

To The Man I Married

LIT001 – PHILIPPINE LITERATURE

THE AUTHOR

Angela Caridad Legaspi Manalang was born on August 2, 1907 in Guagua, Pampanga to parents, Felipe Dizon Manalang (born in Mexico, Pampanga) and Tomasa Legaspi (whom she hardly mentions). However, their family later settled in the Bicol region, particularly in Albay. Caring as she is fondly called studied at St. Agnes Academy in Legaspi, where she graduated valedictorian in elementary. In her senior year, she moved to St. Scholastica's College in Malate, Manila, where her writing started to get noticed.

THE AUTHOR

Angela Manalang was among the first generation female students at the University of the Philippines. Angela initially enrolled in law, as suggested by her father. However, with the advice of her professor C.V. Wickers, who also became her mentor, she eventually transferred to literature.

It was also during her education at the University of the Philippines that she and poet, Jose Garcia Villa developed a lifelong rivalry. Both poets vied for the position of literary editor of The Philippine Collegian, which Manalang eventually held for two successive years.

THE AUTHOR

In her junior year, she was quietly engaged to Celedonio Gloria whom she married. She graduated summa cum laude with the degree of Ph.B. in March 1929.

After graduation, Manalang-Gloria worked briefly for the Philippine Herald Mid-Week Magazine. However, this was cut short when she contracted tuberculosis.

BY ANGELA CARIDAD L. MANALANG-GLORIA
TO THE MAN I MARRIED

I
You are my earth and all the earth implies:
The gravity that ballasts me in space,
The air I breathe, the land that stills my cries
For food and shelter against devouring days.
You are the earth whose orbit marks my way
And sets my north and south, my east and west,
You are the final, elemented clay
The driven heart must turn to for its rest.

If in your arms that hold me now so near
I lift my keening thoughts to Helicon
As trees long rooted to the earth uprear
Their quickening leaves and flowers to the sun,
You who are earth, O never doubt that I
Need you no less because I need the sky!

II
 I can not love you with a love
 That outcompares the boundless sea,
 For that were false, as no such love
 And no such ocean can ever be.

But I can love you with a love
 As finite as the wave that dies
 And dying holds from crest to crest
 The blue of everlasting skies.

A TRANSLATION

I
 Ikaw ang aking mundo at ang lahat nitong hinihiwatig:
 Ang grabidad na nagpapapirmi sa akin sa kalawakan,
 Ang hanging nilalanghap, ang lupang sa iyak ay nagpapatid
 Para sa pagkai't silong laban sa mga araw na sakmalan.
 Ikaw ang mundo na ang daangtala'y takda sa aking daan
 At nagtatakda ng hilaga't timog, silanga't kanluran ko,
 Ikaw ang elementadong luad na s'yang kahulihulihan
 Kung saan lumiliko't nagpapahinga ang pagod na puso.

Kung sa iyong mga bisig na hawak ako ngayong kay lapit
 Sa Helicon itaas ko ang panaghoy ng saloobin ko
 Tulad ng mga punong baon sa mundo't patungo ay langit
 At mga dahon at bulaklak nilang sa araw ang patungo,
 Ikaw na siyang mundo, ay huwag pagdudahan na may patid
 Ang hal'ga mo sa'kin 'pagkat kailangan ko rin ang himpapawid!

II.
 'Di kita kayang mahalín na may pag-ibig
 Na hinihigit ang dagat na walang hanggan,
 'Pagkat huwad ito, waring walang pag-ibig
 At walang gayong dagat na walang hangganan.

Ngunit ma'ring mahalín kitang may pag-ibig
 Na kasing hanggan ng mga alo'ng namamatay
 At abot-diling kapit sa galugod na higpit
 Ang asul ng langit na 'di mamamatay.

AN ANALYSIS

The poem, "To the Man I Married," metaphorically portrays a woman's love for her husband by comparing her need for him to her need for the earth.

It is not wholly a poem regarding the love of a wife to his husband. On the contrary, it describes more in detail the limitations placed by the husband to his wife: the domestication of women. He gives everything she needs and because of this, the wife became dependent on the husband ("The air I breathe... whose orbit marks my way And sets my north and south...").

The poem depicts a woman, now accustomed and limited to the reality of marriage, telling her husband how she loves him in the most realistic description as possible: earthly and mortal. She tells him how, even when he has provided everything for her, she still longs for the ambitions she needed to abandon and how, even when she needs her dreams, this does not lessen her love for him.

Part I:

Part I of Angela Manalang Gloria's "To the Man I Married" is a combination English/Italian sonnet: it consists of an octave with the rime scheme ABABCDCD and in the sestet EFEFGG. The overall rime-scheme is that of the English sonnet, but instead of three quatrains and a couplet, it features the octave and sestet.

Octave:

In the octave, the speaker makes the bold claim addressing the man she married: "You are my earth and all that earth implies." The speaker's claim alerts the reader to a metaphorical comparison: the addressee is her earth. The speaker's final point of comparison is both startling yet quite logical: her husband is like the earth, in that he is "the final, elemental clay / The driven heart must turn to for its rest."

And just what does "earth" imply? Because the person is her earth, he supplies her necessities for life:

-- "air" that she breathes, the fertile soil where her food is grown.
 -- "gravity that ballasts me in space,"
 -- He gives her direction by his "orbit" that "marks [her] way / And sets [her] north and south, [her] east and west."

Sestet:

As most octaves in Italian sonnets do, this octave has offered a thought that will receive a twist in the sestet. While the octave implies a very close and sustaining relationship between the speaker and her husband, the sestet asserts that that closeness does not completely satisfy all of the needs of the speaker as an individual: "If in your arms that hold me now so near / I lift my keening thoughts to another one."

Even as she acknowledges her close, nurturing relationship with her husband, she finds that she needs "another one," because of her "keening thoughts." And then she metaphorically compares herself to a tree whose roots though "long rooted to the earth" raise their "leaves and flowers to the sun."

She needs the earth, but she also needs the sky, just as the earth does, just as trees need the sun. That does not diminish her love for and attachment to her husband, who is her earth.

The speaker wants to make that fact quite clear so she repeats her claim: "You who are earth, O never doubt that I / Need you no less because I need the sky."

Yes, she loves him, but as a woman and as a person, she too has her own ambitions and dreams. However, she can no longer reach these dreams as she is now committed and accustomed to her life as a wife and mother; she can only look on and try to reach out ("If in your arms that hold me now so near... As trees long rooted to the earth uprear...").

Part II:

Part II consists of two quatrains with the rhyme scheme ABAB, ACDC, in which the speaker asserts that she does not want to overstate her case about her love for her husband, and she even backtracks somewhat. Although he is metaphorically her earth, she really cannot compare her love for him to the ocean, because "no such love / And no such ocean can ever be." But she can love him in a finite way, like the waves that keep crashing against the shore; after all, those waves do reflect "The blue of everlasting skies."

As such, it is no wonder that she would describe her love for her husband in a way that contradicts many poems depicting love for a man -- as a perfect, everlasting concept; her love is imperfect and so is her relationship with him ("I can not love you with a love, That outcompares the boundless sea... as no such love... can ever be.").

She speaks of her love as limited, only going as far as the earth may provide ("As finite as the wave that dies...") and tells the husband that his love is not the only one she seeks but also her ambition for greater things, though it does not hinder her love for him ("Need you no less because I need the sky!").

Thank you for listening!

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