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Asia Pacific: Perspectives
Center for the Pacific Rim
2130 Fulton St, LM202
San Francisco, CA
94117-1080

Tel: (415) 422-6357
Fax: (415) 422-5933
perspectives@usfca.edu

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Special Issue: PHILIPPINE STUDIES AND THE CENTENNIAL OF THE DIASPORA

Philippine Studies and the Centennial of the Diaspora: An Introduction
 >>.....Joaquin L. Gonzalez III and Evelyn I. Rodriguez 1

Primerang Bituin: Philippines-Mexico Relations at the Dawn of the Pacific Rim Century
 >>.....Evelyn I. Rodriguez 4

Mail-Order Brides: A Closer Look at U.S. & Philippine Relations
 >>.....Marie Lorraine Mallare 13

Apathy to Activism through Filipino American Churches
 >>...Claudine del Rosario and Joaquin L. Gonzalez III 21

The Quest for Power: The Military in Philippine Politics, 1965-2002
 >>.....Erwin S. Fernandez 38

Corporate-Community Engagement in Upland Cebu City, Philippines
 >>.....Francisco A. Magno 48

Worlds in Collision
 >>.....Carlos Villa and Andrew Venell 56

Poems from Diaspora
 >>.....Rofel G. Brion 57

Reflections on Philip Vera Cruz and the Filipino Diaspora
 >>.....Joaquin L. Gonzalez III 59

An Interview with Philip Vera Cruz, Spring 1971
 >>.....Sid Valledor 61

Yuchengco Media Fellowship Announcement, Spring 2007
 >>..... 64

Asia-Pacific Social Science Review Call for Papers
 >>..... 65

USF Centennial Conference Announcement
 >>..... 66

Asia Pacific: Perspectives is a peer-reviewed journal published at least once a year, usually in April/May. It welcomes submissions from all fields of the social sciences and the humanities with relevance to the Asia Pacific region.* In keeping with the Jesuit traditions of the University of San Francisco, *Asia Pacific: Perspectives* commits itself to the highest standards of learning and scholarship.

Our task is to inform public opinion by a broad hospitality to divergent views and ideas that promote cross-cultural understanding, tolerance, and the dissemination of knowledge unreservedly. Papers adopting a comparative, interdisciplinary approach will be especially welcome. Graduate students are strongly encouraged to submit their work for consideration.

* 'Asia Pacific region' as used here includes East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, Oceania, and the Russian Far East.

Poems from Diaspora

by Rofel G. Brion, Ph.D.

Abstract

This article is a compilation of three poems, each in Filipino and English. The Filipino versions were first printed in his book, *Story*. They are reprinted here with permission. "Poems from Diaspora," the English translations, which were written in San Francisco, have never been published. (Translations are on the right.)

ANG GALING NI INAY

Napakahusay manulsi ni Inay,
Ano mang laki ng butas
Kaya niyang tagpian
Ng sinulid at karayom lang.
Madalas ay ganito--
Pinagdidikit niya ang gilid ng maliit ng butas
Kaya walang maiiwan kundi munting tuldok
Ng sinulid na kakagatin niyang sagad sa buhol.

Ngunit kung minsan--
Pinaglalawa-lawa ng karayom niya
Ang pagkahaba-habang sinulid,
Masinop, mabagal, maingat na maingat,
Hanggang magulat ka na lamang
Sa kanyang nalikha, at malimutan
Mong dati itong pagkalaki-laking butas.

ANG GALING NI ITAY

Mahusay umawit si Itay,
Bidang-bida raw siyang lagi
Noon sa mga haranahan.

Sabi nga'y "Bituing Marikit"
Ang ipinanghalina niya kay Inay.

Ngunit minsa'y huling-huli siya ni Inay
Na binibituing marikit, sa tinig lang naman,
Ang bagong-lipat naming kapitbahay;
Pagkaraa'y matagal silang walang kibuan.

Isang gabi, sa plasa,
Nanonood kami ng santakrusan
At akay nila ako sa magkabilang kamay,
Humulagpos ako nang biglang-bigla
At nagdampi ang kanilang mga kamay

Naglapat at nagpisilan
Nang pagkatagal-tagal.

MOTHER'S GIFT

Mother is an expert at mending;
She can make a hole, no matter how big,
Disappear with just a needle and some thread.
It usually happens this way—
She captures the edge of a small hole
Until what remains is just a tiny dot
Of thread that she has bitten off
At its knot.

But sometimes—
Her needle turns a very long
Piece of thread into a web,
Neatly, slowly, very carefully,
Until you simply marvel
At her creation, and forget
That it used to be a very big hole.

FATHER'S GIFT

Father sings very well.
He was always the star
At serenades.

They say he captivated Mother
With his "Radiant Star".

But one night, Mother caught him
Singing "Radiant Star" to a neighbor,
So she refused to talk to him
For a very long time.

One evening at the park,
As we watched a procession
And they held me at each hand,
I suddenly let go
And their hands touched,

And clasped tightly
For a very long time.

OO, UMUULAN

Kina Dax at A.F.

Umuulan, oo, umuulan,
 Banayad ang patak
 At tahimik na tahimik
 Ngunit puwede na ito

Dahil pakiramdam ko
 Ngayon din sa San Pablo,
 Umuulan, malakas nga lamang,
 Kaya wala kayong pasok--

Katatapos ninyong mananghalian
 Ng pritong baboy at talong
 (Ang isa'y ketsap ang sawsawan,
 Ang isa'y toyo't kalamansi naman)

At nagpapaantok kayo
 Sa harap ng telebisyon;
 Baka-sakaling iniisip ninyo
 Kung anong ginagawa ng inyong tiyo

Kung umuulan din nang malakas
 Ngayon, dito.

YES, IT'S RAINING

For Dax and A.F.

It's raining, yes, it's raining,
 Very gently,
 And very quietly,
 But this will do

Because I have a feeling
 That at this moment in San Pablo,
 Rain falls, too, only heavily,
 So you're free from school—

You've just had your lunch
 Of fried pork and eggplant
 (One dips his food in catsup,
 The other in soy sauce and lemon)

And the television
 Lulls you to sleep;
 Maybe, by chance, you're wondering
 What your uncle is up to

And if it also rains heavily
 Now, here.

Rofel G. Brion was Visiting Fulbright Scholar with the Maria Elena Yuchengco Philippine Studies Program of the University of San Francisco. Dr. Brion is Professor at the Interdisciplinary Studies Department of the Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines. He has degrees in economics and literature from the Ateneo, and a Ph.D. in English Studies-Creative Writing from the University of the Philippines. *Baka Sakali*, his first book of poems, won the National Book Award from the Manila Critics' Circle in 1991; *Story*, his second, was published by the University of the Philippines Press in 1997. Two more books of poetry will be published this year. Professor Brion has received Fulbright and British Council study grants. He has been lecturing on Philippine literature and popular culture for many years, and has been Coordinator of the Ateneo-USF Philippine Immersion Program since 2000.