

The El Bimbo Variations

Also by Adam David

Bikini Idolatry

Instructions For The Inclined

Wahahahaha! I Gag A Gay Hag!

as editor

SAIS

City Lights

WASAAAK!!!

The El Bimbo Variations

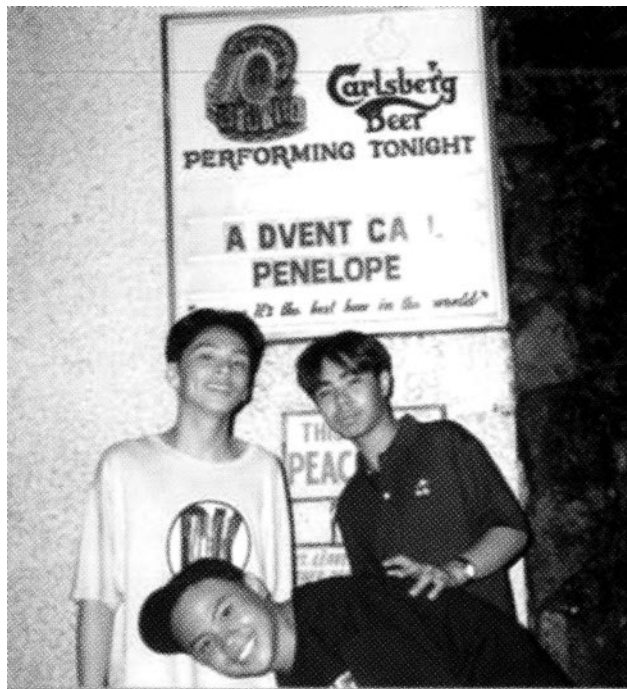
Adam David

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The author and this book has no connection whatsoever to any of the members of the Eraserheads, except for maybe Buddy Zabala, whose good wife is a friend and staunch supporter of the author.

The writing for this book began as an exercise in dexterity, like "Chopsticks" or pentatonic scalings, and ended in Christmas Eve as somewhat a gift of sorts, or more accurately, a *present*, in all the meaning of the word.

This book is for Delilah, for the life-long artist residency.



And for these three lifers, co-authors of the book.



Introduction

To write ninety-nine versions of a single line sounds like the idle boast of a literary geek in response to a drunken dare. Though endearing in its brain-over-brawn daredevilry, it smacks of absurdity, the chances of its successful execution slim. Up the ante—pick a line from a well-known and well-loved song, one that hardly needs rewriting to begin with—and the stage is set for the author of the boast to lose the bet, ending up naked, injured, or broke instead. Unless, that is, the literary geek in question is Adam David, who, in writing *The El Bimbo Variations*, turns what might be dismissed as a harebrained idea into a hilarious, thought-provoking read.

The charms of *The El Bimbo Variations* are as numerous as the risks it takes. What it gains in attention and affinity by using “Ang Huling El Bimbo” as the basis of its riffs, it stands to lose if unable to yield gifts other than the strategic choice of the popular Eraserheads song. A wrong turn in the handling of the material can send it speeding down the highway of what David himself calls “videoke literature,” where the pieces are, at most, excellent covers of the superior originals. Should the author’s imagination prove—however slightly—deficient, how easily the book’s boldness can slip into folly, the sequence remaining all too familiar, the variations redundant, and the ninety-nine times they appear excessive, to say the least.

That David manages to overcome these risks—even cultivating in the reader the contradictory impulses of savoring every line and finishing the book in one sitting—is no small feat. Courtesy of a facility for linguistic acrobatics, an ample vocal range, and a decadent sense of humor, *The El Bimbo Variations* is an impressive stunt its author pulls off, where every page averts the perils of familiarity and repetitiveness, offering instead, and consistently, an occasion for surprise. Whether tongue in cheek, brooding, caustic, or earnest, the variations are, on the whole, playful, emanating sheer pleasure in turning a thought again and again in one’s head and nailing the words with which to convey each turn. The pleasure is immensely engaging, and more importantly, I think, quite contagious. By the time you hit number ninety-nine, the book, though finished, isn’t sealed shut, not when your mind is wide open to possibilities, ready to cook up other, further variations.

It is precisely the book’s peculiar and congenial approach to language as an experience, or perhaps more accurately, an adventure in itself that makes it far more complex and rich than the stunt it appears to be. *The El Bimbo Variations* is steeped in playfulness, but it is certainly not mere play. It does not fall prey to the self-indulgence to which some works written in the same strain are prone, where fancy footwork exists for its own sake, sans the informing intelligence necessary to push it beyond the simply novel and ultimately perishable. Resistant to paraphrase, comfortably bilingual, and casual in its blending of high art and pop culture, it confronts and provokes big questions about language, form and content, originality, and other such matters while remaining lighthearted, entertaining, and accessible. This I find absolutely refreshing, especially when read against works addressing similar concerns which opt to be dense, pedantic, and obscure. David is clearly well-read and *The El Bimbo Variations* highly literary—Raymond Queneau, Georges Perec, and Matt Madden are obvious influences, many of the writing constraints featured in the book are drawn from Oulipo, a number of variations make use of local and foreign poetic forms, and the book references canonical writers such as William Blake and James Joyce—yet the book wisely avoids making a spectacle of its knowledge. It is first and

foremost a delightful read—it is evident to me that the author enjoyed writing it—and as we plumb its depths and pursue its questions, we are constantly reminded to delight in the process.

If *The El Bimbo Variations* were the outcome of the literary equivalent of a dare, then no question about it: Adam David is keeping his clothes on, his limbs intact, and his money in his pocket.

CONCHITINA CRUZ

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Reductive

Kamukha mo dati
si Paraluman.

Antonymy

Hindi niya kamukha si Paraluman
ngayong sila ay matanda na.

Another Point Of View

Kamukha ko si Paraluman
nung kabataan namin.

Subtle Insight

Maganda ka dati.

Synonymous

Kahawig mo si Atang dela Rama
nung may gatas pa tayo sa labi.

Permutation

Nung bata pa tayo
si Paraluman ay kamukha mo.

Spoonerisms

Your lace fucks a lit bike hers
when we your wang.

A Different Generation

Kamukha mo si Joey Albert
nung tayo ay bata pa.

Déjà Vu

Kamukha mo si Paraluman
nung tayo ay bata pa
si Paraluman kamukha mo.

Forgetful

Kamukha mo si...

With One Letter Altered

Kamukha mo si Paraluman
nung tayo ay data pa.

With One Letter Missing

Kamukha mo si Paraluman
nung tayo ay bata, a.

With One Word Altered

Kamukha mo si Paraluman
nung Tao ay bata pa.

With One Word Missing

Kamukha mo si Paraluman.
Tayo ay bata pa.

Unconfirmed Rumour

Uy, alam mo ba, dati daw, kamukha niya si... Paraluman?

Confirmed Rumour

Oo, totoo 'yun, medyo kamukha nga niya si Paraluman noon.

Exclamatory

Oh my God, dude!
Kamukha mo noon si Paraluman!
DaFuuuuuck!

Doubtful

Kamukha daw niya dati si Paraluman. Daw.

Derogatory

Yuck.
Paraluman.

Sarcastic

Angganda-ganda mo kasi, e.

Insistent

Sobrang sobrang sooooobrang kamukha mo dati si Paraluman!
As in! Ibang klase! Putsa, puwede na nga kayong ipagpalit sa isa't isa,
e! Talaga! May nagsabi sa'kin dati, tapos ayokong maniwala hangga't
sa Ginoong ko 'yung litrato ni Paraluman tapos tinapat ko sa litrato
mo nung bata pa tayo tapos... hayup! Kamukhang-kamukha mo
talaga! Dapat makita mo minsan!

Confessional

Alam mo ba, matagal ko nang iniisip na... dati, nung bata pa tayo... kahawig mo si... Paraluman... crush nga kita nun, e...

Knock-Knock Joke

“Knock-knock!”

“Who’s there?”

“*Kamukha mo!*”

“*Kamukha mo* who?”

“E ‘di si Paraluman!”

Single Contradiction

Talaga?

Double Contradiction

Si Paraluman?

Ows?!?!?

Triple Contradiction

Kamukha mo nga ba siya nun?
Si Paraluman nga ba talaga?
Nung bata pa tayo?

Dude

Well, yeah, y'know, you -
I mean - yeah...

Expletives

Kakantutan mo sa puke
nung titi ay bayag-bayag pa.

Interjections

Hm? Oh?
Ah! Pfft!

William Shakespeare

Shall I compare thee to Paraluman?
Thou wert more lovely once, as a young'un!

William Blake

a Serpent's bite in Youth's Delight

Gertrude Stein

Gleam seems merely violet.

James Joyce

riverrun, past Why and If, from swerve of Gee to bend of Eh,
brings us by a sea of recirculation back to Genuine Amour and Co.

American Haiku

Recognition
Sparrows in flight scattering light
You: Paraluman

Koan

your face
before your parents were born
is shown

Snowball

A
si
Ely
dati
crush
batang
kasayaw
maypagka
Paraluman

Diona

Damdamin sa'yo'y litaw,
O, paruparong ligaw:
Paraluman ko'y ikaw!

Tanaga

Babaeng lusog-hita
(Sa El Bimbo'y bihasa)
Sino ang 'yong kamukha?
"Paraluman (nung bata)!"

Dalit

Noong bata pa lang tayo
Mahawakan lang 'yong suso
Sinayaw ko ang El Bimbo
Noong bata pa lang tayo

Limerick

There once was a girl from Bulacan
Shook her hips like no other girl can
 To cha-cha and boogie
 Bebop and rocksteady
Back when she looked like Paraluman

Acronymic

Exuberant loneliness:
 bosoms in motion beyond observation.

Square Poem

Kamukha mo si Paraluman nung tayo ay bata pa.	“Mahal
Mo nga siguro ako para ihambing sa isang aktres,	at
Si Paraluman pa!” Kung alam mo lang, mahal, ikaw	ang
Paraluman ng Puso ko, Gilda Gales ng Buto, at ang	galing-galeng
Nung indak at indayog mo sa El Bimbo. Dati, gusto	mong
Tayo lang ang magkasama, walang ibang gagawin kundi	sumayaw.
“Ay,” ang bulong minsang natapakan. Minasahe ang paa: “Baka	mapaboogie!”
Bata lang tayo, walang alam sa buhay, pag-ibig, sa kung-ano pa	man,
Pa -halik-halik lang, dila sa dila, mahusay ka rin dun,	o
Mahal, at ang galing-galeng mong sumayaw, mapaboogie man o	cha-cha!

Beautiful Outlaw

My ex: to see you here dozin with Jim, you with fly open, him dunkin donuts in coffee cups, without question unbecomin, listenin to the grooves of

Iron Butterfly, begs a reminiscin to happen: there was a time, once, stackin Zs like this, you awoke with a start, caught me by your jugs in a very questionable position where I began to explain

but you, very much not yet “ex”, simply unbuttoned blouse, then queried foxily “why stop jigglin?”, so bein teen, seein no reason not to continue, I replied “OK” then went zoom-zoom-zoom on fist ‘n knees with you, boogiein til mornin, til neighbors were mouthin.

Beautiful In-Law

Alab ng pangarap sa pag-ibig na tapat
Nagmula lang pala sa bulang alaala.

Cento

	Kamukha	mo si -
nang isipan	mo	
in-love na naman	si	-
kamukha mo si	Paraluman	nung tayo ay bata pa
	nung	tayo pang dalawa -
(ilang oras pa ba bago	tayo	ay magkita?)
ako	ay	walang lakas ng loob
- nung tayo ay	bata	pa
nung ikaw ay bata	pa.	

Definitional

the one being addressed
had an appearance that befitted
or accorded
with Paraluman
in a former fact
or state
of inferiority
in age

ALGOL

LIBERATE THRU PROCESS
DEFINE EVENT AND ATTACH VALUE
THEN WRITE WITH TRUE CAUSE

Objectified Woman Of The Minute

Paraluman:
Tanging laman

Ng isipan
Nang 'yong iwan

Nung 'sang buwan -
Muling hagkan

'Yong "kuwan,"
Mahal, kailan?

Six-Word Story

Katanungan pagkagising: "Paraluman ng panagimpan,
nasaan?"

Ad Copy

PARALUMAN

Goat Placenta

Para sa may nais ng diwatang-kutis!!

NO APPROVED THERAPEUTIC CLAIMS

Telegram

ADA STOP BAHAY KAGABI BISITA STOP HANAP
YEARBOOK LUMA STOP KATAWA KATUWA STOP
PARALUMAN HAWIG MO PALA STOP SIGNED BUENDIA

Linear Logical Analysis

So:

Si Paraluman.
Isang aktres.
Na maganda.
Nung Dekada Singkuwenta.
Para sa Sampaguita Pictures.

Kamukha mo siya.

So, maganda ka.
O, at least, sa opinyon ng ibang tao, maganda ka.
O, at least, sa opinyon ko, maganda ka.
O, at least, mestizahin.

Nung bata pa tayo.

So, maganda ka lang pala nung bata ka.
So, hindi ka na maganda ngayon.
Matanda ka na kasi, e.
So, panget ka na.

Circular Logical Analysis

- 1) Mahilig ka sa pansit nung tayo ay bata pa.
- 2) Walang batang mahilig sa pansit ang kumakain ng spaghetti.
- 3) Walang batang mahilig sa spaghetti ang hindi madungis.
- 4) Ang batang malinis ay kamukha si Paraluman.
- 5) Walang batang kamukha si Paraluman ang hindi mahilig sa pansit.

True Philippine Ghost Story

“Pero kasi, mahal... ako si Paraluman, e...”

Fantasya

“By Ba’Tala’s Beard! Renege this ruse, foul asuang! The All-Seeing Eye of Aguimat has negated you glamour’s power over me!”

Liquid light, like molten metal, surges from the triangular stone in A’Dun’s hands, ebbs towards the asuang, and flakes off its fleshsuit, exposing, underneath, gossamer wings and alabaster skin. It shrieks the Shriek of the Thrice Cursed, the Thrice Damned, and on the horizon, almost to the vanishing point, dark shadows flock incessantly towards A’Dun the Reaver.

He grits his teeth at the sight. He prepares himself for the rain finally about to fall on the arid ground of the Bu’Lakan Desert.

A rain of fire.

A rain of tears.

A rain of blood.

SpecFic

As she massaged her dehydrated dermis to what can only be described as a septuagenarian amphibian's thick-lipped, disapproving scowl, she finally put three of her arms up in disgusting surrender: this is not the Calayan NanoPly Cream that she knew in her youth.

Murder Mystery

Mr E holds the thin, yellowing photograph between shaking fingers... the hair, the dimples, the lips... could this be her?

Sweat beading by his brow, E flips the photograph, and suddenly sucks in air: scrawled in ink red as blood still fresh after half a century, a name, glowering in the blankness... "El Bimbo".

A man - known only as "Mr E" - remembers his one great love, a love long lost to a murky chapter in his enigmatic past... or so he thinks: amongst his things labeled to be thrown out in the trash, he finds a photograph of a long-dead famous actress, taken in her youth, a photograph that pulls a thread that will quickly, methodically unravel Mr E's increasingly unreliable memories... memories of "El Bimbo".

Erotica

L. E. Rue, *Julie En Chine* (2008)

Follow gorgeous bosom-heaving Gallic buxom heroine Julie in her titillating travels across the Chinese continent in... Julie En Chine!

HEAT-UP! ... in intrigue as Julie humps the hot and wide Mongolian Desert in search of... the Manchurian Candidate!

SALIVATE! ... in excitement as Julie straddles the long and legendary Great Wall of China in pursuit of... the Dreaded Doctor Fu Manchu!

HARDEN! ... in horror as Julie barebacks the cold and hard peaks of Nepal in a hunt for... the Happy Yeti!

Don't dare miss these three classic L. E. Rue adventures of Julie in *Julie En Chine*, now available in English for the first time ever!

Tabloid News Clipping

13 April 2005

BABAE SA ERMITA PATAY SA ESKINITA!

Isang 'di-pa-nakikilalang babae ang natagpuang patay kaninang umaga sa kanto ng Del Pilar at Soldado, sa Ermita, Maynila, biktima umano ng hit-and-run.

Base sa preliminary investigation ng pulisya, nagtatrabaho ang biktima sa isang 'di-kalayuang nightclub bilang GRO.

Salaysay ni SPO1 Edilberto Buendia: "Malamang taga-rito lang siya, kasi wala siyang bitbit na gamit, kaya minabuti naming magdoor-to-door sa area para tanungin kung merong nakakakilala sa kanya."

"Naglakad siya papauwi at 'di nakaiwas sa paparating na kotse," dagdag nito. "Madilim kasi talaga dito 'pag gabi, kaya dapat nag-iingat talaga ang mga tao 'pag naglalakad sa lugar na'to."

Para sa mga taong maaaring makatulong sa pagkilala sa identidad ng biktima, ang bangkay ng babae ay kasalukuyang nakahimlay sa Ermita Catholic Church.

- Vic Blanco

Map Directions

Just go straight down this lane, parallel to the river, and when you reach the third corner you'll see an old kiddie park and beside that there'll be a street hairdresser's. Go right at that corner and after a few houses' worth of walking, you'll be there.

Epitaph

ADA LOPEZ
May 25, 1984 ~ April 13, 2005
MOTHER * DANCER
DAUGHTER * FRIEND
Paraluman ng Ermita
she dances with angels

Experimental Theater

Characters:

couples in fancy dresses and pressed suits
audience

Props:

cardboard cut-out masks of Paraluman's face (as many as needed)
eggs (as many as needed)

Instructions:

The couples are given two masks and an egg each. The couples wear the Paraluman masks as they dance to a nonexistent beat while balancing eggs between their foreheads. If a couple drops an egg, they will remove their masks and hand them to a new couple in the audience. The new couple will then wear the masks and in turn dance to a nonexistent beat while balancing an egg between their foreheads. Repeat process until either all eggs are broken or all the couples in the audience have taken their turns in dancing.

Left-Handed

Vacated by grace ~ a dreary face barraged by sad years ~ eyes
raw ~ bares rare tears!

Right-Handed

Hip on hip? Pink lip on pink lip? I hum, mull on moll, hopin'
on nil.

Lipogram On “A”

My thoughts: persistently perturbed by memories of you.

Lipogram On “E”

Not to look at, not to touch, not to talk to, not to kiss: all that
is - was - now wisps.

Lipogram On “I”

Our ballroom days are over!

Lipogram On “O”

And regarding the face: is this Age’s cruel reward?

Lipogram On “U”

What is Love? A longing for kind. No? This love is.

Univocalism On “A”

“What was that?”

“That was a lass’ last waltz. A sad chap’s flashback as drama.”

“Ah. Art.”

Univocalism On “E”

When cheerless bent men remember hens, they pen these senseless texts. Yes, even the best esteemed gents!

Univocalism On “I”

His stiff li'l girl is still kicking in his ill li'l mind. Isn't it sick?

Univocalism On “O”

“Oh, God, no, don't go!” Old Boy longs for Joy, now lost to ghosts of old folks; food to frogs, to dog gods, to gross brown worms.

Univocalism On “U”

Lug mulls luv’s mug.

Tautogram On “A”

Another absurd aesthetic appreciation activates anew as an artist appropriates an ancient actress’ aethereal appearance as artful analogy.

Tautogram On “E”

Ely’s elegant eulogy effectively evokes everyone’s emotional earthquakes.

Tautogram On “I”

I-Love-Yous ignore imperfections. It is inherent in Idealization.

Tautogram On “O”

Originality of outlook often obfuscates otherwise obvious objective-correlatives.

Tautogram On “U”

Utilizing utmost urbanity, underdog überpoet - ultimately unloved - unbosoms unencumbered ursine upwellings; utterances unsaid, unbeknownst.

Olfactory

Earthy strong bouquet, smoky nutty,
with wiff of painty gum wafting.

Tactile

Fluff puff supples
crunches marbly smooth.

Auditory

Crystal flange in G sustaining in choral
fourth and sixth octaves ascending
to trebly thick A and C
sustaining in D/G.

Gustatory

Firm sour cold roundness yielding
light sugar explosions, casky,
eventually warm.

Anatomical

curling frontalis
occipitalis folding
masseter
 medial and lateral pterygoid
 smoothly tugging
 labii superiosus
 levator and
 depressor opening
 arching
genioglossus
styloglossus
 back and forth
 galea aponeurotica
 nasalis
 mentalis
 the entire zygomatic
almost
 monozygotic

Sound Effect

sigh

Moral Lesson

Youth is Beauty

Homophony

Cow-moo come-on:

“See? Farrah loom ‘n junta you, eye-butt tapper!”

Anagram

“You pun?!?”

Si Alan, batang mataray, pa-amuk-amok!

Syllabic Cut/Up

Kamu si Yokha, bamo ay
para nuan ng tata pa! Lum?

Homovocalism

“Ang ulam mo! Ikaw ang umatupag, o!”
“A, na naman?”

Homoconsonantism

“Kimi ka, ha? Mis, puro lamon!!!”
“Naniig tayo!!!”
“... uy, ba’t api... ?”

Word Shards

PAR	->	parallelism begins here
ALU	->	the first stirrings of Alunsina
MAN	->	a kundiman without regrets

Crossword Puzzle Clues

Across

...	
12	your spitting image
...	
36	a Philippine muse
...	

Down

...	
65	our wonder years
...	

Mathematics For Beginners

$$\begin{aligned}x &= y \\ y &= \sqrt{196} \\ x &= ?\end{aligned}$$

The Art Of The Possible

(...)

Kamukha mo

(*huh?*)

gulp

~

si

~

(OH NO!)



Paral

uman



AH!

nung tayo ay

:

“bata pa”

ticktockticktock
ticktockticktock
ticktockticktock
ticktockticktock
ticktockticktock
ticktockticktock
ticktockticktock

Gashlycrumb Tiny



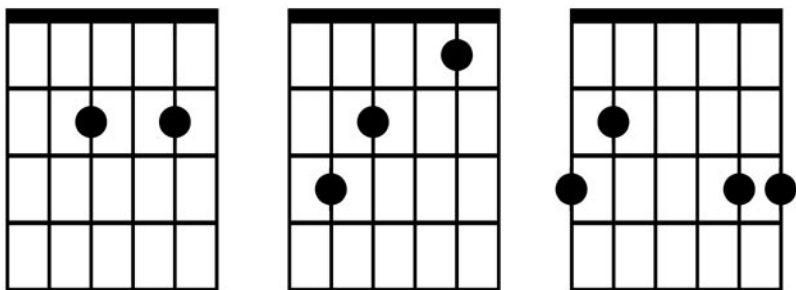
A is for Ada who looked like Paraluman
Run-over in an alley by a driver quite inhuman.

Comic Strip





Chordbook



Artist's Rendition



5th September - 20th November - 28th November
3rd December - 15th December - 19th December - 23rd December

2007

Notes On These Pages

The El Bimbo Variations owes a great debt to Raymond Queneau, Georges Perec, Matt Madden, and the entire roster of the Oulipo. Their books lay the foundation upon which this book is built.

Oulipo stands for *Ouvroir de Littérature Potentielle*, or Workshop for Potential Literature. It was founded by Raymond Queneau and François le Lionnais in France in 1960, hoping to address the apparent potential of using ordered logical systems (i.e., mathematics) to produce literature. I say “apparent” because at that time, Queneau and le Lionnais were working on Queneau’s *100,000,000,000,000 Poems*, which is, briefly, a collection of ten sonnets written and published in such a way that the reader can actually potentially create 100,000,000,000,000 permutations of those same ten sonnets. The project presented a lot of problems for Queneau (who was an amateur mathematician) and le Lionnais (who was a professional one) and also a lot of insights about the advantages of marrying math with lit. And so, the Oulipo was born.

The group swelled to accommodate both writers and mathematicians, amateurs and professionals alike, and together they developed quite a number of constraints they encourage artists to use to produce their own works.

A collection of these constraints (an encyclopaedia, actually) is available as *Oulipo Compendium*, as edited by Harry Mathews and Alastair Brotchie.

The definitions that I'll use as way of explaining the Oulipian constraints are all paraphrased - if not lifted wholesale - from *the Compendium*. I can only hope Mathews and Brotchie (and a hell of a lot of other guys who worked on the book) will see the genuine love and admiration I have for Oulipo and forgive me. Please don't bludgeon me with baguettes.

The order of definitions is not alphabetical. Instead, it follows the order of the book's contents. Only the more obscure ones are defined, or at least, the ones that I think I have to say more about.

Spoonerisms

The accidental interchange of sounds or letters between words. Instead of saying "Paul Toledo", you say "Tall Pulido". The term came from W A Spooner (1844 - 1930), an Oxford don known to have been prone to such mistakes. One distinctly Filipino example of an almost-spoonerism is the P and F phenomena, most famously in "pifty pesos".

The French have their own version of spoonerisms called contrepètes (or contre-pèteries). These are spoonerisms contrived to be distinctly indecent, thus a word game, as opposed to it being accidental. The effort to be distinctly indecent struck me as something very Pinoy, so I decided to go with that than just being merely playful.

William Blake

Visionary poet and artist. If he was alive today, he'd be making zines with his poems in them. I wrote this as one of his *Proverbs From Hell*, from his book *The Marriage Of Heaven And Hell*. He had a habit of eclectic capitalisation, biblical imagery, and absolutely delighted on using the word Delight. I have one of his Proverbs tattooed on the inside of my right arm: **Exuberance is Beauty**, based on his handwriting in *The Marriage*, which he drew and wrote by hand. If he was alive today, he'd be making zines with his art in them. If he was alive today, he'd be making comic books.

Gertrude Stein

Innovative writer and, more famously, a salonist. Mentor and guide to the Lost Generation of expatriate American writers, including Hemingway and Fitzgerald. Friend to Picasso, too, whose Cubist works she tried to emulate in writing with her book *Tender Buttons*.

Echoing Picasso's reduction of still lives to their most basic visual shapes, Stein reduced poems to their most basic units of meaning - words - and in doing so attacked the "denotation of words... She repeated words, recast them, rhymed them, and strung them together in unusual combinations... the reader is forced to question the meaning of words, to become reacquainted with a language that Stein thought had become dulled by long use."

One of her shorter (and better) ones in *Tender Buttons* is

A PETTICOAT

A light white, a disgrace, an ink spot, a rosy charm.

This variation was written in emulation of that voice.

Her concerns with the issue of not confusing looking with remembering in writing sort of informed my process with the Sensory Variations (more on them later).

James Joyce

Modernist writer. All he wrote about was Ireland, even when he spent most of his life away from it, but then again, there's this writerly romantic notion about only being truly able to write about someplace (or someone, or something) when you're at least at an arm's length from it. *Finnegans Wake*, his other novel, was his last and in my opinion best book. It was the Night to *Ulysses'* Day, written in waves of word play and word games, mining Joyce's knowledge of myth and legend and foreign languages to tell a story about Civilization. Its first sentence is in/famously the second half of the last sentence of the six-hundred-plus-page book, and is in one level about a couple, and in another level about Ireland, and in another level about Civilization.

This variation is a play on *Wake's* first sentence, rewritten with unfortunately only really two levels of meaning significant only

to people who know the track listing for the Eraserheads' album *Cutterpillow*, know how to play the guitar, and likewise have read *Finnegans Wake* (i.e., me), but then after thinking about it somewhat I realised that that sort of in-jokeness is a very Joycean thing to do, so I was still actually very much in keeping with *Wake's* tradition.

American Haiku

American, as opposed to the traditional Japanese haiku. In the Japanese tradition, the haiku has the 5 - 7 - 5 syllabic count, and a requirement to season - nature imagery. In most haikus, there is also the formula of concrete imagery - abstract imagery - convergence of imagery.

The Americans, most notably Jack Kerouac, did away with the syllabic count, somewhat played around with the formula, but still kept with the season - nature imagery. It comes across as a very logical thing for me seeing as Nihonggo uses a very different syllabic system and syntax from English, and thus the English-language (and Filipino, and whatever else language in the world) haiku shouldn't strictly adhere to the traditional syllabic count, but I think the season - nature imagery should still be a requirement. I mean, if you still want to call it haiku.

Anecdote about the season - nature imagery: I only vaguely remember Kerouac's American haikus as being flocked by sparrows, so I wrote my El Bimbo Haiku Variation (then called Jack Kerouac) with a sparrow analogy. I went online and Wiki'd haiku and lo and behold the first example for American haikus is Jack Kerouac and his sparrows.

Koan

A paradox to be meditated upon to train Zen Buddhist monks to abandon dependence on Reason to gain Enlightenment. This particular koan sort of answers the Original Face strand in Buddhism. The Original Face is (this is only my reading, of course) one's True Nature, one's Identity beyond identity. One of the more famous koans about it goes: Show me your original face before your parents were born. I thought it was funny how the El Bimbo text converged with this particular concern of Zen Buddhism (face =

kamukha, Paraluman = old actress before your parents were born) and so with this I decided to try to answer that.

Snowball

A form of verse, already practiced in Classical times, requiring the first word of a text to have only one letter, the second two, the third three, and so on, as far as resourcefulness and inspiration will allow. One can also make snowballs based on syllabic count or sentence count.

Variations of snowballs exist. One is the Avalanche, which is essentially a sequence of snowballs organised according to a supplementary rule of progression. For example, an avalanche of three parts would ideally have the first part contain two words, the first of which having only one letter, the second having two; the second part would contain three words, the first of which having only one letter, the second two, the third three; then, the third part would contain four words, the first word having only one letter, the second two, the third three, and finally, the fourth four.

Another variation is the Melting Snowball, which is essentially the normal snowball written in reverse. So, instead of an addition in the number of letters, there is a subtraction. Also, a melting snowball can follow an expanding snowball to create the third variation, the Diamond Snowball, and if you reverse the diamond snowball, you get the fourth variation, the Hourglass Snowball.

Diona

Traditional form of Philippine Poetry. Three lines of seven syllables each, with a rhyming scheme of aaa. It's one of the more obviously formulaic forms of poetry in the Philippines: set-up - elaboration - punchline. One can, of course, mix them up, but upon reading, they will still follow the most basic narrative flow.

Tanaga

One of the most used of the traditional forms of Philippine Poetry, maybe because of its squareness. It's four lines of seven syllables each with an aaaa scheme. It's a solid, reliable form of poetry. It's a rock.

Dalit

Or Korido. Another traditional form of Philippine Poetry. Four lines of eight syllables each, with a rhyming scheme of aaaa.

There's a sort of pattern emerging here with the traditional Pinoy poetic rhyming scheme, the regularity of it, the seemingly unadventurous vibe. Third-hand information about it: according to Virgilio Almario, it's because of our ancestors' reading of their mundane/reliable existence in the barrio: the sun comes up in the morning, blazes at noon, and is down by evening. It works, but it strikes me as being too simplistic.

Limerick

English traditional form. A light or humorous poem of five lines of which lines one, two, and five are of three feet, and lines three and four of two feet. Its rhyming scheme is aaabba. Like the diona, another formulaic form observing the set-up - elaboration - punchline flow.

Acronymic

Poem in which the letters of a given word furnish the initials of the words used in each line.

Square Poem

Pioneered by Lewis Carroll. A poem in which the initial words per line make up the first line, and the final words per line make up the last line, forming a frame of words enclosing the poem body. A personal favourite.

Beautiful Outlaw

Or belle absente. The "outlaw" in question is the name of the person or subject to whom the poem is addressed. Each line should include all the letters of the alphabet except for the letter appearing in the dedicated name at the position corresponding to that of the line. It recreates the acrostic as an absence instead of a presence of a name.

Beautiful In-Law

Or beau présent. A poem in which only the letters from a given name can be used, but the poet isn't pressured to use them all. I used only the sixteen letters from the original El Bimbo text (but not all of them): *a, p, t, b, y, o, g, n, u, m, l, r, i, s, h, and k.*

Cento

A poem made up entirely of lines quoted from another poet or poem. In this variation, I decided it'd be apt if I quoted lines from other Eraserheads songs.

Definitional

Each meaningful word in a text (verb, noun, adjective, adverb) is replaced by its dictionary definition. The dictionary I use for my definitional texts is *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary Tenth Edition*.

ALGOL

The acronym for Algorithmic Oriented Language, a language for computer programming invented in 1960. Its original lexicon consisted of only twenty-four words but further research revealed that there are actually one hundred and six words in ALGOL. Some of these might be familiar to people who, like me, learned computer programming through MS-DOS.

There are thirty-five such reserved words in the standard Burroughs large systems sub-language: ALPHA, ARRAY, BEGIN, BOOLEAN, COMMENT, CONTINUE, DIRECT, DO, DOUBLE, ELSE, END, EVENT, FALSE, FILE, FOR, FORMAT, GO, IF, INTEGER, LABEL, LIST, LONG, OWN, POINTER, PROCEDURE, REAL, STEP, SWITCH, TASK, THEN, TRUE, UNTIL, VALUE, WHILE, ZIP.

There are seventy-one such restricted identifiers in the standard Burroughs large systems sub-language: ACCEPT, AND, ATTACH, BY, CALL, CASE, CAUSE, DEALLOCATE, DEFINE, DETACH, DISABLE, DISPLAY, DIV, DUMP, ENABLE, EQL, EQV, EXCHANGE, EXTERNAL, FILL, FORWARD, GEQ,

GTR, IMP, IN, INTERRUPT, IS, LB, LEQ, LIBERATE, LINE, LOCK, LSS, MERGE, MOD, MONITOR, MUX, NEQ, NO, NOT, ON, OPEN, OR, OUT, PICTURE, PROCESS, PROCURE, PROGRAMDUMP, RB, READ, RELEASE, REPLACE, RESET, RESIZE, REWIND, RUN, SCAN, SEEK, SET, SKIP, SORT, SPACE, SWAP, THRU, TIMES, TO, WAIT, WHEN, WITH, WRITE.

Noël Arnaud contributed several strict ALGOL poems to the Oulipo, together with others, in which he expanded the available vocabulary from the initial twenty-four words by combining them into words not included in the vocabulary. For example, TABOO from TA(BLE) and BOO(LEAN).

Six Word Story

Once, in an interview, Ernest Hemingway was asked which of his stories he thought was his best. He said his best was a six word story he wrote that went "For sale: baby shoes, never worn.". I've written some and have actually designed and co-published a few six word stories (written by other people) as a series of zines called *sais*. Right now (December 2007), I'm trying to develop a significant collection of six word stories (written by other people) that I plan to publish soon (hopefully, mid2008).

Erotica

This variation was written as a Brazzle. The term comes from a story from Vladimir Nabokov's *Time And Ebb*. A brazzle is a short prose piece that describes - in the language of book dust-jacket copy - an imaginary work by an imaginary author. The name of the author and the title of the work are obtained by transforming real names and titles according to a three-stage process.

The procedure to making brazzles goes: 1) a homophonic translation of all or part of the original name or title; 2) semantic extrapolation - whether by similarity, association, or opposition - of the terms created in the first step; and 3) the smoothing-out of results of step two for the sake of plausibility and naturalness.

For my brazzle, I played loose with the first step, seeing as to how Filipino is already generally phonetic. It went like this:

Ely Buendia, Ang Huling El Bimbo

First Step:

Ang > Chinese
Huling > Julie
El > elle > Frenchwoman
Bimbo > ditz

Second Step:

Ely > L. E.
Buendia > avenue > street > Rue

Third Step:

L. E. Rue, Julie En Chine

The resulting fictional author and book title reminded me of the 1960s risqué French bande-dessinées, of which the most famous is probably *Barbarella* (which was made into a movie starring Jane Fonda), where their respective heroines seem to rapidly/gradually (depending on the story) lose their clothes in every subsequent page and adventure. The stories always had single-entendre word plays in the plot if not in the dialogue. This variation is an emulation of that.

Left-Handed

This is a text written using only the left half of a standard PC keyboard, namely the letters *q, w, e, r, t, y, a, s, d, f, g, z, x, c, v, b*, and also the numbers *1, 2, 3, 4, 5*, and the symbols *` ~ ! @ # \$ %*. The spacebar can be used but I limited myself from using the ENTER button for paragraph breaks, as it's on the right-hand side of the keyboard.

Right-Handed

This is a text written using only the right half of a standard PC keyboard, namely the letters *u, i, o, p, h, j, k, l, n, m*, and also the numbers *6, 7, 8, 9, 0*, and the symbols *^ & * () _ + = \ | [] { } ; ' : " , . / < > and ?*. Both the spacebar and the ENTER button can be used.

Lipogram

A text that excludes one or more letters of the alphabet. In his study of the history of the lipogram, Georges Perec observed that, unlike the acrostic or the tautogram, the lipogram passes unnoticed unless it is announced. It should be mentioned that Perec wrote the novel *La Disparition*, translated into English as *A Void*, which he wrote without once using the letter e.

This sequence of lipograms center on vowels. I decided against doing them as full lipograms - using all the letters in the alphabet, even the consonants - because I already did that with beautiful outlaw, and I was sort of gunning for something more poetic in look and breadth, as opposed to the more prosy beautiful outlaw.

The Lipogram On "I" is a Jim Morrison line lacking only one letter, from "When The Music's Over". We're both fans of Blake so I thought maybe he wouldn't mind it too much. Also, he did lift his band name from an Aldous Huxley book whose title was lifted from a poem by William Blake, so, you know, what goes around comes around, I guess.

Something worth noting: contemporary thinking regards the letter y as a vowel when used in words like *baby* or *boytoy*, but not when used in words like *yes* and *yadda yadda yadda*, though it isn't canonical.

Univocalism

A univocalic text is one written with words using only a single vowel. It is, consequently, a lipogram on all the other vowels.

Tautogram

A text whose words, or at least the principal ones, all begin with the same letter. It is alliteration taken to its logical limits. I'm actually using this constraint for a novel I'm writing.

Sensory Variations

I mentioned in the notes for Gertrude Stein that her efforts into not confusing looking with remembering informed this series of variations. With her first books *Three Lives* and *The Making Of Americans*, she tried to create portraits of people rooted solely in the

present moment, but as she progressed she realised that with looking, “... human beings... inevitably carried in its train realizing movements and expression and as such forced me (Stein) into recognizing resemblances, and so forced remembering and in forcing remembering caused confusion of present with past and future time.”

With *Tender Buttons*, again Stein produced portraits, but now they were “portraits of rooms and food and everything because there I could avoid this difficulty of suggesting remembering more easily... than if I were to describe human beings.”

With these variations, I set about trying to rewrite the first line of *El Bimbo* as if they were sensory experiences using idioms centred around the given senses. What I was trying to achieve was somewhat a reversal and a furthering of my understanding of what Stein tried to do with *Tender Buttons*: I say somewhat a reversal because I had no plans on merely echoing her style, copying how she did her portraits in *Tender Buttons* (I already did that with the Gertrude Stein variation). Stein didn't merely stop with just inventing phraseology based on the visual (using words like colourful, or garish, which she didn't do, and which I didn't want to do, either) but instead opted on stripping words to their core, to what they look like on the page, and how they sound like musically, their physicality, in essence, how they look. But as avant-garde as she was, the majority of her portraits in *Tender Buttons* were still firmly grounded on the visual (which ought to explain me calling these variations a furthering of Stein's experiments).

One of the limitations of poeticky idioms and imagery in general is of their being primarily based on the visual, even when one is trying to evoke an extravisual sensory experience (a density of sound, a wave of colours), and so with these variations, I tried to see if it was actually possible to write lines without using a single visual idiom or image without seeming too contrived or cute, to strip words to their most basic meanings but still keeping to heart their musicality and physicality and also, to exercise my capacity of developing phraseologies seemingly inherent to the senses discussed. I'm not too sure if I pulled it off, but at least the images come off as crisp and vivid and sure.

Syllabic Cut/Up

Beat writer Wild Bill Burroughs supposedly invented the Cut/Up when it was actually his artist friend Byron Gysin who accidentally stumbled upon it while cutting paper for his collages, but nevertheless, it was Burroughs who made it popular, with his Cut/Up Book Trilogy *The Ticket That Exploded*, *The Soft Machine*, and *Nova Express*.

The idea is to take a given text and cut it up in whatever way you want (per word, per sentence, per paragraph, or, as in this variation, per syllable), take the pieces of paper and mix them all up, and then randomly tape them together to form new text pieces.

During September - October 2007, I assembled quite a number of Cut/Ups based on UST's *Dapitan: Prose 2006* and typed them up as *We, Without A Susurrant Breath*. Some of them were published in the Philippines Free Press as poetry, and most of them will be published in *Dapitan: Prose 2007* as, well, as prose.

Burroughs wrote about the liberating effect Cut/Ups had on his writing, not to mention mental condition. According to Burroughs, theoretically, one can see into the future with the Cut/Ups, seeing as to how the actual physical cutting-up of paper is also a metaphorical cutting-up of Time and Space. The future leaks through, he used to say. Not too sure about the future leaking, but when I was doing an immense Cut/Up of Paz Marquez Benitez' "Dead Stars", I actually suffered from regular nightmares, panic attacks, stuttering, and (brief!) impotence. I would also wake up in the middle of the night and have these strange paranoid Big-Brother-Is-Watching ideas in my head. I would've chalked all these things up as just me being weird, but all of these things (as in all of these things) stopped as soon as I finished doing the immense Benitez Cut/Up.

A fragment from the Benitez Cut/Up:

Father and son would go crunching up the less slender, not so eagerly alive, yet poet lurking in the heart of every man? Judge's wife invariably offered them opposite her, looking thoughtfully, voice somewhat distinct. The road repose - almost indolence - disturbed did not. After a half hour or so, the out the home town about this and that of mystery somewhere and he was trying to get Alfredo. And Julia Salas would go out to conversed with

increasing ease, though tamarinds lay the road, upturned. A last spurt of hot blood, finish, you will miss it. Someone had seemed to mock and he in a rocking chair and there at all. He could not take his eyes red while an errant breeze strayed in. Few would certainly credit Alfredo on the shadow of Love and deluded by he, enjoyed talking with her and it. Was the loss his? He felt an impersonal sounds as of voices in a dream had amusedly diagnosed his blood as humanity from time immemorial. In the yet what feeling there was between girl must have noticed for her cheek is so brief evidence. Tall and slender, he moved to Esperanza. Matter of course. Only when Esperanza under straight recalcitrant hair, a dim lives? Greed, he thought, was what visits. Did some uneasiness creep into pressed her hand at parting? But his the mystery. Slow, dreamer's eyes, and astonishing into a moment all the enjoyment it. Did she still care? The answer not find it. Appearance betokened little of exuberance the emotion it will yield. Men commit humor, a fastidious artist with a keen, so sacrificing possible future fullness, he rose and quietly went out of the excitement. Greed - mortgaging the Fate.

I later realised that the symptoms I was suffering were akin to a really awful, really bad drug trip's. I thought about it some and concluded that the Cut/Ups actually hacked my body through my logical reading processes, much like how a drug would if taken orally or intravenously. What are drugs but information at the chemical level interacting with our body at the very same chemical level, and what are words but information at the visual and logical levels interacting with our body at the very same visual and logical levels. If you disrupt the body's natural processes of these kinds of information (chemical, visual, logical, genetic, aural, tactile - any kind of information, really), apparently, weird things will happen. It was interesting to have my body react with words pretty much the same way as it would have if I had taken illegal pharmaceuticals.

Homovocalism

The sequence of vowels in a source text is kept while all its consonants are replaced. So, if applied to the El Bimbo source text, the resulting vowel sequence will be *auaoiaauauaoaaaa*.

Homoconsonantism

The sequence of consonants in a source text is kept while all its vowels are replaced. So, if applied to the El Bimbo source text, the resulting consonant sequence will be *kmkhmsprlmnnngtyybt*.

Word Shards

An innovation by Marcel Bénabou. The notion underlying the project is that when certain words are broken, other words appear among their fragments. It then becomes possible to combine the greater and lesser words by defining the lesser in a particular way.

The Art Of The Possible

Title of a book by poet and fellow Yasunari Kawabata-fan Kenneth Koch, which is a collection of pieces he liked to call comics mainly without pictures, yet another study of the physicality of words and punctuation, paired with the physicality of the page, how page layout can actually affect our reading and experience of a piece (which is more of a comic book thing, really, but in terms of literary history, it has shades of cummings and Villa, in a way), which was what I tried to do here.

Gashlycrumb Tiny

After artist and cat-lover Edward Gorey, who wrote and drew dozens and dozens of utterly utterly bizarre books during his eighty-year-lifetime. One in particular, his most famous, I think, is called *The Gashlycrumb Tinies*, and it's a sequence of drawings of little children and the circumstances of their deaths written in verse and ordered alphabetically. It has to be read to be believed. This variation is a tribute to that amazing feat of poetic gallows humour.

Back in 1998, Gorey was interviewed for a feature in the online bookstore *Amazon.com* and they asked him to recommend books he felt people simply have to read, and the first book he mentioned is Raymond Queneau's *Exercises In Style*.

These are not the definitive Oulipian variations, nor are they the only ways to do them. This is just an outline to show people how I did these variations. This is just my way. It'll do us all a great deal of good if, based on these constraints, you yourself come up with your own way of doing these things, and write a whole book about how you do them. After all, that's what Art's for.

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