In Memoriam: Maningning Miclat

An established Pilipino woman painter and poet, born in Beijing in 1972, committed suicide in Manila in 2000.

By X. Z. Shao

I am almost glad you have departed.
The rainy season is upon us, drip-dropping endlessly,
Cold and wet, damping every spark of fires.
A long dead snake hangs around the boughs of a tree,
A half green half dry tree, where yellow flowers
Last blossomed, pleasing to eyes and disturbing souls.

You used to live in a roaring city
Where there are so many spider nets,
Where scavengers fly while people drive.
You loved various colors of bougainvilleas,
Flamboyant trees in flower and the scent of earth
Under the rain-trees after a shower of the dry season.

Built on a poppy hill, etherized by the fragrances,
Your garden was dyed in tropical hues,
Scarlet, purple, yellow and deep blue.
Time and again, you returned to it –
A troubled paradise or the cave of Calypso?
I wish you were the fairy nymph returning to her oblivion.

You were a jewel on the palms that held you,
Staggering in the Forbidden City and the ruin of the Imperial Palace.
The storm in China did not infiltrate hatred into your soil.
You painted bamboo and pine trees on Chinese rice paper,
And wrote out your love in the ancient characters for the land
Old in tales, your flesh and soul, from which you had later to tear away.

Being transplanted, you learnt to love your land of origin.
You saw your past being wrapped up in a hard nut.
The hands that reached you were forced to withdraw;
The hearts that opened to you were ordered shut.
You were alone in an island where you decorated your cave of Calypso,
The cave beyond the reach of filthy trash, where eternity promised.

You are still around, making soliloquies,
And yet you are fondling the land you discarded,
Where live your parents, sister and friends enriched by the colors
You brought from the other shore where you live in tune with rhythms of the sea,
Tranquil and satisfied. There will be tidings from this land of wars, idiots and vanity.
If a warrior is stranded there, nurse him back to life, and he will not long for his Ithaca.

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