

Poetry Series

Sherwin Balbuena
- poems -

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Sherwin Balbuena(08-17-1985)

A son of a farmer, he grew in the barrio full of nature's richness; near the sea, river, forest, etc.

He finished his basic education with flying colors. He is an illustrator, mathematics teacher, musician, painter, poet, and inventor of INTOP card game. His poems are inspired by science, religion, nature, and philosophy.

Adam's Rebirth

I opened my eyes and saw
an unfamiliar place. The noon
sun was bright but less hot,
peeping through the gaps between

leaves of trees bearing fruits
abundantly. The waves and sands
laughed at my nakedness as they
soaked my body with cool relief

from the pain of forgetting the past.

I filled my lungs with the freshest air
and did my first act of moving and

walking. Hermet crabs hid inside their
borrowed monovalves. Didn't they want
to see me? Or were they ashamed?

Or was that how

they showed respect?

I heard the cheerful birds singing

on the trees. I did not know

if they were rejoicing for my

coming or just for themselves.

Continuing my pace towards uncertainty,

a river crossed my path. There I

quenched my thirst with clear

and sweet water. I found my self

sitting on a mossy rock beside the river,

surprised by the reflection on the water:

a woman sitting beside me.

I learned the words with her.

I learned to count the suns

and moons that passed by

and children that I made

with her. We found the things

which were safe and good for us

and for our children

and for our children's children.

Not knowing that it was

another beginning

and the best.

To God I must be thankful.

Sherwin Balbuena

Balangaw (Rainbow)

One morning, I had a cup of coffee
By the window of my hut at Lahong
Facing North. I let the air evolve into wind
From my mouth to the surface of the vaporizing
Liquid in the cup, forming waves,

And then took a sip.

The heat and the taste bit my tongue.
Ouch!

The sky was partly cloudy; it was raining
In the West whilst the sunrise shone in the East.

I took a sip.

I looked up in the sky and was pleased to see
A rainbow painted on the Western part.
Mamang always warned us not to point our fingers
To the rainbow because doing so
Would give us skin blisters.
Papang once told us that there is a pot of gold
On each end of the rainbow.

I took a sip.

The color of the liquid in my cup was pale.
So was its sweetness.
Poverty and frugality are twins.
It came to my mind:
The pot of gold on a rainbow's end
Is the answer to this bland coffee.

I took a sip, the last sip.

I left the hut, treading westward,
Barefooted. Soft drizzle on my head.
Tacky quagmire on my feet.

I walked, walked, and walked
To Gacutan - I had seen one
of the rainbow's ends on this place,
but it disappeared.

Noon came with raindrops
Falling on my head. No shelter.
No food. No rainbow.

On a grassy peak of a hill
I waited for the rainbow to reappear.
Soft drizzle on my head.
Cold wind against my skin.
Tingling touch of grass on my feet.

Afternoon came with sunset visible,
Giving warmth to my shivering lips.
The rainbow! There! On the East!
I saw one of its ends
On my hut at Lahong.

Sherwin Balbuena

Candle

Life on Earth is like a burning candle:
When the flame dies, there's one to rekindle;
While it stands, we see our youthfulness,
Shedding light and melting as time passes;
And while the top is away from the base,
Exude what brightness your clever mind says,
For a strong wind might blow one of these nights
And douse your fire and other candlelights,
Lest a faithful moth might become astray,
Groping, and then taking her life away.
The time she rests on a leaf in heaven,
She'd thank you for the glow you have given,
Just like the greatest poets in this world,
We can see their wit through each written word.

12/31/2011

Sherwin Balbuena

Full Reversal

The Omnipotent Hand knows what is best;
Man sees himself and nature at blind spot.
Now in a sine graph we are at the crest.
Yes, a turning point is what we have got!

The Hand constructed a clean house for us,
But we cook what we eat in the fireplace.
The scented air turns into greenhouse gas,
Increasing the temperature in the space.

The Hand let the rain fall and river flow,
But we give them artificial flavors:
Rain gets an acid, river a shadow.
Sickening softdrinks have various colors.

The Hand gave us the land to tread upon,
But we make the wheels to send us away.
And we bite the dust; diseases have won.
We choose to die and not to walk a day.

The Omnipotent Hand showed us the sign
To bend the trend and take full reversal,
Like searching for the grapes, the source of wine.
Unless we go back, all shall be fatal.

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Sherwin Balbuena

Gravity

Force that keeps the Earth in orbit
Around the Sun.
Nobody has ever seen it
Until the line
Of a falling meteor is drawn
On the night sky;
Until the tiny seed has grown
Into a tree;
Until people can clearly see
What's low or high.

Force that pulls the tide and the spring
A little bit.
Defiance to it is showing
The top secret
When a rocket escapes the Earth
To discover
The universe's wall and its birth.
Newton is found
When an apple falls to the ground.
It's here and there.

Force that lets the Moon rise and set
In the dark night.
Force that makes Heaven and Earth meet
Before our sight.
When raindrops fall on a flower
Magic happens;
The latter's color turns brighter
Under the Sun.
In love I fall with a woman
To the heavens.

To Princess

Sherwin Balbuena

Luna

Brighter than the most powerful star
At this time of the clone of the day -
The night in which children want to play
On streets where nothing would ever mar
The excitement in patintero*.
Your borrowed light keeps them stop and go.

Your being's mystified all the world
Since humans began to ask questions.
They each had contrasting conclusions
About what you are made of and hold:
For a blurry eye, you were a star;
Curiosity sees plainly the far.

'Til some laws speak of you and the tide,
The amount of bleeding of a wound,
The Earth's sun-centered merry-go-round,
An all the principles you abide.
Silent are they in the woman's womb
And about how the hill's spring could climb.

Dexterity let the rockets fly
And told them to land on your surface,
Leaving footprints nothing can erase
But the wind of doubt and rain of lie.
They should have carried a long, long strand
And left the one end where I stand.

Your shape is malleable to sunlight
And the place in the path that you take -
New, quarters, full for calendar's sake.
Your absence is a meaningless night
For an artist wanting your crescent
In his oeuvre with a black content.

At times you affront the Sun you owe
The magnificence you have at night;
At solar eclipse you seem to fight
Or, like a large serpent, to swallow

The burning and benevolent Sun.
A pagan would loudly beat his drum.**

I am afraid that you will be lost.
Our children will never play at night.
Some small islands will be out of sight.
The unborn will choose to be a ghost.
The Earth of life will miss its best friend,
Walking the path with chaotic trend.

* Patintero is a local team game in the Philippines.

** According to some folks, the Sun is being swallowed by a large serpent during the solar eclipse.

Sherwin Balbuena

Mama's Love

Little baby, lying in mama's arms
Tell us how diff'rent her affection is
(Especially to those made deaf
In the arms of insolence)

Tell us that every word from her tongue
Is a berceuse, making you sleep
On the cradle of boon
Not on the hammock of bane

Tell us that every touch made by her hand
Is a panacea, making your withering hope
Prolong its life
Making your dim future a golden sunrise

Tell us that her every kiss
Wipes your tears away
And her every hug
Brings you warmth and joy every day

Sherwin Balbuena

My Princess

Hold my hand, my Princess,
As we step on this grey ground
Where a clear line passes
Separating ill and sound.

Look at Sol, my Princess;
Feel the warmth of Her welcome
Like the yellow roses
That bloom when the dawn has come.

Hear the birds, my Princess;
Translate their sweet melody,
And you will find a verse
That says: No need to worry.

Breathe the air, my Princess,
Whilst it is pure and fragrant.
Be like the green grasses
That dance to the cool wind's chant.

Turn your head, my Princess;
Do not look at the dark night.
Though stars are in brightness,
The world is in black and white.

Lean on me, my Princess,
When you are tired of watching.
My shoulders mean prowess
That wane your pain and crying.

Let us go, my Princess,
To that bright place, pure and green.
Help me build a fortress
And be my beautiful Queen.

10/26/2012

Sherwin Balbuena

Pencil On Canvas

Get a pencil
and a canvas,
and draw these:

A store with dresses hung
And sandals arranged

The owner of the store
at the left, holding
a bottle of Coke
and putting bread
into his mouth

A child at the right,
wearing a worn-out shirt,
looking sadly at the store,
touching his abdomen,
barefooted

Do not add any color
for I see no beauty in it.

Sherwin Balbuena

Perpetual Motion

On a sand less stepped on
by many, I drew a square
whose side is twice my height.
I lay on my back in that square
with my head tangent to its side
and with my feet on the intersection
of the square's diagonals.
Temperature rose in the place.
My body melted.
My head turned into a magnet
and my feet into a pivot.
On each vertex of the square
emerged a magnet polar with mine.
They beckoned me
to join them in their play.
As I approached one of them,
it moved away from me.
The next did the same.
Again I approached another,
hoping that it would be
different from the previous,
but I failed.
They were all the same!
They had planned it?
I thought of stopping their mischief
until I felt that some
mechanisms on my pivot (feet)
were giving them motivation.

Sherwin Balbuena

Signum Naturalis

When the morning sun ascends
And the cocks begin to crow
Whilst the mists fall from a bough
They welcome and wake us up
So when you feel the sun's ray
'Tis time to rise and pray

When the cloudy sky turns dark
And the cold breeze starts to blow
Sooner or later will show
Tiny showers we call rain
So when the sky is gloomy
Stay neath a canopy

When the guava tree bears fruits
Which then begin to ripen
And later become rotten
It reminds us of seasons
So when a near fruit turns sweet
You must not miss a taste

When the night closes the day
And the stars start to frolic
To the cicadas' music
They give a refreshing yawn
So when the moon comes to peep
You must now go to sleep

Sherwin Balbuena

Subtraction

Nature can be expressed in terms of math
'Tis full of quantities and relations
Bounded by the law of interactions
Endpoint implies our dream; segment, our path
There are as many symbols that replace
As there are things in this wonderful place

A plus signifies accumulation
Of things we desire and of friends we need
Constancy of amount of which will lead
To a process called multiplication
A plus is the most legal for the mind
'Cause it never keeps anything behind

But everything has to undergo change
We're bound by this law of the universe
That we can see a thing and its reverse
Just as a domain produces its range
Our gaining results another's losing
Hating this we'll find us violating

Nature is as compliant as we are
We have a minus which means subtraction
Of something from our accumulation
Like seeing true friends going home afar
For memory 'tis the most illegal
Putting this sign between minds is lethal

To Eric and Michael

Sherwin Balbuena

The Dim Torchlight

I never dreamed, but I dared
To hold the torch and light it
I never said that I cared
But I let the night be lit

I thought that it was easy
To spread the beams of torchlight
So that young people could see
The antidote for twilight

My clutching fingers held strong
Each had their own aptitude
But they could not work for long
And with the same altitude

The torch truly had its weight -
I and they felt the numbing
Worsened by an empty plate
And our stomach muttering

This deadened arm found cure
In the cold mediocrity
And in the hot flame then pure
Put out by dishonesty

I never thought it would be
A light to help in one's quest
For truth and to make him see
Dimly that we lost the best

Futile is the torch that glows
Vaguely in this chancy time
A crag is near, no one knows
Letting one trip is a crime

The dim torchlight which we hold
Makes the night even darker
For the promises it told
Whose success is yet yonder

Sherwin Balbuena

The Last Prayer

Struggle is our twin
who treads with us,
our left hand
that breaks the cobwebs -
a hint that no one
has passed this narrow,
virgin path before us.

We have to offend
even the least of
creations that witnessed
our birth -
our ingratitude -
just to conquer
the peak of
the mountain of life.

Whilst we see
the signs of doom there,
we must pray

that He clothe them
with our skins,
so we alone can feel
the burning mulct
of our sins.

Sherwin Balbuena

Time Travel

When a flower's petal falls to the ground
It will never return for time is bound
To follow the path with one direction,
Like one-lane road, to prevent collision
Of mem'ries from the past and the future.
Yet all know that tomorrow is unsure;
Therefore no dream can ever come today.
Life moves, as in geometry, in a ray.
Almost everything is termed in science
Using "now" as the frame of reference
Like the word "time machine" which is not made;
Time travel can't be done but can be said.
When there's an old favorite melody,
Our mind goes back to the past memory.

12/30/2011

Sherwin Balbuena

To Frank, My Student

My memory tells
about your happy school days
as seen in your smile

I heard recently
you bought a dress for your mom
with your own money

I saw you lately
at the center of the crowd
beside the right lane

An old man asked
'He is your student, isn't he? '
I could not answer

You went to Sog-ong
last night in a barayle*
it was fiesta** there

Our eyes were not there
to see the knife reach your lungs
and mar your future

Your friends could not serve
as a thick metallic shield
to face the sharp blade

All that they could do
was to carry your body
home by the hammock

Goodbye, my student
whose life was taken swiftly
like a lost bubble

* Barayle is a local term for 'night party'

** Fiesta is a tradition in the Philippines where people celebrate a feast in honor of a saint

Sherwin Balbuena

To The Rose

Owe sunbeam your petals' radiance
Forever it makes you blossom
And whilst a man gives his furtive glance
At you, may you grant it bosom
Then by your reciprocity
You will gain even more beauty

Be proud of the place that you took
Atop the many thorns and leaves
Pity those who stay at the nook
For a rule of this world believes
That a timid heart does not gain
Adulation and joy but pain

Catch the teardrops shed from heaven
Though they hurt your delicate face
Dews on it will have arisen
By the time heaven finds its grace
As sunbeam returns, you will see
Crystals on your face add more glee

To the rose in the neat garden:
Your scent and look delight me most
Oh! You must have come from Eden
Your splendor will never be lost
But all I said would be a lie
If pretty lady bade good-bye

Sherwin Balbuena

Two Ladies II

Here comes another lady,
So simple and so nice.
She's beautiful and moody,
With two near-sighted eyes.

She used to be my housemate
Who washed the plates at lunch.
I told to her my secret
And made her envies bunch.

As time passed us together,
My shattered gem repaired.
My mind found a fair weather;
The song was again heard.

I had a heart that's beating
And now knew how to speak.
I could not wait for saying
My feeling at its peak.

Her answer, she said, is true
With trust and confidence.
I said to her, "I want you
To be my lover hence.

"Go with me, and we shall fly
To the planets and stars.
The Earth keeps telling a lie
We shall not hear on Mars."

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