

ALFONSO STREET

By Eugene Gloria

In Sariaya, Quezon Province, where
my father's people live, bananas and
mangoes in colored cellophane adorn
windowsills like gaudy evening wear.
In Botong's pastorals, a fluvial fiesta
litters Laguna de Bay with lighted
tiny boats like a fleet of candled hopefuls.

Elsewhere, a nervous boy measures his week
with good days and bad days like innocents
walking on pavements wary of cracks.
In Caracas, a swarm of bees attacks a boy.
His dog shields his body with its own.
The boy lives; the dog dies shortly after.

On Alfonso Street, a kid I knew,
is paraded on a wooden wagon
with a matronly woman at the lead.
My metal trucks with missing wheels,
he once coveted. Stateside toys in chipped
reds and blues I got secondhand
from the children of American GIs.
His cart with wooden wheels, and rings
round his eyes, are gray as metal spokes.
What good are busted trucks to him
whose brand name toys are always new?
Fiesta prince with a shuttlecock crown,
fellow heir of bad blood.

In the kingdom of children where
we conjure angels from rain, a boy's
will could spin and hitch the earth.
Here my wheel-less truck remains.
An ashen kid, gray and gilded
is trundled by his mom in evening wear.

Drunken Boat (fall/winter 2001–02) and *Union: 15 Years of Drunken Boat, 50 Years of Writing from Singapore* (2015)