

3 X Pablo

by Ricardo M. de Ungria

1.

The Once

At least 110 persons died, 119 were initially recorded as injured and 243 more have been declared as missing a day after Super Typhoon Pablo brought flashfloods to this town. Mindanews caption, 7 December 2012

At the threshold / the eye / heaviness of unslept sleep

Pablo

Moving in swathes / torn up / ripping / disbelief / the ungift
Whistling its overdue granite / the lungs magnetic burst

Pablo

Swarm and Pablo swallow fistful spit glibness of outpour

Pablo

Releasing roofs flying off with walls inbred roots bent with whacked nails rusted
Flux of the acrid clownish in the mud over ricefields under cornfields over

Pablo

Asymmetries of panic phosphorescent jelly in the throbbing dark

Pablo

In the tinkle / in the bump / the names. of the suddenly gone.

Pablo

In the paste and furnace of the blown and the crumbled.

Pablo

The humming infringement. The wash and mount. Of whatever nor nor neither.
Undecidable placements of here. And nowhere. Expanded into expanses.

Pablo

Without handholds. Or lift of footings. Sectioned off, will not open.

Pablo

Out or. Pablo In. The space transparent in the tottered trees
and posts / splintered off into wind fabric / Pablum of wreck and whack.

Pablo

No vapors no smell no spectrum bubble of plectrum

Pablo

Junctures running off the howling vials of lived/unlived lives/vistas
Dwindled Pitted Levelledoff Twisted Buried Pilfered Sunk

Pablo

The carpet clanging collided wheezing gone: All. Gone.

Pablo

Cateel Baganga Boston Laak New Bataan

Compostela Kidawa Monkayo Veruela

2.

Seam

A resident sits by a tent he had set up after his house was destroyed by Typhoon Pablo in Veruela town, Agusan del Sur on Dec. 6, 2012. Mindanews caption

Two children's books fished out of a bargain bin,
both without words only pictures.

In one, a child plays catch me
with a lip of waves on the shore, sits herself and listens
with eyes closed to the pounding surf
before she enters the water to splash about
until a whale of a wave dunks her back
leaving her sprawled on a gift of starfish, seashells,
and other leavings of the shore-bound seas.

In the other, a puppy gets flooded out of his duplex tree house,
crosses the high seas on his couch with a book in his hands,
dozes off and is borne by a turtle into a magic circus
where a monkey magician makes an acrobat of him
and when he gets hold of the wand manages to hatch
from out of a box seated on his couch borne by the turtle
his own long-lost and rabbit-eared Lily,
her hands in the air, his name on her lips.

Sometimes I too dream of waking up away from the comforts of home
myself in a place of ruin and desolation
where everything familiar has been blown down and washed away
and the earth is flat once more as was thought of before,
mired thick and piled with debris of what was once home
and the remains of what once stood for landscapes:
low unmoving hills, listless winding rivers,
trees, school buildings, distant neighbors, friends, family.
And I find no words alive enough to give sense
to the pulled-apart, emptied spaces before me.
And I find my arms without muscles
to help shovel up the dead from deep in the murk.
And I find myself without hands to put out
and beg for food and kindness to eat like a fish.
I am breathing underwater all the time and do not know
anymore how to stand on this severe and cut-up land.
I do not know who to hurt with my anger and pain,
what to do with my grief that has turned to wonder,
how to get to your hand stretched out to me.
This must be how a shadow moves that has lost its body.
I cannot begin to find it in me to name
this new strand of feeling and ask why, or to cry.

3.

The Always

In the wake of the flash
Of the going & the gone
Lights out
Wind in the ears ringing
Riverrun
Outwrestled lands nesting
The empty sky

Names of the missing on the board
“Get us more manila paper here”
“More body bags more coffin
& food and clothing giveaways”

They have come from all over
To move us back to life
“Smile for the pictures”
The wasted land & our faces
Scenic
For the papers and Facebook

“I give you food” “I pat your back”
“Remember my name
when you vote”

We were prepared for this
We were not prepared
For this

We were prepared for this
We were not prepared
For this

Pastilan!

This is the end of the world

Pastilan!

This is the birth of the world

Pastilan!

[Ricardo M. de Ungria teaches at the University of the Philippine-Mindanao in Davao City. He was Chancellor at UP Mindanao (2001-07) and Commissioner for the Arts at the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (2007-10).]

