

Huluga

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City Hall officials allowed a construction firm to bulldoze portions of the site of what is believed to be Cagayan de Oro's first settlement, permanently damaging the place that continues to yield archaeological artifacts to this day. – The Mindanao Gold Star Daily, June 3, 2003. <http://heritage.elizaga.net/huluga/chrono7.html>

I

In the beginning
a promontory.
A world jutting
into the river
of young time.

History is far,
it belongs to the future
that wears out itself
until what's left
is today.

Then history is
a satchel of bones.

II

In one cave, a boat-
shaped coffin.
In another
a female cranium.
The holes in the white
skull tunneling back
into the past.

That past is: 350 AD.
Back then, the woman
was thirty years old.

Her ankles bedecked
with gold. On her hair
were white flowers.
Her skin, a smooth canvass
of tattoos. Her head is

glassed in the city's
museum. What is past?

A series of now.
What is present?
A series of future's
past. The past
has another name:

Republic Act No. 4846.
It has children and
grandchildren residing
in caves. Glassy flakes.
Whale harpoon. Potsherds.
Tektites. Shells. Porcelain:
Fossils glassed in the
museum today.

Such a fragile word: today
And yet how solid
like a copper coin minted
in Segovia. Its obverse side
reads:

"Charles III By The Grace
Of God King Of Spain".
How declarative, how
present.

Today,
the promontory is given
twin names:

X-91-Q2. X-91-R2.
How names can be so alien
and break hearts

Like the delicate
blues that persist on the jar
sherds from China.

The promontory is
riddled by looters
searching for gold,
its caves plumbed and
re-plumbed.

Their fringes giving way
to Blue Waters,
Lawndale Spring.
The sounds tender
to the tongue
yet so foreign.

The trees are marked
with X. As if
they're mistakes.

III

In the beginning
a bridge.
A new world jutting
into the time
of river.

History is here,
it belongs to present
that wears out
itself until what's
left is the past.

Then bones are
a satchel of history.