

A Filipinx stands by the riverside where once a white army camped to join the expedition against Iroquois Indians

Shane Carreon*

1

The Chenango would have felt different that August
in 1779, before the climate changed, before all of *these*
happened. Not unlike today, it is wind that comes first
your pores feel it even though the ears cannot yet hear.

In the great beyond the gods are poised to drum,
your heartbeat waits, your blood.
The strings are taut and ready, and Fall arrives in a step.

2

Where the dirt was it is now beneath you, a past hidden
under your feet, under trimmed grass the county
took pains to match with concrete steps
beckoning you, come by the river and see the hills
bloom with leaves the colors of fire, hope, and bruise.

In this season of falling, a sugar maple stands alone
by the bridge.
It is red. It is burning.
It is bush, it is tongues of fire.

It calls out to you: *gaze, be lost, speak...*
and you finally understand
why Moses was afraid, what happened after Babel fell.

Do you not still carry your grandfather's story with you?

The one told in another tongue that eternal afternoon
under the anaháw while you plucked strands of his beard.
The potter and the clay people from the kiln:
the burnt, the raw, the golden brown.

"And god said he is satisfied," your grandfather said
before his aneurysm ruptured and there was blood,
blood everywhere.

3

A black man in black overalls with a fishing rod comes
close to the river. The river is a body, dark and pacified
water and silt.
Another arrives, fair-haired, light-eyed
and sets his sinker, his hook, his bait. He casts his line.

Soon there will be the stir, the heartbeat, the pull,
the drowning in open air. Here by the river wide enough
it makes you think of a lake, you are reminded
who else went fishing, who said he would teach men
how to fish men.

The wind blows cold. The river moves.
Elsewhere the sound of unbeaten drums.
The riverbank would have felt different that August in 1779
but the hills are the same.

You insert a bird across the empty sky.

NOTE

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Beast", published in 2013 and 2017, respectively. Ze is Assistant Professor at the University of the Philippines Cebu and is presently a Fulbright Fellow at Binghamton University, New York.