

National Translation Month Premiere

***Fungi* by Rogelio Braga**

Translated from the Filipino by Kristine Ong Muslim



National Translation Month continues with a premiere: for the first time we're featuring a short story translated from the Filipino language. We are thrilled to share ***Fungi* by Rogelio Braga translated by Kristine Ong Muslim**. This short story is an excerpt of the groundbreaking anthology [*Ulirát: The Best Contemporary Stories in Translation from the Philippines*](#) published in March 2021 by [Gaudy Boy](#). A vital survey of the richness and diversity of modern Philippine short stories, *Ulirát* features fiction from Filipino, Cebuano, Hiligaynon, Ilocano, Waray, Kinaray-a, and Akeanon translated into English for the first time for international audiences. Many thanks to our friends at [Gaudy Boy](#) for providing this exquisite spotlight on translation from the Philippines.

We'd love to hear from you! Follow us on Twitter [@TranslateMonth](#), share using [#TranslationMonth](#), join our mailing list, submit a translation month event, or like our [Facebook](#) page. We hope you'll join us and celebrate your favorite translations of writers from all over the world throughout September.

—*Claudia Serea and Loren Kleinman*

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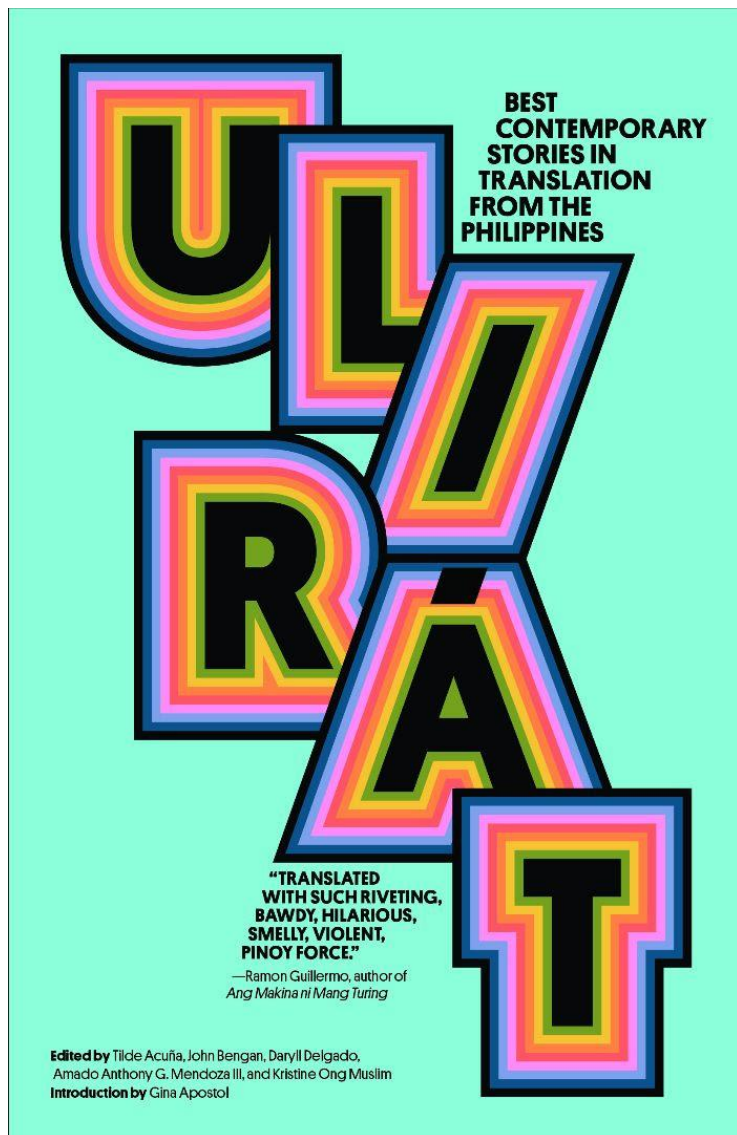
Excerpt from *Ulirát: The Best Contemporary Stories in Translation from the Philippines*

A groundbreaking survey of contemporary Philippine short fiction across seven different languages.

From the foreword by Gina Apostol.
“As a Filipino who dreams in Waray, I have waited too long for *Ulirát*.”

A man grows mushrooms from his nostrils, a town elects three mayors at the same time, a woman gives birth to a snake, and a boy wonders if his soldier father is an aswang.

Ulirát: The Best Contemporary Stories in Translation from the Philippines offers alternative visions of the islands beyond poverty and paradise. A vital survey of the richness and diversity of modern Philippine short stories, *Ulirát* features fiction from Filipino, Cebuano, Hiligaynon, Ilocano, Waray, Kinaray-a, and Akeanon translated into English for the first time for international audiences. Vigorous writing from Filipino writers living in different parts of the archipelago re-animate Duterte’s Philippines, dramatizing everything from the drug wars and widespread corruption to environmental degradation in surprisingly surreal and illuminating ways. *Ulirát*, which is Tagalog for “consciousness,” champions a more expansive, nuanced conception of Filipino literature beyond the confines of English-language Filipino literature.



Praise for *Ulirát*

“This collection is a classic. . . no other anthology has given me this pleasure: the existential jolt of recognizing ways of seeing my world that I have, in fact, experienced but, despite all my years of reading, have not encountered on the page. . . Above all, these stories lay bare blunt historical, political, and economic realities that remain, on many levels, unspeakably surreal. . . as a Filipino who dreams in Waray, I have waited too long for *Ulirát*.”

—Gina Apostol, author of *Insurrecto*, from the “Foreword”

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Excerpt from *Ulirát: The Best Contemporary Stories in Translation from the Philippines*

FUNGI

by Rogelio Braga

Translated from Filipino by Kristine Ong Muslim

Biring's first contact with its slippery surface brought only momentary surprise: she stepped on it and slipped. It was sheer white, all too radiant under the plastic sachet of Tide Ultra. Her surprise turned to bewilderment when she picked it up. It was scintillating, even through the hair strands and clumps of pubic hair adhering to it. Biring quickly pocketed it, rushed to the dilapidated hut she called home. She secretly slipped it behind the altar. *There, right, nobody would see it there*, she whispered to herself.

The next day, she invited her friend Buni to play with her at the itaas. She told her there was another truck carrying old fabric that they could scavenge to resell to the tailor at the corner outside of the Promised Land.

"Let's go, Biring," said Buni. "Let's play jump at the itaas."

She ended up being called Buni because, according to the people of the Promised Land, when she came out of her mother, the first thing that the midwife assisting in her delivery noticed was the ringworm infestation that almost covered her left arm. She was said to be the only child in the Promised Land who developed ringworm rashes where the said fungal infection occurred in dense circular clusters.

Biring refused Buni's invitation, having lost her interest in playing. It was as if there was something that beckoned for her to return to the hut, to the altar, to the white thing behind it. "Buni, come," she told her friend. "There's something I need to show you."

"Why, how come you no longer want to play at the itaas. Let's go. We're better off spending our time there, where there are lots of discarded fabric for us to take."

"No, stay here," Biring exhorted. "I told you, there's something I need to show you."

"What is it?"

“Magic,” mumbled Biring.

Buni’s eyes widened. “Really? Don’t mess with me, or I’ll beat you up.”

Arriving at Biring’s hut, the two decided to wait around until Biring’s parents left to collect *pagpag*—or leftovers from restaurants, including half-eaten meat cuts from restaurant patrons—to be re-cooked for dinner.

Biring extricated the thing she hid behind the altar. “See here. It’s magic, right?”

“Wow, Biring, where did you get this?” Buni asked.

“At the itaas, when I was scavenging for scrap metal.”

Buni inspected it, carefully removing the hair strands and clumps of pubic hair on its surface. It shone even more brilliantly without all the hair stuck to it.

“It smells funny, Biring,” Buni said.

“Stupid, you should not have sniffed it!”

The thing, indeed, gave off a strangely pleasant smell. And the smell wouldn’t come off their palms. Their hands were even tainted with whitish streaks.

“Hide this, Biring. Your father might take it. Can we sell it?”

“I don’t know. I don’t want to sell it. This is mine.” She quickly secured it inside her pocket.

That night, Biring had a hard time sleeping. Her forehead was once again throbbing. And just like before, a rash was forming on that sore part of her body. It was always this way. There were days when rashes suddenly appeared on her body. The first time it happened, it was on her cheek, and her mother told her that it wasn’t rashes but scales, like those of a fish. And, it itched. It itched like hell. Her father said that her itchy scales were more than just scales. The next morning, while waiting for a truck from the countryside, Buni noticed the pus suppurating from the scaly lesions on Biring’s cheek. Buni wiped the pus away.

“Nanay said they were scales,” Biring said.

“I had the same thing, too,” Buni said, showing an infected part of her rump.

“Oh, you also have scales.”

“They tend to bleed when it’s hot. Tatay said the yellow thing that’s coming out of them is mucus,” Buni explained.

“Will this go away?”

“Yes, I think so. All of us at home have it.”

It did not surprise Biring to learn that her mother ultimately developed scales between her breasts, that her sibling had the same at the side of her mouth, that her father had his at the back of his ear. There were always nights when every single one of them was forced into wakefulness by the maddening itch of the scales.

Biring sat up, went to the altar. And because there was no rain last night, there was none of that sickly sweet stench inside the house. Her father likened the cloying smell to that of fermenting pineapple.

The Promised Land stank when it rained. The heady odor was produced by a combination of rotting food, rusting tin cans, vegetables, plastic, fabric scraps, all the broken castaways that were the sources of livelihood for Biring and Buni.

“What are you doing, you godforsaken kid?” Biring’s father called out to her when he saw her going to the altar. “Why are you still up?”

“Nothing. I just have to get something.”

Biring could not help but bring the thing close to her nose so she could inhale that familiar odor again. The strong odor persisted long after she had moved it away from her nose. At one point, she noticed how the sweat from her palms made the thing more slippery to the touch and intensified its already overwhelming smell. She toyed with it some more, in awe of how its contact with her sweaty palms made it near-impossible to hold. It had grown slick to the point where it was like liquid slipping away from her grasp. The smell of magic was stronger now.

At first light the very next morning, Biring rushed to the itaas to tell Buni what she discovered about the thing.

“Really? Can we try it in water?” Buni suggested.

They headed to the lower part of the Promised Land, where the Spring was located. The Spring was in no way an actual spring where pristine groundwater flowed. The supposed “spring” was the stagnant, coffee-colored water that collected around the base of a mountainous garbage dump. The Promised Land’s touted Spring was the rainy season’s runoff around the colossal pile of cloth fabric bundles, filth, rotting vegetables, empty tin cans, plastic bags, and plastic implements, cast-offs that outlived their usefulness.

“Go ahead,” Biring told Buni. “Do it.”

Buni plunked her hand in the Spring. Their eyes widened in surprise when they saw the dirty water around Buni’s hand instantly turn white—not clear but white. Buni swished the thing in her hand, just like what Biring did the night before.

Whatever it was that the two children started when they made the thing interact with water—it spread. It spread farther like the invisible magic of an invisible god, drowning out the suffocating stench of the Promised Land with its scent.

“Buni, there are bubbles! There are bubbles!” Biring jumped up and down with glee as the fetid water of the Spring began to bubble.

“Shhh,” Buni was quick to remind her friend. “Don’t shout, stupid, someone might see us and take this away from us.” Then she held out her hand, offering it to Biring. “Here, your turn.”

Biring went through the same motions as Buni, and the effects were the same. The two frolicked in their newfound fascination, slathered the water from the bubbling Spring across their cheeks, shoulder, forehead, thighs—and anywhere the water touched appeared to glow radiant. Its scent also clung to their bodies. In the days that followed, Biring and Buni continued to secretly bask in what they believed was the thing’s magical powers.

“Buni, what’s wrong with you?” Biring asked her friend when she once noticed her curled up with stomach pain.

“It really hurts. I can’t take it anymore.”

“When did that start? Did you eat the discarded food again from fast-food containers dumped at the Spring?”

“No. This all started when we used that thing.”

“Stupid girl, did you put it in your mouth?” Biring began her victim-blaming.

“Of course not. Why should I when it was bitter.”

“See, so you tasted it? How else would you know it was bitter.”

“But Biring, have you felt anything different since we started using the magic?”

“No, why do you say so?” Biring lied. Her skin felt oddly smooth and fresh the day they played with the bubbles made by the thing when it interacted with the dirty water of the Spring. Along with the refreshing feel of her smooth skin was the stomach-churning stench of the Promised Land. But, it was as if her smooth skin resisted the greasy touch of the Promised Land’s sickening air. What changed, though, was her heightened sensitivity to odors. And then her sense of taste. Latundan bananas, her family’s usual dinner fare, made her nauseous. Her sibling also mentioned how she smelled differently. And each night when Biring and her sibling had no choice but to fit themselves in their small sleeping area, she noticed how her sibling kept covering his nose.

One day, the two friends surprised all the people at the itaas, who were scavenging and hawking their scavenged wares. Biring and Buni were covered up from head to toe, even their nose areas. Their fellow scavengers smirked. Some nodded with amusement and hurled profanities at the two.

“Don’t mind them,” Buni told her friend. “Them putang ina are just envious.”

That night, Biring excitedly accosted Buni.

“What’s up? You have another news?”

“See this,” Biring said, showing her forehead. “My scales are gone!”

Buni stared in amazement. From that time on, they rubbed the thing any chance they got against their scaly skin.

At some point, they noticed something about the magical thing: it was shrinking.

“No, it’s going to grow back to its normal size,” Buni said with conviction, fervently believing what she said was true.

“I don’t think so. Can’t you see how it is becoming smaller and smaller.”

The thing eventually shrunk to the size of an average thumb, which worried Biring.

“You said it would grow back to its normal size again. Why did you lie to me?” Biring sobbed as she confronted Buni, who did not know what to do or what to say as she was in a panic, too.

“What if we try to bury it in the soil, just like a seed growing into a tree,” Buni said. “What do you say?”

And so, they *planted* the thing, watered the ground where it was buried with water from the Spring. Days passed, and of course, nothing sprouted from the spot of ground they chose as the perfect place for growing the thing. And the longer they stayed at the Promised Land, the more unbearable the sour reek of the place became, the more nauseous they felt. The cloth covering their nose to ward off the nauseating smell became thicker and thicker. Their bodies ached for the thing’s scent, how it had made their skin smooth, how it felt especially invigorating when they rubbed it against various parts of their body.

“Something’s wrong, Buni, how come the magic thing hasn’t grown yet?”

“Putang ina, I don’t know. Should we dig it up?”

They did dig it up. Biring broke down, unable to find the thing in the spot of ground where they buried it.

“Where is it!”

“I don’t know. Maybe it decided to leave us. Or maybe God took it. ’Tang ina, Biring. Our magic is gone.”

“Do something, Buni, please do something . . .” Biring cried.

In the nights that followed, despair proved to be overwhelming for the two. They still could not get over the memory of the thing’s slick surface, scent, and radiance. For each day that they pined for the thing, the more intense their hatred of their situation became—the festering greasy feel of their skin, the nauseating fermented-pineapple odor of the Promised Land, the flies that were attracted to their skin. There were even days that they closeted themselves in their respective huts. They also could no longer tolerate going to the itaas to scavenge for sellable items in the garbage dump.

“Buni, I have an idea,” she told her friend one morning.

“What?”

“Let’s hitch a ride in the garbage truck. We look for the magic outside. Someone might have taken it, or it found itself another Promised Land . . . I don’t know. Bahala na! What happens will happen.”

“You’re so stupid. You know there’s no way I’ll be allowed to do that.”

“Why not? It’s your fault we lost the magic. You were the one who said we should plant it . . . because you have shit for brains!” Biring taunted her friend.

Buni remembered how it was, indeed, her suggestion to plant the thing in the ground.

“Now what? Come with me.”

“All right,” Buni finally relented.

The two chose the last garbage truck taking the route to the Promised Land. Garbage trucks were scheduled to arrive at night in the Promised Land. Departure was at dawn. And because it was still dark then, nobody noticed Buni and Biring surreptitiously hiding themselves under the bundles of sacks and cartons.

“Pay attention to where we’re going, Buni, we might not be able to find our way back,” Biring whispered to her friend.

“Why are you always so stupid? Didn’t your nanay and tatay tell you that all garbage trucks in this world end up in the Promised Land? If ever I get lost, doesn’t matter where I am in the world, all I need to do is to hitch a ride in a garbage truck and surely, I would find my way back to the Promised Land.”

“How come I can still smell the pineapple smell of the Promised Land?”

“Because we’re in a garbage truck!”

Alighting from the garbage truck, they were immediately struck by the familiar scent of the magical thing they thought they had lost and had to go out of their way to find outside the Promised Land. Their knees trembled with anticipation. They knew they were close to finding it. They, however, had to settle for the subtle whiff of the thing’s distinctive scent, which was often overpowered by the thick black exhaust fumes of motor vehicles. Interestingly, Biring and Buni could smell the thing off every person they encountered on the streets.

Slowly, they could no longer feel their gorge rising; they were no longer nauseous. The stink of the Promised Land was like a distant memory. The syrupy air? It dissipated with the dizzying view of skyscrapers. Biring thought the impossibly tall buildings looked like the thighs of derelict giants that lived in the clouds.

“Buni, look, a big Spring!”

“That’s not the Spring . . . that’s Pasig River!” Buni said with barely concealed pride.

“I didn’t know Pasig is this beautiful. What do you say we take a bath there later?”

“Tatay said it’s deep. You know, he also told me that was where his mother and her three siblings went under when they were still kids,” Buni recounted as she and Biring watched the grieving waters of Pasig.

“Went under? Why?”

“Tatay said if your hunger pangs won’t stop and when there’s so much pain in every part of your body that it feels as if you and your body are two separate things, then that’s when you should go under the Pasig River?”

“But why? What did he say was in Pasig?”

“The Mutya. Tatay said you should thoroughly wash yourself with clean water. The Mutya won’t let dirty people in her domain. Tatay also said that the Mutya’s dinner table is heaped with lots and lots of food. She’s said to be rich and generous . . . as long as you’ve cleaned yourself well.”

Biring contemplated Buni’s recollections about the Mutya. “Do you want us to visit the Mutya?”

“How?”

“We just have to find the magic, and rub it all over our body. Remember its smell? I’m sure the Mutya will also like the smell,” Biring said and then paused, realizing the fact that they had yet to find the thing. “We have to find it first.”

“I tell you, Biring, just like in my father’s story, let me go under the Pasig if I can no longer take the pain of my empty stomach. Let me be the one to use the magic first.”

“No problem. But what really happened to your father’s mother and her siblings?”

“The Mutya did not allow them to return to the surface. They were given care and fed delicious foods. Tatay said that whether or not he had stomach pains, he would still choose to go under the Pasig.”

The two continued walking. They tried hard to track down the thing. They asked around, but people shooed them away. At night, they slept at the Pasig riverbank or lulled themselves to sleep by counting passing cars along Lawton Avenue. Whenever they were hungry, they ate food scraps in dump sites.

The city was unbelievably vast. The thing, on the other hand, remained diminutive and out of reach. This did not discourage the two, who barely remembered how far away they were from the Promised Land. As for the city, it kept changing what it wore daily: its outfits were always new and never boring.

Biring and Buni did not tire from observing the tall buildings, the vehicles that hurtled past them, the schoolbag-toting children on their way to school, the cars, the people inside the cars. All these seemed like an entirely different world for them. This was the world of enchantment. This was the one true source of the magical thing they were looking for.

One day, they passed by the foyer of a towering building. From the foyer came a gust of chilly air that seemed to beckon out to them. Entering the building’s foyer gave one the sense that the entire world was reduced into a gigantic shoebox that could hold all the people in the world. The building’s exterior was festooned with flags of various colors and designs. The chilly air welcomed them as they joined the throng of people entering the building. Biring nearly cried when she saw the high ceilings and its sparkling fixtures, the mirrors that glinted with the truth—if only they could show her the truth—and the floor that appeared to her to be shifting in its shallow intake of breath. She saw her reflection in the mirrors. Her hair taking on the color of subsoil, her darkening eye bags, the in and out motion of stringy, dirt-encrusted tangles of nose hair. But, it was the scent of the thing that the two found deeply enchanting.

“The magic is here,” Biring said with certainty.

They followed the thing’s scent trail. It took them almost the whole day searching. When they finally found the place where the scent was most pronounced, they stealthily snuck themselves in by timing the movement of the security guards stationed near the building’s entrances.

“The smell’s really strong here,” Biring said.

“Yes, it’s here. I can feel it.”

They inspected every glass display stand. There were glass display stands for noodles, tinned goods, milk, and many others. They were amazed by the excessive displays, which to them represented the incarnation of another Promised Land. The wrapper design on every commodity was surprisingly familiar to them, too. Back in the Promised Land, instant noodle wrappers were strung into flaglets for Christmastime, the biscuit cans were either sold or used as dippers, buckets, or rice cookers, and the tin cans that could no longer be reused were flattened, weighed, and sold.

“Biring!” Buni called out when she found shelves filled with many different sizes and colored variations of the *thing*.

It shocked the two to be faced with way too many pieces of the thing, the thing they called magic, gathered in one place. There’s the thing in a box, in a plastic wrapper, in its bare form but decked with a red or pink ribbon. They wanted to stop the people from taking more and more of the thing to place in their grocery carts. Some were taking tens, dozens of the thing. One old woman was even pushing a grocery cart filled to the brim with boxes of the thing.

They could not even bring themselves to touch it. They were not the only ones who owned bits and pieces of that magic. Some people were even hoarding more of the magic that they deserved in this lifetime or the next. Biring could not help but cry at the unfairness of it all. She faced Buni, who was still stunned by the sight of people after people taking what used to be their magic.

“Buni, let’s go. Let’s get out of this place.”

They sat, heartsick and sulking, among the beggars living near Pasig.

“What do we do now?” asked Buni.

“We have to be able to take home at least one piece of the thing.”

“But how? We don’t have—we don’t have any money.”

“We do what we do best. We scavenge the dump for items to sell.”

“How do we sell them? Where? We can’t just go back to the Promised Land.”

“It’s settled. We sell scavenged items.”

“I have an idea,” Buni said, making a dramatic gesture. She extended her open palm and made a forlorn expression. “I’m sure this will ensure we get one piece of the thing to take home with us.”

Biring did not feel quite so sure of the idea. “I don’t know. I haven’t tried doing that before.”

“Don’t worry. We’re simply going to try, see if we can get away with it. Besides, why wouldn’t you want to not get at least one of the magic?”

“I want.”

“All right, let’s go by the roadside and beg for money.”

Their plan of begging for alms commenced the very next morning. They did it in front of Andrés Bonifacio’s statue, the one that depicted the leader of the Philippine Revolutionary Movement with his hands on his hips, at the plaza right in front of the Philippine Post Office. The two extended their open palms, avoiding direct eye contact with the people passing by. With their necks and arms getting tired and numb from keeping the same posture, they said over and over, “One peso please, one peso please.”

“Buni, are you okay,” Biring said, worried about her friend who was lying curled up with persistent stomach pain.

“Pain’s too much. I can’t take this anymore.”

“Squeeze down, squeeze it down tightly. That’s what we do at home. We squeeze as hard as we can until the pain goes away.”

“It hurts all over. I think the Mutya is calling me.”

“Wow, Buni,” Biring said, rising to her feet. “Lucky you. I think I must buy the magic as soon as possible.”

She quickly slipped her hand inside her pocket. She searched Buni’s pocket, too, and gathered all the coins they managed to amass after hours of begging by the roadside. She crossed Lawton, walked the rear of the Metropolitan Theatre to reach the building—still pulsing with its chilly air—that held the thing they wanted the most.

But it was different this time. A security guard spotted Biring before she even stepped into the marble floor of the building.

“I’m only here to buy something,” she pleaded to the guard.

“Get out of here,” the guard said.

Biring showed him the pocketful of coins. She had faith in the money’s ability to buy her the privilege of entry into the building. But the security guard harshly whisked Biring’s proffered hand away, and the coins clattered across the floor. Biring bent down fast to retrieve the scattered coins, fearful of people snatching them. She did not notice that nobody was paying attention to her and her coins.

It was only when she was at a safe distance from the guard that she had the courage to hurl profanities. “Putang ina mo! Putang ina mo! I hope your eldest child dies!”

She walked, her shoulders slumping with the weight of her hopeless situation, back to the Pasig riverbank where she and Buni were encamped. *Buni needs to be clean to face the Mutya . . . she has to be clean.*

Walking the stretch of plaza in front of the Philippine Post Office, Biring bought a bottle of mineral water from a street vendor.

She came upon Buni wailing and clutching her stomach in pain. Buni’s mouth was open in a garbled scream, shedding bits of her cracked dry lips. Her eyes were rolled back, her legs shaking. Biring was used to this sight. Five of her siblings went through the same eye-rolling and convulsions, the same agonized groaning finality of mouths impossibly stretched so open that the flailing soul inside the body was already visible through the deep dark well of the throat.

Biring twisted the cap of the mineral water bottle, placed a few drops on her palm. And using her finger pads, she cleaned Buni, the dirty spaces between her fingers, her elbows, her knees, her toes. Using the hem of her clothes, Biring carefully rubbed the parts of Buni’s body that were supposed to be clean so she could enter the Mutya’s realm in Pasig.

Buni’s convulsion was still not letting up. Biring asked for Buni’s forgiveness for her failure to buy the magic, which Buni so desperately wanted to rub against her body before presenting herself to the Mutya of Pasig.

“They didn’t let me inside the building, Buni. I was stopped at the doorway. Forgive me.”

Because Buni could no longer stand up, Biring had to carry her. Biring was surprised at her friend's grossly lightweight body. It was like hauling a sack filled with plastic. Carrying her friend, Biring lingered in an area close to one side of Pasig. She decided that by the next scheduled passing of an LRT train, she would release Buni to the Mutya. Biring, anticipating the train's arrival, pressed her chest hard against her friend's stomach in the hope that it would alleviate Buni's pain.

When Biring had the chance to glimpse her friend's face, she was struck by something she hadn't really noticed before: she and Buni resembled each other. Biring saw Buni's tears, and she could not help but weep, as well.

"I will also visit the Mutya, Buni. Set aside some foods in the feast for me." Biring took the LRT train advancing ahead as signal to drop Buni in Pasig River and turned away so she would not see the black water engulf her friend's body.

That night, she hitched a ride in another garbage truck, realized that Buni was right after all. Every single garbage truck in the world was headed to the Promised Land.

By dawn, she reached the Promised Land. Saw the crowd waiting for the truck's arrival. Saw the same garbage mountain with its myriad colors, textures, sizes, aromas. Aromas that, when taken together, smelled sour, like rotting pineapples. Swarms of flies greeted her return to the Promised Land. She never forgot that this was the exact same place where she first found the thing of magic.

"Relief! Relief!" Shouts rang out. People ran in the direction of parked trucks. Biring also joined the rush of people.

An old woman handed to Biring a plastic bag full of relief goods. Biring immediately untied the knot and opened the plastic bag. She saw repacked bags of rice, canned goods, instant noodles, and a box of the thing that she and Buni were looking for. Once again, she now held the magic. She took a whiff, inhaled the pleasant smell. She started walking to the direction of the hut she and her family called home, lugging the plastic bag containing the relief goods and her magic. ♦



About the author

Rogelio Braga is an exiled playwright, novelist, essayist, publisher, and a political activist **from the Philippines**. He published two novels, a collection of short stories, and a book of plays before he left the archipelago in 2018. He was a fellow of the Asian Cultural Council for theatre in Southeast Asia in 2016. His first play written entirely in English, *Miss Philippines*, is currently under development commissioned by the Yellow Earth Theatre in the United Kingdom. He lives in London.



About the translator

Kristine Ong Muslim is the author of *The Drone Outside* (Eibonvale Press, 2017), *Black Arcadia* (University of the Philippines Press, 2017), *Meditations of a Beast* (Cornerstone Press, 2016), *Butterfly Dream* (Snuggly Books, 2016), *Age of Blight* (Unnamed Press, 2016), *Lifeboat* (University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 2015), and several other books of fiction and poetry. Some of her recent translation works include Marlon Hacla's *Melismas* (Oomph Press, 2020) and Mesándel Virtusio Arguelles's *Three Books* (Broken Sleep Books, 2020). Widely anthologized, Muslim's short stories have appeared in *Conjunctions*, *Dazed Digital*, and *World Literature Today*. She grew up and continues to live in a rural town in southern Philippines.

Additional praise for *Ulirát*

“With a manifesto-like introduction which crashes in with guns blazing against the hallowed literary establishment, the stories in this collection are translated with such riveting, bawdy, hilarious, smelly, violent, Pinoy force that we are almost led to believe, once again, in the glorious possibility of translation.”
—Ramon Guillermo, author of *Ang Makina ni Mang Turing and Translation & Revolution*