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Affairs, by Infante

Review Author: Ruth Carina B. Cudala

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freedom of choice even on trivial matters, e.g. food, is too much for him. Doc Buhay goes and puts a bullet through his head.

Espina-Moore's anthology, written from 1958 to 1980, is slim yet rich. Her basic subject is the interplay of illusion and reality, mainly from the consciousness of women. Her stories speak of a wide range of the female gender—from old widows to young, socialites to housegirls, Western women to native ones. For after all, women from all walks of life regardless of race or creed or age do find themselves within the "twilight zone." And so do men.

The author is a careful and competent craftswoman who believes in a well-told narrative. Her beginnings are crisp, the development of the narratives precise. The plots build up to an exciting climax and recede to a quiet denouement of discovery. Her language is direct, and heightens the harshness of the reality her characters run away from and/or fall victims to.

Yet the author, the story-teller that she is, dismisses her passionate endeavors as mere "cuentos," stories like a "blown-glass ballerina in attitude sur la pointe twirling to its measure" (p. 42).

Anna Christie K. Villarba-Torres
Department of English
Ateneo de Manila University

AFFAIRS. By J. Eddie Infante. Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1984. 169 pages.

Affairs, as the title suggests, attempts to tackle the issue of infidelity. Unfaithfulness corrupts and ultimately destroys. The author's didactic threat is hardly veiled: his three characters (Rod, Nick and Marina) who cheat on their mates, all perish in the process of indulging their passions.

Rod, the nineteen-year old high school senior, typifies the searching youth at the threshold of manhood. His saccharine-sweet sixteen-year old girlfriend is Lita de la Vega whose young widowed mother Pia works as a telephone operator in the Dagupan station. Nick Gallardo is Pia's boyfriend—a young, fabulously successful executive, unbelievably suave around women. He carries on an explosive affair in Manila with Rose Maria Virgil, a blindly ambitious screen goddess. One intriguing caricature in the story is Rod's grandmother Lola Elang, a scheming, formidable matriarch. Also worth noting is Marina, the eighteen-year old bar hostess who falls in love with Rod.

Although the greatest strength of the novel lies in its characters, the author fails to develop them to a satisfactory, plausible level. The story starts with Rod, an introspective teenager, nursing a rebellion against his aristocratic upbringing and the family's funeraria business which has been thrust

down his throat. Had Infante chosen Rod as the central character and written his story accordingly, his fictional achievement could have been greater. Instead, he flits from character to character, and his vague sketches of them comprise a loosely-woven novel. For example, Lola Elang's very promising personality dies with a whimper. After staging a theatrical display of hysterics upon learning of Rod's desire to be on his own, she succumbs to illness, and on her deathbed relents, leaving a large portion of her property to her prodigal grandson. From a ruthless, powerful figure, she is reduced to a neurotic miser without any detectable process of change. Nick—a brilliant, American-educated lady-killer—is transformed into a sex fiend with incredible speed. No prior clues or subsequent explanations for his psychotic behavior are provided. Rod, supposedly reared by a domineering grandmother whose folk catholicism smacks of fanaticism, tastes a Communion host for the first time at age nineteen.

The plot of the novel sadly reads like a B-movie. Nick falls in love (?) with Pia. He meets the sultry Rosa Maria who becomes totally enamoured with him in no time, and they become brazen lovers. (Of course, Rosa was lured into show business at sixteen and of course, she used her body to climb to the summit.) Rod is in love with Lita, Pia's daughter, but he uses Marina to gratify his less noble male cravings. In an effort to rescue his reputation, however, he dumps Marina, who, in her moments of anguish, is miraculously reminded of her Christian duty to reform and be a dutiful wife to her withering invalid of a husband. Thus, when Rod seeks her out again, she dumps him, and the boy is left terribly upset over the clumsy way he lost his bed-mate. Nick, in one drunken moment, rapes Lita with beastlike violence. He is found dead the following afternoon.

A dramatic court scene ensues. Pia is given a twenty-year sentence. Lita and Rod get married shortly afterwards. Rod's parents disown him for marrying a criminal's daughter. He is unable to find a job. Within a few months he degenerates into an alcoholic. The metamorphosis takes place in barely a page. This confuses the reader, because a love that is described at the close of the novel as "beautiful, maybe too beautiful, so near perfect that the gods became jealous and raving mad" (p. 169) should have had much more substance and strength than that. Rod visits Marina, who has returned to her working place after her husband's death. As they leave the bar, they figure in a vehicular accident. Both perish, but, before Rod breathes his last, he confesses to the murder of Nick Gallardo. The epilogue has Pia and Lita leading reassuringly normal lives after the series of catastrophes.

The plot becomes tiresome in the author's attempt to incorporate too many elements in too brief a book. One is reminded of local "smorgasboard" movies, which, in an attempt to milk diverse audiences, inject comic, dramatic, "bold," and suspense scenes whenever possible, resulting in sloppy mediocre productions.

The author's familiarity with the film industry is immediately established. He describes the filth behind the glamour in graphic detail, so that at certain points the novel comes very close to a Harold Robbins bestseller. Also, he frequently compares his characters to Hollywood stereotypes—thus, Rosa is a mixture of Lauren Bacall and Katherine Hepburn, Rod is Montgomery Clift, Nick is Marlon Brando. Some of the scenes in the novel seem borrowed directly from soap operas: a grandson comes home to his dying grandmother; a lower-income daughter-in-law is insulted by her privileged parents-in-law, so she tearfully dashes out of the house as her husband runs after her; the court scene seems carefully staged, with someone passing out after the verdict is read.

The author, J. Eddie Infante, is billed as a "distinguished veteran actor-writer, director of film, theater and television," on the book's back cover. His language is pleasantly simple; his prose fast-paced. In the epilogue, Infante uses short, terse sentences that complement a point the novel seeks to put across—that life is indeed simple. As Lita's old neighbor Mang Kario says at the story's close: "There is a thing called destiny. It governs us all. We cannot escape it. So why worry? Bear in mind—if it is meant for you, it will be yours." (p. 169). If the author had kept his storyline similarly simple, he could have explored his material to a much deeper level, and come up with a much more serious work.

*Ruth Carina B. Cudala
Department of English
Ateneo de Manila University*

THE WHITE HORSE OF ALIH AND OTHER STORIES. By Mig Alvarez Enriquez. Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1985. 112 pages.

Mig Alvarez Enriquez, one of the better writers of contemporary Philippine literature in English, has written two novels, one book of plays and a collection of short stories. The contents of *The White Horse of Alih and Other Stories* were published earlier in the *Philippines Free Press*, *Solidarity* and *Saturday Evening News Magazine*. The collection is of uneven quality but each story possesses its own charm.

A majority of the stories were published in the early 1950s and these are the best in Enriquez's collection. One story was published in 1970 and one in 1984. Although his command of the language is still evident in the 1984 story entitled "The Male Chauvinist and The Liberated Woman," the story lacks depth in theme and artistry in technique. The story's contemporary theme is that modernity has undermined the once honest and pure relationship between man and woman which has changed, quite drastically, from the virtuous to the unrestrained. However, the Filipina can never be a truly "liber-