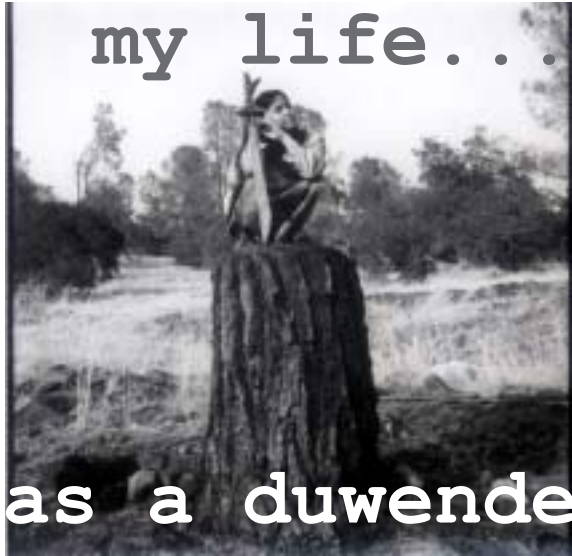


my life...



as a duwende

my life...as a duwende

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for RVP

my life...as a duwende

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my life...as a duwende

Staring creation
In the eye, I turn off the
Lights. Mmmm... masarap.

Opening slowly
My mouth sucks, salty luscious
Liquids of pleasure.

It calls from the streets.
I follow. Hold two hot orbs.
Open. Salty. Wet.

balot...in three haikus

my life...as a duwende

In the heart of the forrest
we are born
like barefooted children running
fallen leaves slipping under
our soles
In the cathedral
of redwoods
you ask
This must be a good place
to be married?
Our necks craned back like in the Sistine
light pouring
through the canopied kaleidoscope
of needles and branches
birds chorus along the boughs

In the hollowed base
of a tree
we sip tea crouched low
sheltered by dozens of our lifetimes.
Hikers walk past wonder aloud
if gnomes live here.
I remember
to count our shoes still tied to your sack
gnomes love to play games
with possession

I want to get lost
you say
as our cell phones search
for a signal

it has been a long time
you say
since this ground
has seen the marks of
footprints with toes
it has been a long time
I say
since people

Cathedral

have seen barefeet
on wooded paths

We walk without speaking
match the silence of our footsteps
hear the rhythm of swaying hands and hips
of women who carry the world on their heads
in bundles
walk within me
as I sashay up the mountain past men
with burdened sacks.

We walk lightly on toes.
my steps entering
yours
under your arching departing foot
the ground warm still.
Like the geese that fly
like the deer that watch
us watch them.
two people become one.

At the crossroads
where the ocean and the lost
meet
we rest
share apricots
that smell
of papaya
of forest
of us.

At the knotted gnarled
altar
we pinch tobacco
with prayers.
I ask the great trees
for their wisdom.

my life...as a duwende

Witnesses to the world
whose roots have
drunk our tears. scars
of fire flood and storm
evidenced on their bark.
What of we now?
In our tree rings,
what will we record
of this moment?

In the whisper of your leaves
the answer is simple
you say.

Ifugao boy where have your childhood dreams gone?
You smiled proudly at empty boxes
that captured your image.
Your long hair pulled back
a bahag your only clothing
your skin as dark as the soil
open to the world
resistant to the tropical heat
a grin stretched across your face

But they had taken more than your image
they had acquired your soul
stolen your spirit
9 years later
a stern man stares back
cropped hair
covered from head to toe
in the white suit given to you
hands shackling each other

You look at your former self
beguiled by your savageness
a world you left behind
on a picture postcard.

But Ifugao boy, where are your dreams now?

my life...as a duwende

I collect string
place them in a plastic bag
gray muddy shoelaces
red bakery ribbons
yellow caution tape
black drawstrings
scratchy brown hemp.

I rest on the bus stop bench
tie them end to end with
square knots
bowlines
figure eight's
entangled mazes
of orderly pattern.

I tie one end of my garland
to your door
then trail the rest behind me
down the steps
across the streets
up and around the old oak
buckling the sidewalk.

I stop at the corner cafe
where Ethiopia and Eritrea
are companions in a new nation
sip on their extra strong coffee
encircle the line around
one of the chair legs
and continue on
to the antique dealer
weaving my colorful tail
around vintage vases
rusting car shells
and unpolished bed frames.

I return to the bus stop
my feet worn
tie the last of the string
around my waist
with a slip knot
and wait for the bus
that will bring you here.

string

I rumble through boxes and drawers,
on yet another wild goose chase,
to find the things that had once
cluttered my room that I need to find
now for some reason or another.

Like a detective I try to place myself
in her head, imagine her view of the room
as she puts away this and tucks away that.
Clues to her logic that may help me find
what I was looking for, what she was putting
away, at times distracted by things
I had forgotten I had lost, but found again,
only to rediscover my initial quest.

I wonder why she does this, cleans my room,
as if holding off the inevitability of my
things finding their way to the floor again.
She does not sleep nor live in my room
but she feels the need to clean it and
keep it tidy, usually when I'm out,
like I am every night.

She, too, is searching for clues, clues about
me: a picture of a new boyfriend perhaps,
a letter from a friend, stacks of bills yet
unpaid, new CDs, or flowers left to dry.

And as she cleans, she, also, searches for
something she has lost, looking for clues
to this daughter, a woman now, no longer
a child, with a life outside of her own,
this daughter that she continually loses
and each time must rediscover the kind
of person she is now.

She picks it up, wipes the dust off and
places it in a drawer, hidden from view,
and there in that drawer we will both
rediscover each other.

Cleaning House

my life...as a duwende

Fighting a war is easy.
There is one enemy.
They have different uniforms.
They are evil.
You have a gun.
If they shoot you,
You shoot back.
Your commanding officer
Will tell you when you
Can stop.

day 19

remain on me
the way dew collects
on glass
til the morning sunglaze
wipes you from
my skin
leaving your warmth

dew

my life...as a duwende

for eileen, jose, leny, and barbara

Aug 2002 01:31:05 -0700

This capacity to traffic in these worlds
with ease

told them to all go back where they belong.
at what point do we discern that we have
been given a gift?

Subject: Re: kuwentong duwende
the fear slowly lessened
us and why
duwendes observing them back
He showed me the marks.
i never thought beings such as these could
survive in the suburbs
learn how to survive
get up and yell!

— In a message dated 8/27/2002 12:02:43 AM
Pacific Daylight Time,

>> micmac74@uclink.berkeley.edu writes:
>> did I ever tell you of its dark
side....?
>> angels/spirits/muses
>> let go of my residual fears
>> women howling at full moons

>>>>> At 11:32 AM -0400 8/27/02
>>>>> wrote a poem about it
>>>>> have a good day!

— Original Message —

Cc: ET

Re: manggagamot

when rebels outcast

the tenderness of yours requires a scrutiny

erase any remnants of guardian angels

namespace prefix = o ns =

a quintessential

my life...as a duwende

She had never seen death so closely. Overcome with awe with this discovery she froze, her eyes transfixed upon the body before her. Oh, she had been to numerous funerals, even to funerals of people she knew, but death had received quite a scrubbing by then. Pickled by formaldehyde, primped and perfumed in its best finery like the flowers that surrounded the casket giving off their last ounces of beauty and fragrance before wilting. This time, death was raw and fresh, giving it a sense of intimacy. His body lay awkwardly, his eyes open witnessing his final moment, the blood that pierced her nostrils with its acidity still flowed out, dying him red.

She felt a great desire to comfort him, in the way we find compassion too late to be known. In her mind, she told him, "I would have caught you." She wanted to touch him, lay his head in her lap and caress him in the kind of affection denied him in life, so that the final sensations felt by his earthly body were not of the cold hard concrete but the soft warm touch of another human being.

Those that found her there a few moments later would think of her morbidly insane, hugging and rocking him back and forth like a child who scraped his knee. But secretly, in the back of their minds, they wished that when their final moments came that she would be there to reach out to them.

untitled

Trash piles up on the street.
*Bawal magtapon ng basura
dito.*

Smoke from the afternoon
traffic
thickens
coating nostrils and lungs
with a black soot
with each breath.
But soon the rains will come.

The bay turns red with the tide
Bawal kumain ng mga isda.
that brings bleeding hearts
of those who ate of the sea
to hospitals.

The sun boils the stew of
brown liquid
in the ditch at the side
of the road:
oil from the cars,
cigarettes, feces, urine, mud.
Bawal umihi dito.

But soon the rains will come
and they will rush from the skies
as gray as the buildings
washing away the trash,
clearing the smoke,
making the oceans holy again.
And the people will
walk the streets,
breathe the air
and fill their stomachs,
because the rains came today.

And tomorrow,
tomorrow the floods will come
running down the streets
overcoming the bridges
because there is no earth
to drink of the waters from the skies,
because the rains came today.

Because the
rains came today

my life...as a duwende

You travel on soft breezes
shielded by cupped hands
for the unwritten rules
that were broken.
Your name floats
on these winds
that glide lightly from
lips to ears.

“She is the bad daughter
masamang babae,”
they say,
the one who rots
the family name
with her disease of dishonor.
Her fruit is spoiled.
Her seed is unholy.
Yet still, it grows from the tears
of shame from her
grandparents’ eyes.

I look at her
she turns away
never again to allow
our eyes to meet
as if she will turn me into stone.
The clouds that enshroud her
walk in her eyes

Her baby cries to her
from shadowed branches
never understanding the burden
given to her from birth
never truly able to feel
the warmth of the sunshine
because of the winds that howl
in her mother’s womb.

I am the good daughter
she must not soil from her stare
I can never speak to her
only of her.
As the wind travels between us
my heart too
freezes from the chill.

in whispers

This building,
a hospital
to treat the sick
and ill immigrants
quarantined.
you did not see
me approach
the steps
my breath short
my steps heavy.
Through the
dusty windows
hands framing
my face
I watched
Women in
blanched ghost
whiteness
scrub you to a
raw sterileness.
Your eyes languid
stare past me
to the blue bay
over an ocean.
You had never dreamed
Gold Mountain
was a haunted realm.
I follow you
down the hall
jumping from
window
to window
past rows
and rows
of patients
who have no
cure for their
sorrowful souls.
You approach
my window
our eyes meet
through the
cobwebbed curtains
of an empty building.

this building

my life...as a duwende

Prologue

The ferry,
anxious,
cuts through waves
a straight line to shore.
40 minute ride.
The slumbering dragon
exhales a misty blanket
where grandmother rests her head.
While the spirit of the deer
watch from
dense forests
trespassers disembark.
This island of angels is not as merciful as it would seem.
There are ghosts here.
They run with the deer,
a memory etched in
dilapidated buildings.

Ayala cove, China cove
fumigation/immigration station
1910-1940

Remove disease and pestilence.
The Red Tide.
The Asian Invasion.
carbolic soap, steam, sulfur dioxide, cyanide
It is not what you bring that kills you
when the body is fresh, the soul is dying.
Quarantine.

I. Paper covers rock (of family blood lines)

En(ter)(ror)Gate
Average stay: 14 days
Longest stay: 2 years
numbers in lies, lies in numbers

the ferry

Count the steps to your door.
How many windows in your home?
Can you smell freedom waft in on the breeze?
What is your grandfather's name?
how many brothers did your father have?
What did your town look like?
Can you see the prison isle from here?

Tell them lies disowning
family and country in one breath .

She is my mother, not my aunt.
He is my son, not my neighbor.
I came to be a prisoner.
Liars will be sent back.

Four walls, Four corners
bad luck — like death like coffins
300 men in this room,
80 women not including children in another
stacked four high
guard towers, barbed wire
Can you see the prison isle from here?
Carve truth leaving your indelible marks
Warnings on the walls.

Stories.
Testimonies.
Confessions.
Hopes.
Dreams.

Painted
over and
over by
layers and
layers of
poison.

Do not touch the walls.

I must hear what the ghosts have to say.

my life...as a duwende

“In the bathrooms, we covered our heads with paper bags. The only privacy to our shame. We never went alone. There was once a young woman here to meet her groom. She did not think they believed her story. One day, she put on the wedding dress she had brought and hung herself in the shower stall.”

II. Scissors slice paper (names).

You meet me on the steps.
Do not enter. Keep out.
Building is dangerous. *I must.*
You beg me not to enter, but I proceed.
The weight of your presence growing with
my deepening breath. *Hear what.* I
feel your heart pounding.
Each step the burden mounts.
This building was once a hospital
to cure the sickness we were. *the ghosts.*
Empty rooms layered in dust and chipped paint. *have to say.*
You watch me look into the history of
each window frame and doorway.
You speak truth through cobwebbed emptiness
the eyes of the deer glimmer
in the mountain's shadow.

Paul Chow chained himself
to the barracks.
History will not be a prop for
Hollywood's muses.

Tie yourself to history to save your future.

“You will not blow up this building!
You will not blow up my parents!
You will not blow up me!”

Tethered to walls that
creak from the witness of sorrow.

III. Rock breaks scissors.

I cringe in the corner
sweep my hand over the walls
press my body into
leaded layers.
I am safe here.
I lick the walls
till my tongue coats white
feed an insatiable appetite
pick and pull at the chips.
I must hear what the ghosts have to say.
Scrape away the layers flaking flecks
til splinters penetrate
underneath my fingernails,
an ancient form of torture.
I lick the walls
till my tongue bleeds
an indelible red ink
and write my own
on the walls.

Epilogue.

Shadows grow long
the ferry blows last call.
The bell tolls echoing across the bay.
Gold Mountain crumbles
and the deer
run ahead
of the landsliding
rock.

my life...as a duwende

island
angels
deer eyes
ghosts
steps
fumigation
immigration
disease
paper names
paper trails
lies
upon
lies
upon
lies
carved
testimony
red
indelible
blood
bell
echos
gold
mountain
last
ferry
leaves

that island

*From "Ticket of Admission VII" 2002 Thomas Fink acrylic on
canvas 40"X30"*

I allow my eyes
to soften then blur
so that you can tell me
what I might not have seen
along the ridges of mermaid's scales
a long legged beetle
skimming still water
layers become columns
when i glimpsed you
a shadow perhaps
but still
my eyes fall
lightning streak silences the night
I dream of Inuits fishing through ice
from a seal's eye of cascading fish line.

what lies beyond the white borders
is proportionless
at this distance
you fill my palm
at another an entire room
and what if i were to
bring you close
closer still
where only minute sections
fill the space of vision

I let go of my eyes
who betray me yet again
to find truth
in the ridges of my palms
circular textured pattern
on smooth surfaces
become ragged and mountainous
irises reflected in you
legs stretched to retain cohesion

do i dare presume
on an outstretched arm?

ticket to
admission vii

my life...as a duwende

On the new year the snake sheds the last of its scales.

You press your ashen thumb upon my forehead.

A light rain falls from an azure sky fading to cobalt as the sun
falls round into the ocean.

The horse snorts, scratches its hooves lightly on the soften moist
ground.

Chinatown is empty.

Firecrackers
dangle
quietly
at
door
steps.

the new year

He is petite Filipino
wears just a touch of eyeliner
to accent his oval eyes
has golden brown skin, naturally
framed by wispy straight black hair.
He always gets the White boys.
They like his color and size
the way he seems much younger than his actual age
the cute accented English he pronounces.

But who he really wants
are the Asian boys.
He wants them
to declare their love for their beauty in him
not skin but soul.
He wants to eat sticky rice
pressed into the salt of their belly
suck them like cocogel candy
so he never has to be ashamed of what
his favorite foods really are.

He is hapa Japanese
but got the stout protruding German nose of his father.
He passes.
He always gets the Asian boys.
They like his color and size
the way he's a macho broad shouldered hairy chested top
his wide all seeing eyes.

But who he really wants
are the White boys,
blond blue eyed types.
He wants to play out his decolonizing theory in the bedroom
make them kneel, bend over
so he can fuck them over and over
release himself in his oppressor
repeat history the way he would have written it.

who he wants

my life...as a duwende

*from "Untitled" by Heather Ackenberg,
Poetry in Six Directions Project, Berkeley, CA*

Fingers dive into satin, white	wine like a prism breaks notion into spectrums	full of a certain silence, red
Fingers pull Paper, yellow	liquid tugs at cheeks like tiny kisses	this mouth tastes like a good memory
Fingers find Heather, "untitled"	Pressed grape sloshes more than swirls I never did learn to hoolahoop	decidedly the wrong question
Fingers pricked by a pin, blood	the second taste is most telling	distance being one

fingers

It has been 53 messages since I last looked for your reply. 10 asked if i wanted to enlarge a penis i didn't have. a dozen more had something to do with plucked, (im)planted, platinum blonds. 9 from various discount sales for just as many online shops. 4 were joke forwards from my sister. 4 from my cousin. 6 from my best friend in college. i got 6 copies of the same exact joke. 7 said i should open this suspiciously large attachment from my mother who doesn't know what an attachment is. (note to self: update anti-virus on mom's comp.) and one from you, marked a week ago, that i left unread. it has been 53 messages since i last looked for your reply. 10 asked if i wanted to enlarge a penis i didn't have. a dozen more had something to do with plucked, 'planted, platinum blonds. 9 from various online registered accounts for just as many online shops. 4 were joke forwards from my sister. 4 from my cousin. 6 from my best friend in college. 6 of those forwards of the same joke. 7 said i should open this suspiciously large attachment from my mother who doesn't know what an attachment is. (note to self: update anti-virus on mom's comp.) and one from you, marked a week ago, that i left unread.

re: thank you
for the sky

my life...as a duwende

author

bio

Michelle Macaraeg Bautista was born and raised in Oakland, CA. During her years at UC Berkeley, she worked with maganda magazine. She has since performed her works with Kearney Street Workshop, Teatro ng Tanan and various other productions, including Clit-Chat, a book launching for Eros Pinoy. She is also a Gura in the Kamatuuran School of Kali with classes in Berkeley, CA and has performed kali in collaboration with creative works throughout the bay area. She is currently working on two future chapbooks: cyberspace poems and playful poems, based on children's games.

salamat

sa

Eileen Tabios, Nick Carbo, Virginia Cerenio, Marianne Villanueva, Krip Yuson, Brian Komei Dempster, Elizabeth Treadwell, Dana Herrera, Leny Strobel, Barbara Jane Pulmano Reyes, Jose Ayala, maganda, Bindlestiff Studio, Pusod and everyone else who has encouraged my writing over the years.