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Filipina I and Filipina II

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and the novelty of the Far East which, Halleluyah! J. de Man has seen for himself?

Each writer is, of course, free to publish what he wants, even "ego-trips." For the Filipino reader today, this book is a testimony of the nineteenth-century European attitude best seen in the scramble to cut up China and Africa in order to assure sources of raw materials and markets for the finished products of the industrialized West.

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FILIPINA 1. By WOMEN (Women Writers in Media Now). Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1984. 149 pages.

FILIPINA 2. By WOMEN. Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1985. 206 pages.

Filipina 1 and *Filipina 2* are anthologies of the work of Women Writers in Media Now (WOMEN), edited by Mila Astorga Garcia, Marra Pl. Lanot and Lilia Quindoza Santiago. *Filipina 1* includes works of poetry, drama and fiction; *Filipina 2* is dedicated to personal and journalistic essays that have been published in current periodicals and magazines. The foreword by Nick Joaquin is printed in both volumes. "The wonderful thing about our gifted women," he says, "is that their writing is done . . . on no money and in no room of one's own." He explains:

It's not private writing or solitary speech . . . It's done all over the house, while stockings are mended, stews are minded, dishes are washed, children are put to bed. It's done in offices, to the clatter of the machines and the chatter of colleagues. It's done out on the streets, amid crowds, the traffic, the avid commerce, the angry demos. It's writing of, for, and by the public, because our women writers . . . are such public persons (p. viii).

Filipina 1 features poems by Denise Chou Allas, Marra Pl. Lanot, Anna Leah de Leon, Babeth Lolarga, Migen L. Osorio, Lilia Quindoza Santiago, and Aida F. Santos; a drama by Sol Juvida; and fiction, some of it published earlier and quite well known (Estrella Alfon's "Magnificence," Gilda Cordero Fernando's "A Secret Aging," Lualhati Bautista's "Gapo,") and some less familiar to the average reader (Joy Dayrit's "Unfinished Story," Fanny Garcia's "Arrivederci" and Norma Japitana's "1026 L. Guerrero").

Filipina 2 is a collection of essays published in recent times in such publications as *Bulletin Today*, *Mr. & Mrs.*, *Panorama*, and the *Observer*.

Filipina 1 and *Filipina 2*, as the first anthologies dedicated to the work of women writers, are a declaration of the rightful place of Filipino womanhood in the literary world, in today's fast-changing and high technology reading world. They underscore the literary talents women have been unconsciously underrating for fear of losing the feminine touch or the feminine image.

Filipina 1 makes a bilingual statement of Filipino women's needs, yearnings, and aspirations as well as the mostly-taken-for-granted work and role of women. It showcases the abundance of literary talents earlier cloaked in the voluminous skirts of Maria Clara. The Filipino poems of Marra Pl. Lanot and Lilia Q. Santiago express the present concerns and areas of involvement of Filipino women which could not be voiced earlier because of the place and role of women dictated by Filipino culture and unquestioningly accepted by the Filipina. Lanot's "Hiling ng Sinta," for example, verbalizes the sensual desires and drives of a woman through images that suggest exploitation of the native land. "Sine" and "Babae Kami" speak of the stereotype roles of women as objects of lust vis-a-vis the perception of the mission of creation delegated to women who are knowledgeable, intellectual, moral and loving individuals concerned with the pursuit and promotion of justice. In "Babae Kami" the poet serves notice:

Babae kami
Hindi pagkaing
Sa mesa ihahain
Babalatan, hihimayin . . .

Hindi manikang
Lalaruin, huhubaran . . .

Hindi kaserola o kubeta
Hindi panaginip na walang isip . . . (p. 12).

Lilia Q. Santiago takes the traditional Ilocano *dung-aw* as title for a powerful lament for a loved one killed in the current national struggle:

Saang bukid, burol, bundok
ko ipapatak ang mga luhang
alay sa giting ng buhay
buhay na ang kabyak ay sa akin . . .
Saanmang bukid, burol, bundok ka nakalibing
Lindol na gigimbal ang gunita mo
Sa mga ayaw umamin
Na sila ang salarin

by a woman who does not stop at lamenting:

At mararating ko rin
Ang bukid, burol, bundok na siya mong libingan
Dito ako'y sasanib sa malayang pagtatatag
Ng mga bantayog na dambana ng lahi natin (pp. 36-38).

The poet uses an Ibaloi tale about the first man as point of reference for "Mga Sibot Mula sa Puso ng Cordillera," which posits the death of Macliing Dulag against the folkloric conflict between Kaitasan and Kailaliman: "Poon, sugatan man kaming nalalang sa balat ng lupa/Talo naman kaming bumabangon sa pakikidigma" (pp. 44-45). Santiago's poems effectively presage the cry for justice and freedom contained in the journalistic essays of *Filipina 2*.

Sol Juvida's one-act play, and some of the short stories, turn to another womanly experience—the throes of aging. "Niyebe sa Tag-araw," the drama, affirms the loneliness behind the facade of contentment and accomplishment of Filipino balikbayans, who, because of their age, are incapable of assimilating the customs and values of a foreign land. In "1026 L. Guerrero," which is both story and feature piece, Norma Japitana, as chronicler, counselor, confidante and patron of the bar and massage parlor girls, also looks into the question of aging—this time of hospitality girls who are considered old for their trade at age twenty-five. Gilda Cordero Fernando's well-known "A Secret Aging" juxtaposes the aging Lorenzo against the thoughtlessness of adolescence.

Fanny Garcia's "Arrivederci" unfolds like a soap opera, but spins out the situation of thousands of Filipino domestics, some of them with academic degrees, who serve foreign masters for bread on their families' tables.

Filipina 1 expresses the ambivalence that a Filipino woman feels because of the traditional role she has been born into and raised in, juxtaposed against the contemporary involvements for which the world demands her talents. It is an ambivalence interestingly concretized in Aida F. Santos' "Sulat Mula sa Switzerland," in which a Filipina away from her family longs for the people and affection left behind, while appreciating the advances of First World lifestyles. The writers of *Filipina 1* make a statement, and they have been heard, although reactions may have been long in coming from nonwriters, because *Filipino women in general still need more changes of heart, in order to be more assertive in the expression of their emotions and their ideas.*

In the field of journalistic writing, however, even before the advent of the People Power Revolution of February 1986, Woman Power has been a reality. Evidence is seen in the competent writing of the women journalists now collectively published in *Filipina 2*, as well as in the events of those times, such as the fight for press freedom documented in one of the essays, in which women played stellar roles.

The anthology documents the changes in the attitudes of women to themselves and their experiences, and to their places in the socio-political-economic structures of the country. The essays range from individual insights into the self, through breastfeeding and sexism, to political issues such as the nuclear arms race, the usurpation of human rights by the Marcos government, and the fight for press freedom. Mostly written for the Sunday magazines, the essays show journalistic writing at its best, not only because of the courage

with which they were written under the Marcos dictatorship, but more especially because of the evidence and testimonies obtained, analyzed and so movingly interpreted by the writers.

In "Depth" Arlene Babst explores Woman as person who respects herself and therefore does not allow herself to be considered as a possession, an object of commerce and an instrument in the recreatory game of man. Babst advocates work for Woman to become economically independent and take her rightful place in the world with confidence, drive and daring. Armed with her own dignity, self-respect and freedom, Woman is expected to make her environment feel her power, to affect the structures she chooses to belong to; to select the type of relationships she would care to enter into; to decide on the type of motherhood that would suit her needs, temperament and beliefs; to grow and develop into an individual person with depth, one whose space in the world is respected by everyone. Babst explains depth as a sense of wholeness which enables a Woman to relate with her whole being, because she dares to explore Martin Buber's Thou and constructs from within, thereby making a person open up to the world with arms of understanding.

Sybilla Green Dorros denounces sexism in Philippine advertisements, which through subliminal seduction make Filipino males strive to achieve machismo through alcohol and sex, and Filipino women to conform to the stereotype of a sex object. In listing the examples of offensive stereotyping especially on television, Dorros also denounces the seeming indifference and noncritical attitude of Filipino women. She ends with an exhortation particularly for mothers: to react, and to react critically.

Paulynn Sicam reports on the Asian regional conference on the Promotion of Breastfeeding, and expresses the fear that because of consumer indifference, the movement may not get mass support. Direct support of the movement for the promotion of breastfeeding comes in the form of a personal narrative by Neni Sta. Romana Cruz, who tells of breastfeeding schedules maintained alongside office work and of the change in the attitude of co-workers towards her single-mindedness in the business of breastfeeding. She provides testimony in support of the practice, from a working mother happy about the experience.

Gemma Nemenzo Almendral, Sheila S. Coronel, Ma. Ceres P. Doyo, and Rochit I. Tanedo strike hard at political issues. Each of their essays explores issues which were originally considered beyond the range of ordinary Filipino women. Almendral traces the development in the nuclear arms race between two super powers for bigger arsenals and better bombs according to the Mutually Agreed Destruction (MAD) Policy. Doyo's report on "Operation Lambat" and Tañedo's account of the Isnegs' last festival present government atrocities, in the claiming of innocent victims in Bataan, ironically considered as a monument to Filipino heroism, and the government's willful destruction of a cultural minority through its take-over of the land of their birth. The

journalists and the victims who gave their testimonies both showed courage and tenacity in exposing the truth. Considering these two reports in the light of the case of the freedom of the press recounted by Mila A. Garcia, and the questions listed by Marites Danguilan-Vitug, one cannot help but pat the collective shoulder of women journalists for their factual presentation not only of the regulation of print media but also of government strong-arm policies. With Letty Jimenez-Magsanoc's questions on the duties, rights and responsibilities of the press, the reader then was compelled to ask: Did the press become really free after the supposed lifting of martial law? and the contemporary reader to ponder: Which kind of regulation was most suffocating, vested economic interests, partisan politics or government censorship? After the Marcos era, Vitug's questions may be deemed academic but they reflect the different layers of attitudes and beliefs in the crust of Filipino reactions to prevailing conditions and situations.

Domini Torevillas-Suarez' emotional experience caused by a song about an eighteen-year-old boy shot while in the act of surrendering, and Jo-Ann Q. Maglipon's account of Sylvia de la Paz' reactions to the assassination of her husband, provide insights into Woman character, even as they represent political occurrences and issues. Notable is De la Paz' philosophical conquest of self and the fusion of *I* and *Thou* after the killing of her husband.

Fe L. Panaligan's capsulized account of the jump made by Lydia de Vega from winner in the outdoor game called Chinese garter to track heroine with several gold medals, and Lorna Kalaw-Tirol's presentation of the activities of the MABINI lawyers, whose names are now household words, suggest the range of reporting women writers show outstanding capabilities for.

By thus presenting essays by women writers on topics ranging from the person of woman, her role, emotions, thoughts, ideas, and relationships, to her involvement in political issues and matters of her profession or career, and her insights into other people's minds and hearts, *Filipina 2* proves not only Woman Power, but also that those with faint hearts and weak stomachs might learn courage from the likes of these women, and the many unnamed others of their ilk.

Filipina 2 as an anthology presents the Filipino Woman after major changes in her attitude to herself and, more importantly, to her various roles in the contemporary socio-political-economic context.

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