

**Bianca Denise Layog**

Age: 17, Grade: 12

School Name: Interlochen Arts Academy, Interlochen, MI

Educator: Brittany Cavallaro

Category: Poetry

---

## A Transient Index

### A

ACCLIMATIZE, what climbers on Mt. Everest have to do  
to get used to the lack of oxygen.

AD INFINITUM,  
endlessly, forever.

AGAD, whenever anyone was caught by surprise. Often a question  
of how.

ALBATROSS, a bird not commonly eaten by man.  
(See also: SEAGULL)

ANTI HISTAMINES, my uncle tells me I lack only in Asia. (See also: TAIWAN)  
He makes me pull down the bottoms of my eyes, tells me  
the reds of my eye sockets are littered with white.

ARCHES, a feature dancers wish for.

ARCHITECT, who my brother wants to be. My first  
dream, when I only knew how to pattern myself  
after him, after her.

ATTRIBUTION,  
as something I am taught to do.  
as causation, recognition.

AUDIENCES  
seem to be the only thing my English teachers care about  
for a very long time. They teach me to care about them, too.  
They ask me questions like *how must they feel?* and high-  
light words in red highlighter to ask me *how does this word*  
*speak to you?* At times they seem to think we are separate  
from the audience. When I leave, my mother gives me  
highlighters packaged in cardboard and glossy plastic.

AVENUES  
New York (See also: NUEVA ECIJA),  
when my father tells me to take photographs of myself  
on 5th, and then on 8th. Where the rich people are.  
Boston, I can't name a single avenue. It feels like the type of place  
that would have a lot of them. Instead, I remember streets.  
124 London St. Every shop closing at six,  
an apartment with neatly framed windows  
in green, a ratty old brown couch peeking out  
from the glass. Bicycles. Restaurants hidden  
underground.

Manila, Taft. The jeepney smoke curling into my eyes. Losing  
my mother's hand in the traffic. A motorcycle crushed  
a friend's foot, black puddles nestled into dips  
in the sidewalk. The lack of sidewalk. I don't know  
where Taft begins, only where it ends.

AWAKE, I keep waiting for it.  
Pinching myself, waiting for the other eye  
to drop in the apartment above me.

**B**

BABAD, to soak. At night my upper body  
floats in the tub. Once, I try to sit up,  
but my neck almost snaps. Water spills out the sides.  
I choke.

BABAERO, the man with the mistresses. In my childhood  
home we burn through many maids. I make up stories  
about each of them. All of them want my father. I don't  
know what desire is, only that the young maids feel  
adjacent to my family and so I refuse these additions. *You are  
not welcome*, I say, dumping dishes into the sink. *Stop looking  
at him like that. He would never want anything else* I say, running  
the clean water tap until my mug is full and lukewarm.

BAGGAGE, from the house to the airport and back  
again. My mother said *remember  
the cover*. I broke the wheels and ordered  
a coffee, tied my backpack straps around  
my carry-on's handles. They kept veering left.

BAGYO, the storms that we pray for. Our mayor  
was an alcoholic and always woke up late.  
In this story he is laughing and drunk. At midday,  
he orders classes to suspend until further notice.  
All around the city, children cheer and scream.  
The rain pounds on the roofs until everything bursts  
open. The next morning, the electric lines sit on the ground.  
Everything steams, then waits.

BARBER, whose shop I've never been to before. My father  
tells me that one day I'll bald. (See also: HATS)

BAROMETER, measuring pressure in a certain environment,  
predicting the next step.

BARTENDER, the man in the Richard Siken poem  
who I discover in Michigan. He wondered  
why a man was taking a girl out  
into the rain when she didn't want to go.  
Later this man enters his bar  
in an ugly undershirt. He draws the water stains  
stained across his ceiling on the bartop in black Sharpie  
and winces every time another boot falls  
from the floor above him. Nothing in this space  
reminds me of home.

BATH, a luxury present only in America. I fill the tub  
with water at night until the water scalds  
my ankles. The water is clear. My bathroom  
is lit by a salt lamp. I close the door  
and nearly suffocate. In the future, I leave  
my door wide open, alone in my bedroom.

BATOK,  
a movement I only associate with Manila.

BELLA GERANT ALLI,  
in which I hide under my sink. The pipes leak.

BIBO ERGO SUM,  
my family chants in my head.

BOARDING PASS, a stack of which lies stacked in

a zipped bag in a drawer in my dorm room's  
desk. Sometimes only bits of them remain,  
seat numbers printed on the cards with no destination.

BOBO, one of my mother's favorite words. I forget  
the flourish with which she would scream it,  
mouth puckered and then gaping.

BODY, the bald spot on the left side of my head  
is tender. Something lurks under the surface,  
something solid that I can press to move  
with my fingers. I beg my hair to grow back,  
wonder if one day I will go bald.

BOOT, sopping wet from the snow. At home  
there is no snow. Here, I stomp them  
on carpet and hope my neighbors  
under me don't hear the noise.

BUTCHER, someone who I hope I don't become.  
How does one decide to become  
a butcher? Every day on the way to school  
I passed the butcher, who stank  
of rotten meat. When he bathes,  
I think he turns the water red.