

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