

## Gémino H. Abad Literary Awards for Poetry and for Literary Criticism Awardees

Rayji de Guia

### NEITHER NOTHING NOR FORGOTTEN

#### With longing for a girl

*He seems to me equal to gods that man  
whoever he is who opposite you  
sits and listens close  
to your sweet speaking  
— Sappho*

Three days overcome  
as nothing is  
catharsis. This is  
what is. She is  
be held behold  
her songs? of honey,  
of sorrow and delight  
that tease her  
But there is quiet she longs for  
someone  
unknown,  
alcohol-ridden, tear-stained prayers  
a man dearest—



## Salve Regina

Hail, holy queen

of miracles, contrition  
can wait elsewhere; out of all

the brides who have sung your canticles  
with their tongues, you chose me. Your sweetness  
blesses the fruit of my body

with prayer, with nectar, nard  
on my petals, saffron, cinnamon;  
I drink the wine of your orchard. Blessed

are we for we are  
our own synagogue

to feed, to shelter,  
to bathe among women  
and oh, we cry at Eve's

solitary sighs upon her exile

as woman—after all, like her we are  
not merciful, loving, sweet,

nor are we most gracious to the Lord or fathers, only  
to our ladies—

at the hour  
of our union

is where I take your love. I am  
your devotee, a pilgrim who comes  
for the cleansing of my chalice. But behold me

mourning and weeping at the valley  
of my father who would rather see me nailed to the cross  
like your son. You are

church, and I turn then to the Lord and ask:

Mother of Mercy, Mother of God,  
the Virgin without a bride, a betrothed  
is knowing how to worship  
the body the original sin?

at the hour  
of my death, beloved,

pray for us.

Amen.

I call you

## **A Portrait of Decomposing Girls**

*After Hozier*

It begins here: My scalp tears, hairs fall;  
in wounds festering, maggots. Am I  
still pretty? Is there a point in asking?  
In the end, we have come to depart,  
a prayer withheld—how we decayed.  
But we will not be rotting in a coffin,  
flesh melding; the church will not bury us.  
As worms wrestle in my mouth down  
to my throat, does it matter when I  
have no use for kissing? Not when  
my body has bloated, bearing your loss,  
before caving in. I sink among molds,  
feces, piss, reeking wastes in the heat.  
My stench exposes me here and you  
—us, decomposing at the same time.

**With longing for a girl (Reprise)**

*He seems to me equal to gods that man  
whoever he is who opposite you  
sits and listens close  
to your sweet speaking  
— Sappho*

Three days overcome with longing for a girl, I do nothing, as nothing is wiser than speaking selfish wants for catharsis. This is not waiting but a will for what is. She is too young to be held; is it so sinful to behold her as I listen to her songs? A voice of honey, cold and sweet, slithers down my spine. Entice me forward, tales of sorrow and delight, as I touch the hairs that tease her shoulders bare. But there is quiet in her eyes: she longs for someone else. To a goddess unknown, as you please, do not forsake alcohol-ridden, tear-stained prayers for a man to steal my dearest—