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## Poems from "Sentence"

Mark Anthony Cayanan  
*Ateneo de Manila University*

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from *SENTENCE*

4

I hope to get by without knowing what we don't  
love: here is everything not clanging inside  
our cupped hands: wife with her evening cries  
children red from the sirens, a circle of conclusions told  
to quiet down, a few coins to the side of the statistic  
The dog-air roaming through tenements is a man  
who builds his house in yours & leaves the key in  
the knob The time he held his answer to your neck

he calls a joke What is this hollow that gleams in our eyelids  
& worries skin off our lips? Whose heft catches  
in my throat There's a name outgrows the dots  
on the map, shrouds with tarp the AM radio, & makes  
stand on hind legs the stupid in me Brow to jaw, his face  
gives mine meaning: every day I rehearse its

certainty, my love for his  
in the ampules I keep as close as my liver Above all he loves  
his might when in my veins slides his light & intercedes

We claim the space where light falls least, we wait  
 for our conviction to match the hyperbole, the blessed  
 lie that thrashes in its cage of never-again, quiets down  
 as it knows it's alone, barks when it hungers  
 —don't we understand it needs to be fed  
 we who push you away every last minute, mouthing  
 we didn't think this through, it hurts too much  
 when all we maybe want is for you to be enraged, gift us

with the harm we've convinced ourselves we're owed  
 distilling more darkness out of darkness, out of  
 turning away with the hope of being rewarded for it  
 out of not so much resentment or even sacrifice  
 but something from you without a name & therefore  
 we're irredeemable: don't we deserve this affliction

the kind we've turned to  
 for comfort &, on days when there's nothing else  
 but the noise we make & don't hear enough of, pleasure?

What about the prayers we hold for no  
     reason, prayers that when pressed against your  
 ear recall the impassive traffic of  
     the ocean What about the hero's will  
 that falls into the plot, his flight an ending  
     you've hot-glued onto his back What about  
 the stranger, his blood running true into  
     the gutter, its nest of cellophane What  
  
 about his wife with the blisters that keep  
     leaking milk What about the man who demands  
 you swallow his anger, what about his  
 smirk once you do What about despair &  
     how it glitters the street, & what about  
 the pictures that fulfill your screen, their baggage  
  
 of words & thrown-to  
     wrath What about the visionary's face  
 of redemption, how does it hollow  
 the way he stabs his  
     resolve into ripe air, how does it trouble  
 this news, what in it must you preserve when  
 it's not from your life  
     Must this day be what cracks off my face What  
 about, should it please you: revolution

*Mark Anthony Cayanan*