

Ang Maca, bagong Alfabetong Pilipinx

three poems

Pilipinx

There is a short version about the Pilipinx language itself that can be discussed another time. The long version: F (along with C, Ñ, J, Q, V, X, and Z) did not exist in the native script of the Philippines (known as baybayin)—long before Spanish influence and rule. As a means to decolonize our selves and way of thinking, most things will be spelled as they are according to this notion. As for the @ [of the Pilipin@ label], it basically says that there are only Pilipino/ Pilipina people and no other gender. X is gender neutral and encompasses all genders that Pilipinx people are.

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— Frequently Asked Questions, *This is Not Pilipinx* (<http://thisisnotpilipinx.tumblr.com/faqs>)

Beautiful names, italicized, slip so easily off
of your tongues like water
on the feathered backs of migratory birds:

<i>Maharlika</i>	<i>Makabayan</i>	<i>Malansang Isda</i>
<i>Taga-ilog</i>	<i>Igorot</i>	<i>Alibata</i>
<i>Bathala</i>	<i>Whang-od</i>	<i>Malakas at Maganda</i>
<i>Singkil</i>	<i>Chickenjoy</i>	<i>José Rizal</i>
<i>Kalantiaw</i>	<i>Tasaday</i>	<i>Kalayaan</i>
<i>Inang Bayan</i>		
	<i>Putang Ina</i>	
		<i>Pilipinx,</i>

X

A trustworthy new import from Thomas's alphabet
 Plot out the archipelago with Xs
 You're Yamashita looking to bury
 a myth's mouthful of fool's gold
 and hope it germinates

X

for a borrowed spectrum X for all gender/genders X for no
 gender X for your brother's laboring hands X for your sister's
 naturalization papers X for bell hooks X for Anzaldúa
 and Moraga X for Césaire X for Senghor, for the copperplate
 inscriptions X for shards of pottery X for slam poets X for prophets
 you claim to possess you X for the Manila, not yours, but of your grand-
 parents X for all gay and bakla and trans transfiguring under the X of one thatched
 binukot roof X for babaylan X for katalonan, bayot, binabae X for the call
 centered English X for buzzfeed X for Pacquiao and Pempengco and pinay mail-order brides.com X
 X X

X for the sign

you refuse to read again
 and again

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X

X the unfathomable, the hybrid X
 X the stutter, the switch the X, from x:

(x = {170 different codes})

X that has been smelted from a Butuanon funerary mask
 into a Spanish Infanta's diadem
 in a touring exhibit in a Makati consulate.

Refashioning your chains into jewelry instead
 of shucking them off, X stands

for the island you now see
 with Magellan's parched eyes,
 delirious from months, land-starved.

impit

ghostbreath that usually appears
 unwritten, the glottal stop. the rising silent
 cocking of the mouth's rifle, or the sudden

pause, an arrested exhale, (as if to say, *i am
 not finished speaking*) severing
 the utterance, clipping the curls

of the word. *basa* — *basâ*: to reach
 becomes damp, wet, fertile upon the plain.
 invisible to the untrained ear, to the amateur

eye, it is inaudible. it divines and divides—("hindí kay
 versus "hindí kayâ"; *it is not possible!* and *no, i insist*
 it is.) for example: *nag-ibâ* atrophies,

crystallizes into *nágibâ*: there is only a subtle
 difference between the forces between *dismantling*
 and *change*. interestingly, no opening vowels exist

without this unsignaled first.

baybayin

at dead quiet of night, a text from abroad: *hey, there's a white man practicing baybayin on the bay area train*. adjusting to the screen's glare, i think of other kababayan calligraphing, font-designing, showing pity to the bastardized script damned to be the stylish *what if*, the postcolonial angst of forgetting, or forging esoteric connections to a utopian past whose mighty knees folded to rigid rules, ganoid edges of the latin alphabet. dazzled by national oneness it's easy to forget. hanuno'o poets still mark their musings in a syllabary of their own, their selfhood indelible. perhaps we're just like the authors of the *doctrina cristiana*, or *arte de la lengua tagala*, with good hearts, but effecting the authoritative singularity of a manuscript placed in the center of a library. thus, consider this tagalog, hailed *the* native script, overwriting a hundred utterances, codes: the kapampangan kulitan or the ivatan v, the tausug j, the meranaw ë, the kalinga f, the ibanag z, tongues all packed up, folded, placed in the storeroom. it seems we rebuild and reconstruct at random, dismantling floorboards without dusting for fingerprints first. the noble savage is literate. which savage? one who replaces? or one who dilutes old spells into tattoos? despite our nativist attempts, the symbols' sinuous waves beat upon some unreadable shore. narcissus cannot see himself in the tide. it remains elusive, like wavering vowels in god's pre-babel name, too sacred to be spoken or written in full: "yahweh" is said aloud only by those who do not fully believe in the word's power.