

**barangay**

Also by Adrian De Leon

**Rouge**

**barangay**  
*an offshore poem*

**Adrian De Leon**

Photographs by Jason Edward Pagaduan



A Buckrider Book

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To my family



**Author's Note**

██████████,  
may you read this from the haze.







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**barangay, n.**  
*a preamble*

*venus*

can a *bangka*  
hold us

when the ocean  
stings your limbs?

can these sails  
steer us past the breach

when *clotilda* billows  
you around like shrouds?

will these outriggers  
keep us afloat

when slavers ledger  
you as dead weight?

can we cradle skin  
against resplendent skin

when guineamen  
gut an umbilical past?

will we paddle  
ashore

a stolen land?

**for the archipelagos**

from Kiribati

to Castries

from Luzon

to Lanai

from Ainu Mosir

to Aotearoa

from Tawi-Tawi

to Tonga

to Scarborough

from Singapore

what tempest strands us  
on the disappearing shores?

*(depuis Édouard Glissant)*

in the  
 salish sea,  
 our clock flickers  
 from *the wake*:  
 when a blaze breaks  
 the lavender, we call the embers  
 morning; a wrestle between  
 desperate ray and  
 relentless cloud, we name  
 their romp the afternoon; if amber  
 blinds the retina, we bid  
 good night to the sun; if ice seems  
 to shimmer in waves as above,  
 we greet the night.  
 the stern germinates  
 into the earth, branching timelines  
 like cedars evergreening into the shore.  
 can we burn the water's waxy  
 leaves into necessary medicine?  
 will we breathe its smoke until our  
 memory scars over? or will  
 our time be denied  
 from us until the shoal  
 beds the dead  
 into the grains of an hourglass?

## **An American Delusion**

When AMERICA frees you  
    from Soleimani,  
you Saigon jungle people who  
    scurry  
from your boondocks will welcome  
    the liberators  
of Guam from the Spanish clutches  
    around your  
Caribbean island. Rest easy,  
    little brown brothers,  
for AMERICA is here to frack  
    every ~~gook~~ rallying  
from the sand against First Secretary  
    Hussein – no comrade  
of yours. You will shout freedom  
    from camptowns,  
built to protect you from  
    the Supreme Leader of North  
San Salvador, keeping you stale  
    so you can gather bananas  
& maintain our AMERICA abroad  
    so that one day you can  
unearth each of your fingers  
    to frack that liquid black gift of  
freedom.

*January 2020*

**dung-aw**

belaboured brothers,

when you hammered  
each railroad stake  
into the earth,

did you hear them wail  
at their reunion  
with Shoshone blood?

did the soot  
sit unmourned?

did your femurs  
rattle the kindred chorus  
rearranging bones beneath you?

did you strike  
the first notes  
of the requiem we call

the Americas?

*(to Guangdong brethren at Promontory Point, Utah, 1869)*





**dung-aw**

when did each *now* curl  
around the stock exchange  
modular arithmetic

when did the cock's crow mark  
the morning ritual of whips  
the reaping that cracks at dawn

against fleshy gong  
grandfathered clock

nine deaths in sixty seconds

twohundredfortynine triggers  
seven months

as cyclical as shopping  
to bleed as periodic as breath

grief is a strange unending pause

clock release  
each name

clock around  
each rifle's neck

clock drown  
each magazine

*(for El Paso, Daytona and lives interrupted)*

	sky	constellates boats,
	the fleeting	fleshy archipelagos,
	brown	still flickering
	warm	with driftwood.
	drifters	dreamed too of azure
	spray-	ing penance on their
	toes	until <i>đại dương</i>
	fades	to navy black.
	some	
	up	
	crests,	
down	cradles	
cascading	the	
breach,	praying	
the saline		
sail to	safety	
<i>hál hañsat.</i>	here,	
passports	ori-	
gami island chains		
soaked stateless.		
	the ma-	
	rooned pilipinas	
	betrays the	
	blood scabbing	
from urban high-rises		
to people under		
street		
lights,		
dreaming <i>dagat</i>		
churning		
pasig river seances for their gone.		

**barangay, n.**

[maysa]

*ti baranggaymi*

our seas

wave

us

ashore

boxes

in algal

shoal

hands

to

home

