

*Audre Lorde said sumn about the master's tools once*

The English been starting to burn  
on my tongue. Yeah, I trapeze off  
the line well enough and land

some fine jumps  
but I still resist against this  
collar and taut leash.

Whenever I come to a body  
of water, I'm aware I am  
touching some ancient

pleasure. We are not particularly  
special. This pleasure doesn't belong  
exclusively to me, or 2023, or 1845

118 BC knows of it, too—particularly  
the one Filipina with the same nose  
and eyes as mine. She returns

to water in the same way I return  
to water. She could not read this  
poem, and perhaps she is saved

because of that. Give me the word  
for what Filipinos call a sharp  
tongued woman:

*Maldita.*

Give me the word for what my ancestor  
would utter in a single breath, if given  
the chance to cast a literary shadow:

*Walang hiya.*

I am writing this to reach you,  
even if all I have left  
in my artillery is a handful

of broken Tagalog  
and an arsenal  
of high-grade English.

If living past 2020 is to slip

through an ether, what did we  
dodge Covid for? We have spent

five years acutely aware  
we are still alive, we  
are still on this rock.

From rock, you are to rescue form  
from its own shadow. You are to hurtle  
a new world towards its conception.

If you don't tread the rectangle  
of light carefully, an influencer  
can be made of you,

which is to say, instrument,  
which is to say, insubordinate,

with a golden ticket into the upper class  
where you can recline and sip prosecco  
in the company of Greek & Roman busts

with no fear of God  
never batting an eye at spilled blood