

[diwata taga ilog at dagat]

regarding the turbulent south seas, the sultan stages elaborate ceremony. as if one man could wed a goddess, part woman, part ocean.

elders say when she walked on earth, her skin's sores and scales a jealous woman's curse upon her, a maiden who escaped betrothal to a wicked deity. a rice farmer's daughter who found death before her time, she found river dolphins kindred.

elders say she loves moonstone, polished jade. elders say her penchant for mischief, elders say she preys.

elders say when ships, when the nailed god came, his hairy men christened her demon. they forbade her offerings. they erected bamboo fences in the shallows. still the elders whisper, sometimes sing.

*when undertow captures foolish boy,
lotus flower petals in monsoon.*

*when she finds he is not to her liking,
lotus flower feast for typhoon.*

[a compendium of angels]

angel of blades beating air synthetic sound chemical rain blood sunset
pearls steel demon birds vapor rising jungle's fire trees erase the name of
here. blades twirl inverted faces. orange sky fallen cities of broken stone.
awakened into nothing, comforted by shards, memory can be filled with so
much detonation.

angel of descent's interlocked confessions. angel of black smoke air raid
sirens. heaven is infected wound attack formation sun rising missile dance
skimming the skin of ocean.

angel of morphine's shrapnel embedded in flesh. jet fighters needle sea
spume's virgin gowns. the opposite of home, this gun-happy necessity. in
labor camps, women strap explosives to their bodies and unfurl wings in
ululation. the river parts its waters.

angel of rock and roll first world impotence, ordered to leave no evidence.
despite this, the dead still hang from trees. parched, earth drinks.

angel of autumn patrol ambush upriver clarity clean genocide. she climbs
coffins so that she will not sleep, hides bullets in baskets of rice. she
barter fuel drums for me love you long time. she blows bridges disney
electric light show in the asshole of the world. liberators rebuild and she
blows them up again.

angel of racial epithet, your enemy is a dismembered fuck you in the
wind. snipers collect tusks of wild boar, go native. angel of corrugated
metal shacks, steel vessels spectral bodies swallowed, lulled by jungle.

angel of machetes, stone dragon sentinels, even corpses must be guarded,
for skulls and souls find a way back to their gods. how lovesong is
contracted from “if it were not so,” holds relevance, especially here, where
buzzing malaria bamboo prisons is no mythology.

angel of proper burials, let earth and river reclaim their fractured children.
adorned in violet ribbons, we mimic predatory birds’ movements beating
brass gongs.

angel of heathen incantation, a procession of painted headhunters crosses
international borders. adolescents wield scythes and semiautomatic rifles.
a child’s third eye opens with a diamond bullet. headdressed elders invoke
river spirits. bend the imagination, and the landscape is dotted charred
crucifixion.

the opposite of eden: angel of guerrilla resistance, let typhoon deities
conceal your tattered soldiers. let ceremonies of rain and fire measure the
weight of the final kill.

[galleon prayer]

pilipinas to petatlán

she whispers desert trees, thorn-ridged, trickling yellow candles; roots spilling snakes' blood
virgin of ribboned silk; virgin of gold filigree
one day's walk westward, a crucifix of fisherman's dinghy dimensions washes ashore
virgin adorned in robe of shark embryo and coconut husk
she fingers mollusks, wraps herself in sea vines
virgin of ocean voyage peril
she wills herself born
virgin of mud brick ruins; virgin of sandstorm echoes
she is saint of commonplaces; saint of badlands
virgin of jade, camphor, porcelain; virgin of barter for ghosts
penitents, earthdivers of forgotten names praying skyward
virgin of scars blossomed from open veins of fire
she slips across the pacific's rivers of pearldiving children
virgin of copper coins
she is bloodletting words, painting unlikeness
virgin of anachronism
children stained with berries and rust, their skeletons bend, arrow-tipped; smoke blurs eyes' edges
virgin of mineral depletion; virgin of mercury
at other altitudes she remembers to breathe; a monument scraping cloud
virgin of tin deposits extracted from mountains
these are not divinations; there is goldleaf about her skin
virgin of naming and renaming places in between