

Poetry Series

Gilbert Luis R. Centina III
- poems -

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Gilbert Luis R. Centina III()

Author Gilbert Luis R. Centina III of Belleville, New Jersey is a leading Christian voice in contemporary literature. He entered the Augustinian Monastery in Manila and studied at the University of Santo Tomas, the Philippines' royal and pontifical university, where he obtained his ecclesiastical degrees: BA classical, Ph.B., STB, and STL, all cum laude. He earned his M.A. in comparative literature from the University of the Philippines and pursued a Ph.D. in comparative literature without completing his dissertation. After his ordination to the priesthood, he briefly served as a missionary in Peru.

He taught literature as a professorial lecturer and for many years served as a school chaplain and as a pastor of a Manhattan parish church. Along the way, he edited books, a magazine and a journal, wrote hundreds of newspaper columns and contributed articles and fiction to magazines and journals.

Somewhen is his third poetry collection. His previous poetry anthologies are *Our Hidden Galaxette* and *Glass of Liquid Truths*. His works have been included in Philippine high school and college textbooks. Besides English, he also writes in Spanish and in two Philippine languages, Hiligaynon and Tagalog. From the Asian Catholic Publishers and the Archdiocese of Manila under Jaime Cardinal Sin, he received the Catholic Authors Award in 1996.

A well-traveled writer, he has visited many places in Europe and in Asia, including Tibet. As an Augustinian friar, he has worked and lived in North and South America. He currently works and lives in Spain but he calls Belleville, New Jersey, U.S.A. home.

Becerril De Campos

Aquí, el vino aproxima a la sangre.
La uva es vid, ausencia de las hojas
Y el tiempo. Un hermano del trigo.

Cuando la divinidad es soledad.
Titilan tus ojos: inoche!
Te sueñas la nariz, y los cuervos
Vienen brincando entre dos luces.
No busques palmas en Becerril.

No hay vacas sagradas en Becerril-
Sólo corderos tímidos que lamen
El sudor salado de tus dedos.
Quien sueña con los bambúes
Debiera ser ciego. Mira.
Los advenedizos sienten frío.

Becerril:
Campos y tierra.
Y mucho azul.

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Elegy

A part of me died when I was twelve.
I buried it in a soccer field.
There were no mourners, only weeds,
And three black cats, no crucifix.

Some parts of me refused to die,
So atop a hill I planted a lily
That bore no flower, kissed no sun,
Wearing itself of grief till soon
Ants came to claim my piece of land.

Now I grieve, how I really grieve,
For these parts of me that chose to live!

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Faith

To love God I must pause
To suspend our covenant
While I seek him among those falsely accused.
Weasels bend the truth and misuse
Their cushy seat of power, relishing
The perks of evanescent authority.
They keep justice at bay, move the light away
And conceal cold facts under the apron
Of spineless casuistry.
To love God I must disown the warped image
Of him that these cretins have cast in their own fashion
In order to appease retired crooks in uniform
Whose pornographic fabrication runs in wanton abandon
Fueled by the drug-addled brain of their relations.
Never mind their record of human rights transgressions
That loop around as long as the endless nights
And as loud as the sharpest cries of their victims.
To love God I must distance myself from my calling,
With much reluctance, while truth struggles
To free itself under the oppressive underskirt
Of cowardice and downright distortions.
With the acquiescence of cloistral godfathers
All too devious sisquialtera
To counter the twisted yarn spun by psychopaths,
God's plan is put on hold,
While perfidy satiates its recalcitrance.
To love God I must delete the Trojan viruses and malware
Infecting the hard drive of my memory
Planted there by identity thieves and peddlers of hypocrisy.
To love God I must suspend disbelief
So that I can refresh the screenshot of my faith
And retrieve God's true portrait,
His image and likeness dwelling in me.

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Genuflection

I hear the choir-conversion
Wake senses through my ears,
I see heavenly vision
In the vista of a hymn.
I watch the gleaming chandeliers
Exude their hidden grace
Above the vigil candles
Incensed with fragrant flames.

This is the Cathedral of Silence
Where he has led me in,
How strong his Passion echoes
Inside these cloistered walls.
All things here trodden by the calm
Of yet unfathomed peace,
The sight is awed to stillness,
The soul to holier aims.

O choir-conversion that I hear
I breathe the wisdom of your tale!

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Grandfather Slept

Grandfather slept leaving in his wake
A family tree shaken and unsure.
Relations came, worried about money,
His wallet empty, exhausted for the poor.
Bankers staked a claim to Mampunay, leaving
The sugarcane fields bare
And Tinin-awan stripped to the last coffee tree.
The rice paddies lay parched in mud,
A playground for water buffalos,
That yielded no bountiful harvest
Unlike summers past when rice mills
Hummed with constant urgency
And the busy traffic of farm hands
Was deadened by the mindless prattle
Of supplicants and mendicants
Whispering their favors to Grandpa's ears.
Grandfather slept leaving in his wake
A family tree shaken and unsure.
With only his children left of everything he held dear,
Finding some so-called friends and neighbors
Was akin to looking for a needle in a haystack.
Those who did show up shed copious tears,
Their final nod to the old man
Now draped in the nation's flag
Whose concern for others was wide and deep.
Grandfather slept suffused with love and prayers.

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