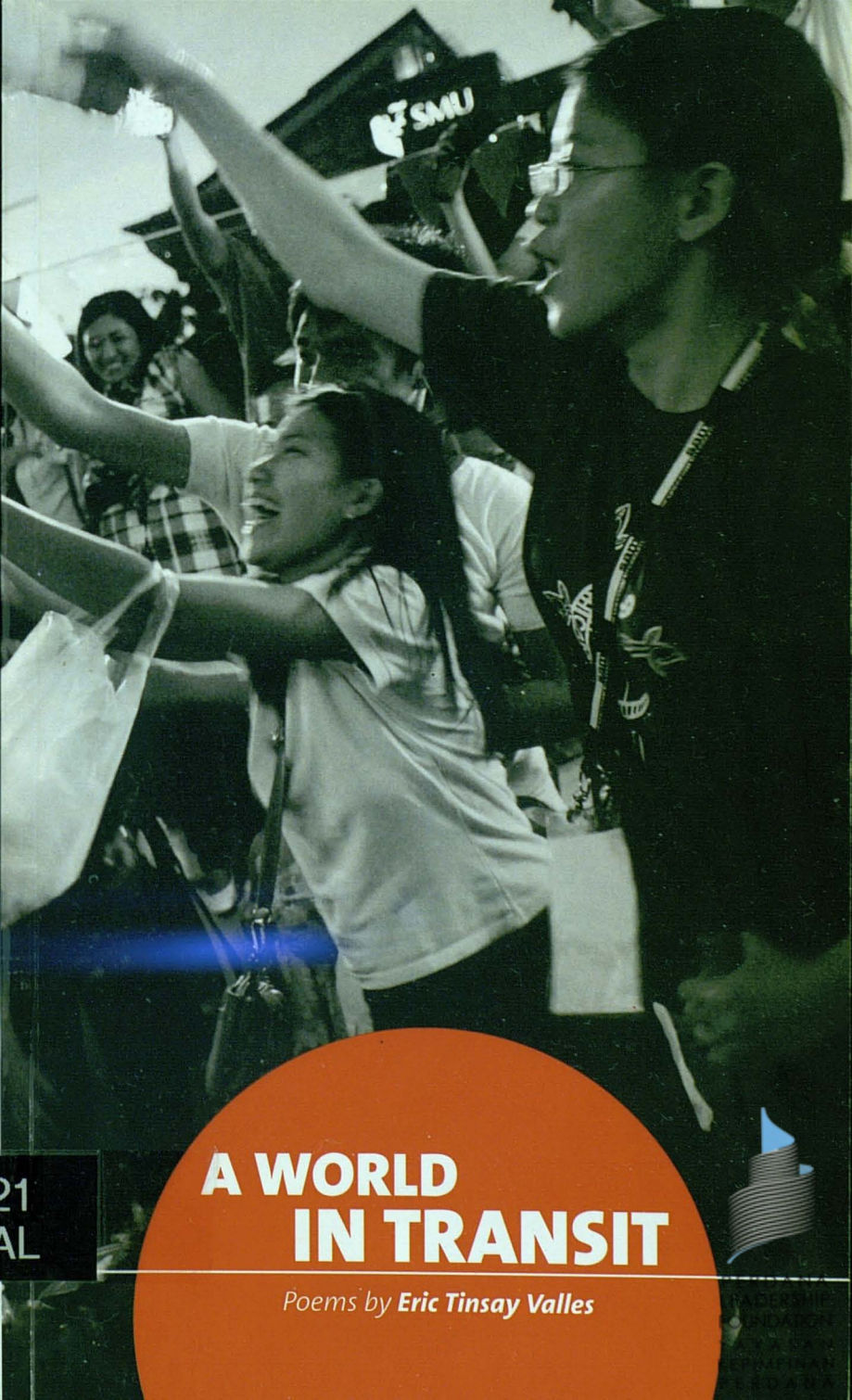

A WORLD IN TRANSIT

Poems by ***Eric Tinsay Valles***

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"Eric's poetry has a keen traveler's eye for detail and a child's appetite for curiosity."

— Felix Cheong, NAC Young Artist Award recipient (2000)

"An enthralling collection of poems. For a new poet, Eric has a mature, sophisticated eye that captivates with his poetry of displacement, globalization and migration."

— Dave Chua, Singapore Literature Prize (Commendation) recipient (1996)

"A poet who lives within and between different cultures, Eric Francis Tinsay Valles wears different skins and shows a ruthless curiosity for diverse ways of seeing and feeling. This collection of poems is a refreshing read in the way it unravels the lives of unsung heroes and places with gentle humor and charming honesty."

— Lim Siew Yea, Arts Educator

"This is the very first collection of Eric Tinsay Valles's work, which is already so well known in literary journals. *A World in Transit* contains poems that speak in many voices, though certain motifs recur and intersect. Rhythm and colour shift from page to page; rhyme-schemes vary, or vanish; fact and invention jostle each other as poetic form is explored from many angles. The poems reflect upon time and destiny, on culture, language, love, on politics and art, on the sacred and the mundane. They investigate terrains both social and inner, proving our daily confrontations with the self in a world in flux. The relation between thought, language, symbol and meaning is a central concern. Read this sequence through from page one, or start at any point and let its circles widen, or perhaps go to the lovely, light-syllabled final lyric and discover surprising ways back."

— Dominique Hecq, Poet and Creative Writing Professor,
Swinburne University of Technology

"A *World in Transit* is a lively window on life in emerging, changing Asia. Its themes which include the interaction between people, nature and the urban environment, and the plight of migrant workers as they search for a better life, rest on sharp observation and a sense of grace dissolved in place. Valles's work distills the acute drama in human behavior and celebrates the transcendence of limits."

— Edwin Thumboo, Emeritus Professor, Department of English
Language and Literature, National University of Singapore

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Poems by Eric Tinsay Valles

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To Papa, Mama, Edwin
and all those who work for
God's glory everywhere

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What
is this world? And what doth man desire?
Now with his love, and now in his cold grave
Alone without any company.

– Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales* (Trans.)

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CONTENTS

10 Foreword
12 Preface

POINTS OF DEPARTURE

16 A World in Transit: A Prologue
18 A Reflection on Seeing Taal Lake
19 Visiting Scholars at Christmas
20 Miracle at Novena
21 March to Clementi
22 A Queue
24 Postcards from Taiwan
26 Stir-Fried Rat
27 Confucius on Wheels
30 Fragment of a Head of an Unknown Queen
31 A Chinese Trader Returns to His Lover in Ma-I
32 Shekem to Dina (A Samal Love Poem)
34 Footsteps of the Great Malayan
36 Rhythm of the Railroad
38 Writing on Epifanio de los Santos Avenue (EDSA) in 1986
40 A Wedding in the Middle of a Coup Attempt in Manila
42 Fleeing a Mindanao Town

CROSSROADS

46 Grazing
48 Kite Flying
50 Out of Judea
51 Astir on Whitley Road
52 In Transit at Chiang Kai Shek Airport

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54 Epitaph for Rama
56 Nonoy's Farewell
58 A Taipei Businessman at the Macao Handover
60 A Foreign Journalist Detained in Zhuhai
62 *War of the Worlds* at the Biennale
63 A Sparrow's View of Shanghai's Pearl Tower
64 A South Asian near an Arundel Tomb
66 A Chinese Priest at Mass in Melbourne
68 Stranded in New York before a Conference
70 Picking Weeds
72 Singing about the Promised Land
74 Rooting for Pacquiao in Daly City

HOME IS THE FREE AIR

78 Awit ng Hayok sa Ibang Bayan
80 Flor Reunited with Her Family
82 Putting on the Merlion
84 Paper Crèche
85 Hokusai's "The Great Wave"
86 Aceh Reborn
88 Manga Firebird
89 The Beach in *Inception*
90 A Golden-Arched Diner in Bargo
92 Smuggling Roast Duck
93 Reunion
94 Singapore River on Exhibit
96 A Taikonaut's View of Earth
97 Where Art Is

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most memorable for their ability to make stories count in their creative recounting.

Eric's more recent pieces, written in Singapore, remind me of the lives of mendicant monks and travelling worshippers–those priest-poets who are also pilgrims and find their God and Word from itinerant wandering. While Eric's affection for his home and personal history in the Philippines is abundantly clear in many of these poems, one notices also his comfort with the urban tropes and vernacular of his adopted home. There is a natural ease to his deployment of both Tagalog and Singlish in many of these poems, as well as his evocation of conversation to propel his poem-stories onward, upward and forward.

I was privileged to work with Eric on early drafts of these and other poems during his participation in the National Arts Council's Mentor Access Project. During this time, I witnessed yet another of his priest-poet's qualities: patient, diligent and dogged attention to craft. It is all too easy for new writers to wait in vain for momentary flashes of inspiration, originating perhaps from a fickle Divinity or whimsical Muse. Eric understood the deeper truth that priestly experience, like other forms of calling and vocation, can bring: that the divine, whether poem, thought or otherwise, often lies at the other side of the onerous and mundane, and needs to be unearthed through painstaking refinement and toil. Watching the love and attention he gave these poems gives me confidence that they will not be the last word from him, and that he will be a priest-poet not "of old", but in and of our time.

Aaron Maniam
Author of *Morning at Memory's Border*
Mentor, National Arts Council Mentor Access Project

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