

August Wind (freely from A. Samad Said)
for Lloyd Fernando

Leonard Jeyam

The moon is calm tonight,
and I gently knock on the wall three times.
I only hear you crying again –
and then speaking passionately

once more: I know, I know we are free.
I know that independence was something
no one had expected, not after eating millet,
sago and tapioca; not after coming home

in Heiho fatigues, carrying a sword
and smoking cheap, Japanese cigarettes.
I know that this freedom was most
unheralded after living in so much anguish.

I have stood here facing the living room
for a long time now, remembering
those events – staring at my feet,
looking at the ants hovering there,

asking who has stolen the bucket?
And now the door has opened, and I utter
these words quickly: We are free!
How bewildering the feeling is,

as if coming upon a rainbow straddled
between two hills, or remembering
my collecting flowers near the sea
beside the flicker of ship-lights.

It rises abruptly – though I still feel baffled –
that joy to kiss the earth, and yell: Yes, we

are liberated, my ancestral land is free,
the country independent at last!

That night, under a bright moon, between
the whispers of the crickets and the white owl,
he slept by the penggaga tree. And an August wind
continued to lull him to sleep.