

## **Eileen R. Tabios** – Three Poems

### **The Difficulty of Nostalgia**

—*Bauang Beach, circa 1965*

She knew she should know

better

I was barely older than a  
toddler

I had played with her only  
daughter

during those summer days of  
*Innocence*

by a sapphire sea warmed by a gentle  
sun

When vacation ended and it was time to  
leave

she lowered her gaze from my  
face

as she carefully suggested I  
give

her daughter one of my  
dresses

“An old one no one would  
miss”

My eyes that squinted all  
summer

opened wide and saw the  
World

ravishing with its poverty and  
desires

*ravishing with its grief, such  
grief*

and leaving me filled with  
loathing

today whenever I see any  
dress

ripped because my young  
mind

could not define a poor  
mother's

plea for charity any other  
way

except to offer something I  
gingerly

resurrected from the  
trash

thrown away as if no  
redemption

is possible, as if what is  
damaged

could not be mended—like a  
rip

whose edges could be sewed  
together

with a stubborn hope for a better  
life

sewn back into a seeming  
wholeness

that masked its wound whose  
tenderness

might never lift despite the  
persistence

of hope against what defines our  
world

now lacking the color of sunlit  
sapphire

across too many of its polluted  
waters

## **Afterwards**

You

realize your

age when you

see protesters as

young as

you

were when you

protested the

same

atrocities. Did your

own actions

matter

if younger ones

protest the

same

matters? There's no

*Volta* here

for

a Hollywood ending

where the

world

is not already

and permanently

ruined.

No wonder we

love the

lucidity

of a poet

who can

discern

an evacuee's admission:

"Though we

lost

all our possessions,

I felt

strangely

relieved to see

my home

explode

in the rearview

mirror.” Thus,

does

form match content

for that

lousy

excuse of making

poetry while

battling

age and the

significance of

mortality.

---

Note: The quote paraphrases from what Bhanu Kapil writes about an evacuee in *How to Wash A Heart*: “Though we lost all our possessions, / I felt / A strange relief / To see my home explode in the rearview mirror.”

**Menstrual Hay(na)ku, Version 2**

When I saw  
Mary's stone  
face  
  
on a statue  
freezing a  
tear  
  
on its stone  
but suddenly  
human  
  
face, I am  
reminded by  
vision:  
  
when I bleed  
I camouflage  
tears

**Eileen R. Tabios** has released over 60 collections of poetry, fiction, essays, and experimental biographies from publishers in 10 countries and cyberspace. In 2021, she released her first novel *DoveLion: A Fairy Tale for Our Times* and first French book *La Vie erotique de l'art* (trans. Samuel Rochery). Her award-winning body of work includes invention of the hay(na)ku, a 21<sup>st</sup> century diasporic poetic form, and the MDR Poetry Generator that can create poems totaling theoretical infinity, as well as a first poetry book, *Beyond Life Sentences*, which received the Philippines' National Book Award for Poetry. Translated into 11 languages, she also has edited, co-edited or conceptualized 15 anthologies of poetry, fiction and essays. More information is at <http://eileentabios.com>

