

Gémino H. Abad Literary Awards for Poetry and for Literary Criticism Awardees

Rayji de Guia

NEITHER NOTHING NOR FORGOTTEN

With longing for a girl

*He seems to me equal to gods that man
whoever he is who opposite you
sits and listens close
to your sweet speaking
— Sappho*

Three days overcome
as nothing is
catharsis. This is
what is. She is
be held behold
her songs? of honey,
of sorrow and delight
that tease her
But there is quiet she longs for
someone
unknown,
alcohol-ridden, tear-stained prayers
a man dearest—

Salve Regina

Hail, holy queen

of miracles, contrition
can wait elsewhere; out of all

the brides who have sung your canticles
with their tongues, you chose me. Your sweetness
blesses the fruit of my body

with prayer, with nectar, nard
on my petals, saffron, cinnamon;
I drink the wine of your orchard. Blessed

are we for we are
our own synagogue

to feed, to shelter,
to bathe among women
and oh, we cry at Eve's

solitary sighs upon her exile

as woman—after all, like her we are
not merciful, loving, sweet,
nor are we most gracious to the Lord or fathers, only

to our ladies—

Guadalupe, Fátima, Lourdes, what I call you

at the hour

of our union
is where I take your love. I am
your devotee, a pilgrim who comes
for the cleansing of my chalice. But behold me

mourning and weeping at the valley
of my father who would rather see me nailed to the cross
like your son. You are

church, and I turn then to the Lord and ask:

Mother of Mercy, Mother of God,
the Virgin without a bride, a betrothed
is knowing how to worship
the body the original sin?

I call you

at the hour

of my death, beloved,

pray for us.

Amen.

A Portrait of Decomposing Girls

After Hozier

It begins here: My scalp tears, hairs fall;
in wounds festering, maggots. Am I
still pretty? Is there a point in asking?
In the end, we have come to depart,
a prayer withheld—how we decayed.
But we will not be rotting in a coffin,
flesh melding; the church will not bury us.
As worms wrestle in my mouth down
to my throat, does it matter when I
have no use for kissing? Not when
my body has bloated, bearing your loss,
before caving in. I sink among molds,
feces, piss, reeking wastes in the heat.
My stench exposes me here and you
—us, decomposing at the same time.

With longing for a girl (Reprise)

*He seems to me equal to gods that man
whoever he is who opposite you
sits and listens close
to your sweet speaking
— Sappho*

Three days overcome with longing for a girl, I do nothing, as nothing is wiser than speaking selfish wants for catharsis. This is not waiting but a will for what is. She is too young to be held; is it so sinful to behold her as I listen to her songs? A voice of honey, cold and sweet, slithers down my spine. Entice me forward, tales of sorrow and delight, as I touch the hairs that tease her shoulders bare. But there is quiet in her eyes: she longs for someone else. To a goddess unknown, as you please, do not forsake alcohol-ridden, tear-stained prayers for a man to steal my dearest—