

# Gwangju Blues

It didn't take days  
For loneliness  
To sink in, to bury its teeth  
Fiercely into the skin.  
Here, I meander  
Through spaces not quite like  
Tandang Sora or Diliman, along  
Streets with names I'd  
Twist my tongue to say—  
Dongmyeong-ro, Chungjang-ro,  
Munhwajeondang-ro.  
Nowhere to go, I spend Sundays  
On an even keel, exchanging  
Pleasantries with office ghosts,  
Leaving thumb marks  
On the keyboards & photocopiers, sole prints  
On the toilet bowls.  
Close by, the May 18 Square still reeks of martyrs—  
Blood, bones, flesh, slogans—  
Of them my country, too, never runs out.  
For now, noontime craving has to yield—  
No samgyupsal for now,  
Just rice & noodles  
With frozen kim chi from a rundown  
grocery.

At night, I walk back to Nuri Guest House,  
Its walls heaving sighs of pity  
For late slumbers  
& skimpy meals & memories  
Till the next trip home.

—*Noel Christian MORATILLA*