

philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University • Loyola Heights, Quezon City • 1108 Philippines

Tibok, edited by Sarabia

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Philippine Studies vol. 46, no. 4 (1998): 529–530

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Fri June 27 13:30:20 2008

teenager who was martyred in Guam in 1752. On account of his earlier book *Southern Harvest* and now, *DevilWings*, these are texts that should also give us hours of pleasure.

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Tibok: Heartbeat of the Filipino Lesbian. Edited by Anna Leah Sarabia. Pasig City: Anvil Publishing and Quezon City: Women's Media Circle Foundation, 1998. 199 pages.

Finally out is the long-awaited anthology called *Tibok: Heartbeat of the Filipino Lesbian*, compiled and edited by Anna Leah Sarabia. As I have said in my blurb, this book is peopled by maiden aunts, housewives, singles, poets, professors, cooks, artists, students and activists—all of them showing us the inner rooms that house the life of the Filipino woman as a lesbian. The texts are strong and lyrical, pained and liberating, threaded with longing and with love. This landmark collection shows an important group finally finding their own voices—and thus, their own homes.

In her preface, Sarabia tells us that they first thought of the book in 1993, as soon as the group Can't Live in the Closes (CLIC) was organized. Like in *Ladlad: An Anthology of Philippine Gay Writing* which J. Neil C. Garcia and I edited, she found some difficulty soliciting materials for publication. Thus, new works were given a premium, which should then be signed by the writers—with their own names. It was "almost like signing their names in blood. Convincing and persuading some writers to do this took even more time. A few whom we approached were not ready to come out so publicly, as in a book, and take the consequences . . . One poet, who could have joined us here, had to pull out after her daughter threatened to declare war" (pp. 7 and 8).

But pour the works did, even if they came in trickles at first. Lesbian writers who have migrated in the West also pitched in, sending works through the e-mail. Clearly, then, poverty is not the only reason Filipinas migrate. Others also want more elbow room with which to move about, a bigger space for their lungs to breathe in.

Tibok is divided into four parts: Heritage, Articulation, Strife, and Singkil. "Manuel's Aunts" by Gigi Bautista is a wry, if occasionally funny, recollection about a straight man's two elderly aunts. Like the society around him that wears blinders, Manuel seems oblivious to the relationship between his aunt and another woman.

Manuel "described to me how his gravely ill Aunt Juliana summoned what little strength she had to mix a level teaspoon of coffee, two heaping teaspoons of sugar, and a dash of fresh milk into a hot cup of water from her hospital bed. She would then tenderly hand it to Aunt Victoria, who sat patiently at Juliana's side, waiting for her morning coffee" (p. 15).

It was clear to the author—and to us, of course—that "this was a ritual of love between two women, two long-time companions" (p. 15). But not to Manuel, whose mind thinks in terms of stereotypes, such that he even asks the lesbian author out on dates, "even if it was only for hamburgers" (p. 16).

The most lyrical essay in the collection is Lani T. Montreal's "The Smell of Sleep." In words that seem to have both the fragility and the strength of a spider's web, Lani tells us about the heart of pain and longing that all lovers feel. Will she love me forever? But is "forever" not composed of moments like this one?

"The smell of sleep is in her hair, tinged with smoke from the campfire. It summons sweet thoughts of the night just passed. I close my eyes, feel the soft curves of her body nestled against mine. My chest and belly pressed against her back, her thighs and buttocks molded into my lap, her icy feet cradled in mine. I imagine her smooth mocha skin and supple flesh underneath her clothes. I shiver. She stirs, carving deeper in my spoon, seeking refuge from the unforgiving cold of the Northern morn. I wrap my arm around her more tightly. Her fingers find mine" (p. 20).

The poetic equivalent of that is Sarabia's "Boracay," whose words rise and foam like the waves surrounding that magical island. When lovers leave their homes and workplace even for a while and take a vacation in another place, they seem to inhabit a world without time, when everything is measured in terms of moments. Boracay, the island, then becomes a metaphor for the beloved. Listen: "your northern head is calm./ the white sands of your face are brilliant—soft crushed powder/ one could forever lie in./ habagat knows he must/leave this place for you. Amihan/ caresses her heart softly, crushing/ only so gently every ache and longing/ in the sand, in the sand" (p. 45).

Natty G. Manauat writes about her coming out with the clarity of mind and vividness of example one would associate with a Philosophy teacher, which she is—and in a Catholic university at that. After attending the First Lesbian and Gay Pride March in Malate in 1996, she is swamped with interviews by media people, some of whom still consider homosexuals as part of the freak show. After this, people at her university "stared as I walked the halls, and some students couldn't resist commenting they saw me on TV or read about me in the papers. I think that this visibility on campus prompted my lesbian, gay, or bisexual students to confide in me. They would ask advice about love problems or talk about their difficulties at home. I do not regret coming out, since it has helped my students feel that they are not alone. And whenever I am asked to do radio interviews or TV guestings, I do not think twice about it" (p. 84). This visibility also helped her come out at home.

Malu S. Marin also contributed two articles here. The first is "The Revolving Door, Realities of our Struggle," which aligns the lesbian-feminist-lesbian discourses. The second is a truly delightful piece called "From Closets to Kitchen: Culinary Lesbian in Control," which has tried-and-tested (I have tasted them) recipes with tongue-in-cheek names. Examples include: Mars and Parsley Potatoes; Hump and Pump-kin; Leeks and Potato Soup; Chicken G-Spotpie and Corn Bread; Tapa Queen; and Lesbian Rice Now.

For this grand spread as well as for this book, my message is dig in, boys and girls, or whatever.

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Manila Ransomed: The British Assault on Manila in the Seven Years War. By Nicholas Tracy. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1995. x + 158 pages, plates.

The British occupation of Manila for about two years, 1762–64 was an immediate result of the Family Compact of the Bourbons in France, Austria, Parma, and Spain. Because of poor communication, Manila, whose defenses were quite poor, was unaware of political developments elsewhere. Thus, the farthest colony of Spain was forced to surrender to an enemy that was not much better prepared for a decisive assault. Not only that, personal rivalry between the military command and the officials of the British East India Company responsible for the invasion marred the brief administration of the captured city. Even when the British command in Manila had received the order to evacuate the colony, threats of mutual arrest by the officers delayed the operation. To the disappointment of the planners who had hoped to dig into the reputed wealth of Manila, postwar negotiations failed to produce the entire ransom the British had demanded on first taking Manila.

This, in brief, is Mr. Tracy's thesis in this brief book. Four chapters ("The Plan," "The Siege of Manila," "The Occupation," "The Reckoning") sum up the story in 128 pages, while endnotes and the list of sources occupy 21 pages, a good clue to the substantial research that produced this essay.

The author shows in some detail that the expedition was both ill-planned and ill-supported. But from a wider perspective, he also shows that it revealed the state of British military technology in the middle of the eighteenth century, the corruption and the problems of an "unreformed" British East India Company, and the growth of British imperialist interest in the Pacific—an interest that culminated in the British hold of Hongkong in the north and North Borneo in the south. Had Manila been blessed with capable leaders, whose personal contests, like those of the British, had stymied