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## The Past

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## THE PAST

In Paco Cemetery in Manila  
 Caskets let end-wise into the wall  
 Claim each a two-foot square of moss-edged space  
 In the great stone circle.

Ylang-ylang trees  
 With year-long steps parade the centuries  
 Slow.

Just now  
 Evening is heavy with their breath;  
 The dizzying sweetness tastes of death,  
 And all around  
 Waxy-yellow petals are fallen on the ground.

## TIME

A single leaf drops from the top of Pagsanjan Gorge;  
 Leisurely it drifts its long, slow descent,  
 Playing with the perpendicular as it falls,  
 Dipping and swaying,  
 Aimless but directed.

The leaf strikes the waiting water,  
 Moving swiftly into a graceful right-angle;  
 Inert it lies upon the taciturn water,  
 Which takes it as something that is sent, that makes  
 no difference,  
 Something that will go beyond the river,  
 Out of the world of the river.

This happens in the primitive calm of Pagsanjan Gorge;  
 As I saw it I heard the anxious cry of a bird;  
 Then there was nothing.

But there is always another leaf, falling or ready to fall,  
 And the taciturn water is always waiting.

C. V. WICKER