

# The Door and Other Poems

RAMON DAMASING

## The Door

I watched how I passed the trees:  
in the distance, color

would come into view,  
vibrations ushered by light

from beyond the known  
into the felt, flowering  
into hazy trunk and canopy,

flowering falling short of definition  
having neared and passed too quickly.

The green skin of mangoes  
is clothed by dust and dew borrowed

from memory, from slowing down

one day by the countryside  
to feel the earth breathe,  
rest in its flowering shade.

The blur that speed has left in the mind  
is varnished over for me to come in, see clearly  
and feel the tree's rough skin,

linger my touch long enough  
the ants journey on my finger thinking  
I am part of the fruit-bearing shade,

linger long enough light impresses  
its high definition into a warm place

within me—yet I was certain  
only of the sky bathing the canopies  
auburn, mottled by early evening.

Suddenly, I am passing by a house  
two years ago, going through its open door.  
I look in, but it ends too quickly,  
the visible is barely made out.

The frame blurs having reached its brink  
as though one had reached the river floor  
and moved the sediments into unrest,  
into a mist one ingests in the vacuum  
of the past, forcing one to resurface  
into a car seat, into warm Sunday  
light, staring at the passing scenery.

After recall, the heart takes over.

The curtains are weaved into familiarity  
against the frenetic pace of the world  
keeping the peered into whole. The door  
resembles something akin to passion.  
The curtains veiling the adjacent field  
open into the swaying rice paddies,  
each head with its own music.

Had I stopped and entered, I'm sure  
I would have seen it more clearly,  
a life. At the crude door  
through which light flowed,  
a young girl appears

and smiles, looks into me as she asks what  
my business is, opens her life as she opens  
the already opened door, holds my heart  
as she holds my hand ushering me in,  
in introduction.

**“Nothing, go on.”**

The sea melds with the shore.  
The cliff’s updraft shows us  
our place, high up the world below  
is a blotched canvas, forms blurring  
into haze that only color is discernible,  
one running into another as sight  
loses itself in the stretch of height.  
You wanted me to take your picture  
just near enough the edge of the water  
could be seen. There, hold still.  
I looked down and saw the shore  
letting itself be softened, enough  
the waves become a part of its fine,  
long body, the beach a creature  
of earth and air, which we term only  
as beautiful—smile,  
hold still. Stop moving. Another  
with the lovely shore, you say.  
But as we admired the view,  
I thought of giving myself over  
to the air, if gravity’s impression

over my falling body  
would let the haze of sand and saltwater  
creep into me, assimilate me

the same way the photograph of you  
letting the wind compose your hair  
would breathe between us

communion. A rock I kick over falls  
like the mind lets fall into its world  
uncertainty, one it fears

and loves, taking you by the hand  
to see it up close—your blue face  
rocked by the waves,

the roused sand, quiet in its rhythm  
of erosion. I hand you your camera,  
hand myself over to whistling

rushing from wherever land.  
You say the beaches down south are divine.  
You ask what's wrong, and I say,

“Nothing, go on.”

## **On the Trip Back Home**

Father tells of a creature whose body is a shadow.  
Without glancing at the fields we pass,

he says it moves toward the sun when it starts  
to set, without being seen, slipping out of the shade

when the leaves rustle, or with a passing flock of birds.  
That month, the roads were being made and unmade.

Headlights would flood the dirt road, enfleshing dust  
in the midst of engine heat and jackhammers. People

within their cars gazing towards the nearest future,  
within their homes, or some stretch of quiet road  
to pass the darkness off. “Your taxes at work,”  
the signs say. “Sorry for the inconvenience.”

I think about the green flag a worker waves when  
it is time to move, industrial work lights coating it  
with energy, moving metal and flesh into a current,  
progressing the parts, the stories of each part,  
people walking beside the road carrying children  
and beer, grateful for the temporary vision  
the nearing election has bestowed. We came upon  
a stretch with plains on each side, few trees, warm  
vibration of wild bushes in evening wind, as though  
something were trying to break free. Far off, blue  
was being eaten by time, into dark blue, into  
maroon, into delayed sigh, to solitary points  
in the dreamscape sky, which kills the thing,  
Father says, or makes it sink deeper into that  
of which it is a shadow. The rest of the trip home  
were fine roads roughened to make room  
for another three-year passage. I stared at every tree,  
especially the young ones, the ones whose shades  
were only years old, the ones to which moonlight  
was a fond acquaintance. Had I stared long enough,  
I would have seen them lose their souls,  
a thin membrane breaking off from the fringes  
of trunks and branches, struggling outward  
at a slightly brighter color, restless and stubborn,  
wicked, lost, filled with wanderlust. Breaking off  
to attempt a revolution, or start a war.

## On a Sketch of Endymion and Selene

In finding a way in, the heart  
shatters, its whole vision  
bathing the leaves  
with return, shattering  
through the canopy  
as moonlight, shrapnel  
on the ground,  
some embedded in pieces  
of flesh heaving  
with repose. There, the lips,  
the chest, the loins,  
the weaving the mind does  
pre-word—and when we say  
*body*, referring to the young  
man, his hair emanating brown  
in the invisible, the woman  
shedding from herself  
the palpable to enter  
his dream, the air gets colder,  
our feet become heavy.  
There, the same  
field and tree. The same  
waiting, the eyes  
of the heart scanning the body  
it has weaved  
into the knowable  
for a place where its gaze  
can be met,  
where introduction  
can take root ... Her heart

sheds over a field trying to grow.  
The seeds vine  
    into a silhouette the wind carries  
into the shade  
    as would a breeze  
        in cool summer night, moon shade  
unto leaf froth  
    without shattering the darkness.  
        Where are you,  
the eyes ask, whose  
    is the wordless asking, gaze  
        of inquiry, that question  
to which we reveal  
    our own face  
        and say we are  
here, we are similar, analogous,  
    stardust. In the real,  
        refulgent and alone,  
the gaze wanders  
    into exodus, the reply  
        restless, unembraced. The gaze never  
bridging them  
    into a phase beyond searching  
        for the possibility  
of a future. That night,  
    crickets could heard  
        in the world. The heart whispers  
into an ear  
    it has created  
        from memory, and  
in the dream the leaves  
    are swaying by how  
        she breathes, falling

the way her voice falls  
with every end  
of song. The tree which greets him  
as he wakes (where, which place?)  
is leafless, the sky full  
and pornographic.