

# peephole



**T**he soul-stirring touch of a vast flood of lukewarm sweat that flowed out effortlessly from the myriad pores, skimming, drenching, a body – pressed against a faded, meaningless wall. Motionless, the body mine, slowly, graduated into some prosaic sensation as it slug-gishly felt the creeping numbness running through the spine. Feeling exhausted, I withdrew myself from the wall. Now buried between soft pillows I tried in vain to tear myself from the silly peephole sight: Kim bursting into sobs, now screaming into some faint, muffled blare, now to some kerking, shuddering stance of her frail body simply because the Beatles had vowed with finality for a split.

Quite naturally, as she always told us, Mrs. Go got irritated with what she called the predominating folly the beat

generation was immersed in. Harboring with bitterness this hostile feeling she would intone in tiring frequency the message: today's young are nothing but a product of the idiotic vagaries of time. While pinned in bed a flood of thoughts rushed into my mind: what must have been the laws that govern human beings, beings who waste themselves on, pusillanimous, plain claptrap, garbage thoughts? It's, you see, the cause of all this mess, mess, mess! We then clamor for change but within us there's that intrinsic evil that so dominates our sagging, rotting soul that we cry for the moon out of some high-falutin', blasphemous desire.

Once, twice the other night I heard footsteps scurrying back and forth, now slower, now brisker and then lost in some farness, darkness of the night. I never

by  
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bothered to give importance to these damn, eerie things but, you see, the frequency, the fear, was unbearable. So once, twice I attempted to set out into the night but found nothing. And I never did again since I saw a mysterious girl inside the house.

My brother said before he left for work. He saw her last night when he came in with disheveled hair wearing a shriveled lingerie like she had just been seduced. She immediately went inside Mrs. Go's room when she saw him. It was this girl Kim tugging along with Mrs. Go, the mother, who did come out and join me at breakfast, while the burning anticipation of seeing the mysterious girl got stifled with such fallacious appearances — this Kim and this widow, Mrs. Go. The usual tryst, the usual boring talk began, Kim asked me if I like toys or candy, I said yes. I really blamed myself for being dragged into this sheer childishness. But Mrs. Go explained: No baby, not anymore. He likes beautiful girls now. We all laughed.

The following night I studied my lessons. It was this confused feeling in me that puzzled me whenever I engaged in such political matters, matters that bordered between thesis and antithesis. What about Hegel's explanation of the Absolute Idea dwelling in the stanches, overpowering state? To him we are only contributors to reason, and therefore reason equals absolute equals real. Marx was brave enough when he said he wanted to put Hegel on his foot. Hegel was standing on his head. I wanted to let him stand on his feet, Marx said. It's always this struggle, keen struggle for thought supremacy. One trying to outclass another and another and another one until the world is bored to death.

When I went to wash that morning my brother told me once again he saw the mysterious girl. I told him I did not know about this for I was inside the room studying and had a good sleep after that. I didn't even notice him enter the room. My brother and I, you know, lived in this boarding house owned by this widow, Mrs. Go who bore only one child, this Kim, who was not quite all right with her thinking. She was sixteen then but acted like she was six or seven. The boarding house was two stories and we settled in the groundfloor together with the owner. The upper story was purely students' territory.

My brother wasn't always around the house but he had always that capacity



**“ . . . life  
is one  
vast  
peephole,  
wherein  
one  
probes  
into  
the  
stark,  
raw,  
inner  
recesses  
of man;  
the cold,  
hard  
realities  
of man.”**

to discover things I could have easily run into. I never expected he would bring more, much more complicated news.

Mrs. Go is a lesbian.

I was taken aback, unmoving, unnerved by the revelation. All long stony silence prevailed. Still skeptical, I resumed leafing through the pages of International Relations. My brother, now pinned in bed, burst into a mouthful of condemnation, damning this kind of freak. It was with cold-blooded umbrage that he blurted out all his feelings of disrelish. And when everything was already done his soul sank, now unspeaking, eyes closed and what remained then was the sad, subdued countenance of a once irate man.

Mrs. Go told me about this — I mean about my brother turning dry — but there was nothing I could do. I had already foreseen the possibility of strained relations between her and my brother. But she was understanding enough. I didn't wish to tell her why so I thought of some other alibis. Later though they did have the chance to talk about each other — heart to heart talk — but as expected my brother feigned the issue.

That afternoon I decided not to attend my classes. The heavy dullness that now kept taunting, hanging over head was justification enough. I wanted really to extinguish this dullness, this lethargy, that possessed me. But this sad state, you see, also possessed this generation to the consternation of the peppery, conniving youth who gingerly exclaimed in vociferation for a revolution. Gory, yes. I was about to go to bed for I was literally jaded but my curiosity put me back into awakening. Yes, the peephole. I said. I was really certain that previous boarders must have bored this hole. It's a frugal way, you know, of cloying oneself with sex without draining one's pocket. So I got the thin piece of paper inserted thru the bored hole. I wished my perceptual process did not deceive me for when I pressed my eyes against the peephole, my eyes stretched wide: two fidgety bare-bodied creatures, feeling for warmth, kneading warmth, rubbing against the drab, sad coolness of the bed, their bed unifying them into one, who now sagged, exhausted, now leaning, wearing feeble, emaciated faces, to the sides. The beautiful girl (the mysterious girl?) now buried her face under the cool, consoling pillows.

Feeling hot within me, I withdrew myself from the wall and flung myself  
*(continued on page 42)*

thoughts

*i see traces of the  
heaviness of my head in  
the thoughts of my  
street-dancing (around  
and closing).  
thoughts*

*thoughts  
thoughts  
i clear the traces  
then mark where a  
youth's i-thinks were  
are.*

*my thoughts crowd on  
some little intimacies  
pregnant with blue –  
impressions  
yes, in some little  
conscious square  
atmosphere.*

– teresita b. bayno  
ab 2

FOR FREEDOM OF . . . . .

(continued from page 15)

arise when not all the members of society share equally and justly the opportunities God has given to this Christian nation. How can the youth expect to live in a Christian society when majority of the members of society are virtually doomed to be slaves, misfits, unfortunates, and thus not allowed to share equally the opportunities to develop into a full-grown, mature Christian? Again and again, riots and violence that have marred the youth's ideal name only show that something must be wrong! And the wrong lies in the fact that there is no FREEDOM given to each Filipino to be himself and above all to be a Christian. There is no freedom to share equally the free bounty of nature. And there is even no freedom to be the youth of the fatherland!

The ideal youth are they who are armed with FREEDOM to be just what they are destined to be: The mouthpiece, the conscience, and the hope of the Filipino people. This could be achieved if we propel the attitude of sincere and open REFORM. Unless we become what we claim to be – a Christian society of equal freedom and opportunity – the future of the Philippines will be hazardous. Only if Philippine society is willing to pay the price of REFORM can we be assured together with the youth, of the enjoyment to live and be fulfilled in a just society!

PEEPHOLE . . . . .

(continued from page 19)

into bed. Passion had always overwhelmed me but then I constrained myself to jostle the flowing temptation. For, you see, when the hallucinogens descended on this generation, they found me among the virile young men who vented all their concupiscence on the breasts of restless, uncomplaining young women, whispering sweet-nothings on the latter, their faces rubbing smoothly of warmth. The advent to these "stirrers" had throttled my propensity to instant, natural urges.

I did not tell my brother of the discovery. When I went to school that morning, Kim reminded me once again about toys and candy. Mrs. Go was always there, at the doorstep, to see me leave, and, of course, to bid me good-bye. It must have been with repulsion that I did not anymore feel her sincerity as she

bade me goodbye. It was the shocking memory that telling afternoon that I now felt how loathsome she was. Freak, I said. I was not really certain if it's being genuinely me but I did just that, thought just that, period. For in the first place, I had always been seeking the normal, proper direction of life, this worldly life that downed this generation to near-naught. A generation not knowing that distance between nothingness and existence is a yawning gap. From zero of existence to zero of existence: that's one simple fact I and everyone else know of life, that is, in between creation and annihilation one dwells on brevity, the finite, perfunctory process. That's why people have fallen into error because of this ignorance.

That Sunday my brother was out. I was reading the Theories of State when Kim barged into the room. She was laughing and grinning all the while. I did not understand at first. But then she pointed toward the position of the hole in the wall. And it was then that Mrs. Go and I talked – heart to heart with each other. With all the sobriety in her she told me:

You know, life is one vast peephole, wherein one probes into the stark, raw, inner recesses of man; the cold, hard realities of man. Orthodoxy is always the demarcation line drawn between two extremes. Falling into these extremes renders one to be mocked a freak and what other filthy things one can muster.

Then we stared at each other, speechless, conveying ourselves through the eyes. She broke the stony silence:

Yes, people have gauged other people according to the explicit. But I also feel love, know how to understand, and have a soul like everyone else.

Her words put me spell-bound. I sat plastered on the corner set, wearing a blank stare, my thoughts drifting. The lightness in the heart now superseded the heaviness that was then preponderant.

When I went back to my room, I could feel the tide of awakening that crept into my body. The dry air that now nonchalantly nestled on my skin seemed to invigorate me as the vast flood of luke-warm sweat kept flowing out, washing away the stain, the stain of soul. A tangle of thoughts hovered in my mind as I busied myself thinking of a way to rid of the hole in the wall while the faint sunlight filtered thru the window sills that brought the dry air into my senses and bathed me with renewed exhilaration.