TO BE AN EMPIRE IS TO BURN!

Eileen R. Tabios

locofo chaps

chicago, 2017
Copyright @ Eileen Tabios, 2017
Locofo Chaps is an imprint of Moria Books.
More information can be found at

Cover image: “Fire Series” (2012), photograph by Dan Waber

Locofo Chaps is dedicated to publishing politically-oriented poetry.

Chicago, USA, 2017
| CONTENTS |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Ambition and Beauty            | 4 |
| Dialogue                       | 5 |
| WHITE TOMBSTONES, GREEN LAWNS  | 6 |
| “What Kind of Poetry Will You Write Now?” | 8 |
| Ferdinand Edralin Marcos       | 9 |
| The Dictator’s Daughter        | 10 |
| #NoDAPL                        | 11 |
| To Be An Empire Is To Burn!    | 12 |
| MONICA LEWINSKY                | 14 |
| LISTING                        | 15 |
| Letter From Paris to New York  | 18 |
| Acknowledgements               | 20 |
| About the Poet                 | 21 |
Ambition and Beauty
—Paris, 2016

When offered Versailles
I shook my head

He’d never been
Once was enough for me

No need to gorge
on foie gras, etcetera
though many do

I don’t feel superior
bringing crickets to geese
Crickets also matter

I am still with this man
who appreciated the result
of a 27-year-old King
‘s aim for immortality

If only ambition could unfold
and beauty reveal itself
without collateral damage

The Lord sits with me
He does not laugh
though we listen to Mozart

and the sunlit sky is burnished
by Versailles gold
Dialogue

Marianne Moore: “I think each time I write that it may be the last time.”

Eileen Tabios: “I want to think so, too. But then 2017-2020.”
WHITE TOMBSTONES, GREEN LAWNS

No promises exist
  in combat…

Hot lead muzzle velocity
  = 1,000 feet/second…

Proverbial bad shit?
  Bound to happen…

The rare constant:
  white marble tombstones…

White tombstones blossom
  as ever in Arlington…

From afar, the eye could choose
  to see magnolias against green lawn…

But he salutes in intimate space
  facing the warrior’s mother…

He cannot disclose
  why her son’s casket is closed…

“I made him promise
  to be careful…”

She sees the medals—
  they fail to console…

“Promises are difficult
  in battle…”

He offers the flag
  folded, not waving…
“You survived to be general.
   Are you a good man?”

He forgets to answer
   “Never as good as the dead…”

He forgets when he catches
   the scent of white blossoms…

As a boy, he frolicked
   in his mother’s garden…

To be a general
   is to be old…

If the old must dream, the innocence
   of perfume offsets inflamed hot lead…

As if…
   “As if…

He silently pleads with
   the grieving mother…

Don’t let me explain: flowers
   must be crushed for perfume

(written while reading Commander In Chief by Tom Clancy and Mark Greaney, G.P. Putnam and Sons, 2015)
“What Kind of Poetry Will You Write Now?”

They belittle the safety pin
on my bodice, cushioned by a breast

They do not see the sharp(ened) point
lurking within its shining steel clasp
Ferdinand Edralin Marcos
—a Rippled Mirror Hay(na)ku

“Power corrupts absolutely”—
you provided proof.

Your life proved
“Absolute corruption powers.”
The Dictator’s Daughter

You praised Chaucer—you understood the significance of the poet (and philosopher and astronomer) for legitimizing Middle English vernacular at a time when French and Latin dominated.

Now you’re relegated to claiming youth as an excuse for not protesting your father’s abuses. 29 is young? No doubt—but only—to a centenarian.

Ivanka Trump, meet Imee Marcos—a future you do not want to be yours.

Bibliography:

“Dear Imee Marcos, you knew all about the torture and political detainees during your father’s dictatorship” by Raissa Robles, inside Philippine politics & beyond, Nov. 15, 2016
water fleshes out
any hollow
if

water does not
freeze from
greed
To Be An Empire Is To Burn!
in memory of Dionel Campos, Datu Bello Sinzo and Emerito Samarca

You slashed
the teacher’s throat.

But he survives
your ignorance

with what he knows:
when you push us

deeper into the forest
higher up the mountains

away from land our ancestors
did not own but cherished

we will fall
from ravines as land ends.

But you shall follow us
down with your lack

of comprehension: our
survival is your survival.

And the few survivors
and the many witnesses

from even oceans away
will pray, sing, dance

make art, write poems
for us, not you.

They will celebrate our lives
not yours. They will remember
us, not you who murdered
to become a footnote in
other people's lives.
History reveals over and over
despite your ears deafened
and deadened by greed:

To be an empire
is to burn!

Hear the teacher invading your
dreams with a throat slashed
but still able to proclaim:
Mr. Footnote, no one knows
your name. Mr. Footnote,
when an empire burns
trees split their own wood
to hiss through the flames:

No one is spared
not even he who lit the match.
MONICA LEWINSKY

obtained a psychology degree from Lewis & Clark College

received a master’s degree in psychology from the London School of Economics

wrote a master’s thesis entitled “In Search of the Impartial Juror: An Exploration of the third person effect and pretrial publicity”

designed a line of handbags bearing her name “The Real Monica”

is the daughter of German Jews who escaped Nazi Germany and emigrated to El Salvador and later the United States

worked as a correspondent for British Channel 5, reporting on U.S. culture and trends

hosted a reality television show

enjoys yoga, musical theater, flea markets, museums, facial and color hydrotherapy

was a spokesperson for Jenny Craig’s diet program

was sheepish when she forgot to pay her cable TV bill

often offers toothy grins

gets introduced by strangers to their dogs

apologizes

is friends with Alan Cummings

knits
I saw the Best Poets of my generation

Best American Poetry
Best U.S.-American Poetry
Best Poet With Lariats Poetry
Best Puppy Poetry
Best CAT! Poetry
Best Moon Poetry
Best Mooned Poetry
Best Ethnic-American Poetry
Best Ethnic-American Poetry
Best Ethnic-American Poetry
Best Ethnic-American Poetry
Best Ethnic-American Poetry
Best Ethnic-American Poetry
Best Cowboy Poetry
Best Indian Native American Poetry
Best Under-Thirty Poetry
Best Under-Twenty Poetry
Best Minor Poetry
Best Over-Fifty Poetry
Best Eighty-is-the-New-Fifty Poetry
Best Obscure Ethnic-American Poetry
Best Bestests Poetry
Best Beasties Poetry
Best White Male Poetry
Best Filipina Poetry
Best Non-American Poetry
Best Non-U.S.-American Poetry
Best Whale Poetry
Best Political Poetry
Best Apolitical Poetry
Best Witness Poetry
Best Blind Poetry
Best Conceptual Poetry
Best Concrete Poetry
Best Death Poetry
Best Samurai Death Poetry
Best Other Poetry
Best Other-ed Poetry
Best Eileen R. Tabios Poetry

_I saw the Best Poets of my generation_

submit themselves

to Best-of Lists

_and Create New Lists_

upon zero acceptance

by Old Lists.

Best American Experimental Poetry
Best U.S.-American Experimental Poetry
Best Poet With Lariats Experimental Poetry
Best Puppy Experimental Poetry
Best CAT! Experimental Poetry
Best Moon Experimental Poetry
Best Mooned Experimental Poetry
Best Ethnic-American Experimental Poetry
Best Ethnic-American Experimental Poetry
Best Ethnic-American Experimental Poetry
Best Ethnic-American Experimental Poetry
Best Ethnic-American Experimental Poetry
Best Ethnic-American Experimental Poetry
Best Ethnic-American Experimental Poetry
Best Cowboy Experimental Poetry
Best Indian Native American Experimental Poetry
Best Under-Thirty Experimental Poetry
Best Under-Twenty Experimental Poetry
Best Minor Experimental Poetry
Best Over-Fifty Experimental Poetry
Best Eighty-is-the-New-Fifty Experimental Poetry
Best Obscure Ethnic-American Experimental Poetry
Best Bestests Experimental Poetry
Best Beasties Experimental Poetry
Best White Male Experimental Poetry
Best Filipina Experimental Poetry
Best Non-American Experimental Poetry
Best Non-U.S.-American Experimental Poetry
Best Whale Experimental Poetry
Best Political Experimental Poetry
Best Apolitical Experimental Poetry
Best Witness Experimental Poetry
Best Blind Experimental Poetry
Best Conceptual Experimental Poetry
Best Concrete Experimental Poetry
Best Death Experimental Poetry
Best Samurai Death Experimental Poetry
Best Other Experimental Poetry
Best Other-ed Experimental Poetry
Best Eileen R. Tabios Experimental Poetry

_I saw the Best Poets of my generation_
When offered Versailles
I shook my head

Once was enough for me

No need to gorge
on foie gras, etcetera
though many do

I don’t feel superior
bringing crickets to geese
Crickets also matter

If only ambition could unfold
and beauty reveal itself
without collateral damage

The Lord sits with me
He does not laugh
though we listen to Mozart

and the sunlit sky is burnished
by Versailles gold

as if he really was the *King of the Sun*—an aspiration
understood and shared
by the steak-eater
with small hands

flinging open the door
of blood diamonds
to the same flashing gold
gilding the chandeliers
of a Fifth Ave penthouse
in New York City where streets are buckling before the steps of a toddler holding up a sign: IF YOU BUILD A WALL, I WILL GROW UP AND TEAR IT DOWN!
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following poems were first published or accepted for publication in the following spaces. Thank you to the editors and curators.


“WHITE TOMBSTONES, GREEN LAWNS” (with different title “On Green Lawn, the Scent of White”), “Ferdinand Edralin Marcos,” and “To Be An Empire is to Burn!” in Ano Ba Zine.

“NoDAPL” in WATER IS LIFE--#NoDAPL Calendar, curator Amanda Ngoho Reavey (Tea & Tattered Pages, 2017)

“MONICA LEWINSKY” and “LISTING” in Moss Trill, editor William Allegrezza
ABOUT THE POET

Eileen R. Tabios has released over 40 collections of poetry, fiction, essays, and experimental biographies from publishers in eight countries and cyberspace. More information is available at http://eileenratabios.com
Locofo Chaps

Eileen Tabios’ *To Be An Empire Is To Burn*

Charles Perrone's *A CAPacious Act*

Joel Chace's *America’s Tin*

More information on Locofo Chaps can be found at www.moriapoetry.com.
“one of the more adventuresome and truly creative poets before the public today.”
-- Grady Harp, Amazon Hall of Fame Reviewer