

i was seeing windy hill again after a year of absence. one year ago or was it a lifetime ago? windy hill, my home for two years. have i been away too long? it looks the same yet something is missing. or perhaps i have also changed: it seems so long ago, a year ago, another world, another time...

mariano, all of a bubbling four-year-old runs down the driveway with a loud yelp and a shout. did you bring me candy? children never forget; one year ago to them is only yesterday or last night and his expectation of my gifts binds me like an old promise. i bring candies and love, mariano, you've grown taller where is lita? dirty and lovably fat, she was scolding like a queen, bingbing, for drowning her dolly in the duckpond. her eyes widened in disbelief; she thinks i'm not real. this is tess, lita, remember her? we used to sing you to sleep. lita, my niece has the clear eyes of one who has never known disaster. in their vivid and strikingly clear depths, i see the wonder and tenderness of a baby growing up.

the house has grown lovelier--the bright rattan furniture, the open french windows opening into well-loved and familiar landmarks, the airport below and Opon

all of them have taken their places in the world but right now they are all here. . . i see glimpses of their faces, like moving water, receding and returning like an ebb tide, the waves echoing behind it. or like tendrils of seaweeds in crystalline waters, forming patterns of different but familiar shadows at varying lights, i hear their voices distant yet near. is it true what they say that there is no going back from life?

memory is a long avenue curved into the past, bringing us beauty and pain. it is a one-way highway with all gates closed yet open to remembrance alone. coming back, a transient guest, to see and review two years of the past in its mute but eloquent landscape, was like seeing scattered pieces of myself, in every tree and furniture i knew so well.

why does this place claim so strong an allegiance from me? is it because this place speaks the language i know, or because she unfailingly ransoms me from disappointments, fear and sadness? i do not know.

# reflections by lourdes v. jaramilla

glistening like a jewel across the sea. undulating valleys of cornfields spread out like a carpet of green from below the terrace. "how utterly! strength and depth!", with a waving gesture, tess summed up the impact of the whole scene, unchangingly beautiful and growing dearer with the passage of time. seeing it again was like seeing it for the first time all over again.

hundreds of daisies in all colors and in full bloom lined the driveway. yellowbells, adelfa trees and the row of violet and orchid plants stood there in the blue arching sky, along the footpaths exactly where i had remembered them. only the massive and riotous red, pink and blue clusters of bougainville were stripped from the winding walls. the green lawn, silent and serene in the cool afternoon light thudded with our footfalls. here was the setting of so much fun, this playground beloved to my college friends. it's still here waiting, untouched and unchanged, awaking me to remember christmas and class parties on the soft summer grass. memories of rain, spilled cokes, a blazing bonfire, barbecue and snapshots at night.

where are the windy hill dreamers now? since then the old gang has disbanded. helen and chito are teaching. . . boy is playing in the world olympics in foreign lands. . . rey, gerry and susan are in UP. i can still hear marietta quoting tagore's poems from "gitanjali" and jess singing "one alone" to us seated in a semi-circle with the wind and skies all around us. one beautiful legacy of girlhood gone and enshrined forever in windy hill's spiralling memories. if i shut my eyes now, the scene would come back, as fresh, as though everyone were present and talking at the same time.

it has its own climate of instilling courage and security when i feel the ground slipping beneath my feet.

perhaps i needed to go away to love it, to soak its warmth, breathe its soul and snatch its haunting beauty. windy hill is part of me: i have loved, valued and written so much about its many faces that i feel it is mine. and love is a greater badge of ownership than realms of titles or deeds and i know it belongs to the one who loves it most.

i remember afternoons we'd spend killing time by watching the clouds' formations shape into monsters and angels and drift away across the blue petal of a sky, wider, bluer, deeper than anywhere else! . . . watching the papaya moon rise from the emerald sea and sunrise in the same spot from the very same window. . . the slow spread of gold and magenta streaks of brilliant light filling the skies like an outspread umbrella at sunset. . . and that special bench under the iba tree where we used to sit on lazy afternoons studying for the midterms. here one could sit and remember and really be done.

lahug was moving to a world of soft darkness and lights, pinpointing the inky distance like a chain of twinkling fairy lamps linking horizons of earth and sky and sea. when we left at dusk. here is where i grow up, and like growing up, this is where i leave off, closing the door to a life buried in a dream, to yesterday asleep in its altared tombs. this will remain as i leave it. strangers may live here but that wouldn't alter things grown timeless, not to us, secure in the credulity of the young whose private worlds are imperishable. «»