their hometown of Baltimore I'm sick of protest images of Baltimore being used to recycle debates over calling it a riot or an uprising I'm sick of your friends in Baltimore commenting on your post that people! are being hurt! by the riots! I'm sick of anyone's message to anyone to stay safe in Baltimore I'm sick of the sense of danger in my body about Baltimore I'm sick from the statistics I've always known but never knew I'm sick of the danger that is the city and not the county I'm sick of the danger that is the county which is whatever passes for my hometown I'm sick of the white people who always speak for Baltimore I'm sick of the white people I grew up having to listen to about Baltimore I'm sick from not really being from Baltimore I'm sick from the danger I was always warned about which is not quite the danger I grew up with which is a danger known in my body a danger which is not quite the danger of the places I passed through and is the danger of the cop car and police van anywhere in this country but first and foremost in my body about Baltimore I'm sick of being adjacent to and complicit in and ignorant of and complacent about and witness to and terrorized by and subject to what is said about and done to Baltimore

Luisa A. Igloria

PEOPLE LIKE US

We were talking to a man we knew at a cafe, who had just come back after several months overseas.

He had been away at the time of the election, and spoke of how unsettling it was to view the aftermath from afar—in a country where he was born but where he could not, after so many decades, feel he completely belonged.

He said for the first time it felt physically as if he
was between two places,
with nowhere now to go.

His first week back, he could hardly bear to get out of
bed, to walk around
as if the world were still normal. *But at least this is a
university town,*
he said—*I suppose there's something still to be said
about what this means? Maybe we can still feel
some semblance of safety here?*

To understand such feelings is to understand the history of all others like us who have always been singled out as expendable, who will always be the first to be pushed to the front of the line :: to take the fall :: to bear the brunt :: to feel the weight :: and still articulate, in representation of.

Also, everything we ever learned about resistance will have to be reinvented.

What kind of stance is best, to adopt for the hard years ahead?

The Thinker rests one hand on his cheek, supporting the head, symbol of rational life and thought. The hand rests on the opposite knee. But he is sitting on a surface providing ballast, providing gravity.

If there is a chair this is obviously a kind of privilege.

And obviously this will not be enough.

So in turn I am reminded of the place I come from—where village elders hold council or simply smoke their pipes or carefully arrange pieces of betel nut leaf and lime to chew.

They squat in a circle and note the time of day. They may say something or nothing, like *It is noon. It is night. It is the next day.* They can do this for long periods of time, with long silences between.

How long can they hold this position?

Somewhere between abjection and the moment before the spring fires the calf muscles forward for the sprint.

Neither a cowering nor a complete sinking into the earth but the vigilance of a wire pressed for the moment into a form biding its time.

Glynda Velasco

The F word

Do you want to throw down some major shade.
Trash talk publicly
There is a dirty F word
Dirtier than Fuck
Oh, hell, if someone said, "Fuck you!"
I'd be like: "Here? Now?!"
Fuck is not as bad as this other F-word.
That word is "frack."

Fracking is when they blast water and chemicals to get oil out of the ground.
If someone said to me, "Frack you!"
I'd be like, "Hell no!"

My home would have water that would burst into flames straight out of the faucet.
I might ^{not} be able to plant a garden because fracking causes sink holes.
So, if you have an enemy such as the shareholders, CEOs, board of directors, owners of oil companies
You might want to say "FRACK YOU!"
To give them a taste of their own ^{lead} medicine. Koch Brothers, Frack

Can you imagine their mansions being fracked.

So let's say it all together "FRACK YOU!"

Chevron, FRACK YOU TRUMP Tower, Frack You
Exxon, FRACK YOU Rex Tillerson Trump-appointed Secretary of State
Shell, FRACK YOU CEO Exxon-Mobil

Raise your hand if you have someone or something in mind to say FRACK YOU

TRUMP is a stockholder; Sunoco an investor in the Dakota Access Pipeline

- GT Velasco January 9, 2017 Innovations
revised January 11, 2017

Barbara Jane Reyes

Prayers of Petition

1. To the Patron Saint of Husbandry and Harness Makers

With Arlene Biala, Veronica Montes, and Jay Santa Cruz

Please do not shush her when she speaks.

You nitpick every little thing; you make her small.

Please do not tell her she doesn't know anything.

You are not pleased; she does nothing right.

Please do not tell her she should smile.

You are her master; this is tradition.

Please do not tell her her skin is too dark.

You pull her hair; you throw her to the floor.

Please do not tell her she is a fat cow.

You do what you will; no one will stop you.

Please do not leer at her body parts.

You beat down the door when she changes the locks.

Please do not leer at her daughters.

You own her; everything she has is yours.

Please do not grab at her body parts.

You make her suffer; you knock out her teeth.

Please do not grab at her daughters.

You promise to change; next time will be different.

Please do not block her with your body.

Your home and your castle, your family values.

Please do not cut off her hair.

You shoot, you strangle, you beat her up.

Please do not tell her to calm down.

You bludgeon, you burn; you serve no jail time.

Please do not pretend she did not say no.

You are not to blame; she stays, doesn't she.

Please do not stab her, then call her your soul mate.

You don't need to change; the laws favor you.

Please do not tell her it will be OK.

You turn on the charm; you know she'll come back.

Please do not tell her not to tell anyone.

You take away her money; she has nothing without you.

Please do not tell her not to make a scene.

You break her spirit; you tease her with hope.

Please do not tell her she's crazy.

You grip your pistol, your fist, your baseball bat.

Please do not incapacitate her.

You know she will stay, for better or for worse.

Please do not lock her in your closet and starve her.

You post bail easy; it's always this way.

Please do not penetrate her against her will.

You drink, and you fuck her so hard, you rip her.

Please do not impregnate her against her will.

You punch her first trimester belly, this is not your problem.

Please do not set her body on fire.

You dump her body — trash, woods, don't matter.

Please do not blame her for her death by your hands.

You are a disease; we will eradicate you.

2. To the Patron Saint of Encumbered Wives

Hija con la barba, pray for us
Bearded maiden of the cross, we have
Many stake claim upon us
No sanctuary from the fathers' will
Santa Librada, crucificada
Our husbands' whims, and our sons
This burden of patriarchs
Ravaging the sad vessels of namesake.
Hija con la barba, virgo fortis
Bearded maiden, they say you are myth,
Corseted messiah, bogeywoman
They brand us cult of hysterical girls,
Sacrilegious sister, que bárbara
They smash our faces with their fists
We are the encumbered wives
They shove our bodies, they spit on us.
Hija con la barba, cut us loose
Bearded maiden, we are ungraced
Unwife our brutish husbands
We are wretched bitches, we are used.
Santa patrona de la tribulación
We will be a woven phalanx of women,
Wild-haired protector, we stand
With you, interlocked. With you, holding.

JOSE PADUA

Seven and Seven Is

The young thug from my neighborhood who whipped
my older
brother Tony with a car antennae outside our
house, and the man who was both former governor
and
senator from Virginia, and whose 2006
campaign to regain his senate seat was derailed when
he used a racial slur while speaking to an Indian-
American tracker from his opponent's camp, were

both named George Allen. This is not an attempt
to point
out the oddities and ironies of life, this is
simply the way things happened. My brother was
thirteen
and I was nine, and George Allen, the young
neighborhood
thug, laughed maniacally as he whipped my brother
over and over with the shiny metal car
antennae. Later, I imagined that if I'd had

a baseball bat I could have snuck up from behind and
swung like Frank Howard, home run hitter for the
Washington
Senators baseball team, and killed George Allen, but I
didn't have a bat, and I didn't have the home run
power, so I didn't kill him and when it was over
my brother slowly walked into the house crying
in pain and all I could do was yell or try to yell.

George Allen was the first and probably the only
person I ever really imagined killing, and
when I was young I didn't understand that killing

him would have changed my life in ways I can't
imagine.

George Allen, candidate for the senate, was the son
of George Allen the famous football coach, and went
to high school in Palos Verdes, California, drove

a Ford Mustang that had a front license plate holder
that was adorned with the Confederate flag, and wore
a pin of that flag for his official yearbook photo.
George Allen, California fan of the Confederacy,
went to the University of Virginia when
his father became the coach of the Washington
Redskins and stayed on there to get his law degree,
and

got married, got divorced, got married again and had
three children and now lives in a wealthy
neighborhood

near the first president of the United States George
Washington's Mt. Vernon estate. George Allen,
neighborhood

thug, was black and didn't have a famous father and
didn't have a fancy car, and was a skinny, kind
of weird looking guy who after he'd whipped my
brother

would always laugh at us, and everyone in the
neighborhood,

black or white or any other color, knew that one
day he would end up in jail, and when he did go to jail
for armed robbery we never saw him again,
never got whipped or laughed at or threatened by
him

again and his story like so many others just
sort of ends, like a film with no plot, a film that ends

with a sudden cut to black. And there are so many
ways to react to getting beaten down like this, and

too many people would take the neighborhood thug
and
anyone who looks like him and lump them all
together
like horrible monsters, like the landlord I once talked
to on the phone about renting an apartment in
New York and who suddenly said he had nothing

available when I told him my name was Jose,
and I later found out that ever since a Puerto
Rican employee ripped him off he doesn't trust
anyone he thinks is Hispanic, like me with my
Hispanic sounding name, and this doesn't make the
landlord
a poor, sorry, fearful, and fragile guy whose
apprehension
is understandable, it makes him an asshole goon.

My brother got beaten and got better and got over
it, and I try to imagine what it was that made
George Allen, asshole candidate for the Senate, give
so much glory to the Confederacy, what could
have filled him with so much backwards shit—did he
learn it,
did it beat him within a sliver of the heart beneath
his bleeding white skin? When George Allen, thug,
was beating

my brother I was full of fear and anger and revenge,
but when I saw George Allen, the candidate, so
casually use that word, that slur that was meant to
lay
another man down to some lesser place, I just felt
helpless, like in a dream where you want to run but
you
can't, where you want fight back, but your arms won't
rise
to shelter the color in your face, and you can't cut to
black.

Cristina Querrer

LINE THEM UP

Where is the land that is mine?
A place I gave birth three times
But not where I was born?
Because I planted my feet here
Half fate, half destiny, all luck
I meld into the crowd
Hoping not to be seen
A ghost caught in between
Life & death
How wonderful
It feels not to hide, not to
Whisper in dark corners
Wonder if I would be
Whisked away in the dark, too

The cries of the fallen echo
Muted, buried within my youth
When in another land
I am safe from dictators
Now familiar panic set in
Of bus loads pulled over,
Lined up, gunned down
Unnamed back then, but how
I remember it so well:
Frayed fabric, forever
Unraveling—just like
My ancestors' spirits
That followed me here
By thread of my hair
Just to repeat the trek
Up the mountains
& into the sea

Angela Peñaredondo

RETURN

I didn't go back to reawaken or recover
the relics, nor puzzle
what I'd become if left behind.
I did not grow old
with the banyan's hollows
or pray soft to them
before pissing on their leaves.

Sometimes I wish them gone
as if I were floating a thousand
feet off the ground. The haunting
of sexless ghosts
when I was child of broken
bridges & metal fences
outlining this portrait of birth.

I came back not to regret
or ask the particulars of why I left.
When a tree falls, its roots
aim jagged, pointing in all directions

like a chapel buried up
by the sea, hiding from any
marriage of light. Her cross
poking out of waves
covered in nothing
but a green flesh.

Jean Vengua

SEPTEMBER 5, 2013

No regard
for the moon

Mosquitos
silently alight

A deer looks up

Crow's black
unfolding departure

Syria's
held breath

Aileen Ibardaloza

APOLOGY

*"Apologies are critical for resolving disputes
and repairing trust between negotiators."*

—William M. Maddux et al

Let us settle
finally and
irrevocably

the issue of
our murky
history.

I regret deeply
and without
defense

past offenses and
take the
indignity

of your oppression
with the
realization

that I am
still not
defenseless

enough to be
absolved fully
or

irrevocably. But here

I am,
heart

in hand, in
hopes of
being

heard as I
say without
defense

how I have wronged you.

Leny M. Strobel

On The Limits of Grief

We survived / We are still here / It is enough,
isn't it? // The past matters / A world was
formed by those who did things ... / Words
matter / We were called "little brown sisters and
brothers" as if we benefited from the best of both
worlds // Enough of that story / It doesn't work
anymore / No more old stories that overstay
their welcome / No more lies that blind us to
what matters // I say, it matters that we are no
longer the willing receptacles of projection //
You call us "small" / You say our canoe is sinking
and we have no rudder // Let it sink then / Let's
get lost in the ocean of smallness / Let the boat
sink // We will be found in a thousand years as
strata of underwater mountains / Then we will
not be so small / We would have been food for
those breathing through water: *of value* / We
would become found objects for future
archeologists: *worthy of being seen*

Angela Peñaredondo

WHAT SHE WILLS [THE TREES BEHIND]

With all the danger involved
at least you know the missing
is not a blank letter or diminished
garden, instead your mouth full
of such shattering sea
and the peninsulas ravaged
like the lean flesh of a neck.

How many times
barefoot and without map, you must
have told God through the slim crevasse
of both palms, you were ready
to let go of all that water.

The wax-like geography of a country
and grandmother finally buried
in Laguna, its quiet shrine
as close to infinity as a small
planet gleaming.

Each summer you take what little
money to escape, eager
for the pulpy bits of yourself
moving, no longer cut in half
but some bandaged organism
with each opening of dark
an easy
compartment without clinging rope
or barricade, not any exotic brand
or objet trouvé like Laurencin's dancers
rather from clouds an animal forms,
a wild cat slipping inside an oblong hole.

You think of the different places
now washed over by rain,
very well,
they tell you under fractions of sky,
because they've watched all things lose
thousands and thousands of times.

Mg Roberts

from a scar mosaic,
an excerpt from *Anemal Uter Meck*

a verb lays waste

in a throat—on a

page

in an abandoned city

lot edged in chain link

lots edged in

chains

link that learn history

learn empty mouth

learn whose song?

Eileen R. Tabios

... from the MDR Poetry Generator: "Pilipinx"

I.

I forgot how perfume cannot obliterate.

I forgot children softening harsh wool with thin fingers in exchange for broken rice kernels.

I forgot discovering the limited utility of calm seas.

I forgot the World War II concentration camp where amnesiacs tortured by tying together the legs of pregnant women.

I forgot how Beauty dislocates.

I forgot *that* sense of approaching a labyrinth.

I forgot the ripped edges of fabrics still mustering to cover the shoulders of non-retired warriors.

I forgot that if you call an island "Isla Mujeres," half of the population will be anguished.

I forgot there is no cavalry.

I forgot how to heal face blindness by introducing context.

I forgot electronic ghosts snooping on our passions.

I forgot defining ambition as the helpless compulsion to write songs for women who refuse headscarves.

I forgot rough skin was a map.

I forgot you losing all Alleluias.

I forgot the musk of a stolen wool coat.

I forgot she became the wind after losing all misgivings at drying my feet with her hair.

II.

I forgot steel will bend to form a heart.

I forgot wax will freeze to form a heart.

I forgot ink will flow to form a heart.

I forgot cantaores drowning in their own blood to sing one last letra.

I forgot a body drowning in light as a hand wrote. I forgot eyes leaking flames.

I forgot Derrida hunched as I was then over an antique desk scribbling past egregious back pain, "There is speech. / There is phenomena."

I forgot wondering if sweat can be dishonest.

I forgot true love is never chaste.

I forgot imagination cannot alchemize air into protein.

I forgot the Sphinx's unasked riddle:

~~"Which is more powerful?~~

~~A moon so bright it erases night~~

~~or~~

~~A sun so bright it darkens vision?"~~

I forgot the anguish of knowledge.

I forgot sickened oceans vomiting dead fish and dumped sewage from every myoclonic jerk.

I forgot ~~that rare poem all too aware that no one else can be the sentry watching over your life— only you can judge when you have absconded from your distinct possibilities.~~

III.

But I will never forget we walk on the same planet and breathe the same air. I will never forget the same sun shines on us. I created my own legacy: *No one is a stranger to me.*

ABOUT THE POETS

Kimberly Alidio: kimberlyalidio.tumblr.com

Michelle Bautista:

<http://meritagepress.blogspot.com/2012/09/kalis-blade-by-michelle-bautista.html>

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Jean Vengua: <http://www.local-nomad.net/>

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Locofo Chaps

2017

Eileen Tabios – *To Be An Empire Is To Burn*

Charles Perrone – *A CAPacious Act*

Francesco Levato – *A Continuum of Force*

Joel Chace – *America's Tin*

John Goodman – *Twenty Moments that Changed the World*

Donna Kuhn – *Don't Say His Name*

Garin Cycholl – *Country Musics 20/20*

Mary Kasimor – *The Prometheus Collage*

Gabriel Gudding – *Bed from Government*

Eileen Tabios, editor – *Puñeta: Political Pilipinx*

Poetry

More information on Locofo Chaps can be found at
www.moriapoetry.com.

trained long before birth to be a soldier of something
-- **Kimberly Alidio**

your arms won't rise
to shelter the color in your face, and you can't cut to black.
-- **Jose Padua**

worthy of being seen
-- **Leny M. Strobel**

Kimberly Alidio
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