

I Want to Be a Bullet!

Three Poems by Wiji THUKUL

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THE THREE POEMS translated here into Filipino and English are by the Indonesian writer Wiji Thukul and taken from the collection *Aku Ingin Jadi Peluru* (I Want to Be a Bullet! [Magelang: Indonesiatara, 2004]). Wiji Thukul was born in 1963 to a poor family in Solo, Indonesia. He was a worker-poet, cultural worker and activist. He was reported missing in the same year that the dictator Soeharto was forced to step down. Ramon Guillermo would like to thank Gelacio Guillermo for his comments on the translations.

Ano ang Saysay ng aking Pagtula?

Ano ang saysay ng aking pagtula
 Kung hindi pumasok sa eskwela ang aking kapatid
 Dahil hindi mabayaran ang matrikula
 Ano ang saysay ng aking pagtula
 Kung umuwi ang aking tatay na nawasak ang pedicab
 Kapag kailangan ng perang pambili ng bigas
 Kung kailangan naming kumain
 At kung wala nang makakain?
 Ano ang saysay ng aking pagtula
 Kung nag-aaway ang tatay at nanay
 Pinagbibintangan ni nanay si tatay na siya ang may kasalanan
 Kahit ginigipit na ng mga bus ang mga pedicab
 Sino ang may kasalanan kung mas mura nang
 sumakay sa bus kaysa magpedicab?
 Ano ang saysay ng aking pagtula
 Kung *sinasakal* sa utang si nanay?
 Kung *sinasakal* sa utang ang kapitbahay?
 Ano ang saysay ng aking pagtula
 Kung napilitan kaming magtayo ng bahay
 Sa tabi ng maruming kanal
 Samantalang lalong nagmamahal ang lupa
 At hindi kami makabili
 Sino ang may kasalanan na hindi kami makabili ng lupa?
 Ano ang saysay ng aking pagtula
 Kapag namatay ang isang maysakit sa kanyang bahay
 Dahil napakamahal magpa-ospital?
 Ano ang saysay ng aking pagtula
 Na kumakain ng aking oras sa loob ng ilang buwan
 Ano ang maiaambag nito sa paglutas sa kahirapang
Sumasakal sa amin?

Ano ang naibigay ko
 Kapag nagpalakpakan ang mga nakinig sa aking mga pagbasa
 Ano ang naibigay ko?
 Ano ang naibigay ko?

Semarang, 6 Marso 1986
 (Translation of *Apa yang Berharga dari Puisiku*)

What is the Worth of my Poetry?

What is the worth of my poetry
 If my younger sibling did not leave for school
 because the school fees could not be paid?
 What is the worth of my poetry
 If my father's pedicab suddenly breaks down
 If rice had to be bought with money
 If we have to eat
 And when there is nothing to eat?
 What is the worth of my poetry
 If father quarrels with mother
 Mother blames father
 Even as pedicabs are pushed off the streets by city buses
 Who is to blame that it is now cheaper
 To ride a bus than a pedicab?
 What is the worth of my poetry
 If mother is being *strangled* by debt
 If the neighbors are being *strangled* by debt?
 What is the worth of my poetry
 If we are forced to build our house
 Along a canal
 While the cost of land keeps going up
 We cannot afford to buy
 Whose fault is it that we cannot afford to buy land?
 What is the worth of my poetry
 If a sick person dies at home
 Because hospitals are expensive?
 What is the worth of my poetry
 Which takes up months of my time
 What can it contribute to alleviate the poverty
 That is *strangling* us?

What have I given
 When the audience at the poetry reading have applauded
 What have I given
 What have I given?

(Translation of *Apa yang Berharga dari Puisiku*)

Balada ng Bala

saan ang nguso ng baril na iyon?

gusto kong sabay na sumabog at maging bala
hanapin ang noo mo, tumuro sa kamatayan Mo
makita ang kaluluwa Mong lumilipad
at hahabulin ito ng sarili kong kaluluwa
upang malaman ang Iyong tinitirahan
handa akong magpatiwakal
tiyak ito, pagkaraan malaman ang inuuwian Mo

ngunit ang balang naghahanap sa Iyong noo
ay nakatagpo lamang sa Iyong matang mambabarang
sim salabim
magbalik ka sa tunay mong anyo!
at totoong hindi magkakaroon kailanman ng
magdadala ng
baril
para sa akin
lalo't higit sa noo
ang magandang panaiginip na ito
ang magandang panaginip na ito
bakit magpakailanman?

(Translation of *Balada Peluru*)

The Ballad of the Bullet

where is the muzzle of that gun?

I'd like to explode and at the same time turn into a bullet
seek your forehead, aim towards your death
see Your soul take flight
and I will chase it with my own soul
so I will know where Your house is
I am ready to kill myself
Certainly, after knowing where You live

but the bullet that is looking for Your forehead
only met Your eyes which cast a magic spell
abracadabra
return to your true form!
and it is true, no one will
carry
the weapon
for me
what more
target the forehead
this beautiful dream
this beautiful dream
why is it eternal?

(Translation of *Balada Peluru*)

Buo pa rin ako at ang mga Salita ay hindi pa Nadudurog

hindi ako artistang gumagawa ng balita
pero ako ay totoong laging masamang balita
para sa makapangyarihan

hindi tula ang aking mga tula
kundi mga madidilim na salita
na pawisan at nagtutulakan
naghahanap ng daan
hindi sila mamatay-matay
kahit dukutin ang mga bilog ng aking mata at palitan
hindi sila mamatay-matay
kahit inilayo ako sa aking tahanan
tinutusok-tusok nang nag-iisa
hindi sila mamamatay
ibinayad ko na ang kanilang hinihingi
panahon - lakas - sugat

lagi akong sinisingil ng mga salitang ito
laging sinasabi sa akin
buhay ka pa rin

totoong buo pa rin ako
at ang mga salita ay hindi pa nadudurog

(Translation of *Aku Masih utuh Dan Kata-Kata Belum Binasa*)

I am Still Whole and the Words have not yet been Destroyed

I am not an artist that makes news
but for certain I am always bad news for
those in power

my poetry is not poetry
but dark sweaty words
crowding each other
searching for a way out
they refuse to die
even though my eyeballs are gouged and replaced
they refuse to die
taken away from my home
repeatedly stabbed alone
I have already paid what they demand from me
time-strength-wounds

those words never stop demanding
always they tell me
you are still alive

certainly I am still whole
and the words have not yet been destroyed

(Translation of *Aku Masih utuh Dan Kata-Kata Belum Binasa*)