# 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—

#### Intoxicated

Goddess, permit me the kiss

of red wine from the rim of the glass, is this the blur of your lips, redder, longing to be taken by someone? Give me a drink; the thought shrinks as soon as I drink wine like water. The chalice shared between us spills through our laughter

on my bed. Your head rests upon my chest, hair close to my face, nothing worth noting—then vou left me, bereft of you in my arms, still drunk with the blood of Christ. I hear you heave

in the bathroom. Let me wash you skin to skin, like Jesus and Mary Magdalene. We drink again, now hand in hand. Fingers touch as imitation of beloved husband and adoring wife, a pity as I bury this memory only to rise three days too soon neither nothing nor forgotten.

## 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—

Guadalupe, Fátima, Lourdes, what I call you

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

Mother of Mercy, Mother of God, the Virgin without a bride, a betrothed

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

is knowing how to worship the body the original sin?

I call you

at the hour

of my death, beloved,

pray for us.

Amen.

## 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—