

AIDA F. SANTOS

PAGSILONG (REVISED)

“Minsan ba pag alone naiisip mo
kung talagang marunong ka na
muling magmahal?”

- T

22:46, 07/21/08

Sapagkat may kabog
ang dibdib (o puso nga ba ito)
sa bawat tawag mo
lalo't may piring ang gabi
may sugat ang buwan
na may kurtinang
abuhin at walang puknat
ang pagsusumamo
sa mga talang
ayaw kumislap,

Iniisip ko:
ang pamilyang nasa ilalim
ng tulay, namamaluktot
sa kaprasong kartongbanig
na hinila mula sa basurahan
sa kantong lugmok
sa nanggigitatang putik
at sangsang,
marunong pa ba silang magmahal?

mulit muli, sa maghapon
na pagkalam ng tiyan
o pagngawa ng mga batang
sindungis ng kalsadang palaruan.

Dito, sa maalwan kong kama
may apat na unan
busilak ang bango
ng bagong labang
kumot na pananggalang
sa lamig ng *electric fan*,
hindi mahirap muling magmahal
lalo na't maaari naman kitang
tawagan o gisingin
kung ika'y wala sa piling
o kaya'y maaga kang
nilugmok ng antok.

Maaaring malulong
sa pagmamahal
lalo na't hindi ko pinag-iisipan
ang agahan, tanghalian at hapunan,
o kung may iba pa bang tulay
na masisilungan
sa gabing nagsaboy ang langit
ng rumaragasang ulan,

o matapos palisin
ng nangangasiwa ng katahimikan
sa lunsod ng milyong
iskwater ng buhay.

Ngunit isipin mo:
bakit silang
laging nag-iisa kahit
santambak ang anak,
di ba ito pagmamahal
na iniraraos sa anumang paraan
saanman, hanggat kakayanin
ng dilim ang umaapuhap
na mga kamay

Paano nga ba ako magmahal?

sa tindi ng dagok
ng kamaong hirap mananggalang
laban sa kawalan;
sa bawat hagkis ng tingin
sa mga batang
tila palasong humahagibis
paroot's parito
patintero sa rumaragasang
kotse, bus at dyipni
at sigaw ng pulis;
o sa gitna ng kilometrong
pila para sa dalawang
kilo ng bigas;
o sa gitna ng di mabilang
na paslit na tanging
pag-asa ay *rugby* o *solvent*

kapag sumisirit ang kabag
sa hungkag na tiyan,
o kaprasong tinapay
mula sa kalsada't basurahan

Iniiisip kita na maging katuwang

sa paghahanap
ng duyan
na paglalagakan
ng muling pag-asa;
at para sa akin
lalo't ako'y nag-iisa
bahagi ka ng mga pangarap, pagkat
anumang sugat na nakatago
sa binagyong puso
ay maaaring sumilong
sa iyong pagmamahal,
kahit na mas madalas akong naiidlip
na walang kadantay.
kahit bilog ng buwan

154 *Pagsilong*

kahit may kurtinang
bumabalot sa kalangitan.

Hulyo 2008

Bodies Crossing Borders

I want to ask you:

When our bodies touch
Gliding like ice in a summer day
Hands akin to an eye
Watching the moistening skin
That covers the length of your back
And breast, and buttocks
Against the yellow light
Of the shadows flirting with the
Incandescent lamp across the street,
Do you still know me--
The guts of my loving
The tenderness of the scent
Of the sampagita that bloom
In my window pane,
As I glide against the flesh
That seems so familiar
And yet a stranger to your memory?

Do the maps of memories
Begin to fade because the weather
Is so humid, and your mind is
Journeying to somewhere else
A land where your books and travels
Shaped a new mind, a new body, a new territory
Of loving: she, of pasty white skin
Aquiline nose that reminds me of our colonizers
A speech that barely touch the soul
Because of its strangeness
And possibly, youth and a more nubile body.

Ask me too: does this skin
That for many years was a blanket
To your sleep, a comfort
Like down, like feathers that lull

You, nearly a lullaby after a frenzied
Lovemaking? Please ask me
Because I have all the answers, for
Even the shadows flirting with the incandescent lamp
Have stayed the same, nothing has changed
Except perhaps you, and I have remained.

January 2006

Loving Differently

If loving me differently
is the tight embrace of our thighs
the crescendo of kisses on necks and lips
breeze-like whispers of broken words
maddening moans melding memories,

If loving me differently
is like the warmth of morning sun
or the full moon of entwined bodies
tingling in a revisited terrain of touch
remembering desire's familiar maps,

(while the clear night sky peeps
through the open window that dares
the ears of slumbering neighbors).

If loving me differently
is you lingering everywhere, here and there
and I caressing old memories of love
on your moistened brown skin
our eyes tracing the lines in our faces,

If loving me differently
is the feverish anticipation to ran the distance
between the days that madly click the hours
on our bodies, ticking like twinned clocks
waiting for the next knock on my door,

(and there are no promises
no tears, no farewells
no dates to forge or forget).

Then love me these ways, as you say, so differently.

January 2006

blues and browns crossing life and death

blues, jazzing through the middle of nowhere
but somewhere, the skies are turning gray
before it hits the orange of sunrise.

jona on my mind,
arli in my memory:
the photos you left
are brilliant symphony
of art and sorrow
of life and death
intertwined.

browns are faint shadows of our planet
carousing between the lack of sleep
and rush of adrenalin
beating consciousness
of severely missing
those who are not
with us, in this life
but stay forever
in the blues of our lives.

jazz, blues
earth, browns
as our skin miss the touch
as we miss the jazz
spicing life...

January 2007

5 BERSO
5 VERSES

1
Butterflies alighted
On my tomb of grief
And I flew with them

*Dumapo ang mga paru-paro
Sa puntod ng aking pighati
At lumipad akong kasama sila*

2
The white orchid
Sat quietly on the green vase
My tears watering the blooms

*Tabimik na nakaupo sa luntiang plorera
Ang puting orkidya
Dinidilig ang mga bulaklak ng aking luha*

3
The sun sat brightly on the window
Mayas chirped their morning greetings
I clutch my breast, I die in grief

*Nakaupo ang sinag ng araw sa bintana
Sumisiyap ang mga maya ng paghati sa umaga
Kipkip ko ang dibdib, sa panglaw ako pumanaw*

4
Rains came pouring like these tears
Sharp edges that seared the waves
Of loneliness

*Dumating ang ulan tulad ng mga luha
Matalas ang talim na pumasong sa mga alon*

160 5 Berso 5 Verses

Ng kalungkutan

5

The moon is a cloud
A drawn curtain in heavy light
I woke up, drenched in a bad dream

*Isang ulap ang buwan
Kurtinang hinawi ng mabigat na ilaw
Nagising ako, pigta ng masamang panaginip*

September 2005

TULDOK

Sa pagitan ng mga tuldok

May hibla, isang tuwid na linya.

Nagdudugtong ng mga hininga.

O kaya'y ng mahimbing na tulog:

Magkayakap o magkasungping ang mga daliri.

Tuldok ito ng takdang panahon.

Sala-salabit na mga hibla

Tuwid na mga linya.

Ilang tuldok pa, akala ko'y

Mabubuo ang hinahabing larawan

Ng mga tuldok ng buhay.

Isang tuldok ang biglang nawala.

Ang tuwid na linya ay naging

Hiblang wala sa larawan.

At nagising akong

May tuldok na rin ang paghinga.

Mayo 2006

Reflections

Crossing emotional landscapes, sexual boundaries and time is the theme that dominates these poems.

The poem "Paqsilonq" was originally entitled "Paqmamahal," and yet upon reflection, I realized that our loves and the way we love, should also be a form of refuge, a shelter in which we can take cover from the harshness of the world. Love intersects refuge, as it must be. Juxtaposing the persona's reflections on how she loves, she makes direct references to the daily images of poverty, marginalization and the many lacks that millions of Filipinos experience. Yet, it is this resiliency that enables them to cross the borders of complete despair – and thus, cross from despair to hope, and even loving others. The poem "Bodies Crossing Borders" redefines loving, and crosses the border of the traditional ways in which loving can take place -- that we cross some kind of emotional borders when the persons involved are not quite on the same plane. Women particularly are vulnerable to this shifting power dynamics especially in heterosexual relationship. But same-sex relationship is not devoid of these dynamics, and we need to cross the borders in which we see and feel love. A sequel poem to this is the piece entitled "Loving Differently," "blues and browns," "5 Bersa" (5 Verses) and "Tuldok" remain on the same ground as in the other poems: from grief to hope -- crosses the borders of wounding to healing, and thus to our humanity that eternally hopes for all that make us human.