

Do Not Go Gentle into That GCQ and Other Poems

Jose Velando Ogatis-I

Do Not Go Gentle Into That GCQ.

(apologies to Dylan Thomas)

Do not go gentle into that GCQ.
Old age burned the Palace at close of day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the true.

Unwise men at their end think that might is true,
Because their minds had forged no iron-clad thinking.
Do not go gentle into that GCQ.

Good sick men wheeze by, then choke in the ICU.
Their frail lungs breathe their last and decay.
Rage, rage against the dying of the true.

Policemen who shot on cue sons without a clue,
Learned too late not to celebrate their own birthday.
Do not go gentle into that GCQ.

Grave trolls, the brain dead, officials caught on the loo,
Blind hungry masses into the mob's wayward way.
Rage, rage against the dying of the true.

And Father Digong, seated on that bloody height,
Curses critics, blesses his cult, to whom they pray.
Do not go gentle into that GCQ.
Rage, rage against the dying of the true.

Ars Pandemica Neo

Where is Art in the Pandemic?

In the piled-up body bags that line hospital halls
There is Sculpture.
Texture of plastic. Hewn from failed flesh.

In how people evade each other in the streets
There is Dance.
Choreography of distance. Pirouettes in peril.

In how the President murders words and meanings
There is Literature.
Fury of Fentanyl. No rhyme nor reason.

In the edited rambling the Palace premieres at odd hours
There is Film.
Cinematography of Covid. Shots in the dark.

In the fences and walls communities build
There is Architecture.
Forts of frustration. Filled with freedom fantasies.

In the cries of families who can't mourn their dead
There is Music.
Rhythm of ruin. Melody in melancholia.

In how the Health Department directs data daily
There is Drama.
Theatre of the absurd. Walls breaking.

In the tarpaulin smiles of politicians
There is Painting.
Portraits of puffery. Our taxes worked.

Where is the Pandemic in Art?

Pandemic Patterns

I used to dream of Cotabato's eagles.
Wonder of wings. Freedom in flight.
As *Fu Dalu* guides me,
I thread their feathers in *T'nalak*—
T'boli dreams dyed in red and black.

These days
as affliction knits death along *Lake Sebu*
the eagles no longer fly as I slumber.
No eagle call blankets my sleep,
only coughing.

June used to be for storm patterns:
raindrops cascading down the abaca;
bamboo bending for the wind;
and lightning streaking across
Lamdalag and *Lamlahak* skies.

June is now for pandemic patterns:
sickness stitched between our houses;
our air darned with disease.
No longer do I see fingers entwined.
I only see spaces being sewn all over.
No longer do children hang abaca fibers
on our lanzones trees.
I only see their lives hanging.

Thankfully,
my people are patched with hope.
Grandmother says this deathly design
will soon unravel.
“*Kadaw La Sambad* will make this all end.
Your dream eagles will fly again
and our lives will soon mend.”

Notes

1. Fu Dalu is the spirit of the abaca
2. Lamdalag and Lamlahak are barangays along Lake Sebu in Cotabato.
3. Kadaw La Sambad is a T'boli deity