2008

Yo Yu, and Christopher Reeve's Filipino Nurse (Two Poems)

Luisa A. Igloria
Old Dominion University

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/english_fac_pubs

Part of the Poetry Commons

Repository Citation
Igloria, Luisa A., "Yo Yu, and Christopher Reeve's Filipino Nurse (Two Poems)" (2008). English Faculty Publications. 62.
https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/english_fac_pubs/62

Original Publication Citation

This Creative Work is brought to you for free and open access by the English at ODU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in English Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of ODU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@odu.edu.
"Have fish."
—Chinese saying

Today, the streets flooded and ceilings leaked, mercurial. On TV, firemen waded through apartments with small children in their arms. The lights went out and we swam to bed after having made a feast of every frozen shape in the refrigerator.

The wind looked for something under all the eaves. The neighbor’s roof flew into the trees. All night the rain made loops of rope outside the window.

Lawnmowers and cars floated by. Sometimes shoes, a nightstand, a red hot-water bottle. Tomorrow the sky could look like a field of helium.

There’s a jar of salt in the kitchen, limes, a tin of sardines.

Why should I line up my cares in a row like die-cast toy soldiers
along the windowsill?  
Luck is bright as a soap-bubble.

Luck is a river. Luck  
is the fickle and ancient carp

a child could ride, his bright  
silk pantaloons improbably rippling.

sweet:

Christopher Reeve's Phillipino Nurse

“Never turn your wife into your nurse or your mother.” — Christopher Reeve

1. The Premonition

Did he listen when I handed him his glass  
of orange juice and vitamins  
the morning of that fateful ride?  
“That’s very interesting, Merlinda,  
but save your grandmother’s ghost  
stories for the kids at bedtime.”

I tried to tell him of my dream,  
the death’s head a horse rearing up  
on its hind legs. A snake  
shedding its spandex, its spine  
a bleached carcanet.  
A handful of teeth, broken  
to rattle like amulets.
2. The Fallen Hero

He calls every attendant “Nurse”. Twenty-four hours a day we lift and bathe, dress and feed, rotate, guide catheters, unburden into bedpans this man who flew across our screens, dark cowlick never once moving despite speeds to make time turn upon itself, dam waters fall back from point of breaking—smile sweet as a charm or an “S” emblazoned on a field of blue and gold. And of course the lucky girl gets the bit, emerges from where she’s buried under shitloads of highway runoff. No rags to riches story, but equally intriguing: a nothing, a brown speck set adrift from an unfamiliar planet or archipelago. It lands with barely any luggage in the middle of the night, adopts the wholesome speech of mid-America and goes to temp while waiting for the big time in the Big Manzanas: Gotham, New York, Amsterdam, Rome, Dubai—wherever it is, we’ve all been there. (That’s shorthand for unarchived work.) Cosmetics are key: I’ll apply a light foundation to the pallid, waxy skin, pencil in the brows that are no longer even there. The photographs will want even a shadow of the myth, arranged by women’s hands.
3. The Current through Her Arms

The surgeons sliced a tendon
of the fractured neck to better
reattach head to body.
Every now and then he has
a little spasm— he says it happens
when the body tries to send
messages to the brain.

I thought of coaches on midnight trains,
of the vague destinations of refugees,
the plaintive songs harmonicas breathed
before bodies hurtled out of cars
and into the hazy, unlit margins
of sleeping towns.

One evening, he shook
as he napped in the hermetic silence
riddled only by the hum of digital
instruments. I bent to straighten
his head, wondering if he ever
again dreamed of power, the mind
shining its steady miner’s light ahead
before the explosive thrust
into a core of basalt…

When I stepped away, my fingertips
glowed coral— as if, beneath the surface
of my labors, some molten self
had stirred awake, remembering
its own dreams of flying.
LUISA A. IGLORIA (previously published as Maria Luisa Aguilar-Cariño) adores dark chocolate with orange rind or crystallized ginger, ripe mangoes and leche flan—but also steamed oysters with black bean and garlic sauce, arguably another category of "sweet." Luisa is the author of Juan Luna's Revolver (forthcoming, the University of Notre Dame Press; winner, 2009 Ernest Sandeen Prize for Poetry http://undpress.nd.edu/book/P01279), Trill & Mordent (WordTech Editions 2005; co-winner, 2007 Global Filipino Literary Awards in poetry), and 8 other books. Originally from Baguio City in the Philippines, Luisa is Associate Professor in the MFA Creative Writing Program, Old Dominion University. Her work has appeared or will be forthcoming in numerous anthologies and journals including Language for a New Century (W. W. Norton, 2008), Poetry, Crab Orchard Review, The Missouri Review, Indiana Review, Poetry East, Smartish Pace, Rattle, The North American Review, Bellingham Review, Shearsman (UK), PRISM International (Canada), The Asian Pacific American Journal, and TriQuarterly.