

the uninvited black clouds departed. The moon rose and shone
above the houses that bloomed like sickly flowers in the dead
heart of the lifeless city.

*'I have no more phantoms,
No more weird darkness in
My world. Now you can look
Into my eyes and see there
The cool serenity!'*

The man on the bongos howled: 'Bravo!' From nowhere
a Voice thundered: 'Liar!'

The audience of young men with jackets clapped and
smoked and laughed and looked.

"Dance, Extraño, dance!"

"Sing, Extraño, sing!"

Thus he danced and sang in the manner of an angry
Ilonggot warrior. Then from the room upstairs a baby cried.
It was a cry of innocence protesting the savage bedlam below.

Panting, Extraño stopped. He took a long drink from
the bottle in his pocket. Whisky! Then, strumming his guitar,
he heaved himself into a song again:

*"Cry, baby, cry
Until your eyes
Become dry!
Flow, tears, flow
Flood the world
And drown all its
Ancient sorrows!"*

Upstairs, the baby cried in obedience.

"Dance, Extraño, dance!"

"Shut up, scalawag! I'm not your slave!"

Guffaws.

Then silence.

Extraño opened a window and looked at the sleeping world
outside. The scavengers of the night — cats and dogs and
rats and brats — tumbled over garbage cans. Almost every
night he peered at the window to watch this cruel thing.

The waifs rummaged the garbage cans only to find there
the scraps of human wrath.

He lighted a cigarette and decided to go out into the
cool of summer night. He proceeded to the door...

"Are you going home now?" Ramon asked.

"I have no home, brother."

"What a catastrophe!" Cornelio sneered.

"Then why don't you join us?" Prospero asked.

"I'm not of your kind, brother."

"What an insult!" Manido boomed.

"You're a fool!" Rackmaninoff squeaked.

"How about you, brother?"

Then he was gone. The young men looked at each other.
Silence asked the silent faces only to receive a silent answer.

IN HIS room, the Professor, after knowing that his wife was
out again with her coterie of 'charitable' women, wrote:

*"Home without love
Is inconceivable
And TV alone is
Not enough. Tell
Me, Dear, in the
Absence of publicity
Where does charity go?"*

WHILE in the empty streets, in the cool of summer night,
Extraño, the eternal stranger of the tired old world mumbled:
"Shantih! Shantih! Shantih!"

THE END

Allelujah

First prize, USC Literary Contest

a huge shining axe
chopped down a tree young and fresh
while a tree stump stood, holding a concentric circle
exposed to sun, to rain

winds sang

and the raindrops brought the hymn of a native
a wanderer who roamed mountains and hills,
slept in caves, sculptured and tattooed his skin,
burnt incense in the dwelling of little gods

there were little gods whose ire and impatience
brought rocks rolling, rolling,
crushed down a deep, hungry gorge.....
these little gods slowly, slowly turned flowers

when the ripples of a stream,
the moss-covered stones of a river,
like the poetry of a star mosaic fastened and
introduced into a dark, uncomprehending world
anchored a light,
light that ripped flowing skirts of darkness,
unbelief taking tiny wings
and tattered fragments awakening slumbering souls!
exposed to sun, to rain,
the tree stump's concentric circle held God

Omnipotence, Truth, Light
and the wanderer no more burnt incense in the
dwellings of his little gods, but picked his little
flowers, strew them around a tree
carried a chalice with prayers

the roots of a tree four hundred years of age,
the beginnings of a new arc in a circle to eternity,
in sunshine or rain

spread out to feed on that divine light,
year after year, grow and multiply like
stars in the skies
singing allelujah! allelujah!

By René Racoma